



FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 2012



Fair Isle Bird Observatory Report no. 64 (2012)

Edited by David Parnaby

Contents	Page
FIBOT Chairman's Report - <i>Roger Riddington</i>	3
Warden's Report - <i>David Parnaby</i>	5
Administrator's Report - <i>Susannah Parnaby</i>	8
The National Trust for Scotland, Fair Isle in 2012 - <i>Alexander Bennett</i>	11
Ornithological monthly summary - <i>David Parnaby</i>	13
Systematic List - <i>David Parnaby</i>	27
Ringing summary - <i>Will Miles</i>	74
Fair Isle's seabirds in 2012 - <i>Will Miles</i>	89
First and last migrant dates - <i>David Parnaby</i>	96
'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler 20th September 2012: the first for Fair Isle - <i>Becki Rosser, Will Miles, David Parnaby, Jason Moss and Martin Collinson</i>	98
Magnolia Warbler 23rd September 2012: the first for Fair Isle - <i>Jason Moss and Will Miles</i>	103
Siberian Rubythroat 23rd October 2012: the fourth for Fair Isle - <i>Nick Riddiford</i>	107
'Eastern' Subalpine Warbler 26th May 2012: the first genetically confirmed record and accepted female for Britain - <i>Will Miles, David Parnaby, Jason Moss, Becki Rosser and Martin Collinson</i>	109
Decisions on previous rarities	111
Cetaceans and other marine wildlife - <i>David Parnaby</i>	113
Lepidoptera report - <i>David Parnaby</i>	115
Other wildlife: some environmental events and jottings - <i>Nick Riddiford</i>	116
Annual Research Report Summary: RSPB FAME seabird tracking project - <i>Rob Hughes</i>	120
Report on investigations into causes of death and diseases states in casualty birds found on Fair Isle 2009 to 2012 - <i>Jason C. Waine B.Vet.Med., MRCVS</i>	121
'Any divers...' A project to computerise the daily log - <i>Roger Riddington</i>	124
JHMF Report 6th-24th July - <i>Alex Rhodes</i>	126
Meteorological data, Fair Isle 2012 - <i>Dave Wheeler</i>	128
Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust Financial Report and Accounts for 2012 - <i>Mike Wood</i>	129
Map of Fair Isle	132
Systematic Checklist of the birds of Fair Isle - <i>David Parnaby</i>	133

Front cover: Snow Bunting, Meoness, April by David Parnaby

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FIBOT Chairman's Report

Roger Riddington

In many ways, 2012 was a year of consolidation, the second full year of the new Observatory building, and the second year for David and Susannah as Warden and Administrator. The new building (how long, I wonder, shall we continue to call it 'the new Obs'?) is proving to be an exceptionally fine facility, warm and welcoming for visitors, a well-equipped base for staff to live in and a splendid venue for island events. The highlight of the year in the Obs was the arrival of Freyja Parnaby in May, a first baby for the new Obs and the best of excuses for a celebration.

The birding year was another varied and interesting one. The headline act was Fair Isle's first, and Britain's second, Magnolia Warbler in September, with a supporting cast of the isle's second Green-winged Teal, third Ring-billed Gull and Hume's Warbler, fourth Siberian Rubythroat and Buff-bellied Pipit, and fifth Firecrest. The autumn migration was a cracker, with good birds from beginning to end (notwithstanding a few quiet spells). The *Locustella* warblers featured prominently, with a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, three Lanceolated Warblers and Britain's first confirmed 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler, a subspecies confirmed by DNA analysis, in addition to two River Warblers (one of those in the spring). Most of the species that have come to be regarded as Fair Isle 'specials' put in an appearance. The island's seabird populations fared better than in 2011, with many species holding their own, although life remains tough for those species that depend on a good supply of small fish close to the island. Fifteen years ago, in my last year as warden, we ringed nearly 4,400 birds of just two species (Guillemot and Arctic Tern) that summer, almost equal to the tally for all species in 2012.



Shearwaters by W. Miles

I made three visits to Fair Isle in 2012, in June, late July and late October. I haven't been on the isle in mid summer or late autumn for many years and it reminded me how every season brings its highlights. Despite all the good birds in October, I shall perhaps remember the July visit best. Circumnavigating the isle on a magnificent tall ship late one afternoon, together with a majority of the isle folk, was spectacular and a special privilege. Bird-wise, that visit reminded me that one of the most satisfying things about Observatory life is introducing people to their first hands-on experiences with birds. Whether it is ringing skua chicks on the hill or storm-petrels at night down below the Observatory, to see the expression of young (and sometimes not so young) folk handling and ringing their first birds is immensely satisfying. I remain convinced that education is one of the most important aspects of this bird observatory. This theme extended to my autumn visit, when we managed to get Stewart and Triona's grandson Logan, already an enthusiastic birder at the age of 13, ringing his first birds - Blackbirds, Bramblings and Robins. Youngsters like this will be the mainstay of places like Fair Isle Bird Observatory in the future, and we must do everything we can to encourage and inspire them.

Warden's Report

David Parnaby

Well, what a year! There never seems to be a normal year on Fair Isle, there's always something exciting or something new, but I'll remember this one as being very enjoyable, with some fantastic birding.

The major news for me was of course the birth of our second child, Freyja, on 20th May. Having caught a Thrush Nightingale on morning traps and finally laying to rest my biggest British bogey bird when I found a Hoopoe on Dronger, it was already a memorable day, so picking up the answerphone message in the evening to find out that I'd become a father for the second time (it turned out that Freyja was born just as I rang the famous bell for Log!) certainly made it one to remember! The arrival of Freyja so close to the start of the season (and her subsequent visit to Aberdeen Children's Hospital) meant that the first few months in particular were a very hectic time at the Obs. I have to thank all the people who helped us to keep the Obs running during this time, in particular my staff, the islanders and my parents (who paid an extended visit to Fair Isle in the spring). Anticipating the extra workload associated with a new arrival meant that we lined up two long-term volunteers for the spring and summer, and David Back (who was joined by his wife Gill as Domestic Volunteer) and Elisa Riera Miquel were superb additions to the team who carried out all manner of jobs with the minimum of fuss and maximum enthusiasm. We're very glad that they seemed to enjoy their stays with us as much as we enjoyed them being part of the team here.

After the excitement of an Iceland Gull influx during the early winter, the birding season really kicked off with a trip to Israel for Assistant Warden Jason Moss, Seabird and Ringing Warden Will Miles, FIBOT Vice-Chairman Dave Okill and myself. As well as providing excellent experience of several potential vagrants and subspecific variation, it proved to be a good birding trip and we were able to enjoy plenty of ringing thanks to an unusually early spring migration of several species. My thanks go to Itai Shanni and the rest of the team at the International Birding and Research Centre Eilat for such fine hospitality. Sadly, whilst I was in Israel my Grandpa Parnaby passed away. As the man who introduced me to watching birds it's thanks to him that I've ended up on Fair Isle and, although I miss him, I'm very glad for those days spent with my nose pressed to his window watching the Starlings tumbling into the garden for kitchen scraps and the visits to the Washington Wildfowl Centre where I first decided I wanted to be a Warden!

The experience of ringing so many birds in Israel meant that we were already up to speed for a large fall just a few weeks into the season, with Robins predominating (up to 20 at a time were being caught on trap rounds) and a few species seeing their

highest spring ringing totals for several years. The team started the season with the usual trap repairs after some heavy storms in the 2011/12 winter saw most of the traps sustain some damage, with the Double Dyke suffering so badly it needed an almost total rebuild. Darren Wiseman of Barkland was contracted to ensure the new structure should last us for many years to come.

The wardening team was joined by Sammy Fraser as Ranger (a role financially supported by SNH) in April, who quickly grew into the position and provided an always cheery face for visitors and staff alike through the season. Sammy also did well to adapt to the new Fair Isle flight timetable that was introduced at the last minute, which also meant I had to join the airstrip fire crew in the spring, causing a whole new set of adjustments at an already busy time.

The spring birding is detailed in the monthly summaries, so I'll not cover it all here, but some exciting falls, good counts and rarities (finished off with River and Paddyfield Warblers sharing the Obs garden in early July) made it a good season, albeit cold at times! The census and regular ringing gave way to the seabird work as the summer progressed. Although it was far from a recovery, there was a more positive feel to the seabird work than in 2011, although in most cases the 'good news' was merely an improvement on some of the awful seasons of recent years rather than anything like approaching the heydays of the 1980s and early 1990s.

The summer also saw the ever-popular Storm Petrel ringing sessions continue, with a few Leach's also trapped (although nothing rarer...yet!). Another wildlife treat of the summer is often regular cetacean sightings, but 2012 proved largely disappointing until a spell of calmer weather in late August saw a variety of species logged. We were also joined in the late summer by Ed Tooth and Alex Rhodes through the JHMF scheme, with both proving very useful additions to the team and I'm sure we'll see more of them in conservation in the future, hopefully at FIBO.

Autumn started well, with another good August; it seems in recent years that the first good migrants are almost expected from the middle of the month. The first three weeks of September though were dominated by westerlies, although they did at least bring a couple of American waders (and, bizarrely, a River Warbler only seen when it was trapped at the Obs). Just as Wardens were starting to recognise individual Meadow Pipits, the wind calmed to a very light south-westerly and an Arctic Warbler and Citrine Wagtail appeared almost instantly; you've got to love Fair Isle! Suddenly there was promise and how it was met, with the light easterlies seeing a Lancey trapped at Da Water. With everyone basking in the enjoyment (and sunshine) the phone rang - it was Jason who had forsaken his Sunday afternoon off to census North again. 'Parners, get everyone to Lerness. I've got an American warbler, bright yellow below, grey head, green mantle and a tail like a Crag Martin's!' What followed wasn't quite chaos, but there were people running from all over, vehicles fleeing around the island and a near meltdown of the Obs phones. One of Susannah's proudest moments of the year has to be ensuring that everyone

(FIBO staff, Obs guests, other birders and islanders) got to see the bird, even though it meant a dash towards sunset for her to be one of the last ones to finally set eyes on this stunner. That set the tone for the rest of the autumn, described as 'Fair Isle at its best' as even a period of westerlies in early October didn't stop the near daily arrival of rarities. A typical late flourish saw a Siberian Rubythroat arrive on *Lusciana*-day (23rd October, which has now had two Rubythroats and a Rufous-tailed Robin in the last nine years!), although there were virtually no birders left on the island to enjoy it. Anyone reading this with a view to booking a birding holiday on Fair Isle could do worse than pick an off-peak time.

The birding wound down after the end of October to a relatively quiet finish after a superb Waxwing influx, but the usual mix of paperwork (including an Obs total of 43 BB rarity descriptions!), harsh weather and island festivities meant the end of the year was still busy enough to stop us getting bored! By the time December came to an end the year list stood on 205 species, well short of the 1992 record of 217 species, but a respectable total nonetheless (especially considering many regular species including Brent Goose, Canada Goose, Slavonian Grebe, Curlew Sandpiper, Grey Plover, Stock Dove, Stonechat, Bullfinch and Rustic Bunting all had 'no-shows'). The final haul for the year included the island's first Magnolia Warbler, second Green-winged Teal, third Hume's Warbler and Ring-billed Gull, fourth Siberian Rubythroat and Buff-bellied Pipit and fifth Firecrest, along with two River Warblers, Pechora Pipit, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Black-throated Thrush, three Lanceolated Warblers, three Blyth's Reed Warblers, two Paddyfield Warblers, six Arctic Warblers, five Citrine Wagtails, eight Olive-backed Pipits, three Thrush Nightingales and three Arctic Redpolls, an impressive list that emphasises that there is nowhere else in the UK that rivals Fair Isle for seeing (and the chance of finding your own) rarities.

The Obs building performed very well (as would be expected), although a faulty valve did result in the loss of hot water for a few days in the spring (it picked a bank holiday weekend to go wrong, slowing the progress of getting a replacement part sent up from Scotland) and a leaky patio door saw us blessed with an indoor swimming pool in the winter, but other than those minor hiccups, all the guests were again impressed with the standard of the accommodation; the 'new' Obs is a great place to stay.

So, once again; thanks to my family, the FIBO team, the Fair Isle community and the visitors to the island for all playing such an important part in a great year.

Administrator's Report

Susannah Parnaby

What a year 2012 turned out to be, with important spring and autumn arrivals in the form of a new baby daughter, Freyja, born in Gilbert Bain Hospital, Lerwick on 20th May (and forever to be remembered as the morning David found Hoopoe on Dronger), and a Magnolia Warbler, the second for Britain, found by Assistant Warden Jason Moss on Lerness on 23rd September.

The first few months of the year were very busy, with David, Will and Jason travelling to Eilat in late February on a ringing trip and both David and I preparing for my departure to Lerwick at the start of the season. As is often the case, things did not go according to plan as we started the season with no assistant cook or childcarer and we are very grateful to David's parents for providing much needed childcare whilst I was away, and to the various islanders who helped in the kitchen until we were fully staffed.

April saw the arrival of FIBO regulars Becki Rosser and Tracey Weekes as domestic assistants, a new ranger, Sammy Fraser, to replace Carrie who had moved on to work on the Isle of May, and volunteers David and Gill Back. David and Gill first visited in 2011 and decided to return for a three month stay, this time as ornithological and domestic volunteers respectively. We are immensely grateful to them for their hard work, cheerfulness and willingness to turn their hands to anything, with many guests and islanders commenting on the display of flowers around the Observatory through the year, courtesy of Gill's green fingers.

In late April we were joined by Hattie Williams, the first of our bar volunteers, who remained with us until late June, enlivening a number of Fair Isle Thursday events with demonstrations of Appalachian clog dancing, and by a number of returning researchers. These included Jess Walkup, completing her final season of fieldwork for her PhD on the starling population of Fair Isle, and RSPB researchers Rob Hughes and Jenny Sturgeon.

One of the key features of the 2012 season was the quality of the team that developed over the year, including staff, volunteers and researchers. David, Gill, Jess, Rob, Jenny, Hattie and subsequent bar, ornithological and domestic volunteers Frances Sawyer, Elisa Miquel Riera and Maggie Berg, and JHMF grant awardees Alex Rhodes and Ed Tooth, all contributed to the great atmosphere at the Observatory, joining in with Obs and island life with enthusiasm. In the summer the Obs was often a hive of activity, with a number of spinning wheels in active use, and a source of much music making, courtesy of singers Jenny and Maggie and the instrumental talents of Will and Jason.

In early May Ann Prior arrived to take the helm as cook, as I departed for hospital, overseeing a very changeable season in the kitchen until mid-September, when she was replaced by two very able assistant cooks Kat Snell and Ed Latter. Thanks to her guiding hand the Observatory kitchen produced a steady flow of good food in difficult circumstances, not least the loss of all hot water for just over a week in early May and the absence of a permanent assistant cook for much of the season. Former staff members Sue Squirrell and Lois Smallwood must be thanked for stepping in at short notice to help in the kitchen in September and October, with Amanda Holmes also working for a short period as assistant cook in June.

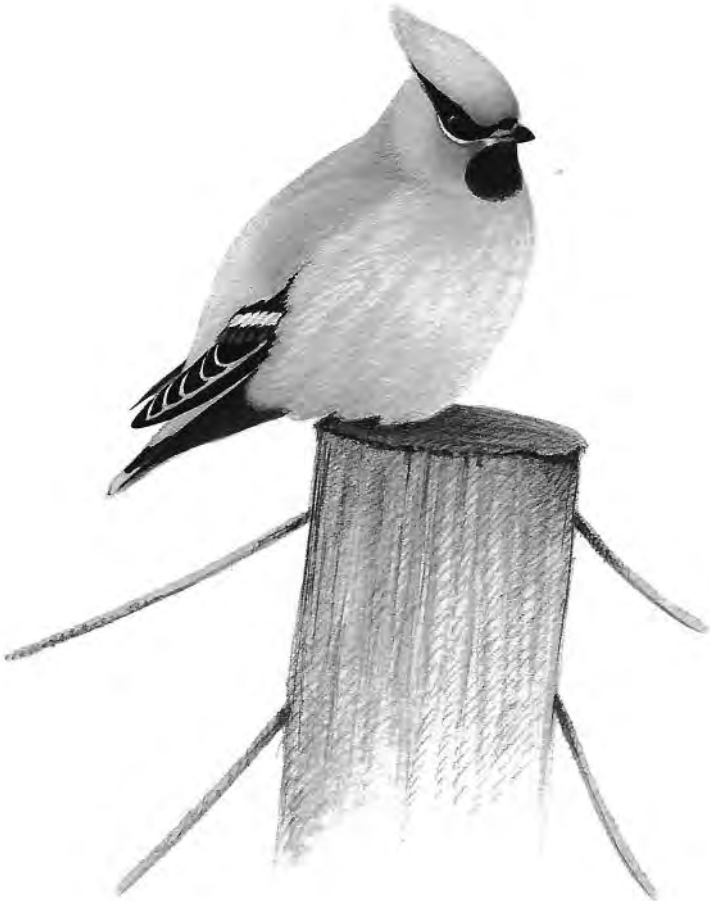
Thanks to some well-timed easterly winds, the spring produced a flurry of scarce migrants, many of which I could only read about by text whilst waiting in the maternity unit in Lerwick. Unfortunately my return to Fair Isle at the end of May was cut short by an infection which saw Freyja transferred to the Children's Hospital in Aberdeen for a short time after only a week at home, leaving David and the rest of the staff team to take on extra work to keep the Observatory running smoothly.

By mid-July the pace of Obs life was starting to slow, following a very busy June for visitors and the much-needed arrival of Claire Charlesworth as child-carer, and everyone was able to enjoy a visit from the Norwegian Tall Ship Loyal to the island, made extra special by the presence of Fair Islander Tom Best on board as crew. An evening party in the Havens was followed by an opportunity for many islanders to join the crew for a sail around the island the next day, all filmed for a Norwegian television series on islands. Indeed the Observatory featured heavily in the media during the year, with a series of short pieces about the island and Observatory by former warden Roy Dennis being shown on Springwatch and the episode of Coast filmed during the Tall Ships races in 2011 appearing on television in May, amongst others.

Late summer and autumn brought changes to the island community, with Nick Lucas arriving from Toronto at the start of the autumn term to take over as headteacher, following the departure of the Bracken family at the end of June for new opportunities in southern England. Angela Young and Brian Smith also arrived to settle into crofting life on the island in the autumn, taking up the reins at Upper Stoneybrek, as Kenny Stout and Sue Hutchison moved east to the newly renovated Brecks.

Although perhaps not one of the true classics, the arrival of some quality birds, including the aforementioned Magnolia Warbler and a female Siberian Rubythroat, and a good supporting cast of scarcities and Fair Isle specialities, such as Pechora Pipit, Pallas Grasshopper and Lanceolated Warblers ensured the success of the autumn season at the Observatory, with several regular visitors finally seeing much sought-after birds.

Whilst many who remember the old Obs, stretching back even to the naval hut days, will probably find the character of the new Observatory somewhat different, not least because many visitors to the island and the Observatory would not describe themselves as birders, the 2012 season is perhaps a reminder that the magic of discovering the utterly unexpected in some little corner of the isle still remains.



Waxwing by W. Miles



the National Trust
for Scotland
a place for everyone

The National Trust for Scotland, Fair Isle in 2012

Alexander Bennett (Group Manager, Countryside and Islands North)

Personal responsibility for the management of Trust interests on Fair Isle remains similar, with myself in the Group Manager role supported by Alan Barrow as Rural Surveyor, Angus Jack as Building Surveyor and a new recruit, Rob Dewar, as our Nature Conservation Advisor. Unfortunately Angus took ill half way through the 2012 season and we all wish him a full and speedy recovery. Angus is covered in his absence by Glyn Young who is also based at the Inverness office and will be familiar to many on Fair Isle as he was involved in building projects in the past.

The Trust worked in partnership with the Island Housing forum to find a new croft tenant for Upper Stoneybrek and considerable effort was invested in preparing application details. These went to great lengths to “manage the expectations” of the applicants. It is generally agreed that this approach was successful, with us receiving far fewer applications of a much higher standard than usual. This is very encouraging and we welcome the new tenants Brian Smith and Angela Young who by all accounts are settling in very well.

Midway Croft and house was renounced back to the Trust by (Mires) Jimmy Stout and the Trust submitted an application for Innovative Funding sponsored by the Scottish Government for the renovation of the house and the downstairs space in the South Lighthouse into affordable accommodation and was delighted when it was successful. The next steps in early 2013 will be formulating this into a full project by building on Angus’s well developed plans and investigation opportunities for match funding. Once the renovation is complete the Trust and Community will seek new tenants for it.

Rob Dewar our Nature Conservation Advisor cut his Fair Isle teeth this year

working closely with Nick Riddiford in order to ensure that the Fair Isle SSSI was assessed appropriately under the site condition monitoring programme in a manner which highlighted the very particular subtleties of heather growth on island and it is hoped that this work is accepted by SNH.

I was delighted to accompany Nick Riddiford and Stewart Thomson as we sat together in Edinburgh in front of a *Parliamentary Petitions Committee* and put forward the island's case for a Marine Protection Area designation. As always we are extremely impressed by the professionalism shown by Nick and his Fair Isle team and fully support the establishment of this MPA as a key element in the building of the island's future sustainability. However, we are all very keen to work with the fishing industry to support the Fair Isle initiative to establish this MPA on the basis of it being a pioneering Research and Development site to demonstrate good practice for the future.

As 2011 drew to a close it was confirmed that both the new Fire Station and Surgery were to progress. There was some considerable flurry of activity as representatives of all parties worked through a feasibility study of options in the spring.

The Fire Station is now complete and we had confirmation from NHS that the surgery will be completed in the 2012–13 financial year. This is great news for the island and we welcome it wholeheartedly - this has been over ten years in the making so a big well done to everyone who has worked for these improvements over the years. After ten years in service the Island Fire Tender underwent a complete refurbishment by the Highlands and Islands Fire Service and is now back in island service and using its new garage.

In September I came to the island with the NTS Head of Health, Safety and Environment, Sean Hanley, to undertake an audit of the health and safety regime within the Observatory and Guest House and of the wider island, with this work to be followed up in 2013. It is always a good thing to consider your activities at regular junctures and work to make yourself and others safe, without going too far!

The Trust continues to work with the Community Housing Forum and individuals on a wide range of issues to allow the community to grow and strengthen itself. As always this work is interesting and rewarding and we wish you all the very best for 2013 and we hope to see you on Fair Isle again soon to enjoy the Observatory facilities in a safe and comfortable manner.

Ornithological monthly summary

David Parnaby

The monthly totals of species recorded were:

Jan	53	Apr	116	July	82	Oct	139
Feb	60	May	144	Aug	109	Nov	78
Mar	85	June	111	Sep	134	Dec	59

January: The year started with 38 species recorded on 1st, including seven European White-fronted and two Pink-footed Geese amongst the 200 Greylags. A Glaucous Gull, Little Auk, Woodcock and two Lapwing were typical winter visitors, with birds lingering from 2011 including two Robin, a Dunnock and a male Merlin (with a female also seen regularly through the month). Guillemots started the year present on the cliffs in good numbers. Three Wigeon and a Teal were present on 2nd, and on 4th wintering wildfowl included Long-tailed Duck, Common Scoter (two were then in Finnequoy through the month) and a Red-breasted Merganser, whilst the White-fronted Goose flock increased to eight. Two Little Auks and three Black-headed Gulls were also seen. The first Peregrine arrived on 6th and 7th saw an Iceland Gull which proved to be the vanguard of an impressive arrival of this white-winger. The 7th also saw a group of four Killer Whales call into the North Haven, a fantastic sight for the lucky observers. By 8th there were two new Iceland Gulls, a Water Rail was at Haa (with one at Schoolton on 10th, both of which were probably overwintering birds) and 12 Snow Buntings were seen. On 10th there were two Little Auks and a new Iceland Gull and on 11th the male Peregrine was joined by a female. The 12th saw a Whooper Swan arrive (with another on 13th), along with a Wigeon and a Red-throated Diver, whilst Iceland Gulls reached six and were joined by a Glaucous Gull, with a second the following day along with a Little Auk. Iceland Gulls peaked at seven (with another found dead the same day) on 14th, with smaller numbers throughout the rest of the month. A Woodcock and two Glaucous Gulls were seen on 15th, with the first Grey Heron of the year on 16th (when the last Little Auk of the winter was found dead). The first Oystercatcher returned on 17th, a Black-headed Gull passed through on 18th, a Glaucous Gull was present again on 20th (and 26th) and the first Cormorant of the year appeared on 21st (with another on 28th). A 'blue' Fulmar on 23rd and Black-headed Gull on 30th were the only sightings of note aside from lingering white-wingers in the following week, but the month ended nicely with a Waxwing on 31st.

February: The month opened with an arrival of birds, including 28 Woodcock, whilst thrush numbers were augmented to 50 Redwing, 36 Blackbird and 15 Fieldfare. The first Meadow Pipit of the year also arrived but the star of the minor fall was without

doubt the Coot first seen at Aesterhoull that went on to linger for the month. The only Golden Plover of the month was also present on 1st and four Wigeon, a Teal and 208 Greylag were noted. Birds present throughout the month included two Merlin, two Robin and Dunnock. Two Iceland and a Glaucous Gull were also seen on 1st, with both species present throughout the month, including at least four individuals of the latter species. Eight European White-fronted Geese were noted on 3rd, as were three Long-tailed Duck and two Common Scoter (all three species being present throughout the month), and there were also eight Lapwing and a Jack Snipe. The year's first Skylark was a welcome sight on 5th, a Dunlin was new on 7th, Kittiwakes were on the move on 8th (with 30 passing South Light in ten minutes) and new arrivals on 9th comprised a Knot and Short-eared Owl. A Razorbill was washed up dead on 12th and a Great Northern Diver was offshore from the Obs on 13th, when Iceland Gulls peaked at five and a Jackdaw arrived. The 14th saw an early Puffin (which was found dead the next day) and Goldeneye peaked for the month at three. A quiet spell followed, with the Water Rail reappearing at Schoolton on 18th, when a Black-headed Gull was also seen and Oystercatchers built up to 22 (with 56 present by 24th). The 29th saw an arrival of three Pink-footed Geese and a Teal, whilst Skylark numbers increased to seven.

March: A small arrival early in the month saw Mistle Thrush (3rd) and Pied Wagtail (4th) put in their first appearances of the year, followed by two Black Redstart, Reed Bunting, Woodpigeon, Shelduck and Ringed Plover (5th), when there were also five Robins. An Iceland Gull was seen on 8th and eight White-fronted Geese were present on 12th when there were also three Teal and a Golden Plover and Skylarks were singing for the first time. Another period of arrivals mid-month saw 38 Lapwing, Woodcock and two Goldcrest (14th), Yellowhammer, Siskin and eight Meadow Pipits (15th), Chaffinch and three Siskin (16th) and Dunlin (17th). The 20th provided a few interesting birds, with two Tundra Bean Geese (until 27th) and Fair Isle's earliest ever Ruff (until 23rd), along with Glaucous Gull, Jack Snipe and eight Fieldfare. The following day saw a Taiga Bean Goose (until 23rd), Kestrel and a new Dunnock. Puffins started to arrive in small numbers from 22nd, on which date there were also Long-eared Owl and Chiffchaff at the Obs and a Grey Heron. Golden Plover increased to ten on 23rd and there were two Goldeneye and a Black Redstart, with another Black Redstart and Reed Bunting on 25th. The 26th saw the first Lesser Black-backed Gulls, along with four Black Redstart and two Chaffinch, then light SW winds and fine conditions saw plenty of new arrivals on 27th. Amongst the highlights were eight year ticks (Bonxie, Collared Dove, Tufted Duck, Sparrowhawk, two Common Redpoll, Lapland Bunting, a female Wheatear and Fair Isle's earliest Blackcap), along with White Wagtail, Wigeon, four Common Scoter, 13 Black-headed Gulls, Glaucous Gull and an increase in other migrants (13 Goldcrest, 55 Redwing, 117 Meadow Pipit and nine Snow Bunting), with the annual Tystie survey producing a good count of 182 in the study plot. Other wildlife recorded on this day included a Minke Whale from the '*Good Shepherd*' and a bee photographed at the Haa that was later identified as a Buff-tailed Bumblebee, at the time thought to be the first Shetland record, and the first of a series of records of the species on Fair Isle (see page 116 for

details)! The 28th saw a good count of 240 Skylarks, with new arrivals on 29th including an Iceland Gull, a Jack Snipe, 79 Snipe, Cormorant and Red-throated Diver, whilst Teal increased to six. The 30th saw a smart male Ring Ouzel at the Mast, with a Grey Heron and *littoralis* Rock Pipit also noted. On the 31st, Fair Isle's second Green-winged Teal was found, just three years after the first and in exactly the same location. The same day also saw the arrival of two Greenland White-fronted Geese, an Iceland Gull, a 'blue' Fulmar and ten Pied Wagtails.

April: April opened with a wintry feel thanks to the cold northerly winds and occasional snow, with the birds reflecting the weather. Highlights at the start of the month included the Green-winged Teal (which was seen virtually daily until 22nd, then again on 30th), two each of White-fronted and Pink-footed Geese and three Iceland Gulls (the peak count for the month, although at least eight individuals were noted). Other sightings included six Teal (which accompanied their Green-winged cousin throughout the month), lingering Red-breasted Merganser and two Common Scoter, two Woodpigeon, Common Redpoll and Lapland Bunting. A few birds arrived with Ring Ouzel, Black Redstart, Linnet and Long-eared Owl noted on the 2nd and a Jack Snipe and a flock of 16 Raven (playing in the snow on Ward Hill!) on 3rd. The Skylark count for the month peaked at 195 on 4th, when two Dunnock and eight Snow Buntings were also seen, along with Cormorant, Wigeon and three Red-breasted Merganser. A new Greenland White-fronted Goose arrived on 5th, along with a Wheatear and Common Redpoll. Light south-easterlies from 7th brought four Goldcrest, five Chiffchaff and Short-eared Owl, whilst Puffins returned to land and Peregrines were seen copulating. A Sparrowhawk and three Woodpigeon arrived on 8th and a Glaucous Gull was seen. Further arrivals on 9th included Shelduck, Sanderling, Woodcock, Collared Dove, a *littoralis* Rock Pipit (the first of six sightings during the month), Greenfinch and two Linnet. As the wind backed north-easterly on 10th a small fall included Woodcock, Willow Warbler, 13 Robin, ten Wheatear, Brambling, Long-eared Owl and the first small fall of thrushes, including a Mistle Thrush. Strong northerlies then held up most birds, although a Green Sandpiper arrived on 11th and Robins increased to 20, with three Lapland Buntings on 12th and a Kestrel on 14th. A Hawfinch arrived on 15th, along with Dunnock and a couple more Pink-footed Geese, then the winds eased on 16th and birds started moving again, with 70 Curlew, light corvid passage, 12 Chiffchaff, three Willow Warbler, 18 Siskin and five Lapland Buntings noted. Foul easterlies and rain on 17th delivered an exhausted Firecrest, Long-eared Owl, two Woodcock and three Sparrowhawk. Light easterlies for several days from 18th saw several new migrants noted including Great Grey Shrike, Hen Harrier, two each of Woodcock and Short-eared Owl, five Blackcap, two Black Redstart, 24 Robin, 65 Wheatear, Tree Pipit, 270 Meadow Pipit, two Goldcrest, 18 Brambling, two Common Redpoll, 37 Redwing, five Barnacle Geese and the first Swallow and Arctic Skua of the year. Arrivals continued on 19th with an elusive Corn Bunting the highlight, along with an early Wryneck, Whooper Swan, Ring Ouzel, 229 Fieldfare, 60 Robin, 91 Wheatear and four Reed Bunting, whilst Shags were on eggs. On 20th there were six Barnacle Geese, Hen Harrier, Woodcock, two

Green Sandpiper, nine Goldcrest, 23 Chiffchaff, 13 Ring Ouzel, 98 Song Thrush, 204 Robin, 14 Dunnock, a Blue-headed Wagtail, seven Chaffinch and five Linnet that went on to linger. The arrival continued to pick up pace on 21st, with an elusive Hoopoe, a more cooperative Crane and a Wryneck the highlights and an impressive back-up of Moorhen, Jack Snipe, 43 Chiffchaff, 13 Blackcap, 23 Ring Ouzel, 112 Song Thrush, a very impressive peak of 407 Robin, 76 Dunnock, three Tree Pipit, 12 Chaffinch, 44 Brambling and four Common Redpoll. Arrivals slowed on 22nd but included the first two Whimbrel, a Lesser Redpoll, three Grey Heron, Jackdaw, nine Carrion Crow, nine Swallow, Grey Wagtail and eight White Wagtail. The winds increased from the north-east from 23rd when a Bar-tailed Godwit arrived and 277 Common Gull were counted, followed by two Moorhen, Black-tailed Godwit, Grasshopper Warbler, Redstart and Greenfinch on 24th. Several lingering migrants were joined by a new Wryneck, six Sparrowhawk, three Woodcock, a Yellow Wagtail and a Hawfinch on 25th, whilst the 26th saw a peak of 18 Woodpigeon and 20 Golden Plover (the peak for the month) and a Common Redpoll. A new Hawfinch (27th) and Goldfinch, Rook and Dunlin (28th) preceded a few arrivals on the fine day of 29th, the highlight of which was an immature White-tailed Eagle heading north. There were also two each of Woodcock and Common Sandpiper, Collared Dove, three Jackdaw, seven Willow Warbler, Garden Warbler, 20 Ring Ouzel and three Black Redstart. Sunshine on the 30th saw Hawfinch, Wryneck and five Black-tailed Godwit, with other migrants including 20 Chiffchaff, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, 24 Ring Ouzel, Redstart, 160 Wheatear and 476 Meadow Pipit.

May: The month opened with light easterlies and a few migrants, including two Wrynecks (one newly arrived), lingering Hawfinch and Green-winged Teal, ten Golden Plover, two Short-eared Owls, the first two House Martin of the year, 11 Blackcap, Grasshopper Warbler, 17 Ring Ouzel, 60 Robin, ten Dunnock, Redstart and four Pied Flycatcher. The wind switched to light westerlies the following day and a superb male Bluethroat arrived, along with a new Hawfinch (with both in the Obs garden), two Pintail, three Sparrowhawk, both Common and Green Sandpiper, *littoralis* Rock Pipit (with regular sightings during the month), 28 Siskin and three Common Redpoll. Snow on 5th May didn't deter new migrants, although five Wigeon, Moorhen, Woodcock and eight Woodpigeon all had a more wintry feel than the two Wood Warbler and Whinchat that also snuck in. Things were then quiet until the south-west wind gave way to south-easterlies on 7th and a Buzzard led the arrivals that also included Pink-footed Goose, Moorhen, 15 Carrion Crow, 54 Swallow, Lesser Whitethroat and nine Whitethroat, with the first Oystercatcher and Razorbill eggs also noted. As the wind increased on 8th an impressive fall was headlined by five Wryneck, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Bluethroat and two Hawfinch, with other migrants including Black-tailed Godwit, 20 Whimbrel, five Common Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, 28 Black-headed and 26 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Long-eared Owl, Goldcrest, Sand Martin, ten Chiffchaff, 41 Willow Warbler, 23 Blackcap, 21 Ring Ouzel, 212 Fieldfare, 29 Song Thrush, 16 Redwing, Spotted Flycatcher, 15 Redstart, six Whinchat, three Pied Flycatcher, Blue-headed Wagtail, 58 Tree Pipit, 118 Brambling, 39 Siskin and 21 Reed Bunting. Despite moderate south-

westerly winds on 9th, migrants included an Ortolan, two Wood Sandpiper, 11 Common Sandpiper, two Long-eared Owl, two Grasshopper Warbler, three Spotted Flycatcher, 325 Wheatear, nine Pied Flycatcher, three *flava* Wagtail, 16 White Wagtail and 59 Tree Pipit, along with the first three Arctic Terns. There were two Bluethroats on 10th, along with 10 Whinchat, Woodcock, Jack Snipe and an Osprey, whilst dwindling migrants in westerlies on 11th were joined by a smart male Red-backed Shrike, a Wood Sandpiper and a Goldcrest, and the first Guillemot eggs were seen. With continued westerlies the three Bluethroats (two new) on 12th were a surprise, the first Bonxie eggs were much more expected. A spell of westerly gales saw things quieten down, with two Knot (13th), four Sanderling (14th) and a Red-throated Diver (15th), along with a surprise Wryneck (14th) that was joined by a second (15th), with sightings then daily until 27th. Lighter north-west winds on 17th allowed the arrival of two Tufted Duck, Woodcock, Iceland Gull, Garden Warbler, 361 Wheatear, two *flava* Wagtails and 46 Tree Pipit, with light northerlies on 18th producing a Spotted Crake at Pund, two Grey-headed and one Blue-headed Wagtail. A confiding Shorelark and nine Snow Buntings arrived on 19th. The 20th saw a memorable day for the Warden when the morning began by trapping a Thrush Nightingale, census contained a Hoopoe (a long awaited British bogey-bird) found on Dronger and an evening barbeque was followed by the birth of his second daughter! The light easterlies also brought five Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike, Icterine Warbler and two Bluethroat, along with a supporting cast of two Common Tern, the first Swift of the year, 13 Willow Warbler, four Garden Warbler, three Lesser Whitethroat, three Spotted Flycatcher, 12 Redstart, five Pied Flycatcher, three Tree Sparrow, Goldfinch, 18 Siskin, two Yellowhammer and 17 Reed Bunting. The generally light easterlies continued until the end of the month and so did the good birds; highlights on the 21st included Nightingale, Short-toed Lark, Common Rosefinch and two Red-backed Shrike, with other sightings including Common Scoter, Woodcock, three Sand Martin, 115 Swallow, ten House Martin, Wood Warbler and Black Redstart. The 22nd was headlined by a Red-rumped Swallow (that lingered until 24th) with seven Red-backed Shrike, four Icterine Warbler, two Common Rosefinch and also two Barnacle Geese, Long-eared Owl, 20 Chiffchaff, 14 Blackcap, ten Whitethroat and 14 Spotted Flycatcher. A hazy day with moderate easterlies on 23rd brought a superb fall with scarcities including ten Icterine Warbler, nine Red-backed Shrike, three Common Rosefinch (including a red male), two Bluethroat, two Dotterel and a Quail, with an impressive count of 64 Spotted Flycatcher, along with 19 Lesser Whitethroat and a Woodcock. Although many of the previous day's birds lingered, new arrivals on 24th were limited to a Lesser Redpoll and an increase in Common Rosefinch to five, whilst thick fog on 25th prevented any new birds being found, except another Thrush Nightingale! Continued fog on 26th did at least clear enough for a female Subalpine Warbler and a Wood Warbler to be found, with the former being trapped the next day and confirmed as an 'eastern' bird. The sun shone on 27th, although new birds were limited to Turtle Dove, Long-eared Owl, Crossbill, four Cormorant, Grey Heron and 18 House Martin, whilst a fine day on 28th saw the arrival of a Spotted Crake (trapped at Chalet), Reed Warbler, Grey Wagtail and a monthly peak of 21 Dunlin. Although a selection of good birds from earlier in the month remained,

new sightings in light north-easterlies at the end of May were limited to Wood Sandpiper and Ring Ouzel on 29th, Osprey on 30th and a brief Marsh Harrier on 31st.

June: June opened with cool north-westerly winds and a few lingering migrants (including two Short-eared Owls and four Chiffchaffs that would be present for most of the month) with the 1st producing a Great Northern Diver past South Light and nine Dunlin (the peak for the month). A late Dunnock on 2nd was somewhat eclipsed by an Osprey heading north, with the 3rd bringing a Wood Sandpiper, the last Song Thrush of the spring (although a few Blackbirds and Robins would remain throughout) and a Common Redpoll. The stronger north-westerlies of 4th produced a couple of surprises in the form of a first-summer Ring-billed Gull in South Harbour and a trapped *hornemanni* Arctic Redpoll. The day also saw an Osprey (over Bunes at 10.50pm!), a Knot and four Whimbrel (the peak count for the month). Lighter winds on 5th saw a singing Marsh Warbler arrive, along with some signs of passage, with Willow Warbler increasing to seven, Blackcap to six and Ring Ouzel to four, with Kestrel and Common Sandpiper also noted, whilst the first Bonxie chicks were seen. Moderate easterlies on 6th brought highlights of a Crane (dropping in and out of low cloud in the evening then lingering until the 9th), three Icterine Warblers, Common Rosefinch and Lapland Bunting, along with Red-throated Diver, two Cormorant and Grey Heron, whilst the first Starling chicks fledged on this date. Some of the previous day's birds lingered on 7th with other highlights including a new Marsh Warbler, an Osprey on the cliffs at Hjukni, Merlin, Woodcock, three Woodpigeon, four House Martin, four Lesser Whitethroat and a Sedge Warbler, whilst the first Guillemot chicks heralded a slightly better year for some of our beleaguered seabirds. A moderate easterly on 8th saw the area around Troila Geo produce Golden Oriole, Red-backed Shrike and Icterine Warbler, with the rest of the island mustering two Kestrel, Common Sandpiper, Swift, five Whitethroat, six Spotted Flycatcher, Black Redstart, two Redstart, Pied Flycatcher, Grey-headed Wagtail, Reed Warbler and two Tree Pipit. The Golden Oriole made it to the Obs mistnets on 9th, with the year's only Cuckoo bouncing out of the same nets earlier in the morning. Other signs of passage included two Marsh Warblers (one of which was new), Long-eared Owl, ten Willow Warbler, eight Garden Warbler, three Sedge Warbler, Pied Flycatcher and Common Redpoll, whilst Common Scoter and two Red-throated Diver were at sea. Aside from the lingering birds on 10th, there was an Osprey over the Obs, an increase in Garden Warblers and Spotted Flycatchers (to nine and seven respectively), a Crossbill and a Red-throated Diver, whilst Fair Isle Wrens and Rock Pipits both had fledged young. The 11th saw light north-east winds and a whole-island Kittiwake count as daily census came to a halt. One of the rarest birds of the spring was then found at Steensi Geo during a lunch stop when a River Warbler was discovered on the beach, before lingering until 13th. Also new in on 11th were a Red-backed Shrike and Redstart, as were a flock of 13 Greylags that flew north. Although a selection of migrants remained, fewer new birds were noted as seabird work started to dominate, with Swift and two Redstart (12th), three Whinchat (13th) and another Osprey, Great Northern Diver, Sparrowhawk, Brambling and six Siskin

(14th) noted. The 13th also saw the first Oystercatcher chicks and fledged Meadow Pipits. A Marsh Warbler was trapped on 15th, with another on 16th when there was also a Redstart, Yellowhammer, Pink-footed Goose, Teal and two Linnets nest-building at Schoolton. A good year for Crane sightings saw another on 18th, when a Hawfinch was found dead in the Gully and a Dunnock and 26 Greylag were seen, with the next day bringing another Hawfinch, Black Redstart, six Crossbill and a Wigeon. Another Crossbill was seen on 20th and the first fledged Wheatear was also noted. The 21st saw the first Arctic Skua chicks (although only one would go on to fledge), the first fledged Razorbill and some signs of continued passage including a smart Dotterel, three Swift, Sand Martin and two Dunnock. On 22nd a Common Scoter arrived and a new Marsh Warbler was at Haa (with one still lingering at Schoolton). A Turtle Dove, two Swift and two Common Sandpiper were typical late June movers on 23rd (when the first Pied Wagtail chicks fledged) whilst the 24th saw a new Marsh Warbler trapped, followed by the surprise relocation of the River Warbler in the Obs garden where it went on to linger until July. Fledged Twite were also seen on this date. Two Crossbill (26th) and a few Swift were all there were to report at the end of the month until trap rounds produced a Paddyfield Warbler and a Marsh Warbler on 30th!

July: Although July does not generally produce many migrants, the month opened with River Warbler (until 15th), Paddyfield Warbler (until 11th), two Marsh Warblers (until 2nd) and a Reed Warbler (until 2nd) in the Obs garden; not a bad selection! There was also a Goldfinch on 1st, with birds summering on the island including a Whinchat and up to four Chiffchaff. The occasional wandering bird was noted in the first week including Teal (1st), four Red-breasted Merganser (3rd), three Common Scoter (2nd), Red-throated Diver, four Dunlin (5th), Collared Dove, House Martin (2nd) and Whitethroat (6th). Mid-month saw occasional Whimbrel, Swift and Common Scoter and the first Shag chicks of a fairly productive season fledged on (9th), but a Coue's Arctic Redpoll seen at the Obs then trapped on 14th was a surprise. A Woodpigeon (16th), Willow Warbler (17th) and a new Robin (18th) arrived, but more typical birds of this period were the Storm Petrels caught at night, with a catch of 94 on 21st the best of the month. Leach's Petrels were recorded on 17th, 22nd and 25th. Two Red-throated Diver passed on 21st, when a Collared Dove, two Siskin and a Redpoll sp. were also recorded. The 23rd saw three Sanderling, two Common Redpoll, Blackcap and the first of the handful of Arctic Tern chicks that fledged take to the wing. Bonxie chicks were the next to take to the skies on 24th, when a Common Sandpiper heralded the start of light wader passage that saw three Black-tailed Godwits (26th) increase to five the next day, Wood Sandpiper (27th) and Ruff and Whimbrel (29th). A Sand Martin and Blackcap were seen on 26th, when a Storm Petrel was seen off the Foghorn. A Sooty Shearwater was at sea on 28th, when there were also 80 Common Gull, a 'new' Robin and a (sadly 'the') fledged Arctic Skua. Swallows fledged on the last day of the month, when there was also a Common Redpoll and Tufted Duck, but the presence of two juvenile Linnet was a puzzle and hinted that the pair that had started nest building at Schoolton had perhaps gone on to nest successfully elsewhere on the island.

August: A Collared Dove arrived on 1st and lingered through the month, whilst

another Leach's Petrel was recorded during trapping sessions (five more would be recorded during the first week of the month). These trapping sessions also produced good numbers of Storm Petrels through the month (although more unusual were the 53 recorded from the Northlink ferry to Aberdeen as it sailed through Fair Isle waters on 3rd). A Dunnock on the 2nd may have been a summering bird and two juvenile Linnets the same day were suspected of being local. The 3rd produced the first Greenshank of the month, Swift and two Sandwich Terns that cruised through South Harbour whilst a small crowd watched around 30 White-beaked Dolphins. The first Sanderling and Green Sandpiper of the month appeared on 4th along with two Wood Sandpiper, whilst a few other incoming birds early in the month included Willow Warbler (5th), three Greenshank, a new Chiffchaff (increasing to six by 10th) and a Fieldfare (6th), Kestrel (8th) and Swift (9th). Light south-easterlies on 11th brought Wood and Sedge Warbler, along with eight Grey Heron, five Shelduck (increasing to six later in the month) and a Sooty Shearwater. The easterlies increased slightly on 12th, as did the birds, with a Marsh Harrier the highlight and a good back-up cast of five Knot, two Ruff, three Green Sandpiper, four Wood Warbler, 17 Willow Warbler, six Chiffchaff, Blackcap, two Garden Warbler, Barred Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Whinchat, five Pied Flycatcher and Crossbill. As good conditions for arrivals continued an Icterine Warbler, seven Ruff and 21 Golden Plover showed up on 13th and strong easterlies and heavy showers on 14th brought two Citrine Wagtails to Utra (with one present until 16th), Common Rosefinch, three Barred Warbler, 28 Willow Warbler, 11 Garden Warbler, two Lesser Whitethroat, Grasshopper Warbler, seven Pied Flycatcher, Siskin, three Common Sandpiper and the peak passage of Common Gull, with 335 noted. Light south-easterlies on 15th saw more new birds, with two Wryneck, 85 Willow Warbler, 25 Garden Warbler, three Barred Warbler, four Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Reed Warbler, Fieldfare, Redstart, six Whinchat, 173 Wheatear, six Pied Flycatcher, Tree Pipit, Little Stint and 35 Silver-Y moth. More birds arrived the following day, including Red-backed Shrike, Sedge Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher and there were increased counts of Willow Warbler (88), Whitethroat (two), Redstart (two) and Tree Pipit (three). Several migrants remained on 17th, with two Grasshopper Warbler and four Reed Warblers amongst the new arrivals. Good counts of migrants on a warm day with light easterlies on 18th included nine Common Sandpiper, the first of several sightings of Woodpigeon and Goldcrest, 102 Willow Warbler, 14 Garden Warbler, Barred Warbler, three Lesser Whitethroat, three Whitethroat, Grasshopper Warbler, five Reed Warbler, two Fieldfare, five Whinchat, three Pied Flycatcher, two Tree Pipit and two Siskin. Although many migrants were still present on 19th, the light south-westerly winds saw few new arrivals, making the Arctic Warbler at Kirn o'Scroo all the more surprising, with three Crossbill and 20 Whimbrel the only other notable sightings. A selection of new birds in light easterlies on 20th included Little Gull, Wigeon, two Red-throated Diver, Knot, Common Rosefinch, Wood Warbler, two Barred Warbler, Song Thrush, Black Redstart and Goldfinch, with some migrants increasing in numbers, including counts of 51 Willow Warbler and eight Whinchat. A new Arctic Warbler was at Setter on 21st when there were also two Barred Warbler, five Lesser Whitethroat,

four Tree Pipit, 33 Swift, two Sand Martin and a Red-throated Diver, whilst two White-sided Dolphins started a few days of regular cetacean sightings. Light south-westerlies on 22nd saw increases in Barred Warblers (three), Tree Pipits (six) and a new Shoveler, although there were decreases in the numbers of most migrants. The 23rd continued in a similar vein, with Merlin, 36 Knot, 36 Swift, a House Martin and 31 *alba* Wagtails noted. Light southerly winds and low cloud on 24th were not expected to produce much new, but a Thrush Nightingale on morning traps set the tone for a good day, with totals including Red-backed Shrike, two Icterine Warbler, six Goldcrest, four Barred Warbler, two Lesser Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler, four Reed Warbler, Black Redstart, Redstart, six Whinchat, four Pied Flycatcher, 221 Meadow Pipit and five Crossbill. Moderate north-westerlies on 25th produced very little new except a Citrine Wagtail at Easter Lother Water, whilst 69 *alba* Wagtails, 325 Meadow Pipits and a Sparrowhawk on 26th joined several scarcities already present. A south-easterly gale on 27th resulted in a Corncrake, with a new Barred Warbler (to join two lingering birds) and a Fieldfare on the 28th, when some seawatching produced nine Manx and one Sooty Shearwater and a blue Fulmar. Lighter winds on 29th saw the arrival of the month's third Arctic Warbler, which lingered until September, with counts of other migrants including Cormorant, eight Grey Heron, Grasshopper Warbler, Black Redstart, four Pied Flycatcher, 101 *alba* Wagtails and 335 Meadow Pipit. Teal increased to 16 and Meadow Pipits to 382 on 30th, with Sparrowhawk and Crossbill on 31st rounding off an enjoyable month.

September: The month opened with south-westerly winds, which were to become something of a theme; the next three weeks were to see winds from a predominantly westerly direction. A selection of birds at the start of the month included many lingering from August, with highlights including Arctic Warbler (until 5th), two Barred Warblers, Common Rosefinch, Grasshopper Warbler, Fieldfare, Crossbill, Shelduck, Sparrowhawk and Green Sandpiper. Waders on 2nd included 50 Ringed Plover, 13 Sanderling and two Ruff, with two Common Rosefinch and a Reed Warbler also seen. A slow week continued with Sooty Shearwater (4th), two each of Sedge Warbler and Lapland Bunting (5th), Sooty Shearwater, two Sparrowhawk, three Common Rosefinch and six Lapland Buntings (6th). The westerly wind finally paid off on 7th with a Buff-breasted Sandpiper on Meoness (until 10th), with 47 Pink-footed Geese and two Black-tailed Godwits from the same direction and a fourth Common Rosefinch and Sooty Shearwater also seen. Pink-footed Geese increased to 1,040, Meadow Pipits to 421, Golden Plover to 60, Teal to 21 and Wigeon to 11 on 8th. Lighter south-westerlies on 9th saw Golden Plover increase to 72 and a Goldcrest arrive (with daily sightings from then on), with the same conditions on 10th seeing Pomarine Skua and Sooty Shearwater recorded from the '*Good Shepherd*', a passage of 110 Pink-footed Geese and two Cormorant, 22 Wigeon, nine Lapland Buntings, the first of regular sightings of 'North-western' Common Redpoll and an unexpected Corncrake. The winds stayed in the same direction but had increased the next day and very few new birds arrived, but a River Warbler battled against the prevailing conditions and was found in the Obs garden mist-nets. The first Jack Snipe of the autumn on 12th was

joined by Marsh and Reed Warbler, and 'North-western' Redpolls had increased to seven, whilst unpleasant conditions on the 13th produced nothing more than a Tufted Duck and very wet Wardens. Buntings increased in number the next day, with 15 Snow and 11 Lapland being the forerunners of daily sightings throughout the month. A Sand Martin on 15th was a surprise given the still strong westerlies (could it have come from North America?!). The River Warbler was sadly found dead in the Obs garden on 16th. A Ruff and Sedge Warbler arrived on 17th, then the winds eased slightly on 18th, allowing passage of 461 Meadow Pipit and 169 Skylark, Lapland Buntings increased to 24, with four Red-breasted Mergansers and two Red-throated Divers also seen. The north-westerlies finally delivered a second American wader on 19th when a Pectoral Sandpiper was found on Meoness (and lingered until 21st), a Jack Snipe also arrived and Skylarks increased further to 269. The most interesting bird of 20th was an 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler trapped at the Obs, potentially one of the rarest birds of the year. Finally the 21st saw a break from the tough conditions, as a fine, calm day, with just the lightest of south-westerlies allowed birds in. The best was the Arctic Warbler at the Vaadal, with a Citrine Wagtail flying over the crowd that had gathered to observe it. Small numbers of other migrants included five Willow Warbler, three Garden Warbler, three Barred Warbler, five Lesser Whitethroat, Reed Warbler, Common Rosefinch and 39 Lapland Bunting. Another fine day with light north-west winds followed and the migrant haul at the end of the day included a Blyth's Reed Warbler at Schoolton (which lingered until 1st October), 14 Yellow-browed Warblers, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Red-backed Shrike, two Bluethroat, five Barred Warbler and two Common Rosefinch, along with seven Grey Heron, two Jack Snipe, four Chiffchaff, 18 Willow Warbler, three Blackcap, eight Lesser Whitethroat, two Whitethroat, Redwing, three Whinchat, six Pied Flycatcher, five Siskin and 41 Lapland Bunting. The 22nd was also a superb day for cetaceans, with sightings of Minke Whale, 13 Risso's, ten White-beaked and three White-sided Dolphins and 23 Porpoise. A great day, but better was to follow on 23rd when light easterlies raised everyone's spirits still further and a fine Sunday afternoon was celebrated by a Lanceolated Warbler trapped at Da Water. A couple of hours later and the Lancey had been reduced to 'supporting cast' by the magnificent Magnolia Warbler found on the cliffs of Lerness. None of the observers present will forget that evening, watching this glowing gem of a bird as the sun set behind them over the Atlantic. Log was a memorable one that night and also included the lingering Blyth's Reed and Arctic Warblers, 21 Yellow-browed Warbler, 2 Barred Warbler, Red-backed Shrike, two Common Rosefinch, Bluethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, two Song Thrush, two Redwing, three Brambling and a Redstart that was the first of the month (showing just how tough the westerly winds had made birding the first three weeks of September). There was no sign of the Magnolia Warbler the following day, but the good birds continued to arrive, with a Paddyfield Warbler (which lingered until October) and Olive-backed Pipit (which remained until 29th) leading the charge and other highlights including the Blyth's Reed Warbler, Little Bunting, two Corncrake, 28 Yellow-browed Warbler, Hawfinch, Red-backed Shrike, Bluethroat, Common Rosefinch and Barred Warbler, along with two Kestrel, Ruff, eight Jack Snipe, Short-eared Owl, 39 Goldcrest, six Blackcap, seven Lesser

Whitethroat, the first 'new' Blackbird, 61 Song Thrush, 19 Redwing, Mistle Thrush, four Robin, four Redstart, five Pied Flycatcher, three Dunnock, 13 Tree Pipit, four Chaffinch, seven Brambling, six Siskin, 25 Snow Bunting and Reed Bunting: this was really good birding! There were fewer arrivals on 25th although a Richard's Pipit and three Little Buntings were new and two Sooty Shearwater, 65 Snipe, 14 Jack Snipe, Common Sandpiper, 54 Goldcrest, five Ring Ouzel, Fieldfare, 173 Song Thrush, 40 Redwing, two Mistle Thrush, three Wood Warbler, nine Redstart, eight Dunnock, 20 Tree Pipit, six Chaffinch, 80 Brambling and 56 Snow Bunting were also all new or showed increases on the previous day. The lingering rarities and scarcities were joined by a new Lanceolated Warbler at Da Water on 26th as light north-easterlies continued. Bluethroats, Richard's Pipits and Little Buntings increased to two, two and four respectively, some common migrant numbers increased slightly and wildfowl passage included 311 Barnacle Goose, two Pintail, 19 Wigeon and 20 Teal. Although the wind had switched to a light south-westerly on 27th there were a new Arctic Warbler and Olive-backed Pipit to add to the haul, Song Thrushes increased to 234, Water Rail and Woodcock arrived as did a new Barred Warbler and good numbers of many other migrants remained. Light to moderate south-westerlies then took over again until the month's end and although many good birds remained there were fewer new arrivals. On 28th 78 Brambling and 99 Snow Buntings both reflected new birds in, then the 29th saw a Buff-bellied Pipit at Furse and a Blyth's Reed Warbler that flew into the Obs lounge and stunned itself against a window, before being released into the garden after a short recuperation; another east-west combination that highlighted Fair Isle's attraction to rarities from all points of the compass, albeit not as striking as that of six days previous. The 29th also saw 25 Greylag and 21 Barnacle Geese passing through. Greylags increased to 73 in the moderate south-westerlies of 30th, but arrivals from the east included Red-breasted Flycatcher, a new Richard's Pipit (to add to one lingering bird), Water Rail, Collared Dove and ten 'Mealy' Common Redpoll.

October: With the month opening to strong south-westerly winds it was thought that the lingering rarities and scarcities (including Paddyfield and Blyth's Reed Warbler, Bluethroat, two Richard's Pipit, Little Bunting and three Yellow-browed Warbler) would have to keep the birders happy, but late in the day a confiding Pechora Pipit was found at Shirva to provide the cherry on a good day's cake. There were also four Tufted Duck, a Scaup and five Kestrel, whilst the first Grey Seal pup was noted. The south-westerlies continued at a moderate strength on 2nd, but it wasn't the end of the new birds as the Pechora Pipit was joined on the island by a very confiding Lanceolated Warbler at Vatstrass, the autumn's sixth Arctic Warbler at Wester Lother and a small scattering of common migrants, with wildfowl including 15 Barnacle Geese. The wind had dropped on 3rd, although it was still from the north-west, but the continued arrival of quality birds was headlined by a Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, whilst the Lanceolated Warbler from 26th was relocated in Field Ditch (where it went on to linger until 22nd October). There was also a reasonable backing cast of two Richard's Pipits, two Little Buntings, four Yellow-browed Warblers, Corncrake and eight Jack Snipe, with commoner migrants including two Goldfinch and wildfowl

including 145 Pink-footed Geese, 47 Greylag, 14 Wigeon and two Scaup. The 4th finally saw the westerlies put a halt to new rarities, with four Goldfinch, a Yellow Wagtail and two Barnacle Geese the only new migrants, but a light westerly on 5th brought a Citrine Wagtail, which flew over during a round up of the hill sheep before being relocated at South Harbour, while Barred and Garden Warbler were also new in. Moderate north-westerlies on 6th saw the first fall of Redwing of the autumn, and brought with them a Black-throated Thrush, whilst a trapped *tristis* Chiffchaff was also new. Greylags passed through, with a total of 158 logged, and a Whooper Swan also arrived. On 7th a Lesser Redpoll and seven Barnacle Geese were new, whilst 325 Greylag passed through on 8th, and 9th saw Yellow-browed Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat, with other sightings including four Whooper Swan, Long-tailed Duck, Glaucous Gull and a 'blue' Fulmar that took up residence on the cliffs at Ditfield until the following month. A few new migrants on 10th included six Blackcap, Ring Ouzel, two Greenfinch, two Siskin and Reed Bunting, and seven Whooper Swans flew south. The 11th finally saw a return to strong south-easterlies, and birds instantly piled in, including two Olive-backed Pipits, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Corncrake, Great Grey Shrike, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Yellow-browed Warbler and counts of two Short-eared Owl, 11 Goldcrest, three Chiffchaff (including one *tristis*), Ring Ouzel, seven Fieldfare, 925 Redwing, Redstart, three Chaffinch, 38 Brambling and five Siskin, whilst four 'blue' Fulmar and three Manx Shearwaters were offshore. There was an increase in counts of some birds the following day, with thrushes increasing to 2,744 Redwing, 124 Blackbird, 86 Song Thrush, 18 Fieldfare, six Ring Ouzel and a Mistle Thrush and other counts including three Yellow-browed Warbler, 53 Goldcrest, ten Blackcap, four Sparrowhawk, eight Jack Snipe, five Woodcock, two Woodpigeon, three Redstart, Black Redstart and Whinchat. The Great Tit that arrived in gale-force north-east winds was the highlight of 13th, with a Little Gull in South Harbour also a rare visitor. There were increases in most of the thrushes, alongside a number of other species that included ten each of Woodpigeon and Jack Snipe, 255 Brambling, ten Chaffinch, six Greenfinch and ten Reed Bunting, whilst Carrion Crow, Yellowhammer, Garden Warbler and Grey Wagtail were all new as were five Sparrowhawk and Glaucous Gull, whilst wildfowl included eight Barnacle Geese, 20 Wigeon, ten Teal, three Shoveler and six Common Scoter. Amongst the lingering migrants on 14th there were higher counts of several species including 113 Goldcrest, 16 Woodcock and seven Crossbill, but continued north-east winds and heavy showers on 15th produced nothing more than a Rook, ten Greenfinch and six Whooper Swans. The 16th saw the easterlies again deliver when an Olive-backed Pipit was found at Schoolton and a Woodlark roamed the south of the island (until November), whilst other arrivals included Common Sandpiper, Little Auk, two Jackdaw, 95 Goldcrest, two House Martin, nine Chiffchaff, 24 Robin, three Grey Wagtail, 314 Brambling and 117 Snow Bunting. A fine day with light easterlies on 17th saw an elusive Hume's Warbler on Lerness (on the same cliff that the Magnolia Warbler had frequented), a new Olive-backed Pipit (at Field), three Short-eared Owls, a *tristis* Chiffchaff, 12 Greenfinch, 21 Siskin, four 'Mealy' Common Redpolls, three Crossbill and two Yellowhammer. The Hume's Warbler remained on the 18th and continued good conditions for arrivals saw the number of Olive-backed

Pipits increase to a staggering four - in one flock (one remaining until 26th)! A *hornemanni* Arctic Redpoll briefly on the Obs roof could not be relocated but other highlights of another good day included two Great Tits, Black Redstart, Lesser Redpoll, Glaucous Gull, 12 'blue' Fulmars and a passage of 115 Greylags. The first Waxwing of the autumn on 19th provided a taste of things to come and the light south-west wind encouraged 156 Greylags to pass through. The continued fine weather on 20th saw an arrival that included 1,698 Redwing, 291 Fieldfare, seven Ring Ouzel, two Waxwing, 135 Brambling, 34 Robin, two Black Redstart, Whinchat, four Goldfinch and two Crossbill, Carrion Crow and Little Auk, whilst amazingly a Shag nest in the south-east contained chicks yet to fledge! Light southerly winds on 21st saw a small arrival of birds, including two Yellow-browed Warbler, Common Rosefinch, six Crossbill, Lesser Redpoll, Moorhen, Sparrowhawk and European White-fronted Goose, with similar winds on 23rd producing Little Bunting, two Yellow-browed Warblers (including a new bird), 398 Redwing, 174 Blackbird, 107 Fieldfare, 96 Brambling and two Crossbills. A female Siberian Rubythroat was found near dusk at Schoolton, but too late for the Obs team who arrived to see a brief flicker of movement in the dense *Rosa* as the bird went to roost. Whilst waiting unsuccessfully for the Rubythroat's reappearance at Schoolton the next day, observers were treated to a Blue Tit dropping into the garden, the first Fair Isle record since 1989 but scant consolation (it remained elusively present until 28th). A pleasant selection of other birds were located in the light westerly wind, with Long-eared Owl, six Chiffchaff (including 2 *tristis*), an 'Eastern' Lesser Whitethroat, two Waxwing, Black Redstart, Redstart and Little Bunting all recorded. The 25th saw cold north-west winds and a brief reappearance of the Rubythroat, with a *hornemanni* Arctic Redpoll found in the attempted twitch. A new Little Bunting was also seen and 60 Jackdaws were noted. Along with a good variety of lingering birds on 26th, the Rubythroat again put in an appearance in the late afternoon at the Haa, seemingly undaunted by the snow and cold northerlies. The consolation for unsuccessful twitchers this time was a Goosander. Finally, the weather improved on 27th and the good deeds of the Wardening team in helping round up the hill sheep were rewarded in the afternoon by good views of the Rubythroat, which would eventually go on to linger into November. Other sightings were twelve Woodcock, Whooper Swan, Great Northern Diver and a Waxwing. Fine weather on 28th saw 21 Waxwing and a Crossbill, with 32 Waxwing on 29th, when there were also nine Long-tailed Ducks and a Red-throated Diver. The 30th saw a Bluethroat trapped at the Plantation, another 'Eastern' Lesser Whitethroat, 30 Waxwings, a Hen Harrier and a Little Auk. Another month of impressive rarities and good birding ended with a fairly quiet day for new arrivals, although several good birds remained and an Iceland Gull, 100 Fieldfare and seven Crossbill were new.

November: Birds present at the start of the month included Siberian Rubythroat (lingering until 3rd), 'Eastern' Lesser Whitethroat (until 1st), Woodlark (until 5th), two Great Tits (one throughout and one until 9th), Hen Harrier (until 23rd at least) and Iceland Gull (until 6th). There were also 20 Waxwing and other species present included Merlin and Peregrine. The 2nd saw 25 Waxwing, 80 Fieldfare, two Chiffchaff

(including one *tristis*), five Brambling, three Woodcock (with small counts regularly throughout the month), Jackdaw, two Water Rail (with at least four present during the month) and five Lapwing (that lingered for the month). The Goosander and 'blue' Fulmar at Ditfield were both still present and both lingered throughout the month. A few new birds on 3rd included a Yellow-browed Warbler, Long-eared Owl, a second Hen Harrier, a second *tristis* Chiffchaff and Little Auk, with Blackcaps increasing to four and Waxwings to 56. By the 4th Waxwings were up to 85 and a Tree Sparrow was new, as were three Common Redpoll, two Rook and five Common Scoter, whilst the three Chiffchaff included one that lingered until 13th and a *tristis* that remained until 6th. A freshly dead Little Auk was at Taft on 5th, when Waxwings peaked at 110, a Goldfinch arrived and Greylag passage saw 210 recorded. Only 12 Waxwings were recorded on 6th (with smaller numbers until 17th) and a couple of late records were a Bonxie and a Garden Warbler. A wintrier feel from 7th saw a Glaucous Gull, with three the next day, when there were also five late Linnet. A Sparrowhawk on 9th was new and the final species was added to the year list on 10th when a freshly dead Velvet Scoter was found in North Haven. Three Golden Plover and a Crossbill were present on 11th, and the 12th saw a selection of wildfowl including 120 Greylags, six Teal and two Red-breasted Merganser. A Goldeneye was present on 13th, when there were eight Woodcock in the north, a new Crossbill, a Goldfinch and an Iceland Gull. The following day saw two 'blue' Fulmar and a Long-eared Owl and a Sparrowhawk lingered from 15th–18th. A late Blackcap on 16th was seen the same day as an Iceland Gull, five Long-tailed Ducks and a Pink-footed Goose. There were again two 'blue' Fulmars on 19th, with Greylag passage again evident on 20th, when 270 were counted. There were also six Wigeon and a Glaucous Gull. A Moorhen in the Gully on 21st was probably one of the birds that went on to winter, whilst 23rd–26th saw a late flurry of up to 14 Waxwing, a Long-eared Owl and Chiffchaff (25th, with the latter also seen on 29th) and the month's peak of 35 Snow Buntings (26th).

December: A quiet month began with two Pintail on 1st, with at least two Whooper Swan on 2nd and 11 Wigeon and Grey Heron on 4th. A few waders were still on the move, with 57 Curlew on 6th, 11 Lapwing on 5th and ten Golden Plover on 9th. The lingering Hen Harrier was last seen on 13th, when it was confirmed that two Moorhen were wintering. The Goosander reappeared on 15th when a Dunlin was also present. A Greenland White-fronted Goose arrived on 16th for a couple of days, Lapwing peaked at 12 on 18th and a Glaucous Gull was seen on 20th and 21st. The latter date also saw a Merlin and three European White-fronted Geese arrive for a short stay. Stormy weather around the festive period brought an Iceland Gull and Coot (23rd) and Short-eared Owl and Waxwing (24th). Boxing Day brought a few new birds including Whooper Swan, Long-eared Owl, Woodcock, Great Northern Diver and four Snow Bunting and a fantastic year came quietly to a close with a Razorbill on 30th and the lingering Great Tit still present at the year's end.

Storm Petrel
by W. Miles



Systematic List

David Parnaby

Notes

The species order is taken from 'the British List' published by the BOU in January 2013. 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 - less than 100 pairs per annum

Moderate Numbers - 101–1000 pairs per annum

Large Numbers - more than 1,000 pairs per annum

Abbreviations

AIA - Apparently Incubating Adult

AON - Apparently Occupied Nest

AOS - Apparently Occupied Site

AOT - Apparently Occupied Territory

Obs - Fair Isle Bird Observatory

** - Indicates record(s) requiring assessment by the relevant records committee*

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

One was present from 12th January until 3rd February (but was then found dead) and was joined by another on 13th–14th January. There was just one in spring, which headed north-west on 19th April. A quiet autumn passage was restricted to 6th–28th October, when there were sightings on just six dates, totalling 21 individuals, with a peak of seven on 10th October. On 2nd December at least two were heard over Schoolton and one flew north on 26th December.

***Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis*

Rare autumn and winter migrant, approximately 35 previous records of around 79 individuals until 2011 when an invasion of at least 63 was recorded

Tundra Bean Goose *A.f.rossicus*

Although none remained on the island from the record autumn invasion of 2012, it was no surprise when two were found near Stackhoull on northward migration on 20th March. They went on to linger in the south of the island until 27th March.

Taiga Bean Goose *A.f.fabalis*

One of these scarce visitors was also found amongst the Greylags in the south of the island where it was present from 21st–23th March.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Two wintering birds lingered until 28th April and were occasionally joined by a third, with four on 15th–16th April. Other spring records were of singles on 7th–8th May and a late bird on 16th–23rd June. Autumn passage began early, with 47 on 7th September the earliest arrival since 2005. The next day saw the island's third highest ever count with 1,040 on 8th September (beaten only by 1,655 in September 2009 and 1,250 in April 2010), with some lingering in the following days but only three counts in double figures after 12th September. In October there was a further arrival of 143 on 3rd and single figure records until 8th, with the only later bird a single from 16th–21st November.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter

European White-fronted Goose *A.a.albifrons*

Up to eight from January until 12th March were presumed to be lingerers from the previous autumn's influx. A much quieter autumn saw just one from 21st–24th October, then three turned up in strong south-easterly winds on 21st–24th December, with two remaining until 27th.

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

There were two adults present from 31st March to 2nd April, then an immature from 5th–18th April. The only other sighting was an adult on 16th–18th December.

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

Maximum monthly counts of Greylag Goose on Fair Isle 2012:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
200	208	162	166	12	26	1	8	73	325	270	115

Winter numbers in the first period were typical of recent years, with a decrease in the spring as birds headed to their breeding grounds. Only single figures were counted from the second week of May, other than flocks moving through on 11th June (14) and 18th June (26). There were no breeding attempts, with the birds lingering in the summer likely to be injured or ill. The first autumn flock was 25 on 29th September, with 73 the following day. A wave of migrants in early October saw the month's peak on 8th, whilst the 156 on 19th indicated another arrival. Numbers through the rest of the month were generally around fifty. Birds were still passing in November and around 200 were regularly recorded, but by December numbers hovered around the 100 mark, a lower total than in recent years for the late winter period.

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

A typical light spring passage saw five on 18th and six on 20th April with two on 22nd May. Autumn passage began with a good count of 311 on 26th Sep, with ten the following day and 21 on 29th September. There were then further records totalling just 33 birds on five dates until 18th October.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* *Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn*

In the spring there were singles on 5th March, 9th and 11th and 14th April. Five juveniles arrived on 11th August and increased to six on 13th–15th (the largest flock since 1988), with between one and three recorded regularly until 4th September.

Wigeon *Anas penelope* *Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter*

There were up to four in the first two months of the year, then singles on five days in late March and early April, a flock of up to seven from 3rd–17th May and singles on three days in June. The first autumn records were of three on 3rd August, with irregular sightings building to six by early September. Following this there were virtually daily sightings throughout September, peaking at 22 on 10th, then regular records of up to 20 in the first three weeks of October. After this records were more irregular, with up to six in November and 11 in December.

Teal *Anas crecca* *Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter*

There were few sightings in the first winter period, with singles on 2nd January and three dates in February. Spring passage began with three on 12th March, then two

from 22nd March increased to six by the end of the month. There were regularly six throughout April, although up to nine were recorded from 16th–18th, then up to ten were recorded in early May until the last were seen on 16th May. Singles on 16th June and 1st–2nd July were the only records for their respective months before sightings became regular from 6th August. Numbers in August were usually between one and five, but 16 were present on 30th, then up to 21 were recorded regularly throughout September and up to ten were seen in October, with scattered sightings of up to seven until the end of the year.

***Green-winged Teal** *Anas carolinensis*

Vagrant, one previous record (in April)

A drake found on Da Water on 31st March with a small number of Teal echoed the first record in 2009. It lingered until 6th May, although intriguingly it was not seen from 23rd to 29th April.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, semi-domestic and feral birds cloud true status

The highest count of apparent wild birds in the first winter period was 22 in January. Eight pairs were noted around the island on 20th March, but only one pair was thought to have bred. Occasional sightings of birds in unusual locations (e.g. two heading north over Ward Hill on 23rd April) suggested some spring passage. Migrants seemed to return from October and 21 was the highest count from the second winter period.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A pair were present briefly on 2nd May, there were two on 26th September and two on 1st December, the latter record being the first for this month.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Scarce and irregular spring and autumn migrant

A fairly quiet year saw no spring sightings, the only records being a juvenile on the Obs wader scrape from 22nd–25th August and three (two males and a female) flying north on 13th October.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

A female flew south past Bunes on 27th March, with possibly the same bird seen on 29th March. A pair arrived on 17th May, with the male still present the following day. One was seen on 31st July, then one lingered from 13th September, increasing to a total of four on 1st–2nd October, with up to three present until 10th October.

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

The first of the year was found dead at Hesti Geo on 11th September. One was in South Harbour from 1st–10th October, with a second bird present on 3rd–6th in a quiet year for the species.

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

The highest count in the spring was 129 (66 males and 63 females) on 16th April, ten less than in 2011. The first females were on the island top on 14th May (a day earlier than 2011) and the first ducklings were noted on 14th June, a typical date and three days earlier than 2011. There were no counts of breeding birds, although 11 females were recorded incubating in Steensi Geo. Three on Easter Lothar Water on 2nd July was an unusual record. The peak post-breeding count was 178 on 24th August, a 37% decline on the last full-island autumn count in 2009.

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

At least two females were present in January, probably birds remaining from 2011 and three were noted on 3rd February, the last sighting in the first part of the year. The first returning bird in the autumn was on 9th October then sightings were regular until late November, usually of one to three, with peaks of nine on 29th October and five on 16th November. From late December females were present in South Harbour and Ditfield and remained until the end of the year.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra***Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant**

At least two were wintering off the north of the island and were joined by two more in late March, with up to three remaining through April. A scattering of sightings in late spring and summer consisted of singles on 21st May and 9th–10th June, three from 23rd June to 2nd July then singles again on 13th–15th and 21st July. After six on 13th October, there were regular sightings of up to three until the end of the month and five on 4th November, with one again wintering in the north.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca***Scarce autumn migrant, rare at other times of year**

The only record was a juvenile female found freshly dead on the North Haven beach on 10th November, which was found to have starved.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula***Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant**

The first of the year was noted on 1st February, with regular sightings during the month peaking at three on 14th. There were then two on 23rd March and one from 28th April to 11th May, with two on 1st May. A very quiet autumn saw sightings of drakes on 13th and 28th November and 26th December that possibly all related to the same bird.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Up to two males were seen in January and February and a light spring passage saw sightings on 12 dates in April, peaking at three on 4th and three singles the following month until 20th May. The next record was of four on 3rd July, with singles then irregularly throughout the rest of the month and one on 25th August. A light autumn passage then consisted of sightings on nine dates in September, peaking at four on 18th, and up to two on six dates in October, with the last sighting of the year of two on 12th November.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Rare migrant in winter, spring and late autumn

A drake was in South Harbour from 26th–29th October, then again on 2nd November, with further sightings on 15th December in North Haven and 27th December in South Harbour presumed to relate to the same bird. Recorded for the second consecutive year, but the first autumn record since 2005.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Scarce spring, summer and autumn migrant; has bred (last confirmed attempt in 2003)

A reversal of fortune following a good showing in 2011, as there was only one record this year; a single flushed from Bull's Park on 23rd May.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn

Only the sixth mid-winter record for the island occurred on 12th January, with the next record not until the more typical date of 29th March. There were further spring and early summer records on 15th and 19th May, 6th, 9th (two) and 10th June and 2nd July. Two headed south on 21st July and there were two on 20th and 24th August. Further autumn records occurred on 12th and 18th (two) September and 29th October.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring

One just off Mavers Geo on 13th February was the first record from the January to March period since 2004. Spring was quiet, with singles on 1st and 14th June the only records, and autumn was little better with singles on 30th September, 4th, 27th and 28th October. The final record was a juvenile in the North Haven on 26th December.

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Resident; breeds in large numbers (last count 29,640 AOS in 2011)

Present around the island in large numbers all year, with the first eggs noted on 16th May, the first chicks seen on 26th June and chicks fledging from 15th August. An increase of 8.9% on the population plots fitted the recent pattern of small fluctuations, whilst the 0.48 chicks fledged per AON on the monitoring plots was also about average for recent years. 'Blue' Fulmars (usually at the paler end of the

spectrum) were noted on 23rd January, 31st March, 28th August, then in the autumn one was on the cliffs at Ditfield from 9th October until the end of November, whilst offshore there were further records on 11th (three), 18th (11 off South Light), 20th and 29th October and 14th and 19th November.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

Regular autumn migrant

A fairly typical scattering of occurrences through the autumn with the first on 28th July, singles on two August dates, records on eight dates (of eleven birds, with a peak count of just two) in September and the last on 10th October. Most sightings were from the 'Good Shepherd', Bunes and South Light.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

There were nine seen from South Light on 28th August and three from Bunes on 11th October. Although the number of occurrences this year was low, they did include the joint second highest Fair Isle count, only beaten by 11 on 25th August 2008.

Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

As usual, the majority of records were of birds caught during late night mist-netting sessions (predominantly at the Havens). A total of 915 birds were trapped (870 new and 45 retraps) over 22 nights, with the peak being 127 on the night of the 16th/17th August. In addition there was one seen from the Foghorn on 26th July and sightings from the 'Good Shepherd' on 30th June (four), 11th (four), 21st (two) and 25th (six) August and 8th September (four), whilst 53 were observed in Fair Isle waters from the Northlink ferry on 3rd August. Birds recently killed by cats were found near the Gully on 29th September and Wester Lothar on 5th October.

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Scarce migrant, summer and early autumn

Another good year with all records again from the Havens during nocturnal petrel tape-luring sessions, with four trapped and five others seen and heard circling the nets or calling from nearby. There were birds on 17th (trapped), 22nd and 25th (trapped) July and 1st (trapped), 4th (one trapped and another two at the nets) and 5th (two) August.

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year

As usual there were records offshore in all months of the year, although they are relatively scarce in the middle of winter. The first eggs were found on 14th April at Guidicum, with the first chicks seen on 4th June and all chicks at the monitored plots fledging by 16th October. Productivity was the highest on record with 0.85 chicks fledging per AON. The total island population was 3,862 AON, a decrease of 5.45% since 2011 and the first recorded fall in the population since 2005, although a small new colony was established at Loangie on Dronger.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

There were winter records on 21st and 28th January, with birds noted on 27th and 29th March, 12 April dates (including a lingering juvenile early in the month), nine May dates and five dates in June. Most records were of singles, with occasional counts of two, and peaks of four on 28th April and 27th May. One on 18th July was the only autumn sighting until September, when one to three were seen on nine dates from 10th, and the last of the year on 6th October.

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers (last count 235 AON in 2008)

Present throughout the year with no significant counts made. The first nest building was observed on 26th March, with the first eggs on 19th April at Dittfield and first chicks seen on 10th June. Numbers in the population plots increased 60% from the lowest ever count in 2011 to 32 AON and breeding success was encouraging, with almost one chick raised per AON, the highest productivity since 2007.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

An early bird on 16th January was the first until 22nd March, with regular sightings between 30th March and 8th April involving some birds heading directly north. Daily sightings from 18th–24th April peaked at three on 22nd and there were then singles from 27th–28th April and on 2nd May. Two on 20th and one on 27th May were the only others for the month, then sightings were regular from 6th June until 13th July, mostly singles but three were present on 20th June and up to two in early July. There were occasional sightings in early August then an arrival of eight on 11th, with up to six regularly until the end of the month and eight again on 29th August. There were still up to five in early September, with two lingering until the 22nd when the next arrival saw a total of seven present, with three remaining until 27th September. In October, daily sightings from 6th–13th increased to six on the latter date and there were then up to two later in the month with a single seen occasionally until 4th December.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Formerly bred (1825–40) and unsuccessful reintroduction attempted (1968), but now vagrant; 13 records (ten in spring, three in autumn); in 1935, 1949 then all others since 1981, at least four of which have been from Scottish reintroductions

A magnificent untagged juvenile flew past Ward Hill on 29th April, and then circled over the Obs before heading north and arriving in Shetland 40 minutes after its departure over Roskilie. The fifth record in the last ten years, all of which have been in April, although the last two were from the East Scotland reintroduction scheme.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus***Rare migrant; 42 previous records (34 in spring, eight in autumn)**

A female over Wester Lothar on 31st May was a relatively late spring occurrence, whilst a juvenile over Meadow Burn on 12th August was the fourth autumn record in the last five years.

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

There were two in spring; a ringtail headed north on 18th April and a superb adult male was present on 20th–21st April. A ringtail arrived on 30th October and was joined by a second on 3rd November, with sporadic sightings of one of these until 23rd November. A further record on 13th December may also have been the same lingering bird.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus***Regular spring and autumn migrant**

The first was present from 27th–31st March and there were regular sightings from 8th April until 5th May, peaking at six on 25th April, equalled in spring only by the same count in 1994. There were further sightings of up to two on nine dates in May and a late bird on 14th June, bringing to an end a good spring in which ten were ringed (eight of these in April). Autumn started slowly, with singles on 26th and 31st August, then there were up to two on seven dates between 1st and 11th September. There were three singles in early October then regular sightings from 11th–15th that peaked at five on 13th, with further singles on 21st October and 9th and 15th–18th November.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo***Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

Recorded for the third consecutive year when one flew north over the island on 7th May.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus***Scarce migrant; 98 previous records of 100 individuals (80 in spring, 18 in autumn)**

The first flew north on 10th May, then a probable female headed low north over the island on 30th May and another went north on 2nd June. One was seen heading north over Bunness at 10.50pm on 4th June, which may have been the same bird that was on the cliffs at Hjukni on 7th June and perhaps the same as one that flew north out to sea from North Haven on 10th June. The final sighting was of one coming in off the sea at South Harbour on 14th June. The seven sightings represent at least five individuals, the best year since the record-breaking six in 2008.

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

One was present on 21st–22nd March, then singles regularly from 14th–26th April (with one found dead on 29th) preceded more regular counts through May, with singles on nine dates and two on 22nd. There were then records on nine dates until

26th June, all singles apart from 8th when there were two. Autumn passage began on the typical date of 8th August, then singles were present on seven dates from 15th August to the month's end and 6th–7th September. There were then daily records from 24th September to 14th October, peaking at five on 1st October, with later singles on 18th and 25th October.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Regular spring and autumn migrant, small numbers overwinter

Two were present in January and February, with a male remaining until the end of March. The only record in April was of two during 9th–17th. There were then two on 2nd May and singles on 7th and 26th May and 7th–8th June. After the first autumn bird on Ward Hill on 23rd August there were regular sightings of one or two until the end of the month and throughout September. Numbers increased in early October, with a peak of five on 7th, and counts of up to four were regular until the end of the month. There were singles recorded throughout November (when one was seen to take advantage of the influx of Waxwings) and one lingered until the end of the year.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

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

A pair were present from the start of the year and were seen throughout the first winter period and early spring. The regular presence of these birds possibly masked the presence of migrants, although three were counted on 4th and 21st April and 10th and 30th May. Copulation was noted on the west cliffs on 7th April, but there was no successful breeding, with an oiled adult seen on 3rd June suggesting Fulmars were the problem. There were sporadic sightings through the summer and up to two were regular throughout September and October, with three on 10th September. Singles were also seen on several dates in November.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters

Sightings until 29th February indicated there were probably two overwintering in the south of the island. There were no spring sightings for the first time since 1999 and autumn passage was restricted to singles on 27th and 30th September and 12 dates in October. Sightings in early November represented late migrants (including a bird in the Obs garden on 8th–9th) and birds settling into wintering territories, with at least four lingering to the end of the year.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana

Rare migrant; 46 previous records (37 in autumn, nine in spring)

Although recorded for the third successive year, the two this year represented the best ever spring showing and the first records in this season since 2003. One was near Pund on 18th May, then another (which photographs showed to be a second individual) was seen briefly then, trapped at Chalet on 28th May. Late night visits to suitable habitat across the island for the national Spotted Crake survey did not produce any records of singing birds.

Corncrake *Crex crex***Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred (last suspected in 2002)**

Although none were seen in the spring, there was a strong autumn showing, with six recorded. The first was flushed near Upper Leogh on 27th August and narrowly avoided being caught by a cat. The next landed next to observers sheltering from poor weather near Double Dyke before hiding in the dyke on 10th September. On 24th September there were two (one at Linni Geo, the other found dead at Guidicum) and further singles followed on 3rd October at Pund and 11th October at Quoy.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

The first was at Utra on 21st April, which may have been one of the two in Hjukni Geo on 24th April, one of which remained until 26th. A dead bird in Gilsetter on 29th April may have been a different individual, but sightings at Boini Mire on 3rd May and Da Water on 7th May were possibly a lingering bird. In the autumn there were singles in the Vaadal on 21st October, then in the Gully on 21st November, the latter of which may have been one of the two that were present from 26th November throughout December around Haa and Meadow Burn.

Coot *Fulica atra***Rare visitor; 85 previous records, most in spring, also late autumn and winter, has summered**

The third year in succession with two records. The first was found at Aesterhoull on 1st February which went on to linger in the south of the island until 29th February. One seen crossing the road at Barkland in foul weather on 23rd December was the first arrival in this month since 1981.

Crane *Grus grus***Rare visitor; 21 previous records (16 in spring) of 30 individuals**

The first was a relatively early bird on 21st April which was first seen on the clifftops at Gunnawark before settling on Suka Mire then heading north. The second lingered on the island, usually around Da Water and Hoini, from 6th to 9th June and the third flew up and down island on 18th June. Another good year for this increasingly regularly recorded stately visitor.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus***Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers**

The first returning bird was on the early date of 17th January, with up to four seen later in the month. Numbers continued to rise the following month, with 56 by 24th February and by late March 133 were present. Counts in April and May were generally around 90–100, presumably mostly breeding birds, with monthly peaks of 126 on 1st April and 121 on 14th May. The first eggs were noted three days later than in 2011, on 7th May, and the first chicks were seen on 13th June, with around 41 pairs recorded breeding. The 135 recorded on 6th June included the regular summering

flock at Shirva, presumably consisting of mostly failed and non-breeding birds, and was the peak count of the year. Birds quickly started dispersing after the breeding season and after 124 on 14th August numbers dropped away to less than 30 after 21st August. In September up to 20 were seen daily until 18th, with the only later records on 25th September, 7th–12th October (up to three) and 26th October.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred (last recorded in 1989)

The first of the year was not recorded until 1st February, with sightings becoming regular from 12th March and rising to 16 on 28th March. In April there were virtually daily sightings of up to five, with a peak of 20 on 26th April. Small numbers continued to be seen throughout the spring, with up to ten almost daily in May and up to four irregularly in June. From 7th July there were again irregular sightings, presumably the start of autumn passage, and sightings continued to increase the following month, peaking at 27 on 15th August. The main arrival occurred in September, with a peak of 72 on 9th and regular sightings of between 20 and 37. Sightings were regular in October, but decreased in numbers throughout the month, with November and December seeing irregular records of up to ten.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

Typically there were scattered sightings in the winter, with two in January and up to eight in February. Numbers increased through March, peaking at just 38 on 14th, with birds then present throughout the summer. The peak number in April was 24, with sightings from May to July largely referring to breeding birds. There were seven nesting pairs, with the first eggs noted on 22nd April and the first chicks seen on 14th May and several youngsters going on to fledge in a reasonably productive breeding season. A light autumn passage saw birds present virtually daily, but monthly peaks of just 19, 11 and eight from August to October. Up to five lingered throughout November and a peak of 12 was recorded in December.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first arrival was not until the late date of 5th March, with regular sightings from 14th rising to 29 on 29th March. There was no significant spring passage, with counts in April largely involving breeding birds. Around 19 pairs were noted breeding, with the first chicks seen on 29th May and small chicks (presumably from second broods) still present in late July. Autumn passage peaked at 58 on 22nd August, with 50 still present in early September. Numbers decreased throughout the month with only single figures present by the month's end, with the last of the year seen on 8th October.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus***Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

A pair were in Bull's Park on 23rd May, with the female remaining the following day. A female on Hoini on 21st June was only two days earlier than the latest ever spring record.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus***Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred (1973 and 1974)**

Two in South Harbour on 22nd April began a series of virtually daily sightings until early June. Birds were clearly moving through regularly, with counts of 11 on 4th, 20 on 8th, 16 on 14th and ten on 18th the peaks in May. Sightings of singles continued throughout late June, although more irregularly, and up to three were noted on six July dates as spring and autumn migration seemingly merged into each other. August saw sightings on eight dates, with no more than two, apart from 20 birds heading south on 19th, with three on 8th September the only other record in a quiet autumn.

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

There were up to 20 in January, but smaller numbers in February, and in March the peak was just 16. Daily counts in April were usually between ten and 20, although 70, mostly moving north, on 16th April was a high count. Seven pairs held territory, with chicks seen on 26th June and two or three pairs fledging young. An interesting record during this time was a female with a fully formed egg inside her, which was predated by Bonxies on Vaasetter. This bird had been ringed in June 2001 on North Ronaldsay, showing that the Fair Isle breeding population recruits birds from elsewhere. Autumn passage was noted from July, with ten heading south on 12th, but was generally light, with a peak of just 27 on 19th August. Regular sightings throughout the rest of the autumn saw up to six regularly in September and up to 11 in October and November. Although counts in December were generally of single figures, a hard weather movement on 6th saw a high count of 57.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa***Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

One on 24th April was followed by a flock of five on 30th April (the largest spring flock since 1990) and a single on 8th May. In the autumn three on 26th July increased to five on 27th–29th July. Two juveniles from 7th September were joined by a third on 11th–18th, with one remaining to 21st September.

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

One flew south over Kenaby on 23rd April, with presumably the same bird then lingering at Setter from 24th until 28th and being seen flying south on 29th April. In a generally poor autumn for waders, there were none recorded for the first time since 1990.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* *Common winter, spring and autumn migrant*

Maximum monthly counts of Turnstone on Fair Isle 2012:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
150	80	51	124	91	19	22	84	170	152	156	75

Other than the autumn peak falling slightly earlier than usual (on 25th September), this was a fairly typical year; good numbers in both winter periods, peaks in spring and autumn and sporadic sightings of small numbers in the summer.

Knot *Calidris canutus*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring, rare in winter

One at Lower Leogh from 9th–13th February was unusual, being only the tenth winter (December to February) record. Spring passage consisted of two on 13th–14th May and singles on 22nd–25th May and 4th June. Autumn passage began with five on 12th August, singles on 20th–21st August and the peak of the year on 23rd August when 36 were recorded. From 27th August to 20th September there were virtually daily records, peaking at 11 on 11th, with the last of the year seen on 28th September.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

A male at Barkland from 20th–23rd March was only the second spring record since the previous earliest sighting on 29th March 2001. Autumn passage began with one on 29th July, then regular sightings between 12th August and 2nd September, peaking at seven on 14th and 25th August. Later singles occurred on 17th–18th and 24th September.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Regular autumn migrant, less common in spring

Spring records were restricted to 9th–10th April, 8th and 13th–14th May, with four on the latter date. Autumn passage began with three on 23rd July then regular sightings from 4th August to 24th September, during which time there were peaks of 11 on 18th August and 13 on 2nd September.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred (last suspected in 2007)

One from 7th–9th February was a scarce winter record; there was then an early spring migrant on 17th March before sightings became regular from 28th April. In May there were up to eight early in the month, rising to 21 on 28th, then regular counts in single figures through June. There were scattered records of up to six in July, then regular sightings the following month built up to a peak of 22 on 15th August. There were then regular counts of up to 20 later in August and fluctuating counts in September peaking at 16 on 11th, with single figure counts to 5th October. The only later sighting was another unusual winter record on 15th December.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, also over-winters

There were less than ten in both winter periods. Spring passage peaked at 70 on 24th April and 2nd May and there were none recorded between 7th June and 10th July, with autumn numbers peaking at a disappointing 12 in October. For a usually strictly coastal species, one feeding on the Gully waterfall on 19th November and one lingering around Golden Water late in the year were unusual.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

In a quiet year for this species there was just one record, with a bird at Utra on 15th–16th and 18th August.

***Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Calidris subruficollis*

Vagrant; 12 previous records (of 13 birds), all in September

One on Meoness during westerly winds on 7th September was typical in date and location (being the fourth to be recorded on the short grass there). As with most of the previous records the bird lingered for more than one day and roamed the south coast of the island until 10th September.

***Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*

Rare visitor; 29 previous records, most from August to October, but three in spring

A juvenile arrived on Meoness on 19th September during a period of westerly winds and lingered until 21st, the 18th record in September of this increasingly encountered Nearctic wader.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were two on 29th April and a single on 2nd May before regular sightings from 8th May to 8th June peaked at 11 on 9th May, although only one or two were recorded after 14th May. Two on 23rd and a single on 25th June may have been early autumn migrants but there were no further sightings until 24th July. The next were daily sightings from 14th–25th August, rising to nine on 18th, then up to two were seen from 25th–30th September, before a bird on 15th–21st October became the latest island record since one on 2nd November 1908.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

The first arrived on 11th April, a relatively early date, and there were regular sightings until 22nd, with two on 20th April. The only other spring record was on 2nd May. Autumn migrants arrived on 4th August and were seen on 11 dates from 9th–25th August, usually one or two, but peaking at three on 12th August. The final bird of a relatively quiet autumn was one on 1st–4th September.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

The first blank spring since 2004 meant that one on 3rd August was the first of the year. Numbers rose to a peak of three on 6th, with one or two recorded regularly until 25th August.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One at Pund on 8th May was probably one of the two found the next day at Barkland, with one still on 11th and 12th May. One was on Da Water on 29th–31st May and the fourth of the spring was on the Obs wader scrape on 3rd June. One at Da Water from 27th July to 7th August was joined by a second on 4th August, making this the best year since 2004 for this elegant wader.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Common migrant in winter, spring and autumn migrant; has bred (1993 and 1994)

Typically there were small numbers scattered around the island in the first winter period, with counts usually between eight and 16. By late March there was a spring peak of 23, but numbers gradually declined through April until the end of the month saw just single figure counts. There were up to seven regularly in May and less frequent sightings of up to four in June. As autumn migrants moved through in July counts increased, with 24 on 23rd the highest. The peak in August was 40 on 30th, with 42 recorded on three dates throughout September. Numbers dropped to a maximum of 32 in October with wintering numbers then between 20 and 25 until the end of the year.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

The only winter record was one on 3rd February, with spring records on 20th and 29th March, 3rd and 21st April and 10th May. The first in the autumn was a typically showy bird at the Obs on 12th September and there were then virtually daily sightings from 19th September to 19th October. Counts were usually in single figures with peaks of 14 on 25th September and ten on 13th October.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Regular spring and frequent late-autumn migrant, occasionally overwinters

A couple were seen in January, with a presumed cold weather movement bringing 28 on 1st February, an unusually large winter count and, surprisingly, the peak count for the year. Spring passage saw one on 14th March, one to three on nine dates in April, singles on five dates in May and a late bird on 7th June. The first autumn migrant appeared on 27th September, with the next not until 12th October, after which there were regular records to the end of November. During this time counts were generally low with peaks of just 16 on 14th Oct, 12 on 27th October and eight (in the north of the island only) on 13th November. Typically the odd single was recorded until the end of the year.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

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

There were low counts in the first winter period, with at least 20 probably present. Drumming was first noted from 22nd March, with breeding scattered across the island, although no formal population count was made. The only count that indicated spring passage was 79 on 29th March, with census totals generally of 20–30. The highest count in the autumn was 65 on 25th September and winter numbers were generally low, although 37 in late December may have represented a hard weather movement.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Rare spring and autumn migrant; at least 65 previous records

An adult seen from the 'Good Shepherd' seven miles north of Fair Isle on 10th September was the first record since 2009.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in small numbers

The first was a dark-phase bird at the Wirvie Burn on 18th April, with numbers slowly building and just 24 present by 3rd May. Only 20 AOTs were recorded, a decrease of 31% from 2011 and the lowest total since the 1950s. The first eggs were noted on 29th May, chicks were recorded by 21st June and the first, and only, fledgling took flight from Bunness on 28th July. By late August the only records were of birds offshore and there were sightings on just three September dates until 27th when the last two were seen over Vaassetter.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers

The first 'Bonxie' returned on the fairly late date of 27th March with numbers building rapidly and birds back on territory by 10th April. The population of 300 AOT was the highest ever recorded on Fair Isle. The first eggs were seen on 12th May and chicks on 5th June, with fledging recorded from 24th July. The productivity of 0.53 chicks per AOT represented an increase of 112% on 2011's figures. With more food seemingly available than in 2011 there was less cannibalism in the colony, with pellet analysis showing the proportion of Great Skua chicks in the diet had dropped from 2.3% to just 0.1%. Although some small chicks remained by late August, overall numbers were dropping as birds began their southward migration, although there were still 20–40 in early October. Regular records petered out by the end of the month until one at sea on 29th October then a late bird over Pund on 6th November.

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

One in Wick o'South Haven on 14th February was found dead the next day, the first winter record from land since 2003 (although three were seen from the 'Good Shepherd' on 28th February 2007). The first returning birds were seen on 22nd March, with several hundred offshore by 27th March. Birds were on land from 7th April,

with good numbers ashore by 16th April. A full island count on 29th April recorded 10,706 individuals, an increase of 47.1% on the last full count in 2009. The first eggs were noted on 3rd May and birds were first seen carrying fish on 13th June. A good breeding season saw productivity increase 53.8% from 2011 with 0.6 chicks fledged per egg laid. By the second half of August the only records were of small numbers offshore and the last of the year was seen at sea on 13th October.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle*

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

The count of breeding plumaged individuals on 27th March revealed 182 between North Light and South Light (the standard monitoring plot), a 13% increase on the 2011 count. This is the highest total since 1997, after which the population dropped dramatically, and continues the gradual increase in numbers noted in recent years.

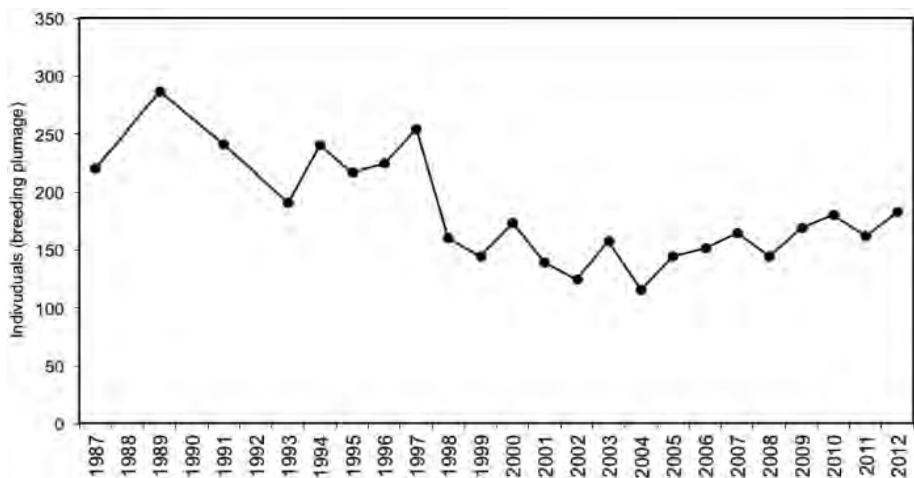


Figure 1. Population change of Black Guillemots on Fair Isle, 1987–2012 (maximum counts of breeding plumaged individuals along east coast monitoring plot).

Razorbill *Alca torda*

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers (last count 1,365 individuals in 2010)

A dead bird was washed ashore on 12th February, with the first live individual not seen until 16th March. Birds were on the cliffs in large numbers from 2nd April. Numbers on the monitoring plot fell in comparison to the previous year, continuing the recent population decline. The first eggs were noted in Easter Lothar on 7th May (five days later than in 2011), with the first chicks in Gunnawark on 31st May. Breeding productivity increased to 0.23 chicks fledged per egg laid (from 0.02 in 2011), a reasonable season in comparison to most recent years but continuing the generally lower productivity recorded since 2003. The first chicks fledged on 21st June and small numbers of birds were recorded around the island from August to late October. A rare winter record was one in South Harbour on 30th December.

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

In January there were one or two present on four dates between 1st and 13th, with a freshly dead bird near the Obs on 16th January and a long-dead bird found at South Light on 30th April the only other records from the early part of the year. Autumn sightings were restricted to singles on four dates between 16th October and 3rd November, with a freshly dead bird at Taft on 5th November.

Guillemot *Uria aalge****Common passage migrant, breeds in large numbers (last count 19,501 individuals in 2010)***

Birds were present inshore in good numbers from the start of the year and numbers on the population plots increased by 32.7% on 2011, suggesting that the severe decline in numbers since the late 1990s may have slowed. The first eggs were noted at South Fair Heel on 11th May with the first chicks seen on 7th June. Although productivity increased to 0.14 chicks per AIA (from zero productivity in 2011) it was still not a great breeding season, continuing the poor productivity regularly recorded since 2002, and substantially lower than the 0.6–0.8 chicks per AIA regularly recorded in the 1990s. Sightings were scarce in August, with single figure counts regularly throughout September and October. By late December hundreds were again inshore during spells of fine weather.

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

Two noisy adults circling through South Harbour on 3rd August were the first since 2010, but the first to be recorded later than July since 2006.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo****Summer visitor, formerly bred in small numbers***

The first returning birds were a pair on 20th May. Three were noted in the tern colony on Buness (the maximum count for the summer), where one pair nested and fledged one chick in early August. What was presumed to be the same family party was noted around South Light until the last was seen on 4th September. Common Terns first nested on Fair Isle in 1970 and the colony peaked at 59 pairs in 1989, but thereafter went into steep decline with ten pairs or fewer attempting to nest since 1990. By 2003 there were no birds nesting and although one and three pairs nested in 2004 and 2005 respectively, this represents the first breeding of Common Terns on Fair Isle since then.

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

The first were three over Buness on the relatively late date of 9th May, although numbers built up rapidly with 165 recorded by 20th May. Copulation was noted from 25th May and the first eggs from 30th May. A total of 227 AIA were recorded, with the main colonies on Buness and Shalstane and a small number nesting on the Brecks o' Busta. This total was the fourth highest in the last 11 years, although a far

cry from the decade from 1991 when numbers frequently exceeded 1,000 pairs, peaking at 2,836 AIA in 2001. The first chicks were recorded on 21st June, but the Shalstane colony was deserted and predation appeared to be an issue on Bunes. The first chick fledged on 23rd July, but was one of only seven to do so, giving a productivity of just 0.03 chicks per nest. Depressingly, this is still the third best breeding year since 2000, with eight years in the last decade producing no chicks at all. The Arctic Tern colony is thought to have been established (in 1980) from birds raised on Shetland, with recruitment to the colony then coming from Fair Isle-reared birds. Ringing recoveries this year support this theory, with four adults found dead in the colonies all having been ringed on Fair Isle (three as chicks) between 12 and 20 years ago. The generally poor productivity of the Fair Isle birds would therefore explain the decline in the population, which seems set to continue given the lack of potential recruits to the colony raised in recent years and the natural mortality of the adults.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Common passage migrant, breeds in large numbers

There were small numbers at sea from early February and birds were nest-building by 17th May, with the first chicks recorded on 16th June. Another disastrous year for the breeding population saw the whole island count drop by 14.8% from 2011 to 1,225 AON, a dramatic reduction from the 19,000 plus pairs breeding in the late 1980s. There were again no chicks fledged from the monitoring plots, repeating the total blanks of 1990, 2003, 2004, 2008 and 2011; a juvenile seen offshore on 28th July was probably not raised on the island. Small numbers, usually less than 20, were seen offshore from August until the end of the year.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were four on 3rd January then occasional records throughout the rest of the month and February. Sightings became more regular in late March when there were up to 13 and regular sightings throughout April were all less than ten apart from 30 on 18th April. There was a similar pattern through May, with a peak of 28 on 8th. Up to five were seen in June and occasional sightings in July included the first visiting fledged chick seen on 9th. Counts during August peaked at 11 on 13th, with regular small numbers through September and occasional sightings in October, with the last on 1st November.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Vagrant; 29 individuals previously recorded, most in late autumn

More than one individual was recorded for the third successive year, with a juvenile at South Light on 20th–21st August and a first-winter in South Harbour on 13th October.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Common spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers

There were small numbers present in the first part of the year, with counts rising from early April as birds moved north. Peak counts during this time included 66 on

10th, 151 on 18th and 277 on 23rd April, with smaller numbers in May peaking at just 69. By early June numbers had settled to around 20–30, although some northerly movement was still being noted. The colony on Buness contained around seven to nine pairs, with eight chicks ringed and the first fledged young seen on 10th July. By late in the month numbers started to rise, with 80 on 28th July, before the following month saw some typically large counts in the second week, peaking at 335 on 14th August. The highest count in September was just 35 on 25th and the only high count in October was 134 on 13th, before numbers settled to a maximum of eight during November and December.

***Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis*

Vagrant; two previous records (April and August)

A first-summer bird showed well in the South Harbour area on 4th–5th June. It arrived in strong north-westerly winds and fitted the pattern of limited recent occurrences in Shetland, several of which have been spring arrivals.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first was seen on the typical date of 26th March, numbers built up to 12 by 12th April with further peaks of 26 on 8th and 21 on 27th May. Two pairs bred on Goorn, a decrease from 2011 but fairly typical for recent years and a substantial decline from the peak of 46 pairs in 1975. Early autumn saw migrants passing through, with peaks of 18 on 28th July, 14 on 16th August and 28 on 4th September. There were then small numbers until 11th September, which was the last record until two on 12th October.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

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

Present all year, with the breeding population estimated at a minimum of 45 pairs (39 Goorn, five Greenholm, one Busta), representing a slight increase on 41 pairs in 2011 and 20–30 pairs estimated during the previous decade, but a major decrease on the peak breeding numbers of 486 pairs in 1975. The first chicks were noted on 14th June and productivity appeared to be reasonable. As usual, stormy conditions in the autumn led to hundreds sheltering on the island, with the peak count of 860 (in the north of the island only) on 31st October.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*

Scarce migrant in winter and spring

A second-winter on 7th January began one of the best series of records of this species ever seen on Fair Isle and reflected a large influx into Scotland at this time. There were two (new) birds the next day with an increase to six on 12th–13th and eight (including one found dead) on 14th, with up to five irregularly until the end of the month. There were regular sightings of one or two throughout February and a peak of five on 13th, then scattered sightings in March, three on 1st April and singles until 29th April (although at least eight individuals were involved in sightings in that month alone). A final first-winter was recorded on 17th May. At least 33 individuals

were estimated to have been involved in these records, with three first-winters, 11 second-winters and 15 older (plus four unaged). At least four were found dead during this invasion, autopsy revealed one had starved, perhaps suggesting a food shortage had caused the arrival. The autumn saw an adult on 31st October and a first-winter from 1st–6th November, with presumably the same bird on 13th and 16th November before a final adult on 23rd December.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter

A first-winter was present at the start of the year, with more regular sightings from 12th January until late February involving at least six individuals (two first-winters, two third-winters and two adults). An adult and first-winter were also seen in March. A first-winter from 8th–12th April was the last of the spring and one of the same age was the first of the autumn, being recorded on 9th, 13th and 18th October. In November there was a first-winter on 7th November, with three (two first-winters and an adult) the following day and occasional sightings of a first-winter until the end of the year.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

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

The breeding population appears to be still declining; only four pairs were recorded this year compared with a peak of 141 pairs in 1975. There were few counts during the year, although the usual large gatherings occurred when the weather was wilder in the autumn and winter, with a peak of 840 noted in the north of the island only, on 31st October.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

The first fledged youngsters were noted at the Obs on 1st July. There were few counts made of the scattered population, with 46 on 24th August being the largest.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After the first on 5th March there were scattered sightings until the end of the month, with two on 25th March. There were two on 1st April then regular sightings from 8th, increasing to a spring peak of 18 on 26th April. Sightings of up to nine were regular during May and up to three were seen on nine dates in June. One on 16th July was the only record until regular sightings of one from 19th August to the end of the month. In September there were up to two on ten dates, with one until 5th October, then two on 12th October increasing to ten the next day and smaller numbers then lingering until the last was seen on 23rd October.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto****Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn***

An early bird on 27th March was followed by another on 9th April and then regular sightings from 29th April to 5th July. The turnover of birds appeared to be quite high during this period, with peaks of four on 8th, 24th and 31st May. A late-summer record on 21st July preceded records in August from 1st–7th, 12th and 21st–22nd, with a final sighting on 30th September.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur****Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

A very similar pattern of occurrences to 2011, with a single in various locations from 27th–30th May then one on Meoness on 23rd June.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus****Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn, has bred (most recently in 2002)***

The only record was of one briefly in the Obs garden on 9th June, making it the quietest year in FIBO history for this species.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus****Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring***

A good spring began with one at the Obs from 22nd–26th March and a new individual on 30th March, with probably the same bird trapped on 2nd April. Another was at Springfield on 10th April and further sightings on 17th–22nd, 24th and 28th April, 3rd and 8th–10th (with two on 9th) May relating to at least three individuals. One was at the Obs on 22nd–31st May, with another at Setter on 27th and the ninth of the spring was at Midway on 9th June. Autumn by contrast, was quiet, with the first seen hunting Redwing on 24th October and further singles on 3rd, 14th and 25th November. The final sighting was one at Lower Stoneybrek on 26th December.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus****Regular spring and autumn migrant***

An unusually early bird was present on 9th February, with the next on the more typical date of 6th April. From 18th April to 10th June there were regular sightings of up to two and the last of the spring was seen on 18th June. In a relatively quiet autumn there was one from 24th–29th September then regular sightings from 11th to 20th October, peaking at three on 17th October. The last of the autumn was on 31st October before a very late bird arrived during south-easterly winds on 24th December.

Swift *Apus apus****Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant***

There was one on 20th May and two on 24th May, with further singles on 8th and 12th June. Two or three on four dates from 21st–29th June may have been the first south-bound migrants and one or two were seen on 10th–17th July. In August there were scattered records early in the month, then daily sightings from 17th to 29th

August, building to a peak of 36 on 23rd before the last was seen on 1st September.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Vagrant; 38 previous records (23 in spring, 15 in autumn)

For the first time since 1981 there were two spring records, with an elusive individual at the Parks then Da Water on 21st–22nd April and one on Dronger on 20th May. With 16 records, May is the best month to encounter this delightful visitor, whilst the first bird this year was the seventh for April.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A bird at Lower Stoneybrek on 19th April was just a day later than the earliest ever Fair Isle record. There were then virtually daily sightings until 3rd May, all singles apart from two on 25th April. Although sightings were from scattered locations, possibly as few as two individuals were involved. Five were then seen on 8th May, with smaller numbers until 11th, then daily sightings from 14th–27th May peaking at five on 20th May. At least 13 in the spring represents the best total for this season since 1985. In comparison autumn was the quietest since 2005, with two seen on 15th August, one of which lingered until 18th, the only records.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Rare migrant; 44 previous records (37 in spring, seven in autumn)

One found at Troila on 8th June was seen the next day at Kirn o'Scroo before being trapped at the Obs. It was then seen briefly again on 10th June at the Obs. In the hand it was considered to possibly be an adult female.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

One on 11th May was the earliest arrival since 2006, but there were no further sightings until 20th May, after which an impressive arrival saw daily records until 27th May. During this time numbers rose to seven on 22nd and nine the next day before falling to between one and four on the following days. A female on 8th June and a male from 11th to 13th June brought the spring total to approximately 19 individuals. Autumn by contrast was again quiet, with singles on 16th and 24th–26th August and 22nd–30th September, the latter of which became somewhat unpopular by killing one of the Robins that had summered at the Obs!

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

One was trapped on 18th April and another arrived at North Light on 23rd April and toured the island until 28th April. Both birds enjoyed the Robin fall, with Chiffchaff also predated. Two in the spring is the best showing in this season since 1993. In the autumn one was around Pund from 11th–18th October.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula***Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

One on the 13th February was the first arrival in that month since one on the same date in 1990 (although other birds have overwintered). More typical spring passage was of one from 22nd April, increasing to three on 29th April, with two lingering until 6th May and another on 20th May. Two from the 16th October increased to three on 18th then 60 on 25th, decreasing rapidly to 48 the following day then single figure counts until the last was seen on 2nd November.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus***Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn**

In April there were three on 16th and one on 28th, with two late spring migrants on 28th May. Autumn passage saw one present from 15th–19th October, a single on 25th October then two from 4th–8th November, with one lingering until 20th November.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone***Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn**

The first was seen on 23rd–27th March then sightings were regular throughout April and May, usually small numbers and with individuals often lingering, although peaks indicating new arrivals included six on 16th April, nine on 22nd and 28th April, 15 on 7th–8th May, seven on 16th May and 12 on 22nd May, with the last spring bird on 7th June. The only autumn sightings were on 13th and 20th October. Most of the arrivals of Carrions Crows also contained up to three hybrids with Hooded Crow.

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

Counts in the early part of the year were generally 10–13, although it was thought there were probably only three breeding pairs. Spring migrants included 16 moving south, along with other corvids on 16th April and six to eight present on several dates in early May. Chicks were noted from early June, with the first fledged youngsters seen on 10th July.

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

Around five pairs were noted around the island, although not all of these may have bred. Migrants included an impressive flock of 16 on Ward Hill on 3rd April and six heading south on a day of corvid passage on 16th April, whilst a flock of six on 1st May could also have been passing through.

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

There were two on 14th March which preceded regular counts in the rest of the month, peaking at 13 on 27th March. There were regular sightings in April, peaking at nine on 20th, then late singles on 8th and 11th May. Autumn passage typically

began lightly during 18th–26th August, with up to six present. Sightings were regular from 9th September, although daily totals were less than five until 24th when 39 arrived, increasing to 54 the following day. Numbers rapidly diminished until the next arrival of 53 on 12th October, increasing to 114 on 14th, after which numbers again tailed off until the last was seen on 31st October.

***Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*

Vagrant; four previous records (two in May, two in October/November)

One was seen briefly in appalling weather on 17th April at the Lower Station (Mast). It appeared to be struggling with the conditions (and was actually blown over at one point), so it was no surprise that it could not be relocated. The first record since 2007 and the earliest on Fair Isle by over two weeks.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Vagrant: eight previous records of 11 individuals (one April, ten from October to December)

During an arrival of this species from Scandinavia into the Northern Isles one was found at Schoolton on 24th October and, although elusive, was seen here again the following day. What was presumed to be the same bird was seen at Shirva on 28th October before flying to the cliffs of Malcolm's Head. The first record since 1989 of this colourful species.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 35 previous records involving around 49 individuals

The first record since 2008 and the first autumn record since 2002 was found on 13th October, initially in Hjukni Geo before heading into the gardens. Suspicion that more than one bird may have been involved in the sightings over the next few days were confirmed on 18th October, when two females were seen together. There were then regular counts of two until 9th November, although a third bird was obviously involved in the sightings as a male was present on 8th November at least. One of the females then lingered around the bird feeders at various crofts until the end of the year.

***Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The only record was of one on the cliff tops at Guidicum on 21st May, maintaining a remarkable unbroken run of annual records on Fair Isle; the last blank year was 1962.

***Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*

Rare migrant; 55 previous records since 1948 (23 in spring, 32 in autumn)

One was found near Quoy on 16th October and lingered in the south of the island, usually either there or in the crop strip by the Haa, until 5th November. This species was a regular winter visitor in the early part of the 20th Century, with peak counts of up to 20 and, although it has become much scarcer recently, this is the fourth autumn in the last seven to produce a record.

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

The first was not seen until 5th February, with seven present by the end of the month. Numbers increased throughout March to 240 on 28th, with singing recorded from 12th March. After 190 on 6th April, numbers generally dropped to between 70 and 100, with counts in May between 35 and 60. Counts in June were generally 30–40, with the first fledged chicks noted on 10th June. August saw a peak of just 35, with numbers then increasing to a maximum of 269 on 19th September. In October there were peaks of 177 early in the month and 120 on 14th, with just small numbers remaining until 26th November.

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris***Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

A confiding bird fed in the Kenaby rig on 19th–20th May, the first record since 2010.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia***Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn**

One on 8th May was the latest arrival since one on the same date in 1991, with a very light spring passage consisting of three on 21st May with two on four further dates until 27th May. Sightings on 26th, 30th and 31st July probably related to one individual, with further autumn sightings restricted to 4th–5th and 15th September.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica***Common spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds**

After one on 18th April there were daily counts of just single figures until 2nd May when ten were seen, with the first notable passage not until 7th May when 54 passed through. There were then regular counts of between ten and 40, building to 71 on 20th and 115 on 21st, with 98 the next day. After that there were still daily records but only the 34 on 9th June involved notable passage. Just one pair bred, with four young fledging from the airstrip. Another pair were present at Setter but did not breed. The first count of more than ten in the autumn was on 26th September when there were 21, with 22 the following day. There were then smaller numbers until 6th October and a final late passage saw up to three daily from 12th–19th October.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum***Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred (last recorded in 1986)**

Two were seen on 1st May and regular sightings from 8th–31st peaked at ten on 21st then 18 on 27th May. Later spring passage saw regular sightings from 7th–13th June, then scattered records until 27th, with the peak count of the year on 8th when there were 17. There were singles on 2nd and 13th July then a quiet autumn passage saw sightings on 23rd–24th August, 10th–11th September (with two on the first date) and two from 16th–18th October, with one still present the following day.

***Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica*

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

A wide-ranging bird was first discovered at Utra on 22nd May and lingered until 24th, being seen as far away as North Light. The third record in four years, this bird fits in nicely with the pattern of spring records that occur during *hirundine* passage.

***Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis*

Rare migrant; 79 previous records (74 in autumn and five in spring/summer)

An impressive six in the autumn equalled the total from 1970, the best ever year on Fair Isle. The first showed well at Kirm o'Scroo on 19th August, with one at Gilsetter, then Setter, on 21st August identified as a different individual based on plumage details. The next was trapped in the Gully on 29th August and lingered around Bull's Park until 5th September. Another was trapped, this time in the Vaadal, on 21st September and remained until 23rd, with a confiding unringed bird around Midway and Shirva on 27th–30th September. Finally, there was one at Wester Lothar on 2nd October.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Regular autumn migrant

The first arrival of the year happened in style, when the first hint of easterly winds during the month brought 14 to the island on 22nd September, increasing to 21 the following day and 28 on 24th September. Birds seemed to move through quickly, with ten on 25th September then daily counts of between two and seven until 3rd October. There were singles on 9th and 11th October and three on 12th October, then daily sightings of up to two from 21st–24th October (involving four birds) and a late single on 3rd November. An estimate of 37 individuals is probably a conservative one and the count of 28 has been bettered only by the period 24th–26th September 2008 when up to 45 were recorded.

***Hume's Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei*

Vagrant; two previous records, both in November 2003

One was found on the cliffs at Lerness on 17th October and was still present the following day. Although elusive for protracted periods, it did show quite well on occasions and the distinctive call was heard at least twice.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A relatively quiet spring saw three records in May, with two on 3rd and singles on 21st and 26th. In autumn the first was seen on 10th August, increasing to four the following day (the highest autumn count since 2006), with one or two until 16th and a new bird on 20th August. The only other record was three on 25th September.

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

Birds were seen virtually daily through the spring after the first arrival on 22nd March, a fairly typical arrival date. Increasing numbers in April saw a peak of 43 on 21st, the highest spring count since the record 50 in 1970. After a small fall in numbers, there were 20 on 30th April and then birds were present throughout May, with peaks early in the month of ten on 8th and 10th, then 20 on 22nd May. At least six were still present in June and three remained throughout July. Migrants were seen from early August, but the monthly peak was just six. Small numbers in September peaked at five, with the peak autumn count occurring on 16th October when nine were present. The peak count in early November was three and a late bird was seen on 26th–29th November. There were several records of ‘Siberian’ Chiffchaffs *P.c.tristis*, including birds confirmed by DNA analysis, with sightings of up to two on ten October dates from 6th and five dates in early November.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus****Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

The first was seen on 10th April (the same date as 2011) and sightings increased through the month to a peak of seven on 29th April. After small numbers in early May, an arrival on 8th saw 41 recorded, with smaller numbers throughout the rest of the month and other waves of migration bringing 13 on 20th and 15 on 23rd May. There were small numbers in June, with an arrival bringing ten on 9th, and the last of the spring was recorded on 23rd June. One on 17th–20th July preceded the first juvenile on 5th August, with numbers building slowly until an arrival from 12th saw numbers increasing to 85 on 15th and an impressive 102 on 18th August. There were then smaller counts until the end of the month whilst virtually daily sightings in September were all less than ten, other than 18 on 22nd. Four lingered into the next month, with the last seen on 7th October.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla****Common spring and autumn migrant***

A female at the Obs on 27th March beat the previous earliest record (set in 2010) by a day, with a female at Wirvie on 31st March possibly the same bird. The next was not seen until 18th April, after which there were daily sightings until 16th June. During this time there were several waves of arrivals with peaks of 13 on 21st April, 11 on 30th April and 1st May, 23 on 8th (the peak spring count), 13 on 19th, 14 on 22nd and ten on 27th May, and six on 5th and 10th June. Scattered sightings of spring migrants continued until 28th June whilst unusual summer records of one at the Obs on 23rd July and Schoolton on 26th–28th July may have involved the same bird. The first autumn record was on 12th August, but there were no more until six singles between 5th and 18th September. Another arrival began with three on 22nd September, with daily records rising to 14 on 27th September. There were regular sightings in October until 23rd, with a mid-month arrival seeing the autumn peak of 16 on 14th October. Daily sightings from 28th October to 8th November peaked at four and a late single was seen on 16th November.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One on 29th April was the earliest arrival since 2003, but there were no more until 17th May, when up to four were regularly seen until the end of the month. The peak spring passage occurred between 6th and 14th June, with nine on 10th and 13th and then scattered records until 25th June. An arrival in August commenced on 12th, increasing to 25 on 15th, with daily sightings to the end of the month. Up to four were seen on 17 dates in September and there were five singles in October before a late bird was at Schoolton on 6th November.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

Regular autumn migrant, vagrant in spring (three records)

After the first on 12th August there were daily sightings from 14th August to 11th September, with a peak of four on 24th August. Another two were involved in sightings from 14th–16th September and then a further arrival from 21st–24th September peaked at five on 22nd (the highest count of the year). There were further sightings on 26th–30th September and 5th and 9th October, bringing the total for the autumn to approximately 28 individuals, a reasonable year.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first arrival was on the typical date of 7th May, with up to two until 10th May. The next sighting was three on 20th May, increasing to 19 by 23rd, with smaller numbers regularly through to 19th June, including small arrivals of six on 27th May and four on 7th–8th June. After the first two autumn arrivals were seen on 15th August, numbers increased to five by 21st, with up to two regularly until 18th September and three on 10th September. The next arrival commenced on 21st September with five, increasing to eight the next day, then an autumn peak of nine on 23rd, with decreasing numbers until 6th October and another on 9th October. Late birds on 24th and 30th October (with the latter lingering until 1st November) were both identified as one of the eastern races, based on plumage and measurements, with the former having DNA consistent with *S.c.halimondendri*.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

In the spring there were up to nine between 8th and 12th May, a late date for the first arrivals. There were then regular records from 17th May to 3rd June, with numbers generally up to three, but a peak of ten on 22nd May and a further arrival of six on 27th May. The next were five on 8th June, increasing to eight on 9th–10th, with scattered records of up to two until 29th June. One at the Obs on 6th–11th July was a scarce summer record. Autumn passage was light, with up to three from 15th–24th August then one or two on 13 dates in September and the final two on 2nd October.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans***Rare migrant; 79 previous records (75 in spring and four in autumn)***

A first-summer female was seen in the south of the island on 26th May and was relocated at the Observatory the following day. It was trapped in the Obs plantation where measurements identified it as belonging to the eastern race *albistriata*, which was later confirmed by DNA analysis.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola***Vagrant; 22 previous records all between mid-September and mid-October***

One was found by the cemetery on 3rd October and was later trapped in fields between Utra and Haa. This species has now been recorded in five of the last six years on Fair Isle.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata***Rare autumn migrant; 81 previous records***

The first was trapped at Da Water on 23rd September, with another trapped there on 26th September. The latter bird then reappeared at Field Ditch on 3rd October where it lingered until 22nd October. The longest stay of any British Lanceolated Warbler was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that it had lost its tail. The third of the year was an incredibly confiding bird at Vatstrass on 2nd October, making this the best year since 2007.

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

The first was on 24th April, and a very quiet spring saw further singles on 30th April, 1st May and two on 9th May. A better autumn saw sightings on seven August dates from 12th, and 1st–2nd September, all singles except two on 17th August. One of the most interesting birds of the year was the 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler trapped in the Obs garden on 20th September, potentially the first British record of the subspecies *straminea*. The last of the year was present on 26th–27th September.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis***Vagrant; 14 previous records, seven in May–June and seven in September–October***

One was found in Steensi Geo on 11th June and remained here until 13th June. It was missing several tail feathers and coverts having presumably escaped the clutches of a potential predator. Remarkably a bird seen briefly at the Obs on 24th June was trapped and found to be the same individual. It went on to linger until 15th July, often showing very well just outside the library windows. An elusive juvenile was at the Obs from 11th–16th September, only being seen when it was trapped on the first date and, sadly, found dead on the latter date. There have now been six records in the last seven years.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The first of the year arrived on 20th May, increasing to four by 22nd May and an impressive ten (including one found dead) on 23rd May, a day count only beaten by the 11 recorded on two dates in spring 1992. Between one and five were present until 30th May, with ringing indicating some turnover of birds in this period. A further small arrival saw three on 6th June, with one to two present until 16th June and at least five individuals involved. A relatively quiet autumn saw one in Skinners Glig on 13th August and two on 24th August, with one remaining until 26th August.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

The 30th April saw the first, a typical arrival date, and regular sightings in May were of low numbers, with a peak of just six on 27th May. Sightings in June were restricted to six dates from 7th–15th, peaking at three on 9th–10th and two on 22nd, with one the following day. A quiet autumn saw five singles in August from 11th then up to two from 5th–8th September and singles on 14th, 17th and 18th September.

***Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*

Vagrant; 18 previous records, 14 in autumn (13 September, one October) and four in spring (late May/early June)

One was trapped in the Plantation on 30th June and lingered at the Obs until 11th July, the latest spring arrival by three weeks and the longest staying Paddyfield Warbler on Fair Isle. One found at Setter on 24th September moved to Stackhoull where it lingered until 1st October, often showing well.

***Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Rare migrant; 28 previous records, 20 in autumn and eight in spring

Another good year; the first was at Schoolton from 22nd September to 1st October, one was at the Obs on 29th September and one was in the Walli Burn on 11th October. The Obs bird was found under particularly unusual circumstances when it flew into the lounge through an open door and stunned itself against a window. It was rescued from behind a sofa and, after recovering, was ringed and released.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

The first of the year was a bird occasionally singing at Springfield at 5th June, a typical date. A single was present from 7th–10th June, with a second bird on 9th June. There were further birds on 15th June (trapped) and at Schoolton from 16th–22nd June, with another at Haa on 22nd June. One trapped on 24th June lingered at the Obs until 2nd July and another joined it from 30th June to 2nd July after being trapped in the Gully, giving a total of eight for the spring. The only autumn record was of one in the Walli Burn on 12th September.

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

One lingered at Schoolton from 28th May–5th June, during which there was another at Chalet on 3rd June. Further spring migrants were also seen on 8th–9th June and from 16th June to 2nd July, with a second bird present on 23rd June. In the autumn there were regular sightings from 15th August to 2nd September, peaking at five on 18th and 20th August. In September there were records on 2nd, 12th and 21st, then two arrived on 26th, with one lingering until 29th September.

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

One on 31st January was an unusual winter sighting and there were no spring records. One on 19th October was the vanguard of an impressive autumn movement with two on 20th and 24th October then virtually daily sightings from 27th October to 17th November. Two waves of arrivals seemed to occur, peaking at 32 on 29th October then 110 on 5th November, with ringing indicating a high turnover of birds. After 25 on 9th November, numbers dropped away and were generally in single figures. Another small arrival from 23rd–28th November peaked at 14 on 25th, with the only bird after this date a very late migrant on 23rd December.

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***

Singing birds were heard from 13th March and nest-building was first noted on 28th March. Wrens are not counted on census, but individuals trapped on 21st and 22nd April may have belonged to a race other than *fridariensis*, suggesting that migrants were moving through. Dedicated surveys produced a total of 38 territories (one more than 2011), including inland territories at Gilsetter and Stackhoull, although only the former was thought to have actually involved a breeding attempt. The first fledged chicks were seen on 10th June (two days later than 2011) and fledged broods were noted in 18 of the territories, this representing an absolute minimum of successful nesting attempts.

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

As usual there were few counts made during the year, although over 750 were in the croft lands in late March and early April, which could have involved passage migrants. The first eggs were noted on 5th May (nine days later than 2011) and the first fledged young were recorded on 6th June (six days later than 2011). Of a study of 59 nests, there was a mean clutch size of 4.6 and a breeding success of 87%.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus****Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

A male at the Mast on 30th March was the first and may have been the same bird near the Ringing Hut from 2nd–10th April. The next was on 19th April with numbers rising to 13 the following day, then 23 on 21st with daily sightings of decreasing

numbers, until the end of the month saw another arrival peaking on 30th when 24 were present. Numbers declined through early May until a further wave of migrants on 8th brought 21, with up to three then lingering until 22nd May. Another unusual arrival concerned regular sightings of up to four in Kirn o'Scroo between 29th May and 14th June before the last of a good spring was seen on 16th June in Gun nawark. Autumn passage began with five on 25th September, rising to six the following day and then smaller numbers present until 3rd October. One on 10th October was the vanguard of a good run of autumn sightings, with numbers gradually rising to 18 on 14th October and between one and seven seen regularly until 23rd October.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers over-winter; has bred (last recorded 2011)

There were around 50 present in January, a relatively high count for the winter, with numbers decreasing until only single figure counts were being made by late March. Although present daily throughout the year the first arrival was not until 10th April, when there were 25, and a spring peak of 27 on 18th April. The peak in May was just ten on 11th. There were then two in June and one summering bird present at the Obs throughout July to late September. The first few migrants started to be noted from 24th September, with the first significant fall of 124 on 12th October, increasing to 292 on 14th and decreasing to 66 before a further fall on 23rd saw 174 present. Counts in November were consistently around 20–30 then ten throughout much of December until a small arrival late in the month saw 26 in the south on 26th December.

***Black-throated Thrush** *Turdus atrogularis*

Vagrant; 12 previous records, nine in October, two in April, one in December

A first-winter male was found along the Hill Dyke on 6th October before relocating to Barkland where it showed well for the afternoon. Its arrival, which was five days earlier than any previous autumn record of the species on Fair Isle, coincided with a small fall of Redwing, with which the bird associated.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

There were up to nine in January, 18 in February and eight in March, all fairly typical numbers for the time of year. There were 14 on 10th April with numbers rising to 229 on 19th, with smaller numbers until the end of the month. In May there were occasional singles early in the month, then an arrival of 212 on 8th May, with numbers dropping away sharply until the last two of the spring were seen on 17th May. The first autumn bird was an early individual on 6th August, with sightings of between one and three from 15th–20th August, 28th August to 5th September, 9th–13th September and 25th September to 3rd October. There were then seven on 11th October, slowly increasing to the year's peak of 291 on 20th October. After that there were smaller numbers, with further peaks of 100 on 31st October and 140 on 25th November. Single figures remained into early December, but over 20 were present by the end of the month.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos****Common spring and autumn migrant, sometimes over-winters; has bred (last recorded 1926)***

There were at least two apparently overwintering, with three on 12th and four on 28th March the peak counts for the first winter period. The first significant fall was 39 on 10th April and numbers dropped before another arrival from 17th April saw numbers steadily rise to 112 on 21st before falling away rapidly to single figures by early May. A small arrival on 9th May brought 29 to the island, with scattered records of small numbers until 3rd June. One on 20th August was an early autumn returnee, with the next arrival not until the end of September when counts from 23rd–27th increased from two to 61, then 173, 220 and finally 234. By early October just single figures remained, then 86 arrived on 12th, increasing to a peak of 171 the following day, with fluctuating numbers finally dropping away by the end of the month and up to two present until the end of the year.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus****Common spring and autumn migrant, sometimes over-winters; has bred once (1935)***

Good numbers were present in the early part of the year, with up to 50 in January and February. Numbers declined in March until 27th when an arrival saw a count of 55. Small numbers were seen throughout April, with a peak of 37 on 18th–19th and one sang at the Obs for several days at the start of the month. There were regular small counts in May until 12th, peaking at 16 on 8th and scattered sightings until the last of the spring on 30th May. The first autumn bird arrived on 22nd September, with numbers rising to 40 on 25th, then the next fall was not until 6th October when there were 61. The main arrival occurred from 11th October, when there were 925, with the peak count of 2,744 the next day, before numbers fell until another fall brought 1,698 on 20th October. Birds moved through rapidly and the maximum count for November was 35, although 54 were recorded later in December as hard weather brought a few more thrushes to the island.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus****Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

The first was seen on 3rd March and a reasonable spring passage saw one or two recorded on 15 dates between 10th April and 5th May. Birds were regularly present between 27th September and 3rd October, with a peak of three on 26th September and singles again from 12th–20th October, with two on 14th–15th October.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata****Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

The first was on 8th May (the same date as 2011), with up to three until 12th May. There were then three on 20th May, increasing to 64 on 23rd May, the second highest count on Fair Isle, beaten only by the amazing passage of spring 1992. There were then regular sightings until 29th June, with further small peaks of arrivals including seven on 10th and four on 19th June. Autumn passage was much quieter, with counts

of up to two on four dates between 12th and 20th August. There were then three on 22nd September and one remaining until 27th September.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common spring and autumn migrant

At least two were present at the start of the year, with the first arrivals noted at the end of March. April saw an arrival take place from 10th, increasing to 60 on 19th, 204 on 20th, then 407 on 21st, the fourth highest spring count for Fair Isle. Numbers gradually decreased after that with only 66 left by the end of the month. A considerable turnover of birds was estimated during this time, with over 360 ringed during the spring. There were daily sightings in May, although generally less than 20 and at least two birds remained for the summer, with occasional other birds appearing during June and July. Autumn arrivals started on 24th September, with small numbers until 24 on 16th October, rising to 34 on 20th, the peak autumn count. There were up to five early in November, with eight in mid-month and at least three remained through December.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia

Rare migrant; 54 previous records, 45 in spring and nine in autumn

One was trapped in the Gully on 20th May and then lingered at the Obs until 22nd May. A new individual was seen near the Single Dyke, then trapped in Roadside trap on 25th May. Continuing the recent run of autumn sightings one was trapped in Gully on 24th August and seen again on 26th at the Obs. A good year, although multiple annual occurrences are not unusual.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos

Rare migrant; 49 previous records, 40 in spring and nine in autumn

One was trapped in the Plantation on 21st May, the first spring record since 2009.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Regular spring and scarce autumn migrant

The first was a fine male in Hjon Park on 2nd May, with sightings from 8th–12th May peaking at three on the latter date. Late May saw two on 20th, one on 22nd and two on 23rd, giving a total of probably ten birds, a reasonable spring showing. In the autumn one lingered at Stackhoull from 22nd September to 1st October, one was at Furse on 26th September and a late bird was present around the Plantation on 30th–31st October.

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope

Vagrant, three previous records, all in October

A first-winter female was seen going to roost at Schoolton on 23rd October. Although not seen on 24th, it was relocated in the Walli Burn on 25th and lingered in this area until 3rd November. The ninth Rubythroat for Britain, this was the second to arrive on Fair Isle on this date and the longest staying for the island. All four of Fair Isle's records have been first-winter females, although curiously the other three Rubythroats seen on Shetland have all been males.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva****Rare spring and scarce autumn migrant***

The first spring record since 2009 was a female or young male at Wirvie on 8th May. In the autumn there were singles at Troila on 22nd September, Hesswalls on 30th September and the Obs on 11th October.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca****Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Four arrived on 1st May, with one on 2nd–3rd, then three on 8th May, increasing to nine the following day, with smaller numbers remaining until 14th May. Another wave of arrivals from 18th–24th peaked at five on 20th May, with the last of the spring on 8th–9th June. In autumn there were virtually daily records from 12th–31st August, peaking at seven on 14th and several smaller peaks of up to four suggesting some turnover of birds. The next records were not until 22nd September when six arrived, with one to five recorded until 28th September.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros****Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn***

Typically one of the earliest migrants to arrive, the first two returned on 5th March, although there were no more until 23rd March, with sightings to the end of the month peaking at four on 26th March. There were regular records throughout April, with peaks of just three on 29th and two on 18th and 22nd; many of the records possibly referred to a long-staying male. Later spring records included sightings from 21st–23rd May (with two on 22nd), 27th–29th May and 8th and 19th June. A quiet autumn saw three singles in August from 20th and records on 12th–15th, 18th, 20th (2) and 24th October.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus****Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

A male at Linni Geo on 24th April was the first, with further records on 30th April and 1st May then none until a fall of 15 on 8th May. There were then virtually daily sightings until the end of the month, with another arrival detected on 20th May when 12 were counted. The last spring records were of one or two on four dates between 8th and 16th June. Early autumn records consisted of August sightings on 15th, 16th (2) and 24th before westerly winds put paid to migration and none were seen until daily records from 23rd September to 3rd October, which rose to a maximum of 13 on 27th September. Late migrants consisted of up to three on six dates from 11th–24th October.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra****Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

A relatively late first arrival was on 3rd May, with numbers then rising to a spring peak of ten on 10th May. There were then smaller numbers present regularly throughout the month with up to three still present until mid-June. One bird then summered in the area around Quoy and Da Water, the first to oversummer on the island, although there

are two previous July records. Autumn passage started from 14th August and picked up to a peak of eight on 20th August, with up to three seen regularly throughout September, then late migrants on 2nd (2), 12th and 20th October.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

The first was a female on 27th March, with two the next day, one on 5th April, then daily sightings from 8th April. The first major arrival was 65 on 18th April, with numbers increasing to 160 by the end of the month and the first 'Greenland' Wheatears *O.o.leucorhoa* noted from 25th April. The peak counts in May were 325 on 9th May then 361 on 17th May, the highest count since 2005. After 22nd May numbers settled below 150, with daily counts generally between 40 and 70 through the summer. The first fledged birds were noted from 20th June and numbers built up in August as family parties were joined by migrants, including 173 on 15th August that included *leucorhoa* birds. From 25th August counts were less than 100, with the peak in September of 82 on 11th, then single figure counts from 6th October until the last on 22nd October.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred twice (1973 and 1993)

A rare overwintering bird was present until March at least. The first migrant was noted on 21st–22nd March, then there were scattered ones and twos until a larger arrival saw daily records from 15th April to 31st May. Counts were regularly of up to 30 during the early part of this period, with a peak of 76 on 21st April (the largest spring count since 1998), but just single figure counts after 3rd May. Late migrants were seen on 2nd–4th and 18th June, then two arrived at Schoolton from 21st June, lingering until 15th July at least, the first summering birds since the last pair bred. Sightings at Chalet on 2nd August and 1st September may well have involved one of the summering birds. From 9th September there were regular singles, then three on 24th increased to 18 on 26th September and fewer than ten daily until 6th October. A later wave of migrants from 11th–27th October peaked at six on 14th, with the last two seen on 30th October.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Resident, breeds in small numbers

The breeding population was probably in the region of 20–30 pairs, with the first fledged young recorded on 2nd June (one day earlier than 2011). Autumn counts were lower than 2011, with a peak of just 83. This could suggest that the breeding season was not as productive as the previous year, with ringing data offering some support to this theory as the percentage of juveniles ringed fell from 75.6% in 2011 to 56.6% this year.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A quiet year, with three on 20th May and a single at the Obs on 4th November the only records.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava****Regular spring and autumn migrant*****Blue-headed Wagtail *M.f.flava***

The first *flava* wagtail of the year was a male of this subspecies at Shirva on 20th–22nd April. It was followed by further records in May of singles on 8th–10th, 14th–17th (with two on the latter date), 18th, 21st and 23rd May. One of the individuals on 17th May appeared darker-headed than a typical *M.f.flava* and may have been a hybrid or one of the southern races.

Grey-headed Wagtail *M.f.thunbergi*

Several sightings in May consisted of singles on 9th, 18th, 20th, 22nd–24th (with two on the first date) and 27th May. One was on Meoness on 8th–9th June and the last *flava* wagtail of the spring was a bright female on Bunes on 21st–22nd June.

Yellow Wagtail *M.f.flavissima*

The only confirmed record of this race was a male on 25th April.

Unidentified *flava* wagtail

Most sightings of birds unidentified to subspecies were flyover birds and consisted of spring sightings on 26th April, 9th, 11th (2), 12th, 14th (2), 16th, 20th (2), 22nd and 27th May and 8th June. With two Grey-headed also present on 20th May, this date provided the peak count of *flava* wagtails for the year, with four present in total. The only two autumn sightings were both of birds unidentified to subspecies, with singles on 25th August and 4th–5th October.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola***Rare migrant; 66 previous records, 63 in autumn and three in spring***

The second consecutive year with five records began with two on Utra scrape on 14th–15th August, with one still present the following day. Another was found at Easter Lother Water on 25th August. On 21st September one flew over a group of birders watching an Arctic Warbler at the Vaadal before landing briefly in Gilsetter, than settling at Setter. The final sighting was of one that flew south over the crowd assembled at the Sheep Cru following the hill sheep round up on 5th October and later showed well in the Walli Burn.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea****Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred twice (1950 and 1989)***

One was seen on 22nd April and a male was in the Gully on 28th–29th May. A relatively quiet autumn passage was restricted to one to three seen on seven dates between 13th and 23rd October.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first was at the Airstrip on 4th and 6th March (12 days earlier than 2011) and from 13th March there were regular records, increasing to 11 by the end of the month, with the first 'White' Wagtail *M.a.alba* on 27th March. In April the peak count of *alba* wagtails was 26, with a maximum of eight White Wagtails. In May the peak count was also 26, including 16 White Wagtails, with only small numbers seen by the end of the month and the last White Wagtail noted on 31st May. A minimum of three pairs raised chicks (at North Light, the Havens and South Light) with the first young fledging on 23rd June. The regular roost in the Obs garden started to build from early August, contributing to the autumn's highest count; 101 on 29th August. After this numbers decreased rapidly, with around 25 by mid-September and less than ten regularly the following month, with the last on 25th October.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*

Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

Sightings of one to two were virtually daily from 25th September to 10th October, with a minimum of five individuals thought to have been involved, an improvement on the single records from the last two years. The first lingered around Leogh and Meoness throughout, the second was seen on 26th September on Meoness, the third on Vaasetter on 27th September, the fourth in the north from 30th September to 1st October and the fifth in the south on 3rd October.

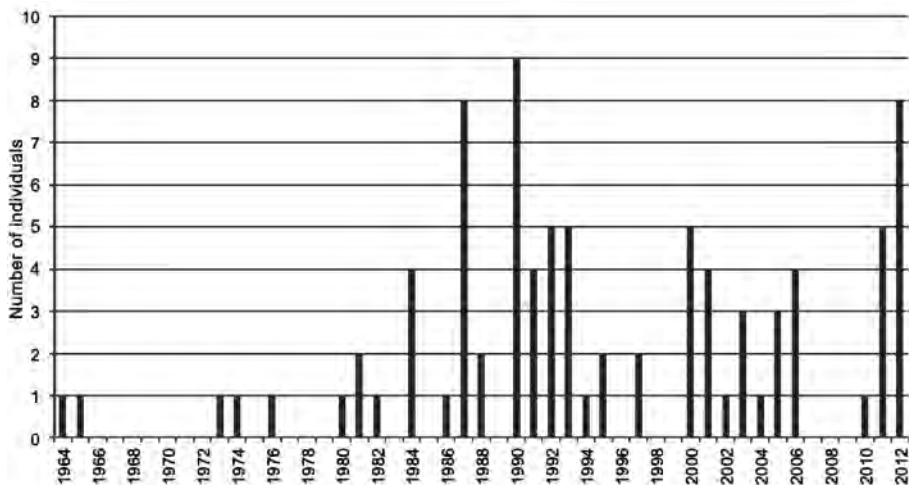


Figure 2. Annual occurrences of Olive-backed Pipits on Fair Isle. Note the increase in records, which is in line with national occurrences (the 1964 and 1965 birds were only the second and third for the UK). The species also seems to be prone to fluctuations, with the last two years apparently part of another upsweep in records.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni***Rare migrant; 79 previous records, 77 in autumn and two in spring***

The first was a sometimes elusive individual at Haa from 24th–29th September, during which time a second individual was found at Setter on 27th–28th September. Two were found simultaneously on 11th October, one at Vaila's Trees that lingered until 12th and a one-day bird at Lower Leogh. An amazing set of records began on 16th October when one was found at Schoolton, with a different bird at Field the following day. These two were assumed to have moved to Meadow Burn on 18th October when four were present there, an impressive flock! Two to three were present until 24th with singles recorded on 25th–26th October. A minimum of eight has been bettered only by the nine recorded in 1990 (although eight were also recorded in 1987).

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis****Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

After the first on 18th April there were regular sightings of up to three until the end of the month, then daily sightings until 29th May. Two main waves of arrivals during this time saw peaks of 59 on 9th (the highest spring count since 1999) and 46 on 17th May. The final spring migrants were up to two on 8th–11th June. There was a peak of six from 15th–24th August, then a single on 11th September before 13 arrived on 24th September, rising to 20 the next day, and daily sightings until 23rd October, although counts were all in single figures after 27th September.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi***Rare autumn migrant; 42 previous records, all in September or October***

The first since 2009 was found late on the evening of 1st October at Shirva and was still present the following day, where it showed very well in roadside fields.



Pechora Pipit by W. Miles

Tundra Bean Goose, March, School © D. Parnaby



Green-winged Teal, April, Da Water © D. Parnaby



Great Northern Diver, December, North Haven
© D. Parnaby



White-tailed Eagle, April, Obs © D. Parnaby



Spotted Crake, May, Chalet © R. Rosser



Crane, June, Obs © D. Parnaby



Ring-billed Gull, June, Kirki Geo © *D. Parnaby*



Wood Sandpiper, May, Da Water © *D. Parnaby*



Iceland Gull, January, Leogh © *D. Parnaby*



Short-eared Owl, December, Setter © *D. Parnaby*



Golden Oriole, June, Kirn o'Skroo © D. Parnaby



Hoopoe, May, Dronger © D. Parnaby



Blue Tit, October, Haa © T. Hyndman



Great Tit, School, November © D. Parnaby



Red-backed Shrike, May, Obs © D. Back



Arctic Warbler, September, Shirva © S. Arlow



'Eastern' Subalpine Warbler,
May, Obs © W. Miles



Lanceolated Warbler, October, Vatstrass © D. Parnaby



Icterine Warbler, May, Utra © R. Rosser



River Warbler, July, Obs © D. Parnaby



Paddyfield Warbler, September, Stackhoull © S. Arlow



Blyth's Reed Warbler, September, Schoolton © S. Arlow



Black-throated Thrush, October, Barkland © S. Maxwell



Nightingale, May, Plantation © D. Back



Thrush Nightingale, May, Gully © D. Parnaby



Siberian Rubythroat, October, Walli Burn © D. Parnaby



Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll, June, Obs © *D. Parnaby*



Olive-backed Pipit, September, Haa © *S. Arlow*



Buff-bellied Pipit, September, Obs © *I. Andrews*



Common Rosefinch, May, Haa © *Henry. Hyndman*



Ortolan, May, Stoneybrek © *D. Parnaby*



Hawfinch, April, Lower Stoneybrek © *D. Parnaby*



© S. Arlow



© S. Arlow



Magnolia Warbler, September, Lerness © T. Loseby.

A fine day's birding was capped by the second British record of this superb American warbler, a sight that will linger long in the memories of the 34 lucky observers present on the island at the time.

© S. Arlow



© I. Andrews



Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first was an early bird on 1st February, with no more until 15th March when eight were noted. Passage saw numbers build up to 117 on 27th March, then fluctuating counts in April saw numbers generally rising, with peaks of 194 on 13th, 270 on 18th and 476 on 30th April. In May there were regularly over 220 until 20th, with numbers dropping off to less than 100 after that. Counts in June were from 28 to 57, with the first fledged chicks noted on 13th June. Numbers increased through August to a peak of 355 on 31st, then peaks in September included 438 on 9th and 461 on 18th September. From 5th October numbers decreased to less than 100 and in the following month there were just single figures until the last on 26th November.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

Resident, breeds in small numbers, also frequent spring and autumn migrant

Numbers throughout the year are hard to judge due to the species' preferred habitats and habits, but the pattern followed recent years with smaller numbers early in the year and an increase in the spring (maximum counts in April and May were 58 for both months). Singing was noted from 23rd March and the first fledged youngsters from 10th June (a week later than 2011), with numbers then building up as families appeared on the clifftops. By August there were also probably migrants moving through, with a peak count of 149 on 19th, peaks of 109 in September and 72 in October (although by the latter part of the month counts were usually 30–40). There were no winter counts, although numbers were clearly lower. Recent ringing has shown that at least some of the Fair Isle breeding birds (both adults and youngsters) move to north-east Scotland in the winter.

'Scandinavian' Rock Pipit *A.p.littoralis*

This scarce spring migrant was well represented this year with sightings on 30th March, six dates between 9th–30th April and eleven dates in May, all sightings were singles except three on 10th May.

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens

Vagrant; three previous records all found in September

The third record since 2007 occurred on 29th September when one was found at Furse and showed well, before moving to the Obs wader scrape later in the day.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common spring and autumn migrant

One was seen on 16th March, then from 26th March onwards there were regular sightings of up to three until an arrival of 22 on 19th April, after which there were smaller counts, peaking at nine in May, until 2nd June. Autumn passage began on 24th September and numbers increased to ten by 26th, with smaller numbers until 5th October. A further arrival saw sightings daily from 11th–31st October, rising to 19 on 16th, with scattered records of up to three until 26th November.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla***Common spring and autumn migrant**

There were two on 24th March, singles over 10th–12th April and then heavy passage saw one on 17th April increase to 18 the next day and 44 by 21st with smaller counts (although ringing showed considerable turnover of birds) until the next large arrival, which brought 188 on 8th May, the highest spring count since 2001. Smaller numbers lingered until 28th May and a late bird appeared on 14th–16th June. Three on 23rd September increased to 90 on 26th, with smaller numbers present until waves of arrivals of 26 on 2nd October, then 38 on 11th October that increased to 255 on 13th, then 314 on 16th (the highest autumn count since 2004). There were 96 still on 23rd October but then no more than 23 until the end of the month and just single figures remained until 8th November.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris***Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A quiet spring saw singles on 9th and 24th–30th April. Autumn passage occurred between 10th and 27th October, with a maximum of 12 on 17th, the largest count since 2007.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis***Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

There were spring records on 28th April and 20th May, whilst one on 1st July was only the second record for this month following a group of four in July 1999. The first autumn bird was on 20th August, but there were no further records until sightings of up to four from 2nd to 7th October. One on 14th October preceded regular sightings until 26th, with a peak of four from 20th–21st October. Further singles on 5th and 13th November completed the best autumn showing since 2002.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus***Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

The first migrant appeared on 15th March, with up to three regularly until the end of the month. Regular sightings of small numbers in April peaked at 18 on 16th and a fluctuating presence in May had peaks of 28 on 2nd, 39 on 8th and 18 on 20th, whilst one was singing at the Obs on 15th May. As in 2011, there were regular sightings in June, usually one to three but six on 14th, although after 26th the only summer record was two on 21st July. From 14th August there were again regular sightings, then four on 1st September preceded smaller numbers until 5th, one on 13th and regular records from 17th until early October, peaking at eight on 26th September. A final wave of migrants arrived from 10th October, increasing to 21 on 17th with smaller numbers present until the last was seen on 27th October.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

One on 2nd April preceded regular sightings of up to six until early May, with scattered sightings later in the month. The first records in June were two that arrived and immediately started nest-building at Schoolton on 16th, although they then moved to the north of the island where they were recorded until the end of the month, with irregular sightings throughout July. At the end of July and early August three young juveniles were trapped, as was an adult female in wing and tail moult and this family party may have been largely responsible for sightings of up to six in August and September. It seems likely that this group represents the first breeding record for Fair Isle, perhaps not a surprising development given the increasing population in south Mainland Shetland. In October there were between one and three from 14th–27th, which were probably migrants and five on 8th November were the last of autumn. There were unusual winter records on 6th and 26th December.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers breed and over-winter

Maximum monthly counts of Twite on Fair Isle 2012:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
16	7	33	58	39	40	n/c	195	280	197	33	5

A very similar pattern to recent years, with small numbers in the winter, signs of spring passage in April and numbers settling down to a breeding population of 10–20 pairs. The first fledged youngsters were noted on 24th June, almost three weeks later than 2011. Numbers built up in early autumn, although the peak was somewhat lower than 2011, with numbers dropping away in the last week of October and just small numbers again seen later in the year as most of the Fair Isle breeding population moved to Orkney for the winter.

Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret*

Scarce migrant in spring, summer and autumn

In the spring there were singles on 22nd April and 24th May. In autumn one was seen on 7th October and sightings of up to two on five dates between 21st and 28th October probably related to just two individuals, with one of these present until 12th November.

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were up to three from 27th–29th March and up to four on 11 dates in April, before almost daily sightings of up to five in May and records on seven dates from 9th–22nd June. All of those identified to subspecies in the spring were ‘Mealy’ Redpoll *C.f.flammea*. An unidentified Redpoll was the first of the autumn on 5th September, then from the 10th there was a ‘North-western’ Redpoll *C.f.rostrata/islandica*, along with two not identified to subspecies. There were then regular sightings throughout September and early October of up to seven ‘North-

western' Redpolls, with five 'Mealy' from 21st–25th and ten on 30th September. The remainder of October saw four 'Mealy' and up to three 'North-western', then three 'Mealy' were trapped at the Obs on 4th November, with one remaining until 12th. Several 'North-western' birds were trapped during the autumn, with measurements suggesting the majority of them were *C.f.rostrata*.

***Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni*

Rare migrant; approximately 95 previous records, most in autumn with around eight in spring

Coues' Arctic Redpoll *C.h.exilipes*

Mid-summer often sees 'northern' finches moving through Fair Isle in small numbers, but a worn individual of this race seen briefly at the Obs then trapped at the Plantation on 14th July was still unexpected, although not unprecedented as one was trapped on 19th July 2007.

Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll *C.h.hornemanni*

A large, pale, worn Redpoll (probably a first-summer female) trapped in the Plantation on 4th June was identified on plumage and biometrics as the second spring record of *hornemanni* for Fair Isle, following one in April 1990. A more typical occurrence was an individual briefly on the Observatory before flying south on 18th October with presumably the same bird near the Chapel on 25th October.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Irregular irruptive summer and autumn migrant

A juvenile was at the Obs on 27th May and one was present on 6th June. There were sightings of one to five on seven dates between 12th August and 2nd September and up to seven on seven dates from 14th–31st October, with around 26 individuals involved in the latter arrival. Further late singles were seen on 11th and 13th November.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Although spring passage was restricted to daily sightings from 21st–31st May, this included a peak of five on 24th including both 'red' and 'orange' males, the latter an unusual colour variant last seen on the island in 2002. Autumn passage began on the typical date of 14th August, with another on 20th then regular sightings from 25th August to 16th September, peaking at four on 7th and 9th September. Up to two were present on 21st–24th September and a late bird was recorded on 21st October. The autumn records involved a minimum of 14 individuals.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The record for number of occurrences was broken for the second year running, following the eight in 2011. A male was around Stackhoull and Haa from 15th–16th April, with another male at Haa on 25th April and a female there on 27th April. A

female at the Obs from 30th April to 3rd May was a new bird and was joined by a male from 2nd–4th May. Two on 8th May (a male at the Obs and a female at Schoolton) were probably responsible for sightings of a female at the Observatory and Kenaby on 9th and a male at School on 10th May. On 18th June one was found dead in the Gully, then a female was present at the Obs and Plantation from 19th–23rd June, but was killed by a cat on the latter date. Autumn sightings of one at Lerness on 24th September and one at Stackhoull the following day were assumed to be the same individual, the tenth of the year.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters

Up to twelve were seen in the early winter period, and spring passage saw regular sightings of up to nine from late March through to 29th May. The first returning autumn bird was at the Vaadal on 11th September, with numbers then building steadily through the month to 100 on 30th and then fluctuating, with a peak of 117 on 16th October. From the last week of October to late November numbers were never greater than 35 and only single figure counts were recorded in December.

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

Another reasonable spring passage saw singles on 27th March and 1st April, then regular sightings from 12th April to 18th May, peaking at five on 16th April, with at least 15 birds involved. A late male was at the airstrip on 6th–7th June. Two on 5th September began autumn passage with numbers gradually increasing through the month and peaking at 41 on 22nd September. There were almost daily sightings of up to ten in October until 24th with the last two of the year on 29th October.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Regular spring and autumn migrant

An average spring showing consisted of birds on 15th March, two on 20th May (with one until 24th) and a late bird on 16th June. A quiet autumn saw one bird present from 13th–18th October, with a second on 17th, and presumably the same bird on 22nd October.

***Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana*

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A female frequented the road verge near Upper Stoneybrek from 9th–10th May, the first spring record since 2006, since when there have been three totally blank years for this declining species.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring (27 previous spring records)

The first of the autumn was a confiding bird in the Havens on 24th September, the next day there were also birds at Kenaby and Lower Stoneybreck, with the 26th seeing the island total rise to four. On the 27th September there were still four, with the Havens bird still present and three together at the Kenaby oat crop. The flock of three remained on 28th September, with up to two present until 3rd October. One was in Gilsetter on 23rd October, with presumably the same bird trapped at the Obs the following evening. One at the School on 25th was a new (unringed) bird, with presumably the same bird seen here on 28th. A minimum of six individuals represents another good autumn.

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

There were early singles on 5th and 8th–9th March then regular sightings from 25th March to 9th June. During this time numbers rose to four at the end of April and peaked at 21 on 8th May, with regular counts of over ten until later in the month, after which there were just scattered singles. Autumn passage consisted of up to three from 24th September to 4th October then regular sightings from 10th–31st October, rising to ten on 13th and 18 on 18th October.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra****Former breeding species (last in 1905) and regular visitor, but vagrant since 1980***

An elusive bird was in the area of Taft on 19th–27th April and represents only the ninth record since 1979, although five of these have occurred since 2005.

Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia***Vagrant; no previous records***

The highlight of the birding year for most (certainly the lucky 34 who saw it!), this stunning American vagrant was found on the cliffs of Lerness on the late afternoon of 23rd September. Thought to be a first-winter male, it showed very well on the cliffs until it was watched going to roost at 7.25pm. Sadly, there was no sign of the bird from first light the next day, so it eluded any chance of a twitch. It arrived after three weeks of westerly winds had just given way to a light easterly and just four days short of the 31st anniversary of the only other British record (on the Isles of Scilly).

Ringling summary

Will Miles

A total of 4,497 birds of 107 species were ringed during 2012. With the exception of Storm Petrels, Great Skuas and Puffins, once again non-passerines, in particular seabirds, contributed little to the annual ringling totals. Shag, Guillemot and Razorbill chick survival was again low in 2012, and the majority of chicks of these three once commonly ringed species did not reach an age and size suitable for ringling. 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 2012.

Table 1. Ten most commonly ringed species on Fair Isle in 2012, with species totals (2011 totals for comparison).

Species	2012	2011
Storm Petrel	870	659
Robin	399	61
Starling	389	527
Great Skua	320	66
Blackbird	223	419
Brambling	222	33
Meadow Pipit	157	163
Twite	139	128
Puffin	113	143
Waxwing	106	0

There were no species ringed in 2012 that had not featured before in the Fair Isle ringling totals; however a notable variety of unusual and exciting birds were encountered in the Helgoland traps and mist-nets through the year. This included the 9th Golden Oriole to be ringed on the isle, 10th and 11th River Warblers, 11th Paddyfield Warbler, 13th Richard's Pipit, 14th Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, 19th Blyth's Reed Warbler, 20th Spotted Crake, 24th and 25th Arctic Redpolls (unusually, both in the summer: a Hornemann's in June and a Coues's in July), 29th–31st Hawfinch, 31st Nightingale, 34th Subalpine Warbler (a female of the eastern race *Sylvia cantillans albistriata*), 36th and 37th Arctic Warblers, 36th, 37th and 38th Thrush Nightingales, 40th and 41st Lanceolated Warblers, 40th and 41st Little Buntings, nine Red-backed Shrikes (the 358th to 366th individuals to be ringed), nine Barred Warblers (the 464th to 472nd to be ringed), and 106 Waxwings.

There were four record-highest or joint record-highest species year totals in 2012, including the figure for Waxwing (see above, the previous highest being 76 in 2010); also, 320 Great Skuas (the previous record being 267 in 2010), 62 Pied / White

Wagtails (the previous record being 48 in 2010), and two River Warblers (two individuals were ringed in 1982 and in 1993). Other notable high species year totals in 2012 included 71 Chiffchaff (the 2nd highest after 74 in 2009), eight Icterine Warblers (the 3rd highest year total after 11 in 2008 and 13 in 1992), 15 Sparrowhawks (3rd highest year total after 21 in 1998 and 26 in 1994), 222 Brambling (4th highest after 247 in 1986, 286 in 1976 and 350 in 1977), 29 Lesser Whitethroats (4th highest after 32 in 2002, 40 in 2008 and 41 in 1970), 399 Robins (5th highest after 403 in 1998, 437 in 2000, 448 in 1978 and 486 in 1986) and 17 Woodcock (5th highest after 18 in 1984, 24 in 2009, 29 in 2011 and 30 in 1976).

Two colour-ringing projects continued to be run on the isle in 2012: the long-term Starling research project, started in 1980, and the Wheatear migration research project, which was a PhD study from 2008 to 2011 before the colour ringing was taken on in 2012 by the Bird Observatory as a RAS project (Retrapping Adults for Survival project). In addition the Observatory began colour ringing juvenile Shags in 2012, using red darvic rings with white, individual, 3-letter codes. It is hoped that this work will continue for several years to come, and forms part of a large-scale project being run up and down the east coast of Scotland by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) and Aberdeen University, studying juvenile Shag dispersal, survival and wintering ecology.

Occasionally, capture of a healthy, dry bird and examination and measurement of it in the hand is crucial for identification. In 2012 a total of seven birds were deliberately trapped for identification purposes: two Lanceolated Warblers, two Grasshopper Warblers (one of one of the eastern races *Locustella naevia straminea/mongolica*), one Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, one River Warbler and one 'Eastern' Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans albigularis*. Close examination and measurement of the 'Eastern' Subalpine Warbler and 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler proved critical for identification to subspecies level. DNA analysis of feathers that dislodged in the net and bird bag from each of these two birds was later carried out by Dr Martin Collinson at the University of Aberdeen, and supported the sub-species identification in both cases. 'Eastern' Subalpine Warbler has never previously been identified in the UK using a combination of in-hand measurements, plumage criteria and DNA analysis. Similarly, 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler has never previously been identified using these combined methods in the UK and, subject to formal acceptance, this is a new subspecies record for Britain.



Leach's
Storm-petrel
by W. Miles

Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed on Fair Isle in 2012, ringing recoveries/controls received in 2012, and cumulative totals since 1948.

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2012	Total 1948–2012	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2012	1948–2012
Whooper Swan	-	-	-	51	-	8
Bean Goose	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pink-footed Goose	-	-	-	18	-	1
White-fronted Goose	-	-	-	3	-	1
Greylag Goose	-	-	-	101	1	17
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	-	-	-	8	-	-
Lesser Scaup	-	-	-	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	16	49	65	17757	3	185
Storm Petrel	870	-	870	32961	20	1273
Leach's Petrel	4	-	4	109	1	4
Gannet	1	-	1	644	1	18
Cormorant	-	-	-	7	-	-
Shag	13	17	30	23751	2	593
Grey Heron	-	-	-	23	-	-
Little Grebe	-	-	-	10	-	-
Great Crested Grebe	-	-	-	1	-	-
Red-necked Grebe	-	-	-	1	-	-
Slavonian Grebe	-	-	-	3	-	-
Marsh Harrier	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hen Harrier	-	-	-	2	-	-
Goshawk	-	-	-	2	-	-
Sparrowhawk	15	-	15	435	-	25
Kestrel	-	-	-	53	-	8
Red-footed Falcon	-	-	-	1	-	-
Merlin	-	-	-	199	-	12
Peregrine	-	-	-	6	-	1

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2012	Total 1948–2012	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2012	1948–2012
Water Rail	3	-	3	339	-	3
Spotted Crake	1	-	1	20	-	-
Little Crake	-	-	-	1	-	-
Baillon's Crake	-	-	-	1	-	-
Corncrake	-	-	-	44	-	2
Moorhen	2	-	2	107	-	3
Coot	1	-	1	16	-	1
Great Bustard	-	-	-	1	-	-
Oystercatcher	-	11	11	1588	-	73
Golden Plover	-	-	-	27	-	-
Grey Plover	-	-	-	1	-	-
Lapwing	-	4	4	379	-	6
Little Ringed Plover	-	-	-	1	-	-
Ringed Plover	11	4	15	809	-	6
Dotterel	-	-	-	4	-	-
Whimbrel	-	-	-	18	-	-
Curlew	1	5	6	220	-	6
Black-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	1	-	-
Bar-tailed Godwit	-	-	-	9	-	2
Turnstone	3	-	3	114	-	-
Knot	-	-	-	109	-	4
Ruff	-	-	-	41	-	1
Curlew Sandpiper	-	-	-	6	-	-
Temminck's Stint	-	-	-	2	-	-
Sanderling	2	-	2	125	-	1
Dunlin	4	-	4	624	-	8
Purple Sandpiper	-	-	-	193	-	1
Baird's Sandpiper	-	-	-	1	-	-
Little Stint	-	-	-	123	-	-
White-rumped Sandpiper	-	-	-	1	-	-
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pectoral Sandpiper	-	-	-	5	-	-
Semipalmated Sandpiper	-	-	-	1	-	-
Red-necked Phalarope	-	-	-	5	-	-
Grey Phalarope	-	-	-	3	-	-
Common Sandpiper	1	-	1	70	-	1
Green Sandpiper	-	-	-	63	-	1
Spotted Redshank	-	-	-	3	-	-
Greenshank	-	-	-	15	-	-
Wood Sandpiper	-	-	-	19	-	-
Redshank	1	-	1	294	-	3
Jack Snipe	-	-	-	154	-	3
Woodcock	17	-	17	554	3	28
Snipe	6	2	8	575	-	4
Great Snipe	-	-	-	2	-	-
Pomarine Skua	-	-	-	1	-	-
Arctic Skua	1	-	1	4057	-	71

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2012	Total 1948-2012	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2012	1948-2012
Great Skua	1	319	320	4113	2	60
Puffin	56	57	113	14111	-	34
Black Guillemot	5	3	8	1678	-	19
Razorbill	44	13	57	11866	5	296
Little Auk	-	-	-	14	-	-
Guillemot	4	7	11	37854	1	1106
Common Tern	-	-	-	485	-	3
Arctic Tern	-	18	18	11900	-	39
Kittiwake	5	-	5	7188	-	39
Black-headed Gull	-	-	-	51	-	2
Little Gull	-	-	-	1	-	-
Common Gull	1	8	9	322	1	4
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	3	4	1470	1	36
Herring Gull	1	35	36	4601	-	102
Iceland Gull	-	-	-	1	-	-
Glaucous Gull	-	-	-	40	-	1
Great Black-backed Gull	-	-	-	2870	-	114
Rock Dove	11	-	11	188	-	-
Wood Pigeon	-	-	-	76	-	2
Collared Dove	4	-	4	416	-	6
Turtle Dove	-	-	-	82	-	2
Cuckoo	-	-	-	111	-	1
Scop's Owl	-	-	-	2	-	-
Snowy Owl	-	-	-	1	-	1
Long-eared Owl	4	-	4	276	-	14
Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	18	-	-
Nightjar	-	-	-	6	-	-
Swift	-	-	-	19	-	1
Hoopoe	-	-	-	3	-	-
Wryneck	3	-	3	260	-	-
Great Spotted Woodpecker	-	-	-	29	-	-
Golden Oriole	1	-	1	9	-	-
Brown Shrike	-	-	-	1	-	-
Isabelline Shrike	-	-	-	2	-	-
Red-backed Shrike	9	-	9	366	-	-
Lesser Grey Shrike	-	-	-	7	-	-
Great Grey Shrike	2	-	2	120	-	1
Woodchat Shrike	-	-	-	13	-	-
Jackdaw	-	-	-	16	-	-
Rook	-	-	-	10	-	-
Carion Crow	-	-	-	2	-	-
Hooded Crow	-	-	-	49	-	-
Raven	-	-	-	29	-	-
Goldcrest	48	-	48	1989	1	4
Firecrest	-	-	-	2	-	-
Blue Tit	-	-	-	2	-	-
Great Tit	-	-	-	14	-	-

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2012	Total 1948–2012	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2012	1948–2012
Coal Tit	-	-	-	1	-	-
Short-toed Lark	-	-	-	8	-	-
Woodlark	-	-	-	3	-	-
Skylark	8	-	8	1428	-	3
Shore Lark	-	-	-	5	-	-
Sand Martin	-	-	-	8	-	-
Swallow	2	4	6	324	-	2
House Martin	-	-	-	150	-	1
Greenish Warbler	-	-	-	25	-	-
Arctic Warbler	2	-	2	37	-	-
Pallas's Warbler	-	-	-	4	-	-
Yellow-browed Warbler	5	-	5	187	-	-
Hume's Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Radde's Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dusky Warbler	-	-	-	7	-	-
Bonelli's Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Wood Warbler	2	-	2	119	-	-
Chiffchaff	71	-	71	1727	-	5
Willow Warbler	79	-	79	4271	-	7
Blackcap	87	-	87	6384	-	26
Garden Warbler	28	-	28	3910	-	6
Barred Warbler	9	-	9	472	-	1
Lesser Whitethroat	29	-	29	905	-	1
Whitethroat	16	-	16	1097	-	-
Subalpine Warbler	1	-	1	34	-	-
Sardinian Warbler	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	1	-	1	14	-	-
Lanceolated Warbler	2	-	2	41	-	-
Grasshopper Warbler	4	-	4	160	-	-
River Warbler	2	-	2	11	-	-
Savi's Warbler	-	-	-	4	-	-
Thick-billed Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Booted Warbler	-	-	-	8	-	-
Syke's Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-
Icterine Warbler	8	-	8	142	-	-
Melodious Warbler	-	-	-	13	-	-
Aquatic Warbler	-	-	-	25	-	-
Sedge Warbler	8	-	8	606	-	1
Paddyfield Warbler	1	-	1	11	-	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	1	-	1	19	-	1
Marsh Warbler	4	-	4	159	-	-
Reed Warbler	7	-	7	353	-	1
Great Reed Warbler	-	-	-	8	-	-
Waxwing	106	-	106	250	1	2
Treecreeper	-	-	-	1	-	-
Wren	23	-	23	1029	-	-

Species	Ringed as:		Total 2012	Total 1948–2012	Recoveries/controls	
	Ad / Juv	Pullus			2012	1948–2012
Starling	163	226	389	30911	3	207
Rose-coloured Starling	-	-	-	3	-	-
Daurian Starling	-	-	-	1	-	-
Dipper	-	-	-	17	-	-
White's Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Hermit Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Grey-cheeked Thrush	-	-	-	2	-	-
Ring Ouzel	11	-	11	544	-	9
Blackbird	223	-	223	25310	3	349
Eyebrowed Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	1
Dusky Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Black-throated Thrush	-	-	-	2	-	-
Fieldfare	5	-	5	674	-	1
Song Thrush	53	-	53	3276	-	32
Redwing	97	-	97	9992	-	75
Mistle Thrush	1	-	1	23	-	-
Brown Flycatcher	-	-	-	1	-	-
Spotted Flycatcher	19	-	19	875	1	4
Robin	399	-	399	9947	1	42
Rufous-tailed Robin	-	-	-	1	-	-
Thrush Nightingale	3	-	3	38	-	-
Nightingale	1	-	1	31	-	-
Bluethroat	1	-	1	315	-	2
Siberian Rubythroat	-	-	-	2	-	-
Red-flanked Bluetail	-	-	-	2	-	-
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	-	1	63	-	-
Collared Flycatcher	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pied Flycatcher	5	-	5	1020	-	-
Black Redstart	1	-	1	164	-	-
Redstart	10	-	10	1922	-	1
Rock Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-
Whinchat	2	-	2	695	-	2
Stonechat	-	-	-	62	-	-
Wheatear	84	5	89	18906	-	83
Pied Wheatear	-	-	-	1	-	-
Black-eared Wheatear	-	-	-	3	-	-
Duncock	86	-	86	2866	-	10
House Sparrow	83	-	83	1994	-	4
Tree Sparrow	-	-	-	121	-	1
Yellow Wagtail	-	-	-	11	-	-
Citrine Wagtail	-	-	-	7	-	-
Grey Wagtail	1	-	1	60	-	1
Pied/White Wagtail	58	4	62	1005	-	5
Richard's Pipit	1	-	1	13	-	-
Blyth's Pipit	-	-	-	2	-	-
Tawny Pipit	-	-	-	3	-	-
Olive-backed Pipit	-	-	-	9	-	-

Ringed as: Species	Ad / Juv	Total Pullus	Total 2012	Recoveries/controls		
				1948–2012	2012	1948–2012
Tree Pipit	2	-	2	680	-	-
Pechora Pipit	-	-	-	10	-	-
Meadow Pipit	147	10	157	12018	-	45
Red-throated Pipit	-	-	-	9	-	-
Rock Pipit	55	-	55	10062	-	30
Chaffinch	24	-	24	3397	-	15
Brambling	222	-	222	4335	2	22
Greenfinch	4	-	4	541	-	33
Citril Finch	-	-	-	1	-	-
Goldfinch	-	-	-	23	-	1
Siskin	33	-	33	658	-	1
Linnet	10	-	10	213	-	5
Twite	139	-	139	7007	18	52
Lesser Redpoll	1	-	1	32	-	-
Common Redpoll	33	-	33	902	-	6
Arctic Redpoll	2	-	2	25	-	-
Two-barred Crossbill	-	-	-	7	-	-
Common Crossbill	5	-	5	570	-	2
Parrot Crossbill	-	-	-	37	-	-
Pallas's Rosefinch	-	-	-	1	-	-
Common Rosefinch	6	-	6	268	-	2
Bullfinch	-	-	-	309	-	-
Hawfinch	3	-	3	31	-	1
Snow Bunting	2	-	2	679	-	3
Lapland Bunting	4	-	4	104	-	-
Savannah Sparrow	-	-	-	2	-	-
Song Sparrow	-	-	-	3	-	-
White-crowned Sparrow	-	-	-	1	-	-
White-throated Sparrow	-	-	-	1	-	-
Pine Bunting	-	-	-	2	-	-
Yellowhammer	-	-	-	73	-	-
Ortolan Bunting	-	-	-	20	-	-
Cretzschmar's Bunting	-	-	-	1	-	-
Yellow-browed Bunting	-	-	-	1	-	-
Rustic Bunting	-	-	-	17	-	1
Chestnut-eared Bunting	-	-	-	1	-	-
Little Bunting	2	-	2	41	-	1
Yellow-breasted Bunting	-	-	-	6	-	-
Reed Bunting	12	-	12	537	-	3
Pallas's Reed Bunting	-	-	-	2	-	-
Black-headed Bunting	-	-	-	4	-	-
Corn Bunting	-	-	-	4	-	-
Red-headed Bunting	-	-	-	5	-	-
Chestnut Bunting	-	-	-	2	-	-
Tennessee Warbler	-	-	-	2	-	-

Ringling recoveries and controls reported to Fair Isle Bird Observatory in 2012

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

Order of data for each record:

Ring number - age of bird - date of record - location (with distance (km)), direction (°) and duration (days) between ringing and recovery / control)

Ages of birds: 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, 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 ringling recoveries and controls for which details were reported to Fair Isle in 2012 by the BTO or, rarely, other national ringling schemes.

Greylag Goose

5201555	3	20/10/08	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	31/01/12	Kirkwall, Orkney (99km, 231°, 1198 days)

Fulmar

FP18845	1	22/07/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	07/03/12	Fugloy, Nordoyar, Faroe Islands (402km, 321°, 594 days)
FP18665	1	29/07/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	14/06/12	Embo, Highland (228km, 217°, 686 days)
FP17585	1	18/08/98	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	15/06/12	La Roche Seche, Morbihan, France (1328km, 185°, 5050 days)

Given that most foreign recoveries of this far-flying petrel involve dead or dying birds, for a Fair Isle ringed bird to be caught and released away from the UK, in winter and in the Faroe Islands, is remarkable.

Storm Petrel

2536658	4	08/08/00	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	05/08/12	Porth Iago, Gwynedd (767km, 195°, 4380 days)
8E05912	4	11/08/11	Lindesnes Fyr, Vest-Agder, Norway
	R	29/07/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (530km, 290°, 353 days)
2E08351	4	11/08/11	Revekaiaen, Klepp, Rogaland, Norway
	R	18/07/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (416km, 283°, 342 days)
2669713	4	30/07/12	Bewan, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	R	04/08/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (46km, 69°, 5 days)
2669634	4	26/07/12	Twinyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	R	06/08/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 11 days)
2669588	4	14/07/12	Twinyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	R	21/07/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 7 days)
2606992	4	29/07/12	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	30/07/12	Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney (63km, 246°, 1 days)
2606870	4	21/07/12	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	09/08/12	Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney (63km, 246°, 19 days)
2606859	4	21/07/12	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	10/08/12	Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney (63km, 246°, 20 days)
2606668	4	24/08/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	21/08/12	Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney (63km, 246°, 363 days)
2606544	4	23/08/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	11/08/12	Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney (63km, 246°, 354 days)
2552991	4	07/08/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	21/08/12	Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney (63km, 246°, 380 days)
2552869	4	30/07/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	10/08/12	Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney (63km, 246°, 377 days)
2552865	4	30/07/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	08/08/12	Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney (63km, 246°, 375 days)
2552692	4	22/07/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	31/07/12	Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney (63km, 246°, 375 days)
2606650	4	23/08/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	27/07/12	Birsay, Orkney (104km, 243°, 339 days)
2606868	4	21/07/12	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	27/07/12	Birsay, Orkney (104km, 243°, 6 days)
2638043	4	30/07/12	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	31/07/12	Duncansby Head, Highland (129km, 219°, 1 days)
2444489	1	12/10/10	Mousa Isle, Shetland
	R	31/07/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (56km, 207°, 658 days)
2552532	4	27/07/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	27/07/12	Birsay, Orkney (104km, 243°, 366 days)
2426925	4	29/07/94	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	26/05/10	Mousa Isle, Shetland (56km, 27°, 5780 days)
2541389	4	18/08/01	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	28/07/11	Mousa Isle, Shetland (56km, 27°, 3631 days)
2536880	4	14/07/01	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	14/06/09	Priest Island, Highland (285km, 232°, 2892 days)
2471358	4	07/08/97	Fair Isle, Shetland
	V	31/07/11	Mousa Isle, Shetland (56km, 27°, 5106 days)
2508687	4	28/07/99	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	12/08/11	Mousa Isle, Shetland (56km, 27°, 4398 days)
2552738	4	11/08/10	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	28/07/11	Mousa Isle, Shetland (56km, 27°, 351 days)

2444394	1	12/07/99	Mousa Isle, Shetland
	R	06/08/01	Fair Isle, Shetland (56km, 207°, 756 days)
2533783	4	01/08/12	Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney
	R	23/08/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (63km, 66°, 22 days)

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 18th July 1997 was found dead on the isle on 28th August 2012 (5520 days). Another ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 13th August 2001 was re-trapped on the isle on 21st July 2012 (3995 days).

Leach's Petrel

NB84855	4	11/08/08	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	20/07/11	Rona, Outer Hebrides, Western Isles (242km, 259°, 1073 days)

Only the fourth time ever that a Fair Isle ringed Leach's Petrel has been recovered, but perhaps this is not surprising given the far-wandering, pelagic lifestyle of the species, particularly during years prior to breeding.

Gannet

1417831	1	30/06/07	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	18/05/12	Fjerritslev, Nordjyllands Amt, Denmark (691km, 113°, 1784 days)

Shag

1279878	1	07/07/92	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	08/08/12	Lunna, Shetland (101km, 17°, 7215 days)
1339289	1	24/06/97	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	18/07/12	Shalder's Ayre, Scalloway, Shetland (70km, 16°, 5503 days)

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 26th June 1994 was re-trapped on the isle on 31st May 2012 (6549 days).

Kestrel

72114161	1	17/06/11	Sodra, Berg, Vaasterbotten, Sweden
	R	09/08/11	Fair Isle, Shetland (1233km, 248°, 53 days)

A very notable control, considering the distance covered by the bird and that this involved a sea-crossing, that the bird had fledged between ringing and recapture, and that it was trapped in the 'Roadside' trap - our smallest Helgoland trap, not well known for catching raptors!

Oystercatcher

FP10958	8	28/12/00	Alness Bay, Highland
	X	26/05/11	Fair Isle, Shetland (259km, 37°, 3801 days)

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 29th March 1998 was found dead on the isle on 11th June 2011 (4822 days). Another ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 28th May 1983 was found dead on the isle on 26th May 2011, 2 days short of exactly 28 years after it was ringed (10225 days).

Lapwing

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 1st June 2001 was found freshly dead on the isle on 12th September 2012 (1199 days).

Curlew

FP421401		22/06/01	Westness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	XF	03/05/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (48km, 70°, 3968 days)

Sanderling

L = White/Red; R = White/Green

	2	21/05/07	Sandgerdi, Iceland
	VV	04/02/11	Fair Isle, Shetland (1355 days)

Woodcock

EW19930	3	16/10/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	10/12/11	South Branchal, Bridge of Weir, Inverclyde (447km, 204°, 55 days)

ET84958	4	11/12/09	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	14/01/12	Epsley Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland (480km, 181°, 764 days)
EW19942	3	21/10/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	27/10/12	Ringkobing, Denmark (702km, 123°, 372 days)

Recoveries of Woodcock ringed on Fair Isle do mostly involve birds that have been shot, but international recoveries are still unusual.

Great Skua

MA22120	1	12/07/09	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	04/11/11	Etang de Leon, Leon, Landes, France (1737km, 180°, 845 days)
MA27567	1	22/07/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	19/06/12	Griend, The Netherlands (333 days)

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 16th July 1995 was found freshly dead on the isle on 27th September 2011 (9517 days). Another ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 12th July 2007 was found dead on the isle on 22nd June 2012 (1807 days).

Puffin

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 19th July 2007 was found dead on the isle on 22nd July 2011 (1464 days). Another ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 7th July 2006 was found freshly dead on the isle on 26th July 2012 (2211 days). A bird ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 11th July 1994 was re-trapped on the isle on 24th July 2012 (6588 days).

Razorbill

M46311	1	15/07/83	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	18/06/96	Bardsey Island, Gwynedd (779km, 195°, 4722 days)
M46370	6	20/06/84	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	04/06/87	Bardsey Island, Gwynedd (779km, 195°, 1079 days)
M75242	1	23/06/91	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	02/01/12	Falsterbokanalen, Ljunghusen, Skayne, Sweden (984km, 118°, 7498 days)
M46386	8	21/06/84	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	12/06/98	Bardsey Island, Gwynedd (779km, 195°, 5104 days)
M94491	6	24/06/98	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	07/01/07	Plage de la Mine d'Or, Penestin, Morbihan, France (1342km, 183°, 3119 days)

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 26th June 1995 was found dead on the isle on 5th July 2012 (6219 days). Another ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 18th June 2009 was found dead on the isle on 27th June 2012 (1105 days).

Guillemot

GK84813	1	17/06/79	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	22/09/11	Halleviksstrand, Gateborg och Bohus, Sweden (768km, 102°, 11775 days)

GK84813 had been caught again on Fair Isle 9 years to the day after ringing and became the oldest known BTO ringed Guillemot. A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 28th June 2003 was found freshly dead on the isle on 21st July 2011 (2945 days). Another ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 17th June 1991 was found freshly dead on the isle on 23rd June 2009 (6581 days). A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 27th June 1979 was re-trapped on the isle on 27th June 1988 (3288 days). Another ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 11th June 1976 was re-trapped on the isle on 10th June 1987 (4016 days). Another ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 23rd June 1996 was re-trapped on the isle on 20th June 2012 (5841 days). A bird ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 20th June 1996 was re-trapped on the isle on 27th June 2012 (5851 days). A bird ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 22nd June 1977 was re-trapped on the isle on 1st July 1979 (739 days).

Arctic Tern

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 11th June 1998 was found freshly dead on the isle on 10th June 2012 (5113 days). Another ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 24th June 2006 was found freshly dead on the isle on 20th

June 2012 (4379 days). A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 30th June 1992 was found freshly dead on the isle on 10th July 2012 (7315 days). Another ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 1st July 1996 was found freshly dead on the isle on 20th June 2012 (5833 days).

Kittiwake

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 7th July 2000 was found dead on the isle on 26th July 2011 (4036 days).

Common Gull

ET84878 8 03/08/09 Fair Isle, Shetland
 XF 16/06/12 Venjanaset, Hordaland, **Norway** (411km, 80°, 1048 days)

The fourth recovery of a Common Gull ringed on Fair Isle. The age of this bird, the date of recovery, and the freshly dead / dying state reported, together suggest that this individual may either have bred in Norway or crossed the North Sea after failing to breed in the UK.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

GH19625 1 16/07/95 Fair Isle, Shetland
 XF 28/10/99 Quiaios, Coimbra, **Portugal** (2205km, 194°, 1565 days)

Herring Gull

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 9th July 2005 was found dead on the isle on 2nd May 2011 (2123 days).

Rock Dove

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as an adult on 22nd May 2010 was found freshly dead on the isle on 10th July 2012 (750 days).

Goldcrest

DLE764 2M 14/10/12 Fair Isle, Shetland
 R 21/10/12 Lista Fyr, Farsund, Vest-Agder, **Norway** (498km, 109°, 7 days)

The fourth ever recovery of a Goldcrest ringed on Fair Isle; remarkable as an example of the sea-crossings this species can undertake and because the bird was caught in Norway by Richard Cope, a ringer from the UK who came to work as Assistant Warden on Fair Isle the following year.

Garden Warbler

Y367280 3 24/08/11 South Milton Ley, Devon
 4 27/05/12 Fair Isle, Shetland (1040km, 8°, 277 days)

Waxwing

NW62620 3M 04/11/12 Fair Isle, Shetland
L = Blue/Black; R = BTO
 R 15/11/12 Kincorth, Aberdeen (260km, SSW, 11 days) (colour rings added)
 VV 09/12/12 Newton, Powys, Wales (520km, SSW, 35 days - resighting by photograph)

An extraordinary record, given that one of the Fair Isle ringling team was present for the bird's capture on Fair Isle, then extracted the bird from a mist-net in the centre of Aberdeen 11 days later, while ringling there with the Grampian Ringling Group.

Starling

LB75983 1 02/06/10 Fair Isle, Shetland
 VV 05/11/11 Sanday, Orkney (64km, 241°, 521 days)
LA56675 3F 27/08/09 Fair Isle, Shetland
 VV 12/02/12 Surrigarth, Westray, Orkney (77km, 249°, 899 days)
LA56100 1 04/06/08 Fair Isle, Shetland
 VV 30/12/11 Sanday, Orkney (65km, 239°, 1304 days)
 VV 01/04/12 Sanday, Orkney (65km, 239°, 1397 days)

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as a pullus on 5th June 2005 was found dead on the isle on 26th August 2011 (2273 days).

Blackbird

CL41581	4F	21/10/05	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	01/12/11	Trolla Vatn, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (46km, 249°, 2232 days)
LC44621	5F	27/05/12	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	30/05/12	Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (49km, 248°, 3 days)
LC44165	4F	30/10/11	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	24/10/12	Filey, North Yorkshire (597km, 173°, 360 days)

A female ringed on Fair Isle as a first-winter bird on 14th January 2012 was re-trapped on the isle on 21st May 2012 (128 days). A male ringed on Fair Isle as a first-winter bird on 20th December 2011 was re-trapped on the isle on 25th March 2012 (96 days). These retrap records are unusual as they involved two individuals apparently wintering on the island.

Spotted Flycatcher

Y123035	4	12/06/12	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	17/06/12	Melvich, Highland (171km, 231°, 5 days)

Robin

L274951	5	12/05/12	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	27/05/12	Scousburgh, Shetland (48km, 22°, 15 days)
6435592	3	30/09/10	Bassins des 5 Tailles, La Neuville, Nord, France
	R	23/04/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (1049km, 344°, 571 days)

Two movements of Robins associated with the large fall of this species in late April and Early May on the island.

Wheatear

A bird ringed on Fair Isle as pullus on 10th June 2010, found freshly dead on the isle on 2nd May 2012 (686 days).

Rock Pipit

2611301	3M	07/11/11	Rosehearty, North-east Scotland
	VV	17/04/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (162 days)

The first sighting of a colour ringed Rock Pipit on Fair Isle; this bird was present through the late spring and early summer, was seen carrying nesting material, and was thought to breed successfully close to South Haven beach.

Chaffinch

V832852	6F	21/04/12	Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	R	28/04/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (49km, 68°, 7 days)

Brambling

L274583	6M	07/05/12	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	12/05/12	Grimstadvatnet, Hareid, More og Romsdal, Norway (519km, 53°, 5 days)
L274904	6F	09/05/12	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	13/05/12	Helgoland, Germany (832km, 136°, 4 days)
11651725	5F	04/01/11	Sint Kruis, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
	R	08/05/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (974km, 342°, 490 days)

Three Brambling movements associated with the large arrival of this species in May, which was first evident from sightings and ringing in the Bird Observatory garden.

Siskin

Y025411	3F	25/07/11	Bar Brook, Derbyshire
	R	23/05/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (697km, 0°, 303 days)
L792987	6F	13/03/11	Cross Lane Head, Bridgenorth, Shropshire
	R	10/10/12	Fair Isle, Shetland (778km, 4°, 577 days)

Twite

X713330	5M	29/04/10 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	10/03/11 Kirbist, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (50km, 246°, 315 days)
V683878	3M	02/09/09 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	28/03/11 Twynyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 572 days)
X713194	5F	18/04/10 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	10/03/11 Kirbist, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (50km, 246°, 326 days)
X713129	4M	06/04/10 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	21/10/11 Twynyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 563 days)
X712343	3M	14/10/10 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	10/03/11 Kirbist, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (50km, 246°, 147 days)
L194229	6F	19/03/11 Firth School, Firth, Orkney
	XF	22/09/11 Fair Isle, Shetland (103km, 55°, 187 days)
X713596	3	19/07/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	26/11/11 Twynyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 130 days)
V480940	3M	12/12/09 Dale, Costa, Evie, Orkney
	R	03/06/11 Fair Isle, Shetland (101km, 63°, 538 days)
	R	13/03/12 Fair Isle, Shetland (101km, 63°, 822 days)
	R	02/04/12 Fair Isle, Shetland (101km, 63°, 842 days)
L274011	3	07/09/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	19/02/12 Ocklester, Holm, Orkney (99km, 225°, 165 days)
X713846	3	08/08/10 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	04/03/12 Queena, Sandwick, Orkney (110km, 239°, 574 days)
X713339	5M	30/04/10 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	14/03/12 Queena, Sandwick, Orkney (110km, 239°, 684 days)
X712777	3	28/07/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	19/02/12 Ocklester, Holm, Orkney (99km, 225°, 206 days)
X712593	3	30/07/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	14/03/12 Queena, Sandwick, Orkney (110km, 239°, 228 days)
V480940	3M	12/12/09 Dale, Costa, Evie, Orkney
	R	03/05/12 Fair Isle, Shetland (101km, 63°, 873 days)
X409863	6F	11/03/12 Queena, Sandwick, Orkney
	R	08/05/12 Fair Isle, Shetland (110km, 59°, 58 days)
L274118	2M	01/10/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	27/12/12 Twynyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 118 days)
L274068	2	20/09/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	26/01/12 Twynyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 128 days)
L274016	3M	08/09/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	26/01/12 Twynyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 140 days)
X713599	3	19/07/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	26/01/12 Twynyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 191 days)
X713596	3	19/07/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	26/01/12 Twynyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 191 days)
X712866	2M	26/09/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	31/01/12 Twynyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 127 days)
X712497	6F	11/04/11 Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	26/01/12 Twynyness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 290 days)

A male ringed on Fair Isle as a juvenile on 2nd September 2009 was re-trapped on the isle on 3rd June 2011 (639 days) and then re-trapped again on the isle on 16th May 2012 (987 days). It seems a good bet that this particular individual may have spent time on Orkney between captures, considering the controls for this species listed above!

Fair Isle's seabirds in 2012

Will Miles

Overview: 2012 was a mediocre year for Fair Isle's seabirds. Most species fared better than they did during the dire season of 2011, but there were still declines in population size recorded for Gannets, Arctic Skuas, Kittiwakes and Razorbills. Increases in population size, although often small, were recorded for Fulmars, Shags, Great Skuas, Arctic Terns, Common Terns (which bred for the first time since 2005), Black Guillemots and Puffins. In 2011 productivity was low or zero for most species, so it was encouraging in 2012 to see breeding success improve and increase from the previous year, albeit often by little, for Gannets, Shags, Arctic Skuas, Great Skuas, Arctic Terns, Common Terns, Guillemots, Razorbills and Puffins. Productivity declined slightly since 2011 for Fulmars, and was zero for the second year running for Kittiwakes, as measured from the monitoring plots. This species is arguably the one in steepest decline on Fair Isle and, along with Shags and Arctic Skuas, could quite conceivably disappear as a breeding species on the isle within a decade.

Fulmar: An increase of 8.9% was recorded at the population monitoring plots in 2012 (329 AOS), in comparison with 2011 (303 AOS). The general long-term trend at the monitoring plots has been a gradual, fluctuating decline. Mean Fulmar breeding success on the monitoring plots declined slightly (-7.7%) between 2011 and 2012, from 0.52 to 0.48 chicks fledged per apparently occupied site. The long-term trend in breeding success is neither one of consistent increase or decrease, but rather is of relatively short-term fluctuations and high variability.

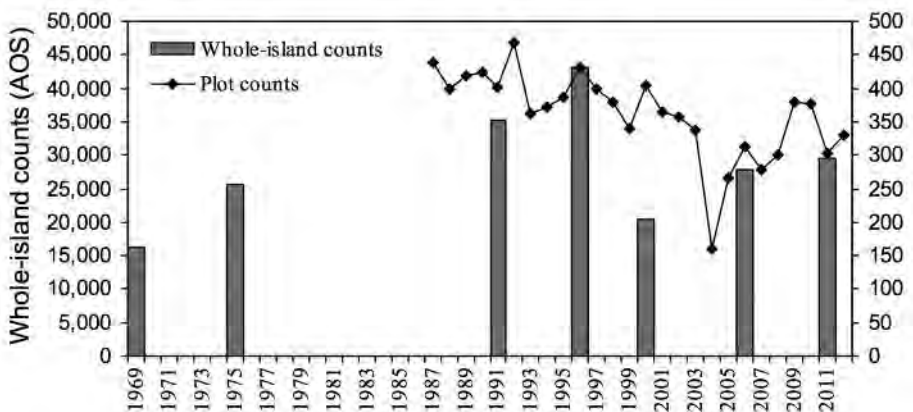


Figure 1. Population change of Fulmars on Fair Isle, 1969–2012 (whole-island and plot counts of AOS). Plot counts for each year are the sum of counts from five study plots.

Gannet: In comparison with 2011 the island population of Gannets decreased by 5.45% in 2012, from 4,085 to 3,862 AON. This was at odds with the long-term trend, which has been for numbers to steadily increase, with the exception of 2008 to 2010 when population expansion was relatively rapid. Gannet productivity in 2012 was 0.85 chicks fledged per apparently occupied nest, which is the highest value on record and represents an increase of 18.06% since 2011 (productivity 0.72). The 2012 figure is in line with the trend for productivity values to be relatively high during the last ten years (above 0.6 in all years with data from 2001 to 2012).

Shag: The total count from plots in 2012 numbered 32 apparently occupied nests, an increase of 60% since 2011 (when 20 AON were found, the lowest number on record). However, long-term, whole-island monitoring and plot counts have shown that overall the Fair Isle population of Shags has declined considerably since 1969. Shag productivity was 763.6% higher in 2012 (0.95 chicks fledged per AON) than in 2011 (0.11 chicks fledged per AON). 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. The breeding Shag population on Fair Isle has declined severely and the total number of occupied nests in the productivity monitoring plots is now very low: 21 in 2012 compared with 68 in 1986.

Arctic Skua: Numbers of Arctic Skuas in 2012 were down by 31% from 2011, to just 20 AOT, the lowest number on record since Arctic Skuas became established on Fair Isle in the 1950s. The long-term trend in the population has been a gradual decline with occasional fluctuations. One pair of Arctic Skuas fledged

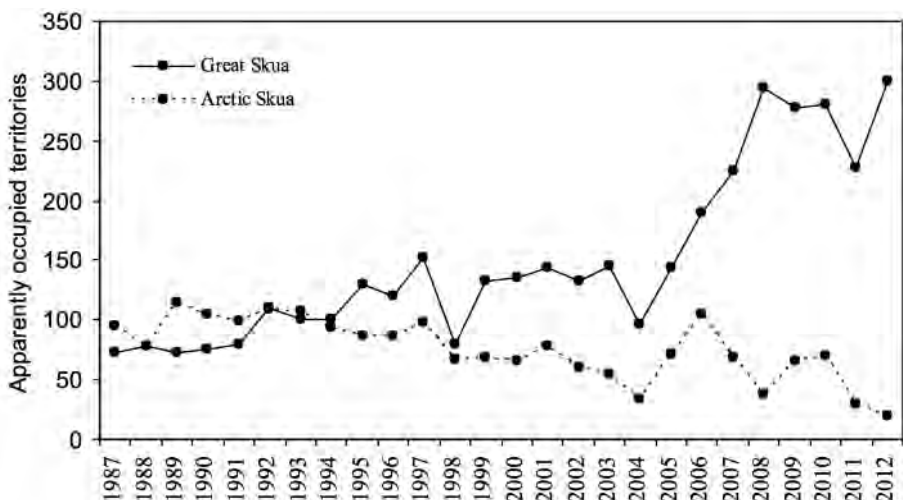


Figure 2. Population change of Great and Arctic Skuas on Fair Isle, 1987–2012 (whole-island AOT counts).

one chick in 2012, giving a productivity value for the year of 0.05 chicks fledged per AOT. This is an improvement on 2011, when no chicks fledged; however, with the exception of 2006 (productivity = 0.82), Arctic Skua breeding success has been consistently low during the last decade, never rising above 0.3.

Great Skua: An increase of 32.2% in the number of Great Skua apparently occupied territories was found in 2012 (300 AOT) in comparison with 2011 (227 AOT). The 2012 AOT count is the highest number of Great Skua pairs ever recorded breeding on the isle and continues the long-term pattern of population increase on Fair Isle, which was particularly rapid between 2004 and 2008. Breeding success was 112.0% higher in 2012 (0.53 chicks fledged per AOT) than in 2011 (0.25 chicks fledged per AOT). The increase in the population of Great Skuas seen through the last decade on Fair Isle has not been mirrored by breeding success, which has fluctuated through the period with no obvious pattern of increase or decrease.

Kittiwake: This species is severely declining on Fair Isle. Plot counts in 2012 (52 AON) revealed a decline of 35.8% compared with 2011 (81 AON). Similarly, the 2012 whole-island count of 1,225 AON equated to a 14.8% decline since 2011 (1,438 AON). The whole-island count and plot counts in 2012 were the lowest on record. In 2012 no Kittiwake chicks fledged at the productivity monitoring plots. This has occurred five times previously since 1986: four times in the last decade (2003, 2004, 2008 and 2011) and in 1990. Since 2000 Kittiwake productivity has been consistently low, never rising above 0.5.

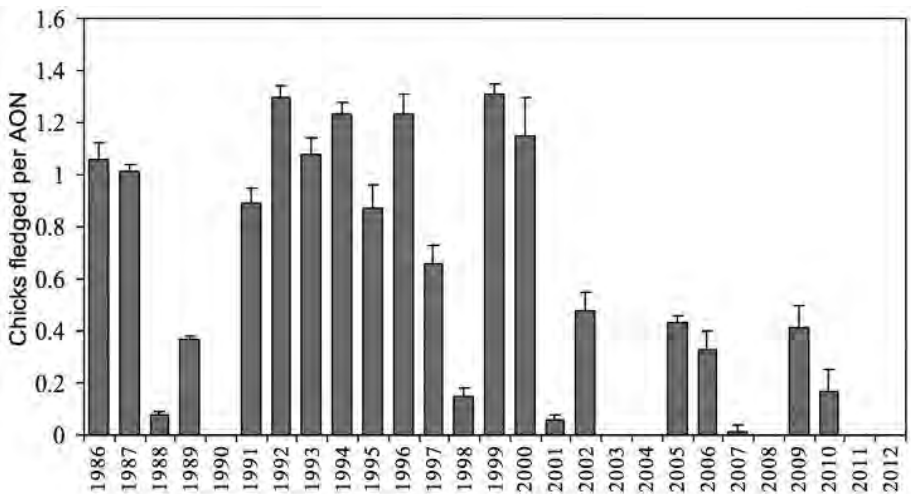


Figure 3. Breeding success of Kittiwakes on Fair Isle, 1986–2012. Data presented are means from ten plots (\pm Standard Errors).

Arctic Tern: The whole-island count showed an increase of 2422.2% in 2012 (227 AIA) in comparison with 2011 (9 AIA). Breeding numbers have fluctuated greatly since 1987, probably because Arctic Terns often prospect for nest sites in large, cohesive flocks, they breed colonially, and individuals (and flocks) do not always nest at the same site every year. Arctic Tern productivity was 0.03 in 2012; some improvement on 2011, when productivity was zero, which it has been in eight years of the last decade (including 2010). Breeding success for this species since 1988 has been highly variable, probably due to fluctuations in the availability of small, surface-shoaling fish.

Common Tern: For the first time since 2005 Common Terns nested on Fair Isle, with one pair breeding in the Arctic Tern colony on Bunes. This one pair successfully reared one chick (productivity = 1.00 chicks fledged per AIA). The species last bred successfully on the island in 2005, when three nests fledged three chicks.

Guillemot: Plot counts showed an increase of 32.7% in numbers of Guillemots in 2012 (1,320 individuals) compared with 2011 (995 individuals). However, since 1999 the overall pattern of change has been one of decline, as recorded by plot counts and whole-island counts. Productivity was 0.14 chicks fledged per apparently incubating adult, whereas in 2011 no chicks fledged from the monitoring plots. By comparison, in 2010 productivity was 0.31 chicks fledged per AIA. From 1988 to 2002 productivity remained relatively high, fluctuating between 0.67 and 0.85; however, since 2002 the general trend has been for productivity to be relatively low (<0.5) or to be zero. The number of occasions when fish were observed being brought back by Guillemots during a 24hr watch was 422.2% higher in 2012 (141 return flights with fish) than in 2011 (27 return flights with fish). Sandeels were the most common prey-type seen in 2012 (50.4% of fish brought back were this species), then Clupeids (9.9%) and then Gadoids (7.1%). Similarly in 2011 Sandeels were the most common prey-type (51.9%), then Clupeids (33.3%) and then Gadoids (14.8%). In 2012, it proved relatively difficult to identify prey types accurately: 31.9% of feeds were too quick for the prey to be confidently named (0% in 2011). Fish that were equal to the length of the bill were brought back by Guillemots more frequently (29.1% of return flights with fish) than fish of any other size category; unlike in 2011 when the majority of fish brought back were larger (59.3% of fish brought back were 1 to 1.5 times the length of the bill). A 24hr Guillemot feeding watch was carried out on 26th June and daily chick feeding frequency was found to be 11.9% higher in 2012 (1.78 feeds per chick per day) than in 2011 (1.59 feeds per chick per day).

Razorbill: Razorbill numbers at the Lericum monitoring plot had declined by 19.1% in 2012 (17 individuals) compared with 2011 (21 individuals). The total number of breeding sites (sites where an egg was laid) at the Easter Lothar beach productivity monitoring plot declined by 31.7% in 2012 (43 individuals) compared with 2011 (63 individuals). Whole-island counts since 1988 have shown a sustained, gradual decline in the island population. A decline in population since 1988 has also been

seen from the Lericum plot counts; however this has not been gradual and is mostly accounted for by a large drop in numbers observed between 2006 and 2007. Razorbill productivity in 2012 remained low (0.23 chicks fledged per egg laid), although was higher than in 2011 (0.02 chicks fledged per egg laid). From 1990 to 2002 productivity fluctuated but remained relatively high, at between 0.47 and 0.8. Since 2003 however, productivity has consistently been low (<0.5) or, in four years, been zero.

Black Guillemot: The number of Black Guillemots counted on the east coast of Fair Isle (North Lighthouse to South Lighthouse) was 13% higher in 2012 (182 individuals in breeding plumage) than in 2011 (161 individuals in breeding plumage). This was a continuation of the recent trend of slightly increasing annual numbers seen between 2004 and 2012. The count of 182 individuals in breeding plumage in 2012 was the maximum day-count from counts made on the 27th March (count = 182) and on the 16th and 29th April (counts = 125 and 133, respectively).

Puffin: The population of Puffins on Fair Isle was estimated by a count of all individuals around the island (on land, at sea and in the air) on a dry, fine, calm day in late April. This method is the only one suitable for Fair Isle, although it is limited in its ability to accurately count the total breeding population, where Puffins nest in inaccessible cliffs and slopes and in most areas burrow occupancy cannot be directly checked. The 2012 count was 47.1% higher (10,706 individuals) than at the last count, in 2009 (7,278 individuals). However, the long-term overall pattern since 1986 has been a gradual decline in numbers. Productivity was 53.8% higher in 2012 (0.60 chicks fledged per egg laid) than in 2011 (0.39). Breeding success tended to be higher and less variable between 1987 and 2000 (14-year mean = 0.72, S.E. = 0.03) than from 2001 to 2012 (11-year mean = 0.50, S.E. = 0.05). In comparison with Guillemots and Razorbills, Puffin breeding success in the last decade has remained relatively high, with no years of zero productivity.

In 2012, for the first time, Puffin mark-resighting data from the breeding colony at (<http://www.phidot.org/software/mark/>). The analyses showed that adult survival has remained stable since 1987, and not declined; however, the likelihood of resighting adults has declined over the years. The survival study colony at Roskilie is now heavily patrolled by Great Skuas and it seems likely that resighting colour-ringed adults is strongly affected by the presence of this predator. In 2011 and 2012 few Puffins were seen spending much time standing on the surface of the colony, although many were seen off-shore nearby, sitting on the water. By contrast, on every visit made to the colony in 2011 and 2012, Great Skuas were seen either standing on the Puffin colony or in flight patrolling the cliff top. In recent years, the normal behaviour of the Puffins during daily observations at the colony has been that most come in irregularly, alone, land, and then very quickly run straight down their burrows (making colour-ring-reading and trapping breeding adults very tricky). Only on rare occasions do multiple birds arrive or do many spend time standing together, communing out on the grass. Scaring away all skuas within c.300m of the Puffin colony at the start of each colour-ring-reading session sometimes appeared to increase the number of Puffins landing!

The total number of occasions when fish were observed being brought back to burrows by Puffins during a 24hr feeding watch was 29.1% more in 2012 (111 return flights with fish) than in 2011 (86 return flights with fish). Small Sandeels (<100mm) were the most common prey-type seen during the feeding watch in 2012 (16.2% of fish brought back were this species), then second most abundant were Rockling (12.6%). In comparison, in 2011 Rockling were the most common prey-type (72.1%) and then small Sandeels (11.6%). Similarly, in both 2012 and 2011 small Sandeels and Rockling were the most abundant prey-types in food samples collected from mist-netted Puffins (52.5% small Sandeels and 37.5% Rockling in 2012, 63.7% small Sandeels and 36.2% Rockling in 2011). On average, the prey-types of longest length in Puffin food samples collected in 2012 were small Sandeels (mean = 30.6mm), as was true in 2011 (mean = 38.1mm). The mean mass of food samples collected in 2012 (mean mass of one 'beak-full' = 1.6g, SE = 0.25g) was the lowest on record during the monitoring period (1986 to 2012). Since 2001 the mean mass of Puffin food samples collected annually on Fair Isle has only once exceeded 6 grams (mean = 6.1 in 2003), whereas prior to this period (in 1986 to 2000) the mean mass frequently exceeded 7 grams (e.g. in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997). A 24hr Puffin feeding watch was carried out on 13th July, and daily chick feeding frequency was found to be 29.8% higher in 2012 (2.18 feedings per chick per day) than in 2011 (1.68 feedings per chick per day).

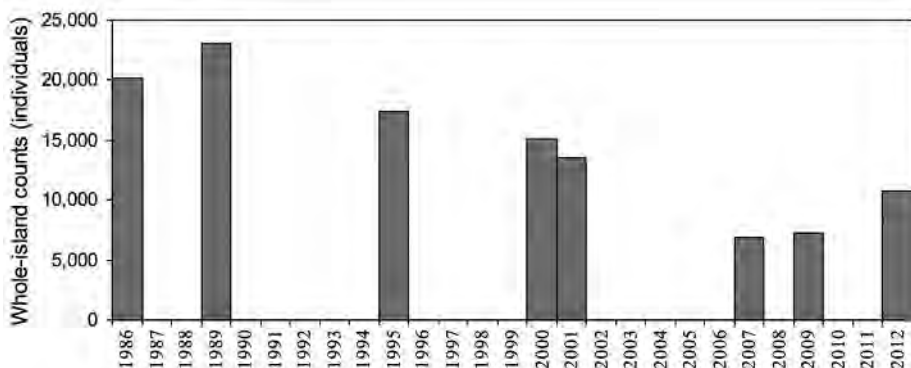


Figure 4. Population change of Atlantic Puffins on Fair Isle, 1986–2012 (maximum whole-island counts of individuals).

Other seabird studies on Fair Isle in 2012: For the third year running research was undertaken by RSPB to determine the foraging behaviour of Fulmars, Shags, Kittiwakes, Guillemots and Razorbills and identify important offshore feeding areas for these species, for consideration as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The work involved fitting breeding adults with GPS trackers and TDR data loggers and integrates into an international seabird conservation study (Future of the Atlantic Marine Environment project, 2010–2012; www.FAMEproject.eu). Aside from this project, feather samples from adult Puffins that had been killed by Great Skuas were collected for DNA extraction and analysis for an Icelandic research project (Matis

Ltd. R&D) looking at the genetic structure of the Puffin throughout its breeding range. Additionally, for the second year in a row, Puffin breeding activity was monitored at the Roskilie colony using a remote camera and time-lapse photography as part of a PhD study supervised by Glasgow University, running from 2011 to 2013. The photographic data collected by staff at Fair Isle Bird Observatory will be analysed by Glasgow University in 2012 and 2013 with the aim to assess Puffin numbers, breeding activity and potential impacts from Great Skuas and grazing sheep. Also in 2012, fifteen Shag chicks were fitted with darvic rings (red rings with white, individual, three-digit capital letter combinations) at a range of nests sites around the island (South Ramnigeo, Easter Geo O' Skroo, Guidicum, South Naaversgil and South Gunnawark). This fieldwork was for a project being run by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (see Ringing Summary).

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 2012 season can be found in the annual seabird report (Miles, W.T.S., Parnaby, D., Moss, J.W., Fraser, S., Hughes, R.D., Miguel, E.R. & Back, D. 2012. *Fair Isle Seabird Studies 2012*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Aberdeen). **AON** = apparently occupied nest, **AIA** = apparently incubating adult, **AOT** = apparently occupied territory, **AOS** = apparently occupied site.

First and last migrant dates

David Parnaby

Species	Earliest ever	Earliest 2012	Latest ever	Latest 2012
Quail	30.04.61	23rd May	13.10.89	23rd May
Osprey	25.04.66	10th May	04.11.35	14th June
Corncrake	10.04.66	10th September	03.11.77	11th October
Dotterel	25.04.73	23rd May	06.11.76	21st June
Whimbrel	12.04.10	22nd April	12.12.1907	8th September
Common Sandpiper	05.04.83	29th April	02.11.1908	21st October
Green Sandpiper	08.04.79	11th April	12.11.70	4th September
Arctic Skua	04.04.88	18th April	25.10.	27th September
Great Skua	17.03.09	27th March	16.11.	6th November
Sandwich Tern	23.04.07	3rd August	18.09.77	3rd August
Common Tern	25.04.83	20th May	18.10.75	2nd September
Arctic Tern	No data	9th May	30.10	11th September
Lesser Black-backed Gull	02.02.11	26th March	12.12.57	12th October
Turtle Dove	23.04.71	27th May	01.11.82	23rd June
Cuckoo	17.04.87	9th June	08.10.77	9th June
Swift	29.04.01	20th May	26.10.75	1st September
Wryneck	18.04.81	19th April	17.10.74	18th August
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.84	11th May	08.11.93	30th September
Goldcrest	27.02.	14th March	19.12.03	31st October
Sand Martin	02.04.89	8th May	19.10.78	15th September
Swallow	31.03.02	18th April	02.11.84	19th October
House Martin	10.04.11	1st May	02.11.11	19th October
Wood Warbler	14.04.81	3rd May	06.10.73	25th September
Chiffchaff	12.03.73	22nd March	no data	29th November
Willow Warbler	25.03.10	10th April	23.11.27	7th October

Species	Earliest ever	Earliest 2012	Latest ever	Latest 2012
Blackcap	28.03.10	27th March*	20.12	16th November
Garden Warbler	21.04.68	29th April	20.11.76	6th November
Lesser Whitethroat	20.04.09	7th May	08.11.	1st November
Whitethroat	11.04. Pre 59	8th May	21.10.78	2nd October
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.00	26th May	29.10.07	27th May
Grasshopper Warbler	07.04.02	24th April	23.10.00	27th September
Icterine Warbler	12.05.07	20th May	13.10.76	26th August
Sedge Warbler	19.04.87	30th April	11.11.75	18th September
Marsh Warbler	22.05.84	5th June	06.10. Pre 63	12th September
Reed Warbler	28.04.01	28th May	31.10.80	29th September
Ring Ouzel	16.03.88	30th March	18.12.1909	23rd October
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.49	8th May	26.10.85	27th September
Bluethroat	22.03.1908	2nd May	13.11.83	31st October
Black Redstart	09.02.1989	5th March	22.12.86 ^x	24th October
Redstart	12.04.1981	24th April	11.11.81	24th October
Whinchat	14.04.81	3rd May	26.11.90	20th October
Wheatear	13.03. Pre 59	27th March	19.11.59	22nd October
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.83	1st May	29.10.85	28th September
Yellow (flava) Wagtail	25.03.54	20th April	20.11.57	5th October
Pied Wagtail	20.02.03	4th March	17.11	25th October
Tree Pipit	14.04. Pre 63	18th April	09.11.1908	23rd October
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.36	-	01.11.1908	-
Common Rosefinch	08.05.77	21st May	30.11.91	21st October
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.64	9th May	01.11.00	10th May
Rustic Bunting	25.04.80	-	08.11.75	-
Little Bunting	04.04.58	24th September	19.11.75	28th October

*new record x arrival date (went on to winter)

'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler 20th September 2012: the first for Fair Isle

Becki Rosser, Will Miles, David Parnaby, Jason Moss and Martin Collinson

Four subspecies of Grasshopper Warbler are recognised, but based on similarities in plumage and biometrics currently these are widely considered to form two distinct groups: 'Western' Grasshopper Warbler, comprising the nominate subspecies *Locustella naevia naevia* and the subspecies *L. n. obscurior*, and 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler comprising the subspecies *L. n. straminea* and *L. n. mongolica* (BWP, Svensson 1992, Harvey & Small 2007, Pearson *et al.* 2009). The boundary between the two groups is at 46–55°E (BWP). 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warblers occur east from the Volga River in Russia, across the west Siberian plain, to the Tien Shan Mountains in south-eastern Kazakhstan (*L. n. straminea*), and in north-eastern Kazakhstan, western China and north-west Mongolia (*L. n. mongolica*, often treated as a synonym of *L. n. straminea*; Stepanyan 2003, Harvey & Small 2007, Pearson *et al.* 2009). 'Western' Grasshopper Warblers occur across Europe east to central European Russia; a distribution represented entirely by *L. n. naevia*, except for the extreme south-east, where *L. n. obscurior* occurs, apparently isolated from *L. n. naevia* and restricted to the Caucasus Mountains in Russia and Georgia and the mountains forming the borders between Georgia, Armenia and north-east Turkey (BWP, Harvey & Small 2007, Pearson *et al.* 2009).

'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler by W. Miles



Circumstances

Around noon on the 20th September, Becki Rosser saw a streaked *Locustella* Warbler in the Bird Observatory garden. The bird looked tiny as it scurried a short distance through the grass, flicked into a tangle of rose bushes and disappeared. The fixed-position mist-nets in the garden were opened, and then checked regularly through the early afternoon. At 14:05 the warbler flew out of a thick tussock into the bottom shelf of one of the nets. In the hand it felt very small, the streaky markings looked bold and rather cleanly demarcated, and this first impression suggested the possibility of Lanceolated Warbler.

The bird was taken to the observatory ringing room, measured and examined in detail. The species identification presented a puzzle at first. The wing length was too short for nominate Grasshopper Warbler but perfectly fitted Lanceolated Warbler. The small, compact body structure and generally bold, cleanly demarcated patterning of the upperparts was also suggestive of Lanceolated Warbler. However, the pattern of the undertail coverts ruled out Lanceolated Warbler, as this fitted only Grasshopper Warbler. After consideration of a range of plumage details, and that the eastern subspecies of Grasshopper Warbler tend to have a shorter wing length than the nominate subspecies (Svensson 1992), the bird was positively identified to species and ringed as a Grasshopper Warbler, possibly an eastern subspecies. In the hope of further identification being possible, additional biometric measurements to the normal wing length and weight were recorded (in particular details of wing structure), a series of photographs showing plumage details were taken, and the small number of contour feathers that had dislodged in the mist-net were collected. The bird was soon returned to the garden, where it disappeared back into the tussocks and was not seen again.

The photos and measurements were compared with published images and biometric data of different Grasshopper Warbler subspecies (Svensson 1992, Harvey and Small 2007, Pearson *et al.* 2009). The size, wing structure and plumage fitted an eastern subspecies far better than a western subspecies, and



based on this the bird was identified as an 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler. The collected feathers were sent to Martin Collinson at the University of Aberdeen for genetic analyses. The results unequivocally supported an eastern origin for the bird and identification as either *L. n. straminea* or *L. n. mongolica*.

Description of appearance

The bird was very small, compact and spool-shaped; in size and structure closely resembling a Lanceolated Warbler. The general impression of the plumage also resembled this species, looking basically olive, brown and neatly streaked. The bird was never seen well in the field and further details of its appearance were noted only in the hand.

The basic ground colour of the upperparts was olive-grey, tinted buff and rather pale, while that of the underparts was very pale whitish. The underparts were clean and unmarked, except for a very few, tiny, indistinct pale brown spots on the lower throat and long, pointed dark brown streaks on the undertail coverts, reaching the feather bases. The flanks and breast sides were washed pale olive-grey, patterned with large, oval, pale brown streaks towards the rear. The forehead, crown, nape and mantle were streaked dark blackish-brown (narrowly on the head); the scapulars, back and rump feathers, uppertail coverts, upper wing coverts and alula had olive-grey edges and round, blackish-brown centres; the primaries, secondaries and tail feathers were blackish-brown with olive-grey fringes. Each tertial had a blackish-brown centre and olive-grey edge, narrowest at the tip of the feather and along the inner web but widening down the outer web towards the feather base. The border between the dark centre and olive-grey edge of each tertial was sharply demarcated, losing definition only very slightly towards the feather base. The face was rather plain, with the supercilium and ear coverts pale olive-grey, the lores pale greyish-white, and a narrow, dark eye-stripe extending a little either side of the eye.

The iris was dark olive-brown and the narrow orbital ring white. The bill was narrow and spikey, with the upper mandible shiny black and narrowly bordered yellow along the cutting edges, the lower mandible yellow-orange but tipped black. The legs and feet were pink.

The plumage was all of one generation, extremely fresh and not at all worn or abraded, and based on this the bird was aged as a juvenile (Svensson 1992). Additionally, the bill still had a bright yellow and fleshy gape patch, typical of young birds of the year but absent in older individuals.

Biometric measurements

Measurements are given on page 102. The wing length was 58mm. This falls outside of the range of the western subspecies of Grasshopper Warbler but within the range of the eastern subspecies and of Lanceolated Warbler (*L. n. naevia* and *L. n. obscurior* = 60–68mm; *L. n. straminea* and *L. n. mongolica* = 53–63mm; Lanceolated Warbler = 52–61.5mm; Svensson 1992 & Pearson *et al.* 2009). The second primary was only fractionally longer than the fifth primary and considerably shorter than the fourth primary. Harvey and Small (2007) found this character to be frequent in the eastern subspecies (P2 often < P4) but very unusual in the western subspecies (P2 normally = /> P4). The length of the notch on the second primary was 9.1mm and within the range of Grasshopper Warbler but not Lanceolated Warbler (Grasshopper Warbler = 7.5–11.5mm; Lanceolated Warbler = 6.0–7.5mm; Svensson 1992). The fourth primary was weakly emarginated, a feature that Harvey and Small (2007) found to be present in just over 50% of Grasshopper Warbler specimens of the eastern subspecies, but to be entirely lacking in specimens of the western subspecies. Tail graduation was not measured directly but a derived estimate of this parameter was obtained using measurements of first secondary to

wing point and of tail graduation taken from one of the photos, and the actual measurement of first secondary to wing-point to correct for scale. The derived estimate of tail graduation was 16.1mm, which is within the range of both 'Eastern' and 'Western' Grasshopper Warblers (eastern subspecies = 12–25mm, western subspecies = 12–21mm; Harvey & Small 2007).

DNA analyses

Grasshopper Warbler has not been extensively sampled genetically, though two relevant papers have been written (Drovetski *et al.* 2004 and Kerr *et al.* 2009). These publications sequenced the COI and ND2 genes of birds from Norway and Sweden (nominate *L. n. naevia*), Tyva (probably *L. n. mongolica*), and the Caucasus at Krasnodarskiy Kray (probably *L. N. obscurior* and *L. n. straminea*). The Caucasian region NE of the Black Sea may represent a biological boundary based on altitude between the two subspecies groups: Drovetski *et al.* (2004) found that birds from the Caucasian foothills were genetically identical to those from Tyva (95°E), whereas birds from the Caucasian alpine meadows, 1500m above sea level, were 1.8% genetically divergent from these. It is likely therefore that the low-level birds were *L. n. straminea* whereas the alpine birds were *L. N. obscurior* (though Drovetski did not discuss this).

DNA was isolated from contour feathers of the Fair Isle bird by MC and the University of Aberdeen. Using the universal avian primers BirdF1/R1 and L5216/H6063, the mitochondrial COI and ND2 genes were amplified and sequenced (654 and 1013 base pairs respectively). Both gene sequences were consistent with the plumage and biometric measurements suggesting that the bird was of one of the eastern subspecies (*L. n. straminea* or *L. n. mongolica*).

On the basis of COI sequence, the Fair Isle bird was 99.85% identical (652 out of 653 identical base pairs) to a bird from Tyva (GQ482088 http://www.barcodinglife.org/index.php/Public_RecordView?processid=KBPBR304-07, probably *L. n. mongolica*; Kerr *et al.* 2009). Other birds sequenced at the COI locus were nominate birds from Norway and Sweden (GU571460, GU571461, GU571955), from which the Fair Isle bird was 8–9 base pairs distinct, and 3 birds from Krasnodarskiy Kray (GQ482089, GQ482090, GQ482091; subspecies not stated, though one is given as 1850 m above sea level, which puts it in the 'alpine group' and probably *L. n. obscurior*), from which the Fair Isle bird was 8–10 base pairs distinct. The ND2 sequence of the Fair Isle bird was 99.7% identical (3–4 base pairs difference out of 1013) to database birds AY382381, AY382382 and AY382383 (Drovetski *et al.*, 2004). The first two of these three birds are from Tyva (probably *L. n. mongolica*) and the third from the Caucasian foothills of the Krasnodar region (subspecies not stated, but inferred to be *L. n. straminea*, see above). The Fair Isle bird was 98% identical (20–21 base pairs different) from 4 birds (AY382382–AY382385) from the Caucasian alpine meadows of the Krasnodar region. This is consistent with the COI data (i.e. that the Fair Isle bird is not of a Caucasian alpine population). No European birds have been sequenced at ND2.

The ND2 and COI data are coincident and both unequivocally support an eastern origin for the Fair Isle bird, somewhere within the range of *L. n. straminea* or *L. n. mongolica*. Notwithstanding limited sampling, the conclusion on current knowledge eliminates the possibility of a European origin. There has only been one 'possible' specimen of *L. n. straminea* sequenced, so the similarity of the sequence of the Fair Isle bird to that of birds that are probably *L. n. mongolica* should not necessarily imply that the Fair Isle bird was more likely to be *L. n. mongolica*, because *L. n. straminea* and *L. n. mongolica* likely are genetically very similar and of course the Fair Isle bird, geographically, is more likely to be *L. n. straminea*.

Discussion

For those involved, this was an education in *Locustella* identification using in-hand plumage details, biometric measurements and DNA analysis. The similarity of the Fair Isle bird to a Lanceolated Warbler was striking, in particular the small, compact structure and 'contrasty', well-demarcated appearance of the dark upperpart markings. This highlighted that 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler may present a potential pitfall for identification of Lanceolated Warblers. Subject to official ratification, this is the first 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler record for Britain.

'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler

Ring Number	Y123573	Wing point equal to	Primary 3
Date	20.09.2012	Emarginated to	Primary 4
Time	1415	Primary 2 equal to	Primaries 4/5 (only fractionally longer than primary 5)
Age	Juvenile (BTO age code 3)		
Wing length	58mm	First secondary to wing point	10.7 mm
Weight	9.3g	Estimated tail graduation	16.1mm
Tail length	49mm	Fat score (0–8)	1
Tail/wing ratio	0.845	Pectoral muscle score (0–3)	1
Length of notch on primary 2	9.1mm		

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Magnolia Warbler 23rd September 2012: the first for Fair Isle

Jason Moss and Will Miles

'Wardening a Mega' by David Parnaby

Sunday 23rd September was already a good day; three weeks of westerlies had finally given way to lighter winds earlier in the week and a run of good birds had started with an 'Eastern' Grasshopper Warbler on Thursday, Arctic Warbler and Citrine Wagtail on Friday and Blyth's Reed Warbler and 14 Yellow-browed Warblers on Saturday. Sunday was another promising day with light easterly winds seeing Yellow-browed Warblers increase to 21 before that classic Fair Isle rarity, a Lanceolated Warbler was found at Da Water and trapped to confirm identification.

A sunny Sunday afternoon, full of roast dinner and having seen some great birds, it would be tempting to maybe take things easy, but that isn't how things work on Fair Isle. The Transit had received a puncture whilst parking at Da Water, so I headed down at about five o'clock to fix it (and get the people carrier filled with diesel, as it had spent the day with the fuel warning light on) whilst JM and WM showed their dedication to the cause by forsaking their afternoon off to head back into their census areas.



Magnolia Warbler with
Yellow-browed Warbler by W. Miles

Having sorted the Transit, I was heading to Skerryholm for fuel when the phone went, it was Jason who yelled a message along the lines of 'get everyone now, there's an American warbler on Lerness - it's yellow with a grey head, green mantle and white panels in the tail like a Crag Martin. Come quickly, bring the books!'. It was after half past five, there was probably only an hour and a half or so of good light and this was something mega that everyone had to get to. There was no time to panic, but it was hard not to. First of all: start spreading the news, I tried Will whose phone was engaged, a message was left at the Obs, I called Deryk who sounded very pleasantly surprised and said he'd head straight up, and then concentrated on driving. The lack of diesel was forgotten and the people carrier went roaring (at about 25mph, but that's as close as you get to a roar on Fair Isle's roads) up the island. WM was sighted by Da Water and the news was relayed to him, with the instruction to take the Transit and get straight up there (having experience of ringing in Canada he'd be able to nail the ID). I'll admit it was very tempting to head straight up there myself, but with no vehicles left at the Obs, that wouldn't have been popular - I just had to hope it would stick around. Guests were picked up and bundled into the vehicle and with every extra person jammed in, the level of excitement ratcheted up another notch. Conversation was flying around the back seats 'could be Magnolia', 'where's Lerness?', 'was it showing well?'. Dropping the first load of people at the airstrip, I headed back to the Obs where responsibilities for finding everyone else were handed to Susannah and I took flight, leading a charge of staff and guests across the Eas Brecks and Mire of Vatnagard (including a group who had misheard the original message and would have made a potentially crucial error of heading to Meoness at the opposite end of the island had they not been caught in time!). As we streamed west, it became clear that, although Jason thought he was probably at Copper Geo, he wasn't sure, and we weren't entirely sure where Copper Geo was anyway. Nevermind, keep going and things would work out! The phone went again 'it's Magnolia, it's definitely Magnolia!', Will had got there and recognised the species from his Canadian experiences. Everyone on the island knew about the bird now and people from further afield were starting to join in the experience, but it was obvious the sun was on its way down and the fear of the bird flicking down the cliff never to be seen again was starting to raise its head.

Eventually as the charge from the Obs reached the brow of the hill, the location could be seen - and now it was downhill, we were off again, sweating, panicking but getting closer. At the geo people all seemed to be looking the same way (always a good sign), 'it's there - it's in the scope' and there it was, every bit as amazing as Jason's description. Feeding actively on the cliff, it remained in place whilst a steady stream of staff, islanders and visitors arrived. Trying to liaise with Susannah and work out who was there was rewarded with the sight of the last of the guests being directed to the correct geo by about quarter to seven and finally Susannah, having done her bit, also getting to see the bird.

The happy, smiling crowd were surely what birding should all be about, an absolutely stunning location, as the sun set behind us over the Atlantic, a glowing gem of a bird the subject of our attention, the call of a Yellow-browed Warbler ringing out around the geo and, at one point, the Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-browed Warbler and Fair Isle Wren all feeding in the same binocular view - literally nowhere else in the world could that happen! The happy chatter was all about the bird (the winding up of birding friends elsewhere, the competition with other sites, the blogging, updating of lists and posting of photos would all be saved for the bar later that evening), pretty much a perfect birding moment.

As most folk headed back for a late dinner, a few of us stayed on to watch the bird for as long as possible, partially to take in as much of the experience as possible, partially to make sure we had the maximum information for potential twitchers the next day. Eventually, after feeding near the top of the cliff for some time, the Magnolia Warbler found a small nook (which turned out to be the left nostril of a distinctive 'monkey's head' rock formation - handy for relocating the site the following morning), turned to face us, tucked its head under its wing, fluffed itself up (taking on the appearance of a lemon in the gathering gloom) and went to roost at 7.25pm.

Heading back to the Obs, the bar was already busy (Jason racked up a lot of free drinks that night!) but our work wasn't quite done. The blog was updated, the various information services were informed of the latest news, calls were made to accommodate charter planes the next day should the bird still be present and then some relaxing was done.

The next morning a small group of us went across to Lerness before first light to check for the bird, but it soon became apparent it wasn't there. A group of Shetland birders made the journey anyway and, although virtually every other migrant from the previous day was relocated (and Paddyfield Warbler, Olive-backed Pipit and Little Bunting were amongst the new birds found), there was no sign of the one they really wanted. Whilst it was great to have been one of just 34 lucky observers to have witnessed this amazing rarity, it would also have been good to have been able to share it with others, but it wasn't to be.

Description (JM)

Behaviour: A very active bird, appearing completely at home on the rugged cliff-face. Constantly searching for food (though I never actually saw it physically catch anything, or what it was catching was too small to see easily), both by fly-catching and by picking items from the rock and lichen itself, with jerking flights and movements of the head. Occasionally acrobatic in its behaviour, sometimes hanging from overhanging rocks whilst seeking food. In flight the bird would fan its tail broadly. It would frequently flick and shuffle its wings. **Size and Structure:** On direct comparison the bird was clearly smaller than a Rock Pipit, being roughly similar in size to a Blackcap, though differing structurally by being a larger headed and shorter tailed bird with a broader, more rounded body shape. The primary projection was roughly equivalent to half the length of the longest tertial and the

undertail coverts extended along less than a third of the tail's total length. **Upperparts:** The head was fairly plain, with a slate blue/grey crown, nape and ear-coverts (the latter being a slight shade darker), with a sharp dividing line from the base of the bill where the grey head met a bright yellow, unmarked throat. The mantle was a rich moss-green colour, with a weakly marked series of darker mantle stripes. The wings consisted of dark blackish-grey primaries, secondaries and tertials, with all feathers fringed by a narrow, sharply demarcated, pale slate grey border. Greater and median coverts were similarly patterned, with a distinctly dark centred feather narrowly fringed pale, but with each feather bearing a broad white tip, forming a distinctive double wing bar on both wings. The broad square rump patch was bright, vivid yellow and clearly demarcated from the mantle and upper-tail coverts. The upper-tail coverts were dark centred with narrow greenish fringing. When closed the tail appeared all black, with the central pair of feathers being entirely dark. However, when the tail was opened it revealed a striking pattern of broad white outer feather bases (on the 5 outermost feathers). The white extended across the majority of the base of the broad inner web of each feather, but not the narrow outer web, giving the impression of bright white squares at the base of each feather. **Underparts:** The underparts, from throat to vent, were a bright, vivid, sulphurous yellow throughout, with 2 rows of wispy dark greyish streaks along the length of the flanks. The undertail coverts were pure white. **Bare parts:** The legs were a dark brownish-black and the eye was dark surrounded by a distinct, broad white eye-ring. The bill was short, stout and pointed, with a pale pinkish-brown lower mandible, tipped dark, and dark upper mandible. **Voice:** The bird was not heard to call.

ID, ageing and sexing (WM)

When the bird first appeared it was side-on and the immediate impression was a small warbler with dazzling yellow underparts and throat, white undertail coverts, greyish upperparts, and a distinct pale eye-ring. This initial basic image presented only two possibilities in my mind: Magnolia Warbler or Canada Warbler. The bird quickly flitted into a position facing away from us and I could then see that it had a rump patch of the same dazzling yellow as the underparts and that the tail was black with long white panels at the feather bases, except on the central pair. These features ruled-out Canada Warbler and perfectly fitted Magnolia. The moss-green mantle, double-white wing bars, weak grey throat stripe and faint dark streaking on the flanks were additional good features for Magnolia, and the bird was soon identified as this species.

The bird could be aged as a first year because the tail feathers were all very sharply pointed, the mantle was relatively plain and uniform green (lacking prominent dark streaking), and the dark streaking on the flanks was very weak and almost entirely limited to the rear flanks.

The bird could be sexed almost certainly as a male because the plumage was extremely bright and the colours very rich, pure and saturated. This appearance would be unusual in a female. For example, the yellow colouration of the throat, breast, chest and rump was particularly bright and intense and the green tone of the mantle was deep and lacking any brown.

This was the UK's second Magnolia Warbler, following one on St Agnes on the Isles of Scilly on 27th–28th September 1981.

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Siberian Rubythroat

23rd October 2012:

the fourth for Fair Isle

Nick Riddiford

My attention had been attracted to a Great Tit at one end of the Schoolton garden when I became aware of another bird amongst the rose bushes further to my left. I think it must have been the movement of its tail and unusual pose - like a giant wren - which caught my eye. It was facing away from me and its tail, already raised at 45°, was constantly being flicked upwards. It was a drab, pretty uniform, grey-brown above and not that much paler underneath apart from a pale wedge formed by the undertail coverts. Briefly I struggled to even think what it might be but then it turned its head towards me revealing the give away features of a thin white supercilium running well back behind the eye, whitish chin bib and submoustachial stripe - narrow below the base of the bill tip but flaring downwards - divided by a grey moustachial line. The "chat" like stance and long robin-like legs removed any lingering doubt and I called it as Siberian Rubythroat to my wife. She came quickly and we both had prolonged views - hard to say how long but time enough for my wife and I to take it in turns phoning the Bird Observatory and interested neighbours. All the time it was sitting out on an exposed branch in full view but it slipped down into the bushes before folk could arrive and they only got the briefest of views a little later into a gathering dusk. Fortunately, the bird remained on the isle, transferring some 800 m farther south, and was well seen for some days thereafter.

I made some notes at the time, which are as follows:

Upperparts: dull grey olive-brown (shades greyer than robin), head slightly warmer brown. Closed wing only slightly warmer than back; short primary projection. Tail narrow, cocked at between 45° and almost 90° and continuously flicked upwards. **Undertail coverts:** whitish with hint of flecking. **Flanks, belly, chest:** fairly uniform pale-mid grey with warmer brown tone to flanks. Chin, bib and submoustachial whitish divided by thin grey line onto chest. **Supercilium:** thin, long white - clearly standing out from grey head. **Bare parts:** Thin, rather pointed bill, long dark (*) legs. **Call:** No call.

Notes: * When I saw it a few days later in better light it had pale legs. The leg colour on first sighting was a trick of the light - which was moderate against dark rose bushes background.

Further Information

Although looked for from dawn the following day, there was no further sign of the bird (although finding a Blue Tit at Schoolton provided some consolation!) until Deryk Shaw had brief views at the Walli Burn on the late afternoon of 25th October,

although it quickly went to ground again (would-be observers were consoled by finding a Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll this time). It was relocated in a similar area late on 26th October, where its movements and habits became a bit more predictable and allowed everyone the chance to finally connect with this outstanding rarity. Although some good views were obtained, it remained elusive, often sitting hidden in the irises or at the base of a wall and flying some distance at the first sight of people, until it was last seen on 3rd November.

The Rubythroat was one of few migrants to arrive on a pleasant, calm day with light SSE winds, a Little Bunting and a few more Blackbirds were the only obvious arrivals. It was identified as a female by the lack of any red in the throat and photographs showed at least one greater covert was pale-tipped, indicating the bird was in first-winter plumage.

It was the fourth Siberian Rubythroat for Fair Isle, following birds on 9th–11th October 1975, 17th–19th October 2003 and 23rd–27th October 2005, all of which have also been first-winter females.



Siberian Rubythroat by W. Miles

'Eastern' Subalpine Warbler 26th May 2012: the first genetically confirmed record and accepted female for Britain

Will Miles, David Parnaby, Jason Moss, Becki Rosser and Martin Collinson

A female Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* was found at Lower Leogh by WM on the morning of 26th May, but it was highly mobile that day, and disappeared before other observers could connect with it. The following day JM re-found the bird in the Bird Observatory garden, where it was trapped that afternoon. Measurements suggested that it was of the eastern form *S. c. albistriata*. The wing length was 66mm (mostly 60–64 mm in *albistriata* but 57–61 mm in other subspecies); the tail/wing ratio was 0.86 (usually below 0.90 in *albistriata* but above 0.90 in other subspecies) and the distance between P10 and P9 was 36.9 mm (usually above 32 mm in *albistriata* but rarely over 34 mm in other subspecies; Shirihai *et al.* 2001). Contour feathers that dislodged in the mist-net and bird bag were retained for genetic analysis. The mitochondrial cytochrome b (*cytb*) gene was amplified and sequenced at the University of Aberdeen by MC, using the universal avian *cytb* primers L14993, L15549 and H16065. Comparison of the sequence of the Fair Isle bird (EMBL Nucleotide Sequence Database accession number HF562847) with that of all Subalpine Warbler subspecies was carried out online using NCBI nucleotide 'BLAST'. This confirmed that the bird was *S. c. albistriata*. Its *cytb* sequence was novel, but 99.9% identical (994/995 identical base pairs) to an *albistriata* (accession number EU760673) from Lesbos (Brambilla *et al.* 2008). The Fair Isle bird was 1–6 base pairs different from the seven *albistriata* sequences in the database from Lesbos and Dalmatia (Brambilla *et al.* 2008) and clearly falls within the *albistriata* group. The Fair Isle bird was next most similar (~98% identity, 18–23 bp difference) to birds of the 'southern *cantillans*' group of Brambilla *et al.* (2008) - birds from mid/southern Italy and Sicily. It was more divergent (~96% identity, 36–39 bp different) from the western *cantillans* group sampled in Spain and southern France (Brambilla *et al.* 2008). All data - base examples of 'Moltoni's Warbler' *S. c. moltonii* from northern Italy, Corsica and Majorca were at least 41 bp different. This is the first genetically confirmed *S. c. albistriata* from Britain, though it does suggest that biometric criteria for identification of vagrant female *albistriata* are probably reliable.

Table 1. Comparison of biometrics of 'Eastern' Subalpine Warbler trapped on Fair Isle with 'Eastern' and 'Western' subspecies of Subalpine Warbler as given in Shirihai *et al.* (2001).

Subalpine Warblers	Fair Isle bird	<i>S. c. cantillans</i> (Western)	<i>S. c. albigriata</i> (Eastern)
Ring Number	Y123135		
Wing length	66.0 mm	54.5–63.5 mm	58.0–64.0 mm
Tail length	57.0 mm	49.0–60.0 mm	50.0–57.0 mm
Tarsus length	20.0 mm	16.8–20.1 mm	18.2–22.0 mm
Bill length (to skull)	14.1 mm	11.6–14.6 mm	12.0–14.9 mm
Bill depth	3.5 mm	2.7–3.3 mm	3.0–3.2 mm
Bill width	3.7 mm	3.3–4.4 mm	3.6–4.1 mm
Tail / wing ratio	0.86	83.3–100.0	81.6–93.1
Tail graduation	5 mm (but tips abraded)	3.5–7.5 mm	3.0–8.0 mm
P10 - wing tip	37.3 mm	29.8–39.5 mm	34.0–40.5 mm
P9 - wing tip	1.2 mm	0.5–5.3 mm	0.5–2.0 mm
P8 - wing tip	WP	0.0–1.0 mm	0.0–0.1 mm
P7 - wing tip	0.4 mm	0.0–1.0 mm	0.0–0.5 mm
P6 - wing tip	1.3 mm	0.0–3.0 mm	0.0–1.5 mm
P5 - wing tip	4.5 mm	2.0–6.0 mm	2.5–4.5 mm
P4 - wing tip	8.1 mm	3.5–9.0 mm	5.0–8.0 mm
P3 - wing tip	8.9 mm	5.5–10.5 mm	6.1–9.5 mm
P2 - wing tip	10.5 mm	7.0–12.0 mm	8.0–12.0 mm
P1 - wing tip	13.5 mm	8.0–13.0 mm	9.2–14.0 mm
P10 - P9	36.9 mm	27.0–36.0 mm	32.0–38.5 mm
P10 - primary covert	P10=PC	-0.5–5.0 mm	-2.0–3.5 mm
Tertial tips - wingtip	14.8 mm	8.0–10.5 mm	8.2–12.0 mm
Weight	11.7 mm		
Fat score (0–8)	1		
Pectoral muscle score (0–3)	1		

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- Shirihai, H., Gargallo, G., & Helbig, A. J. 2001.** *Sylvia Warblers: identification, taxonomy and phylogeny of the genus Sylvia*. Christopher Helm, London.

Decisions on previous rarities

BBRC - British Birds Rarities Committee

SBCRC - Shetland Bird Club Records Committee

SBRC - Scottish Birds Records Committee.

Rarities Committees' decisions on 2011 descriptions

Bewick's Swan (5), 16th February, Da Water, D.N.Shaw *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Tundra Bean Goose (59+), 11th November to 14th December, Various, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Taiga Bean Goose (5), 15th November–11th December, Various, D.Parnaby, D.N.Shaw *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Lesser Scaup, 7th–9th October, Buness, A.L.Cooper, A.Hitchings, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Pallid Harrier, 12th–15th August, Various, D.Parnaby, N.Riddiford *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Pallid Harrier, 11th–14th September, Gilsetter, C.Armour, J.W.Moss, N.Sutherland *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Rough-legged Buzzard, 12th–13th November, Swey, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by SBRC**

Hobby, 4th June, Midway, N.Riddiford *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Hobby, 15th–21st June, Furse, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Spotted Crake, 29th October, Da Water, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Baird's Sandpiper, 25th September, North Haven, A.Hitching, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Pectoral Sandpiper, 3rd–8th September, Buness then Da Water, J.W.Moss, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Great Snipe, 2nd May, Utra, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Great Snipe, 29th August to 3rd September, Kenaby, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Great Snipe, 18th September, Da Water, I.D.Broadbent, R.C.Broadbent *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Grey Phalarope (2), 5th October, South Light, D.Barr - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Grey Phalarope, 11th October, Buness - **Found not proven by SBCRC**

Grey Phalarope, 15th–18th October, South Haven, N.Green *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Grey Phalarope (second bird), 17th–18th October, South Haven, N.Green *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Grey Phalarope, 17th October, Buness, A.Saunders - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Grey Phalarope, 1st November, South Light, W.T.S.Miles - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Sabine's Gull, 20th–21st September, South Light then Buness, R.Hughes, A.McNee - **Accepted by SBCRC**

White-winged Black Tern, 16th July, Setter, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by SBRC**

Woodchat Shrike, 14th–16th June, Field, W.T.S.Miles, S.Money *et al.* - **Accepted by SBRC**

Short-toed Lark, 13th May, Vaadal, J.W.Moss *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Short-toed Lark, 7th–30th August, Airstrip, J.W.Moss *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Short-toed Lark, 18th September to 7th October, Sheep Cru, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Red-rumped Swallow, 3rd May, Kirki Geo, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by SBRC**

Greenish Warbler, 9th June, Haa, T.Hyndman, J.W.Moss *et al.* - **Accepted by SBRC**

Arctic Warbler, 12th–14th August, Schoolton, N.Riddiford *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Arctic Warbler, 23rd–24th August, Vaadal, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Subalpine Warbler, 24th April to 3rd May, Lower Stoneybrek J.W.Moss *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**

Subalpine Warbler, 29th April to 4th June, Loangie then Obs D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC as albiatriata**

Subalpine Warbler, 31st May, Gully, J.W.Moss *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC as cantillans**

Subalpine Warbler, 6th June, Schoolton, N.&E. Riddiford *et al.* - **Held by BBRC**

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, 30th September, Gilsetter, I.Cowgill, P.A.Jeffery, W.T.S.Miles *et al.*

- **Accepted by BBRC**

Lanceolated Warbler, 13th–14th October, Field then Pund, P.F.Cook, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, 2nd–3rd September, Taft then Schoolton, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Booted Warbler, 26th August, Burkle, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Melodious Warbler, 26th August, Haa, W.T.S.Miles, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by SBRC**

Melodious Warbler, 12th September to 3rd October, Schoolton, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by SBRC**

Blyth's Reed Warbler, 10th June, Plantation, W.T.S.Miles, J.W.Moss, J.Nilsson *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Blyth's Reed Warbler, 20th September, Obs, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Blyth's Reed Warbler, 1st October, South Haven, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Blyth's Reed Warbler, 14th October, Easter Lothar, J.Moss *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**
Blyth's Reed Warbler, 5th November, Dronger - **Found not proven by BBRC**
'Black-bellied' Dipper, 26th April, Hjukni Geo, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**
Thrush Nightingale, 28th May, Haa, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**
Collared Flycatcher, 30th April to 5th May, Hoini, J.W.Moss, S.West *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**
Citrine Wagtail, 13th-16th August, Da Water, J.W.Moss, B.Wilcox *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**
Citrine Wagtail, 6th-17th September, Furse, W.T.S.Miles, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**
Citrine Wagtail, 15th September, Easter Lothar, R.Hughes - **Accepted by BBRC**
Citrine Wagtail, 17th September to 3rd October, Barkland, W.T.S.Miles *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**
Citrine Wagtail, 10th October, Walli Burn, J.Hunt, B.J.Small - **Accepted by BBRC**
Olive-backed Pipit, 1st October, North Light then North Restengeo, J.P.Cook, C.Dodd, W.T.S.Miles
- **Accepted by BBRC**
Olive-backed Pipit, 17th October, Setter, M.Breaks *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**
Olive-backed Pipit, 7th November, Gilsetter, W.T.S.Miles, D.Parnaby - **Accepted by BBRC**
Olive-backed Pipit (2), 10th-12th November (one to 10th only), Gilly Burn, D.Parnaby - **Accepted by BBRC**
Rustic Bunting, 21st-25th May, Quoy then Obs, D.Parnaby *et al.* - **Accepted by SBCRC**
Black-headed Bunting, 3rd-17th July, Vaadal then Schoolton, D.Jardine *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

In addition, the following records that did not feature in the Annual Report were assessed:

Sabine's Gull, 14th September, South Harbour - **Found not proven by SBCRC**
Blyth's Reed Warbler, 26th September, Setter - **Found not proven by BBRC**

Records from earlier years:

Saker Falcon, 23rd October–3rd December 1986 - **Found not proven by BBRC**
Western Bonelli's Warbler, 17th–18th September 2008, Hjukni Geo, P.Mayer *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**
River Warbler, 5th–12th October 2009, Lower Stoneybrek, S.J.Davies, D.N.Shaw *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**
Thrush Nightingale, 13th August 2008, Single Dyke - **Found not proven by BBRC**
Siberian Stonechat, 13th October 2009, Schoolton - **No description received**
Siberian Stonechat, 15th October 2009, Hjukni Geo - **No description received**
'Hornemann's' Arctic Redpoll, 25th October 2006, Barkland, P.A.Harris, R.J.Nason *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC (same as Shetland)**
'Hornemann's' Arctic Redpoll, 30th October 2006, North Light, M.Warren - **Accepted by BBRC**
'Hornemann's' Arctic Redpoll, 8th April 2008, Barkland - **Found not proven by BBRC**
'Hornemann's' Arctic Redpoll, 1st–2nd October 2008, Setter, A.Banwell - **Accepted by BBRC**
Two-barred Crossbill, 7th–14th September 2008, Roaming - **Found not proven by BBRC**
Black-headed Bunting, 1st–7th June 2007, Quoy, M.B.Rosser, M.J.Whitingham *et al.* - **Accepted by BBRC**

Cetaceans and other marine 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.

Sei Whale *Balaenoptera borealis* or **Fin Whale** *B. physalus*

Three of these giants were seen in Fair Isle waters from the 'Good Shepherd' on 21st February, an outstanding record.

Minke Whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

The first was seen from the 'Good Shepherd' on 27th March, with the only sighting from land occurring on 18th July when one passed South Light. Further sightings from the 'Good Shepherd' in Fair Isle waters were of singles on 17th and 21st August and 22nd September. In addition there were six further sightings from the 'Good Shepherd' in Shetland waters between 1st May and 2nd September.

Risso's Dolphin *Grampus griseus*

The only sighting was of 13 off Bunness on the fantastic cetacean day of 22nd September. In Shetland waters the 'Good Shepherd' recorded three on 19th August (including a calf) and one on 22nd September.

White-sided Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus acutus*

A run of records in late August saw two from the 'Good Shepherd' on 21st, at least five off Bunness on 22nd and one more on 24th from the same location. Three were also seen from Bunness on 22nd September in a good year for this species.

White-beaked Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*

Around 30 passed north along the east of the island on 3rd August and there were two off Meoness on 22nd August and 10 seen from the 'Good Shepherd' on 22nd September. Sightings outside of Fair Isle waters were of one on 21st September and at least 20 on 27th September from the 'Good Shepherd'.

Killer Whale *Orcinus orca*

After an impressive run of sightings in 2011 the year started promisingly with four entering North Haven on 7th January before heading south along the east coast of the island. Sadly, this was the only record of the year.

Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*

Sightings in the early part of the year were limited to five on 19th June. Singles on 27th and 31st July preceded more regular sightings, with records on ten August dates (the majority in the last ten days) of up to 30 animals. At least four calves were noted in one group during this time. Sightings of up to 23 on three September dates and 20 on two days in October were largely restricted to calmer weather (which is always a limiting factor in records of this species). In addition there were several records in Shetland waters from the 'Good Shepherd'.

Unidentified cetaceans

One to four unidentified dolphins were seen on 30th June and four dates between 19th and 25th August, with a couple of sightings also made in Shetland waters from the 'Good Shepherd'.

Other Marine Wildlife

Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*

The first seal pup was in Gunnawark on 1st October, with the majority of calves pupping late in the month. By mid-November pupping was largely finished (although at least one was born in late December), with just 55 pups counted, continuing the recent run of poor breeding success.

Common Seal *Phoca vitulina*

The only records were of one in South Harbour from late April to early May, the species seems to have undergone a serious decline in Fair Isle waters in recent years.

Eel *Anguilla Anguilla*

One was in the Vaadal on 6th October.

Lion's Mane Jellyfish *Cyanea capillata*

Small numbers were seen offshore in late August.

Mauve Stinger *Pelagia noctiluca*

Large 'wrecks' of this small jellyfish occurred in North Haven on 24th September and early November, repeating the events of 2010 when the first large arrival was noted on Fair Isle. This apparent increase in occurrence apparently reflects a change in distribution in British waters.

Lepidoptera report

David Parnaby

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Just one was recorded, at the Haa on 10th July.

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

A quiet year, with no major passage noted. The only records in spring were on 28th May and three on 26th June, with a very quiet autumn producing singles on 19th and 20th August.

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

One on 13th June preceded records of up to four on eleven dates between 23rd June and 16th July, with singles one four dates between 16th and 21st August.

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

The only records were singles on 26th August and 9th–10th September.

The Observatory moth trap ran on 39 dates between 21st May and 22nd October, with a total of 801 moths caught of 35 species (24 macro and 11 micro moths). The peak period was late August (with 140 moths on 23rd August representing the best catch of the year).

In addition, there were field records of several species including one (a Magpie Moth at the Obs on 23rd July) that was not recorded in the trap. The migrant Silver-Y was noted on a few dates in early June, regularly in late June and early July (peaking at 28 on 6th July) and again from mid-August to the end of the month (peaking at 35 on 15th August), with a later individual on 27th September.

Table 1. Summary of moths trapped at FIBO in 2012.

	First Date	Last Date	No. of nights trapped	Max. catch	Max. catch date	Total individuals
Macro Moths						
Map-winged Swift <i>Hepialus fusconebulosa</i>	14.06.12	10.07.12	3	3	29.06.12	5
Silver-ground Carpet <i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i>	06.07.12		1			1
Garden Carpet <i>Xanthorhoe fluctuata</i>	05.06.12		1			1
Yellow Shell <i>Camptogramma bilineata</i>	25.06.12		1			2
July Highflyer <i>Hydriomena furcata</i>	10.09.12		1			1
Twin-spot Carpet <i>Perizoma didymata</i>	23.08.12		1			1
Netted Pug <i>Eupithecia venosata</i>	29.06.12	18.08.12	2			2
Juniper Pug <i>Eupithecia pusillata</i>	19.08.12		1			2
Dark Swordgrass <i>Agrotis ipsilon</i>	19.08.12		1			1
Northern Rustic <i>Standfussiana lucerneae</i>	10.07.12	05.09.12	13	12	23.08.12	54
Large Yellow Underwing <i>Noctua pronuba</i>	26.07.12	28.09.12	11	7	19.08.12	33
Autumnal Rustic <i>Eugnorisma glareosa</i>	16.08.12	05.09.12	8	44	23.08.12	105
True-lover's Knot <i>Lycophotia porphyrea</i>	25.06.12	23.08.12	13	24	16.07.12	56
Ingrailed Clay <i>Diarsia mendica</i>	16.07.12	10.09.12	9	2	16 & 19 08.12	11

	First Date	Last Date	No. of nights trapped	Max. catch	Max. catch date	Total individuals
Macro Moths						
Small-square Spot <i>Diarsia rubi</i>	18.08.12		1			7
Setaceous Hebrew Character <i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>	18.08.12		1		1	
Square-spot Rustic <i>Xestia xanthographa</i>	16.08.12	05.09.12	7	12	19 & 23 08.12	44
Shears <i>Hada plebeja</i>	23.05.12	25.06.12	7	4	27.05.12	14
Marbled Coronet <i>Hadena confusa</i>	21.05.12	14.06.12	6	12	23.05.12	24
Antler <i>Cerapteryx graminis</i>	12.08.12	26.08.12	9	20	20.08.12	79
Dark Arches <i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	29.06.12	05.09.12	16	53	20.08.12	251
Confused <i>Apamea furva</i>	16.08.12	05.09.12	6	5	23.08.12	12
Rosy Rustic <i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	22.08.12	05.09.12	4	2	23.08 & 05.09.12	6
Silver Y <i>Autographa gama</i>	25.06.12	06.07.12	3	4	06.07.12	7
Micro Moths						
Diamond-back Moth <i>Plutella xylostella</i>	24.05.12		1			7
<i>Eupoecilia angustana</i>	29.06.12		1			1
Billberry Tortrix <i>Apelia viburnana</i>	23.06.12		1			1
<i>Eana osseana</i>	10.07.12	23.08.12	8	21	16.08.12	37
<i>Eana penziana</i>	10.07.12	23.08.12	8	5	19.08.12	17
<i>Acleris aspersana</i>	18.08.12	23.08.12	2	2	23.08.12	3
<i>Acleris hyemana</i>	20.10.12		1			1
<i>Crambus lathoniellus</i>	26.05.12		1			1
<i>Scoparia ambigualis</i>	03.06.12		1			3
Rush Veneer <i>Nomophila noctuella</i>	19.08.12		1			1
<i>Eucosma cana</i>	19.06.12	27.07.12	4	5	27.07.12	9

Other wildlife: some environmental events and jottings

Nick Riddiford

Bumblebee invasion

In recent years there have been some marked changes in distribution of plant and animal species, terrestrial and marine, in the UK and a trend of movement northwards by more “warmth adapted” biota is now a recognized feature.

Nevertheless, Tommy Hyndman caused a major stir in the entomological world on 27th March 2012 by photographing a Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris* in his garden at the Haa. This was not just a first for Fair Isle, but at the time, appeared to be new for the Northern Isles.

A few days later, on a visit to Lerwick, Tommy found more! Further observations by Paul Harvey and others confirmed a substantial influx into Shetland. Subsequent research by Paul suggested that the species may have arrived one or two years before.

The March 2012 Buff-tailed Bumblebee proved to be the forerunner of a notable influx which included up to four foraging in Fair Isle gardens by May. We held hopes that the Fair Isle bees, all queens, were mated and would breed. The behaviour of the bees in Schoolton garden in early May certainly suggested that. Unlike the resident "Shetland" Bumblebee *Bombus muscorum agricolae* which moves fairly systematically from flower to flower, the Buff-tails would forage on single Red Campion or Dandelion flowers, then dash away again as if provisioning a nest. The result was a series of frantic comings and goings in and out of the garden involving more than one individual.

Breeding was not to be. Whereas *Bombus muscorum* queens - followed later in the summer by smaller workers - continued to go about their daily business, there was no Buff-tail activity in Schoolton garden after 25th May and only later reports of two in the Haa garden on 17th June and one on 23rd June.

The end of activity at Schoolton was fairly sudden but may have been assisted. The first I knew of one in the garden on 22nd May was when I watched a male Red-backed Shrike swooping. It returned to its perch with a queen Buff-tailed Bumblebee in its beak! Rare species probably taste just as good as the common ones. Another Buff-tail was in the garden on 24th May even though the same shrike was still in residence.

The Fair Isle and Shetland Buff-tails opened up a debate. A column in the October 2012 issue of *British Wildlife* suggested that it was due to "assisted passage through human activity, since this species is unrecorded in the more southerly Orkney Islands and very rare in northern mainland Scotland" (*per* Murdo Macdonald). However, intriguingly, another journal reported a mass movement of queen Buff-tailed Bumblebees along the South Wales coastline at precisely the time the first was seen on Fair Isle. The records comprised c30 flying east "away from land" past a line fisherman in a boat close offshore on 26th; and on 27th March, a seawatching birder noted 45 approaching over the sea or along the coast during a 90 minute period, all moving directly north-east (*source*: A.R. Plant. 2012. Mass movement of *Bombus terrestris* along the South Wales coastline: migration or irruption? *Brit. Journal Ent. & Nat. Hist.* 25: 151-152).

The coincidental dates and demonstration that movements over sea can occur give an alternative hypothesis for the Fair Isle arrivals which seems far more plausible than the "human assistance" theory. I cannot believe anyone would intentionally bring in bumblebee queens from down south; equally, I feel we can reject the possibility of a whole series being imported accidentally with goods, all at the same time. In addition, I do not think the 2012 cohort were the progeny of an individual

from the year before. The coincidence of simultaneous reports across Shetland undermines that possibility; and Fair Isle has too many sharp eyes, tuned to observing and reporting, for one to breed and raise progeny unnoticed on this island.

New to Fair Isle

New invertebrates for Fair Isle are an annual occurrence. This does not mean they are all new arrivals. The sepsid fly *Themira pusilla* and the micro moths *Ancylis unguicella*, *Aspilapteryx tringipinella* and *Coleophora saxicolella*, all additions in 2012, were probably overlooked in the past. The same applies to the marine 'firsts' in 2012: the tiny snail *Rissoella diaphana* and the sea slugs *Onchidoris bilamellata* and *Aplysia punctata*. However, as mentioned above, the Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris* record on 27th March constituted a major extension north of its UK range.

More orchids than ever before

The Northern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* had its best ever year. It was super-abundant at most known sites and moved into two new locations. The annual count of flowering spikes in Schoolton wet meadow was 1,461 in 2012, exceeding the previous highest count (892 in 2010) by a massive 64%. A new site for Early Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata* was found on the wet down-slope in front of Quooy, bringing the number of sites on the isle to four. For the second year running the number of flowering Frog Orchids *Dactylorhiza viridis* on Bunness was over 100, particularly on the saddle overlooking Slogar; and a new population of over 100 was discovered in coastal grassland at Wirvie. The Lesser Twayblade *Listera cordata* population holds on at its traditional site at Wirvie, though few were found and only a small proportion produced flowers.

Moorland heath - not as boring as you think

The dry heath habitat supports a very special community which includes the Lesser Twayblade *Listera cordata* and various classic biota of extreme North Atlantic coastal conditions such as the lichen *Frullania teneriffae* (which loves growing on moribund parts of *Calluna*), very strong and successful populations of Prostrate Juniper *Juniperus communis alpina*, a superb colony of Chickweed Wintergreen *Trientalis europaea* at Wirvie and some of the best remaining populations of All-seed *Radiola linoides* in Shetland (and much of the UK). Ironically, All-seed loves trampled areas, though not agricultural chemicals. The grassland/heathland mosaic habitats are enormously important. We are discovering more and more populations of the rare St Kilda Hook-moss *Sanionia orthothecioides*, including what UK bryophyte expert Gordon Rothero described as the biggest colony in the UK on Vaassetter. These plants are thriving and are good indicators of the environmental condition on the hill.

Environmental aspects of the in-bye

Experimental management of a field at Schoolton no longer treated with chemical fertilisers is beginning to get substantial results. There are now thousands of flowering Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, a classic indicator of environmentally enhanced

grassland. Another plant which has established itself and flowered in profusion in 2012 is the White Clover *Trifolium repens*; two species of vetch are also establishing themselves. Apart from enriching landscape values with their colour, the vetches and clover fix nitrogen and become natural replacements for expensive chemical products.

The number and extent of arable rigs has decreased dramatically during the last 20 to 30 years. Old photographs show multiple strips of cereals and vegetables on every croft but, outside gardens, only a handful remain. This is an important habitat for birds but even more so for arable plants which have declined dramatically in the UK in the face of modern agriculture intolerant of “weeds”. The rigs remaining on Fair Isle are a refuge for plants which have become extremely scarce in Britain and for flora which are northern in distribution and thus rare farther south. They include species such as Bugloss *Anchusa arvensis*, Hemp Nettle *Galeopsis tetrahit*, Bifid Hemp Nettle *Galeopsis bifida*, Northern Knotgrass *Polygonum boreale*, Corn Spurrey *Spergula arvensis*, Northern Dead-nettle *Lamium confertum* and Sun Spurge *Euphorbia helioscopia*. Some, such as the Corn Spurrey or Sea Mayweed *Tripleurospermum maritimum* are a minor irritation for the crop but are generally tolerated. The arable rigs and their wild flowers attract a lot of insects, especially hoverflies (Syrphidae) and day-flying moths. Best benefit would be a marked increase in rigs throughout the in-by-e but this is a time-consuming activity for an isle which gets busier and busier.

A rare plant of the ditches

Lesser Marshwort *Apium inundatum* is one of Fair Isle’s special plants. It is scarce and declining in the UK and it occurs in very few sites in Shetland. It has long been established on Fair Isle and the strongest colony for some years has been in a Gilsetter roadside ditch. Ditch clearance led to complete removal of all vegetation in the early part of 2012. Lesser Marshwort is an opportunist of opened up wet places and can eventually be shaded out of vegetation-choked ditches. Therefore, this apparent “destruction” of the colony was actually beneficial to the species and by late summer a mat of new growth had established - the only vegetation clearly showing at this early stage. Lesser Marshwort can also be found at the other end of Gilsetter, where the stream begins its tumble into the Gully.

Water Quality

In most places Suka Mire burn is currently choked with vegetation but there are a few gaps and in one a substantial population of the stonewort *Nitella flexilis* var *flexilis* has appeared - the most extensive yet recorded. Most stoneworts are found in calcium-rich water and this is one of very few which can cope with more acidic (oligotrophic) conditions. Unsurprisingly it is the isle’s only stonewort. Stoneworts are used as indicators of water quality because they are generally intolerant of pollution. Our thriving population demonstrates the good quality of the water coming off the hill. The *Nitella* is an opportunistic early colonist. As vegetation density builds up, it is gradually out-competed or out-choked by more vigorous plants. This is a new site for the stonewort, adding to known sites in the Vaadal and Gilsetter. It has “migrated” upstream. How does it do that? Perhaps with the unsuspecting help of a sheep’s foot or passing Water Rail.

Annual Research Report Summary: RSPB FAME seabird tracking project

Rob Hughes

Following work undertaken in 2010 and 2011, the RSPB continued to track seabirds breeding on Fair Isle in 2012. The study used miniature GPS tags, temporarily attached to the birds' dorsal feathers, to track birds to their foraging areas. The RSPB's work is part of a larger programme of tracking several seabird species from dozens of 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.

Improved breeding productivity of Razorbills, Guillemots and Shags at Easter Lothar and Gunnawark, with improved weather conditions contributed to a successful tracking season. Rob Hughes (Senior Research Assistant, RSPB) and Jenny Sturgeon (RSPB Internship Volunteer) tracked three Fulmars, ten Shags, 23 Razorbills, seven Guillemots and five Kittiwakes this year.

The Guillemots and Razorbills were on average feeding closer to Fair Isle than they were in 2011. This year no Guillemots travelled anywhere near as far as the record breakers in 2011, that travelled up to 340 km from the colony to forage. This could explain why more fish were observed being brought into the colonies. The work in 2012 has provided a very useful insight into the life of Razorbills. They appeared to change feeding strategies at the time when their chicks were growing older and started to feed in the bays around Orkney. One bird made a trip to a bay near Sumburgh, Shetland.

Kittiwakes suffered a poor breeding season again. No chicks fledged from 21 pairs at Gunnawark and ten pairs at Easter Lothar. A bird tracked from Gunnawark parenting a chick, travelled some 396 km on a foraging trip in a southerly direction, taking approximately 16 hours.

This year the increased number of Shag territories and productivity at Gunnawark, and the access of birds at Lericum, Ramnigeo and the Naversgills by Zodiac meant that we were able to track ten birds. Although we were unable to track any birds in 2011, the birds caught in 2012 appear to mimic the two trapped in the pilot study of 2010 in feeding close inshore.

Maps of the foraging trips of all birds tracked from Fair Isle in 2010, 2011 and 2012

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 are very grateful to Fair Isle Bird Observatory for providing food and accommodation through the breeding season for Jenny and I. Thanks to David and Susannah Parnaby, and the rest of the Observatory's staff and volunteers for their kind hospitality. Thank you to Will Miles and Jason Moss for assisting in the access to the more inaccessible Shag nests by zodiac. This work was funded by the RSPB and the European Regional Development Fund through its Atlantic Area Programme and the fieldwork in 2012 was funded by Marine Scotland, JNCC and SNH.

Report on investigations into causes of death and diseases states in casualty birds found on Fair Isle 2009 to 2012

Jason C. Waite B.Vet.Med., MRCVS

As part of an ongoing project into the examination of causes of death and disease states of birds, staff of FIBO have been saving avian casualties found on Fair Isle for post-mortem examination.

For a variety of reasons (not least the work involved in the new observatory buildings) no report has been produced for the last 4 years and, until this year, fewer specimens have been submitted. Therefore this report covers not only 2012 but the intervening years of 2009 to 2011.

In this period 85 birds of 42 species from 20 families and six orders were sent for examination (**Anseriformes**: one family Anatidae with three species and three specimens; **Gruiformes**: one family Rallidae with three species of four specimens; **Charadriiformes**: five families - Charadriidae with two species, Scolopacidae with three species, Stercorariidae one species, Laridae three species and Alcidae three species; **Cuculiformes**: one family Cuculidae with one species; **Strigiformes**: one family Strigidae with one species; **Passeriformes**: 11 families and 22 species - Alaudidae one species, Hirundinidae one species, Motacillidae one species, Troglodytidae one species, Bombycillidae one species, Turdidae six species, Sylviidae five species, Corvidae one species, Sturnidae one species, Fringillidae three species and Emberizidae one species). Of these, three birds were from 2009, five from 2010, 19 from

2011 and 44 from 2012, 14 birds had no date of collection. Unusual and interesting species included Velvet Scoter, Ruff, Green Sandpiper, Iceland Gull, Short-eared Owl (two birds), Bohemian Waxwing (five birds), Icterine Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, Common Rosefinch and Lapland Bunting. Numbers of Alcidae casualties continue to decline with just one Razorbill, one Guillemot and three Little Auks over the four years. It would be nice to think that the drop in Guillemot casualties reflects an improvement in food source rather than a continued decline in breeding success.

The most common species examined were Redwing with 12 specimens, Meadow Pipit with ten, and Robin and Swallow with five each.

The age distribution, not unexpectedly, shows a heavy bias towards the young. Ageing of the birds has been done mainly on the maturity or otherwise of the gonads so that immature means sexually immature rather than immature plumage. On a number of occasions I have examined birds with immature plumage but fully active gonads. Where a more accurate assessment of age can be made, for instance by ringing data, this has been used instead.

Of the 85 birds examined post-mortem, 24 were adult, two were sub-adult, five were second-year, 52 were classed as immature, one pullus and one age not determined. This gives a ratio of 2.2 young bird deaths to one adult bird death. This may reflect the greater likelihood of inexperienced birds succumbing to injury or starvation or it may just be in proportion to the population age ratio.

The majority of casualties have occurred during peak migration time with 15 in October, 11 in September, seven in November and then six in April and 12 in May. This latter figure was swollen by the deaths of five, recently arrived Swallows during a period of fairly prolonged bad weather.

Table 1: List of Specimens Autopsied Arranged by Causes of Death

Species	Age	Sex	Date found	Cause of death
Scaup	immature	f	17.11.2011	starvation - primary; renal failure - secondary; drowning
Long-tailed Duck	adult	m	17.12.2011	bilateral thyroid hyperplasia; secondary inanition
Velvet Scoter	immature	f	10.11.2012	starvation - primary
Water Rail	immature	f	n/k	no diagnosis
Water Rail	adult	m	22.03.2010	collision injuries
Moorhen	adult	f	01.10.2011	collision injuries
Coot	adult	f	27.01.2010	starvation primary - primary (cold weather)
Lapwing	adult	f	12.09.2012	predation; damaged feet due to entanglement
Ringed Plover	1st-winter	f	03.09.2011	collision injuries (rta)
Ruff	immature	m	15.08.2012	predation
Dunlin	juvenile	f	25.08.2009	collision injury
Green Sandpiper	adult	f	06.09.2011	collision injuries
Arctic Skua	adult	m	20.06.2011	collision injuries
Arctic Skua	adult	f	10.06.2011	acute egg peritonitis; ruptured uterus
Arctic Skua	pullus		10.07.2012	no diagnosis
Razorbill	juvenile	m	19.09.2012	starvation -primary
Little Auk	adult	m	19.12.2011	starvation -primary; drowning
Little Auk	1st-winter	f	16.01.2012	intestinal granulomata. secondary: renal failure, starvation
Little Auk	immature	f	05.11.2012	starvation - primary; collision injuries
Guillemot	juvenile	f	n/k	starvation - primary

Guillemot	adult	m	19.09.2012	starvation - primary
Lesser Black-backed Gull	adult	f	13.04.2012	caseating abscesses of oesophagus; secondary inanition
Iceland Gull	immature	f	16.01.2012	starvation - primary
Great Black-backed Gull	juvenile	m	n/k	overwhelming thoracic infection probably from trauma
Great Black-backed Gull	immature	m	12.10.2012	fungal poditis; starvation - secondary; renal failure
Cuckoo	juvenile	m	n/k	starvation - primary
Short-eared Owl	immature	m	10.12.2009	starvation - primary
Short-eared Owl	immature	m	13.11.2011	starvation - primary
Hooded Crow	adult	m	27.03.2012	injuries - shooting or predation
Skylark	juvenile	m	17.08.2011	collision injuries (rta)
Swallow	immature	m	09.05.2012	migration stress
Swallow	adult	m	09.05.2012	migration stress
Swallow	n/k		09.05.2012	migration stress
Swallow	adult	m	09.05.2012	migration stress
Swallow	adult	m	09.05.2012	migration stress
Chiffchaff	adult	m	21.05.2012	predation - red-backed shrike
Willow Warbler	juvenile	f	31.08.2009	collision injuries - window
Blackcap	1st-winter	m	13.10.2011	starvation - primary; pneumonia - secondary
Blackcap	1st-winter	m	06.11.2011	starvation - primary; pneumonia - secondary
Grasshopper Warbler	adult	m	30.04.2011	migration stress ?, renal failure
Icterine Warbler	adult	m	23.05.2012	migration stress ?
Waxwing	1st-winter	f	20.10.2010	starvation - primary; migration stress
Waxwing	adult	m	20.10.2012	collision injuries - window; shock
Waxwing	immature	f	29.10.2012	collision injuries - window
Waxwing	immature	m	29.10.2012	collision injuries - window
Waxwing	immature	f	13.11.2012	starvation - primary; migration stress
Wren	adult	f	10.04.2010	collision injuries
Starling	immature	f	04.03.2010	cestodiasis; secondary starvation; secondary pneumonia
Starling	adult	f	24.04.2012	predation - cat
Blackbird	1st-winter	m	06.11.2011	predation/aggression injuries
Fieldfare	immature	f	28.01.2012	predation (cat?)
Song Thrush	immature	f	n/k	collision injury/predation
Redwing	immature	f	n/k	collision injury; secondary infection; secondary starvation
Redwing	immature	f	n/k	collision injuries - lighthouse
Redwing	immature	f	n/k	collision injuries - lighthouse
Redwing	immature	m	n/k	collision injuries - lighthouse
Redwing	immature	f	01.10.2011	collision injuries
Redwing	immature	m	03.10.2011	migration stress - shock
Redwing	1st-winter	f	11.10.2011	collision injuries - lighthouse
Redwing	1st-winter	f	11.10.2011	collision injuries - lighthouse
Redwing	immature	f	28.01.2012	no diagnosis
Redwing	adult	m	03.04.2012	collision injuries - window
Redwing	1st-summer	f	01.05.2012	collision injuries - window
Redwing	immature	m	14.10.2012	collision injuries
Robin	1st-summer	f	27.04.2012	collision injuries
Robin	1st-summer	f	07.05.2012	collision injuries
Robin	1st-summer	f	20.05.2012	collision injuries
Robin	immature		22.10.2012	collision injuries
Robin	1st-winter	m	24.12.2012	collision injuries
Wheatear	immature	f	n/k	intestinal obstruction; starvation - secondary
Wheatear	immature	f	27.09.2012	cellulitis right wing
Meadow Pipit	immature	f	n/k	collision injury
Meadow Pipit	immature	m	n/k	starvation - primary; pneumonia - secondary
Meadow Pipit	immature	f	n/k	starvation - primary; renal failure - secondary
Meadow Pipit	immature	m	26.09.2011	no diagnosis
Meadow Pipit	immature		23.07.2012	shock
Meadow Pipit	immature		09.09.2012	starvation - primary; migration stress
Meadow Pipit	immature	f	12.09.2012	collision injuries
Meadow Pipit	adult	m	30.09.2012	starvation - primary
Meadow Pipit	immature	f	02.10.2012	shock
Meadow Pipit	immature	f	27.10.2012	collision injuries
Brambling	adult	m	27.09.2012	collision injuries

Common Redpoll	adult	m	26.05.2012	starvation - primary; secondary pneumonia
Common Rosefinch	immature	m	19.05.2011	collision injuries - window (early morning)
Lapland Bunting	immature	f	n/k	collision injuries

Not unsurprisingly, collision injuries and starvation were the most common causes of death with 34 showing typical collision injuries and 21 with primary starvation. Migration stress, which is often associated with inanition also accounted for eight birds. Redwings again featured heavily in the impact injury data with five hitting a lighthouse and another five with typical window collision injuries. Waxwings also seem prone to hitting windows with three affected (one factor with this species seems to be confusion when sunlight is reflected off the window). Those suffering from starvation often had secondary disease, especially pneumonia or renal failure. Predation also featured quite strongly, six having succumbed this way. One particularly interesting case was the Chiffchaff, which fell foul of a Red-backed Shrike.

A number of individual interesting cases were found including an Arctic Skua with egg peritonitis (a condition where an egg or egg yolk is released into the abdomen causing widespread peritonitis), a Long-tailed Duck with bilateral enlarged thyroids (this would have resulted in excessive production of thyroid hormone causing weight loss and heart problems), a Wheatear with a gross infection of the soft tissue of one wing, a Lesser Black-backed Gull with an obstructing granuloma of the gullet, a Great Black-backed Gull with fungal infection of the feet, another Wheatear this time with a granuloma (probably caused by parasites) causing an obstruction of the intestine and a Lapwing which had become entangled in fibre (probably sheep wool) causing severe damage to the feet.

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

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

'Any divers...' A project to computerise the daily log

Roger Riddington

Daily log - it's an institution at *every* observatory, but perhaps nowhere more so than on Fair Isle. Every single night during the migration seasons of spring and autumn, more or less on the dot of 9.30 pm, the stentorian voice of the warden booms out to quell the background hum of conversation. There is silence (as a working biro is sought), an air of palpable anticipation (which may on occasion be related to whether or not the trolley of cocoa and homebakes has been wheeled out) and finally the

science of the log begins! An average log might see counts of 60 to 80 species, more on a good day. Log on a *really* good day can take quite some time - ample justification for those sticky cakes, log can require energy-sapping levels of concentration. Let's say for argument's sake 70 species a day, every day for six months of the year. That's a lot of numbers. Multiply that by the 60+ years of FIBO's history and you have a quite monumental pile of numbers. Traditionally inscribed on heavy, greenish-toned log pages, this is a phenomenal historical record of the observations at this, one of Europe's foremost migration sites. The value of that written record has never been in doubt, but building the new observatory highlighted just how potentially fragile that record is. Although the key observations (such as rarities, peak counts, first dates and so on) are summarised in annual reports like this one, the raw data for many of those years exists in a single, printed copy. Realising the potential for losing those data to a catastrophic event such as a major fire spurred us on to think urgently about a long-term back-up system. Good progress was made over the last decade in computerising the current year's data. But the majority of our daily logs have remained as a single paper volume. And it soon emerged that there was another important factor to consider too. As a brainstorming meeting at the Obs, held the day after the official opening in early July 2012, participants discussed the future priorities for bird-related work. Looking to the future is crucial for us in all sorts of fields, and ornithology is foremost among those. Where are the efforts of our staff best directed? We discussed, for example the merits continuing the long-term general monitoring, or switching to a small census area combined with closer study of certain key species. Quickly, we realised that in order to answer to those questions we needed to be able to analyse the past. What were the strengths and weaknesses of what we already have? And it was clear that looking to the past was quite effectively impossible until all those numbers were computerised... So began a project that is still underway, and on which we shall report further in these reports in due course - including more about the detail contained in the logs and how the data can be used. Over the course of the winter of 2011/12, we scanned about two thirds of the existing log pages. These will be digitised off the island by AEL data (the scanning allows the originals to remain on the isle); the remaining work will be finished next winter, which will then allow us to produce some basic analyses of a phenomenal dataset which, for some species, stretches over 75 years (since there are in fact quite good records for some species dating back well before the 1948 start date, back to 1936 in some cases). The purpose of this article is twofold - to tell Friends of Fair Isle and other readers about the project; and to allow me to thank the various people involved so far. In particular, we are indebted to the Scottish Ornithologist's Club, who have generously grant-aided the digitisation process with a grant of up to £15,000 from their Birds of Scotland Fund. In addition, I should like to thank all those who participated in the brainstorming meeting on Fair Isle in July 2011, but particularly David Jardine for his role in securing the above-mentioned funding and Ian Newton for acting as a referee on the application; Alan Knox for much very helpful advice on the practicalities of the digitisation process; and Will Miles for scanning the data.

JHMF Report 6th–24th July

Alex Rhodes

Recently, I found the original piece of paper that enticed me to visit Fair Isle under the JHMF grant. On it, I'm certain there is no mention of bicycle repair work, endless days toiling with chicken wire and tea dances - and yes, I'm a guy saying that! It was at the Rutland BirdFair in 2011 that I met with Tim and Irene Loseby on a stand advertising the Bird Observatory. Little was I to know that in just under one year I would be spending two blissful weeks in one of Britain's most remote corners.

Dreams of what I was to expect took over my life for the rest that year, but nothing came close to reality; to join such a welcoming community, spending two of the happiest weeks of my birding life and even get to sail on the tall ship 'Loyal'. It was just six days after sitting my last GCSE exam that I left my home near Bristol to make the trip up to the Shetland archipelago. Opting for the 'longest possible journey' to fully acclimatise to northern life, one flight, one train and two ferries later I stepped off the '*Good Shepherd IV*' onto the quay side at North Haven in the glorious sunshine that was to epitomise my time here on Fair Isle. The two weeks I worked at the Obs coincided with some of the worst summer weather possible back home with widespread flooding in areas. Isolated here in the North Sea, I could have been almost anywhere in the world with the sun shining on all but two days! I had an interest to expand my ringing experience with seabirds, while also to learn more about the day-to-day running of a Bird Observatory during the course of my stay and those aims were more than accomplished by the time I set sail back to mainland Shetland.

There's no denying Fair Isle is the jewel in the crown when it comes to rarity finding in the British Isles with its legendary vagrancy status second to none. However, the true magic of Fair Isle came into play when, within hours of stepping off the '*Good Shepherd*', I was watching a Paddyfield Warbler flit around the Obs plantation and a rather worn River Warbler skulk at point-blank range in the vegetable garden! At times, both birds were in the same binocular field of view... how much better could it get? Over the next two weeks, I was out each day assisting with the all kinds of seabird research; from monitoring the nesting successes of notorious Bonxies around Ward Hill and Vaasetter, to late nights out mist netting Storm Petrels in the Havens. Indeed, a 'typical' day (and I say that with a pinch of salt!) might be as follows:

Up at 06:00 for a pre-breakfast trap round. Out in the inflatable Zodiac all morning going round the sea cliffs & boulder-strewn beaches searching for nesting Shag, Razorbill, Guillemot etc. An afternoon visit to a gull colony or Arctic Ternery on the island checking for unringed pulli. Data entry and other admin work after dinner, before spending the night out catching Storm Petrels 'till 03:00 the following morning!

Of course, no two days were the same with changing priorities as the weeks went on. Some mornings would be based around more practical tasks, such as repairing the various Heligoland traps around the island and erecting what felt like miles and miles of fencing around the Obs. So much so, I defy any rabbit to penetrate the fortress of chicken wire! However, there were some particular highlights I would like to share that really made my trip.

It was a warm, sunny Monday and we had been out all morning around the east coast on the zodiac. After a successful morning's session, I had handled my first Razorbill and Shag chicks when the plan was to finish up by investigating the sea caves on our way back to the Obs in time for lunch. The atmosphere was hushed, there was an air of suspense as we cut the engine and drifted our way into the gloomy caverns. Thin, plaintive whistles from deep inside gave us hope that our "quarry" lay somewhere amongst the dark, slippery boulders at the back. Armed with a net in one hand, three of us stumbled our way over the seaweed-covered rocks to the place from where the sound was originating. After an explosion of wings, several flooded boots and a sweep of the net, I emerged from the murk clasping my bag tightly and the largest grin possible on my face. The prize? An adult Tystie! Moments later, others in the team came back with their own precious cargo and we sat in the near-twilight soaking up the beauty of these stunning little auks.

Operation one successful, we rounded the corner to North Mila Hesslands with high prospects of finding more birds. A lone adult was seen returning to a probable nest site partway up a steeply angled rock face, which I was able to reach with some determined scrambling and a somewhat inelegant reverse vertical wheelbarrow to get me back down. That moment will remain with me for many years to come... and I'm sure also by those watching (and laughing!) from the zodiac below!

I could not summarise my summer trip to Fair Isle without mentioning the Norwegian tall ship 'Loyal'. This stunning wooden vessel had moored up in North Haven earlier on in the week en route back to Oslo. On the final Friday of my visit, word was out that the crew were going to take anyone interested on a round trip of the Island in full-sail. This was to be followed by an evening's barbeque on the beach. Over 80 people boarded and in true Fair Isle fashion, all the islanders chipped-in for the meal, resulting in a memorable evening of good food, music and storytelling - dinner even being signalled by the firing of the ship's canon!

So, what have I come away with? Well apart from six new 'lifers' to my list, I've learnt one or two interesting things such as, yes, it is actually possible to drive a zodiac through Sheep Rock itself! The ringing experience I gained was second-to-none; I've made some great friends; and it's been a privilege to be part of both the Obs and the Fair Isle community for those few short weeks. There's no denying that I've caught the bug and fallen under the magic of Fair Isle - a magic that will draw me back time and time again. Here's to the Fairest of Isles!

If you are aged 25 or under and would like to experience FIBO through the John Harrison Memorial Fund, please contact the Obs or visit the website for details.

Meteorological data, Fair Isle 2012

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR	1974-2000
Mean	4.9	6.0	7.1	5.3	7.3	9.4	11.2	12.4	10.2	8.1	7.1	4.7	7.8	7.6
Highest Maximum	9.1	9.9	13.9	9.1	17.6	13.8	15.8	15.8	14.8	12.6	11.0	9.8	17.6	20.2
Lowest Minimum	-2.0	-1.2	1.6	-1.3	0.3	4.2	7.5	5.5	5.7	0.6	1.9	-1.3	-2.0	-5.6
Sea	8.4	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.5	10.4	11.7	12.9	11.5	11.4	10.0	8.6	9.8	9.2
Rainfall (mm)														
Monthly	66.2	65.8	46.4	52.2	33.5	37.2	41.6	91.4	81.0	72.6	73.6	139.6	801.1	924.4
Maximum Daily Fall	10.8	15.2	9.6	10.4	9.4	21.6	13.0	17.2	15.6	21.6	8.2	26.0	26.0	46.2
Sunshine (hours)														
Total	25.8	47.9	88.7	157.1	273.3	210.7	147.3	121.3	130.7	90.3	57.6	23.7	1374.4	1223.5
Maximum Daily	3.9	6.8	10.5	14.5	15.8	17.1	16.7	12.1	8.2	9.4	6.4	4.3	17.1	16.9
Wind speed (knots)														
Mean	14.8	17.8	15.9	13.6	11.1	11.8	11.4	10.2	16.1	13.7	15.0	17.6	14.1	16.0
Maximum Gust	48	64	56	52	55	51	38	48	53	48	49	67	67	109
Number of days														
Hail	12	3	5	7	6	0	0	0	0	6	30	6	75	790
Snow/sleet	9	2	2	9	5	0	0	0	0	4	4	18	53	65.5
Rain, >0.1mm	18	19	15	21	15	15	17	20	26	23	26	27	242	242.3
Wet, >0.9mm	14	15	9	15	9	8	11	11	22	14	19	19	166	175.9
Ground frost	9	2	2	10	7	1	0	0	0	2	4	15	52	59.9
Air frost	3	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	10	18.0
Gale	5	8	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	7	27	56.5
Fog during 24hr	1	8	6	5	4	6	11	20	5	2	1	0	69	78.1
Wind (direction at 0900)														
North	3	1	0	9	4	8	5	1	3	4	3	6	47	42.3
North East	0	0	0	2	4	5	4	3	2	2	0	1	23	22.1
East	2	0	0	8	7	6	2	9	1	3	4	6	48	34.7
South East	2	1	4	2	1	2	3	8	2	5	3	7	40	50.0
South	2	8	6	1	2	1	4	4	4	3	6	7	48	60.0
South West	7	8	7	4	2	0	3	1	8	2	7	1	50	51.3
West	10	5	13	1	8	3	6	3	6	6	1	0	62	62.5
North West	5	6	1	3	3	5	4	2	4	6	6	3	48	37.1
Calm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.5

Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust Financial Report and Accounts for 2012

Mike Wood

A summary of FIBOT's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2012 appears on the following pages. The full statutory accounts can be inspected at the Bird Observatory on Fair Isle.

The year ended 31st October 2012 was an encouraging year for FIBOT as a business. Our target is to stabilise the number of revenue-earning guest-nights at around 3,000 per year, so the 2012 figure of 2,905 bed-nights (and the 2011 figure of 2,972) is a solid step towards that target. Combining the number of bed-nights with slightly-increased charges in 2012 means we recorded a small profit for the year. Many guests have commented favourably on the quiet, warm and comfortable accommodation, excellent food, well-stocked bar and friendly atmosphere of the Observatory and we recommend anyone who has yet to experience the new building to definitely visit Fair Isle in the near future.

With two flights each day to and from Shetland mainland every day except Sunday during the summer, together with three days on which the '*Good Shepherd*' sails between Fair Isle and Shetland, getting to the island is much easier and more predictable than in past years.

The Bar and Shop operated successfully and profitably in 2012 and we received additional grant funding from SOC to enable the digitising of many years bird sightings to take place over the winter 2012/13.

We have also continued to receive valuable grant 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.

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. Ultimately it is not just the comfort of the new building that determines whether or not a guest has an enjoyable stay at the Observatory, it is the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff that is a key factor in visitor satisfaction. This is the magic ingredient that is essential to our success.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the Appeal Fund which enabled the rebuild project to take place. Whilst our finances continue to be 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 2012

Sales Income	2012 (£)	2011 (£)
Guest House Income	137,173	114,558
Shop Sales	9,612	8,839
Bar Income	17,226	20,754
	164,011	144,151
Cost of Sales		
Purchases	55,358	57,964
Wages & Salaries	44,005	44,771
	99,363	102,735
Trading Profit	64,648	41,416
Other Income		
Interest Received	3,297	1,436
Deferred Grant Income released	112,000	82,290
Subscriptions	5,465	5,395
Donations	11,110	7,592
Grants Received	37,234	22,113
Other Income	0	0
	169,106	118,826
Gross Profit	233,754	160,242
Other Expenses		
Administration	13,195	24,475
Establishment	78,082	48,468
Sales & Marketing	7,024	6,183
Financial & Legal	6,746	7,285
Depreciation	124,844	96,473
	229,891	182,884
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	3,863	(22,642)

Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2012

Fixed Assets	31/10/12 (£)	31/10/11 (£)
Tangible assets	3,868,441	3,993,285
Investments	0	0
	3,868,441	3,993,285
 Current Assets		
Stocks	17,890	14,894
Debtors	18,277	78,992
Cash at bank and in hand	34,039	693,536
	70,206	787,422
 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(18,363)	(708,051)
Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)	51,843	79,371
 Total Assets less Current Liabilities	3,920,284	4,072,656
 Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(0)	(28,114)
	3,920,284	4,044,542
 Representing:		
Accumulated Surplus	3,920,284	4,044,542
Appeal Reserve	0	0
	3,920,284	4,044,542

Map of Fair Isle

Toilets:

FIBO
Stackhoull
Airstrip

Payphones:

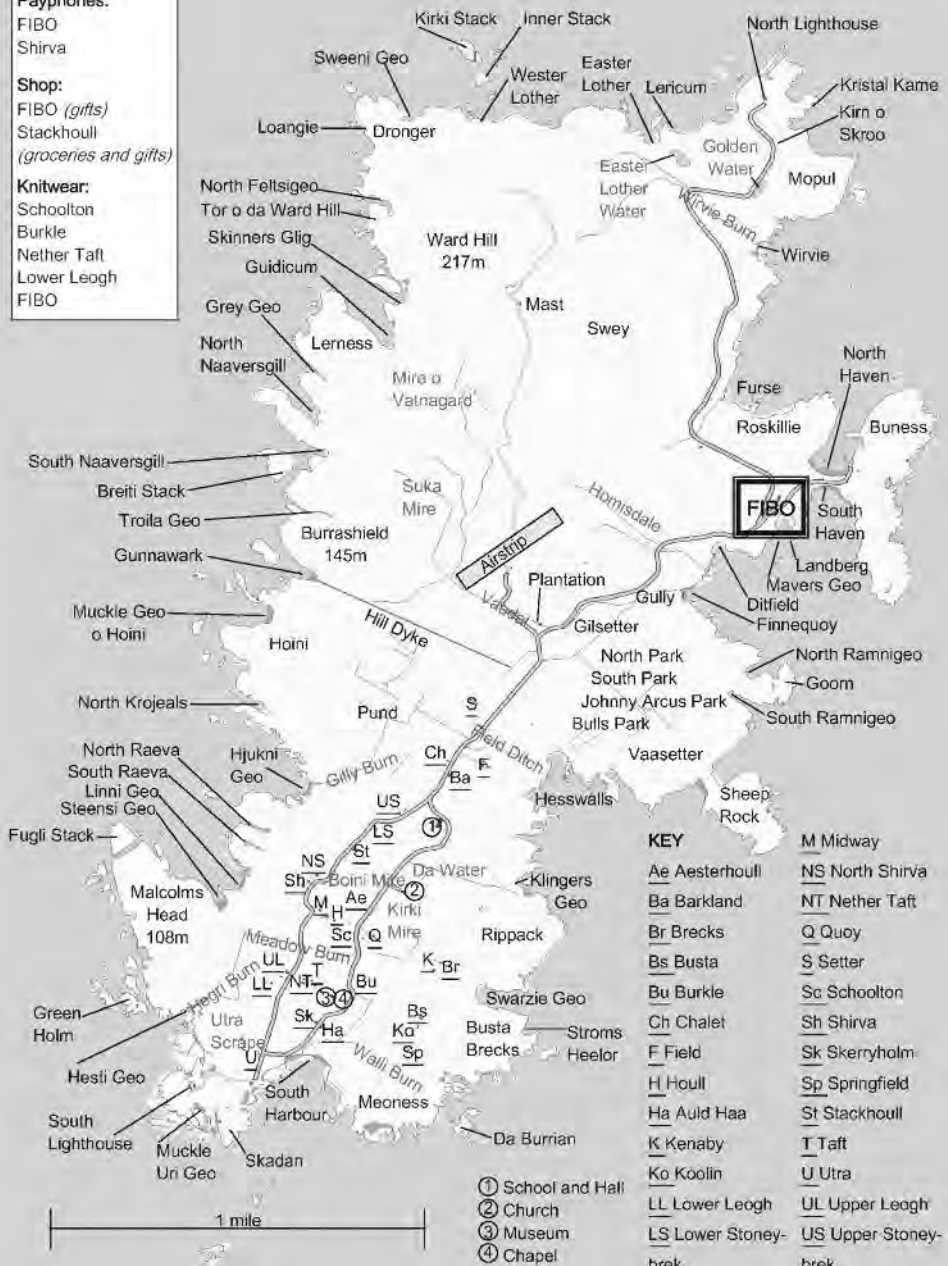
FIBO
Shirva

Shop:

FIBO (gifts)
Stackhoull
(groceries and gifts)

Knitwear:

Schoolton
Burkle
Nether Taft
Lower Leogh
FIBO



Systematic Checklist of the birds of Fair Isle

David Parnaby

The table below is a checklist of the birds of Fair Isle at the end 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 the addition of Magnolia Warbler in 2012, the Fair Isle list stands at 379 at the end of 2012.

Status Categories

Vagrant V

Rare R

Scarce S

Regular Migrant RM

Frequent Migrant FM

Common Migrant CM

No. of records

ten records or less in the past 20 years

11–40 records in the past 20 years (* number of individuals is greater than the number of records)

averaging 10 records or less per annum

averaging 11–40 records per annum

averaging 41–500 records per annum

averaging more than 500 records per annum

Breeding Categories

Small Numbers BS

Moderate Numbers BM

Large Numbers BL

No. of records

on average less than 100 pairs per annum

on average 101–1,000 pairs per annum

on average more than 1,000 pairs per annum

☐ Mute Swan V (9)

☐ Bewick's Swan V (6*)

☐ Whooper Swan FM

☐ Bean Goose R (38*)

☐ Pink-footed Goose FM

☐ White-fronted Goose S

☐ Greylag Goose CM

☐ Canada Goose R

☐ Barnacle Goose FM

☐ Brent Goose R

☐ Shelduck S

☐ Mandarin Duck V (1)

☐ Wigeon FM

☐ American Wigeon V (1)

☐ Gadwall R (39*)

☐ Teal FM

☐ Green-winged Teal V (2)

☐ Mallard FM BS

☐ Black Duck V (1)

☐ Pintail S

☐ Garganey V (12)

☐ Shoveler S

☐ Pochard R

☐ Ring-necked Duck V (1)

☐ Tufted Duck RM

☐ Scaup S

☐ Lesser Scaup V (1)

☐ Eider FM BS

☐ King Eider V (17)

☐ Steller's Eider V (1)

☐ Harlequin Duck V (2)

☐ Long-tailed Duck FM

☐ 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 (14)
- ☐ Marsh Harrier R (44)
- ☐ 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 (48)
- ☐ Little Crake V (1)
- ☐ Baillon's Crake V (2)
- ☐ Corncrake S
- ☐ Moorhen S
- ☐ Coot R (87)
- ☐ Crane R (24)
- ☐ Sandhill Crane V (1)
- ☐ Little Bustard V (1)
- ☐ Great Bustard V (1)
- ☐ Stone Curlew V (8)
- ☐ Avocet V (1)
- ☐ Oystercatcher FM BS
- ☐ American Golden Plover V (10)
- ☐ Pacific Golden Plover V (2)
- ☐ Golden Plover CM
- ☐ Grey Plover S
- ☐ Lapwing FM BS
- ☐ Little Ringed Plover V (3)
- ☐ Ringed Plover FM BS
- ☐ Kentish Plover V (1)
- ☐ Caspian Plover V (1)
- ☐ Dotterel S
- ☐ Upland Sandpiper V (1)
- ☐ Hudsonian Whimbrel V (2)
- ☐ Whimbrel FM
- ☐ Curlew FM BS
- ☐ Black-tailed Godwit S
- ☐ Bar-tailed Godwit RM
- ☐ Turnstone CM
- ☐ Knot FM
- ☐ Ruff RM
- ☐ Curlew Sandpiper S
- ☐ Red-necked Stint V (1)
- ☐ Temminck's Stint V (17)
- ☐ Sanderling FM
- ☐ Dunlin FM
- ☐ Purple Sandpiper FM
- ☐ Baird's Sandpiper V (4)
- ☐ Little Stint RM
- ☐ White-rumped Sandpiper V (5)
- ☐ Buff-breasted Sandpiper V (13*)
- ☐ Pectoral Sandpiper R (30)
- ☐ Semi-palmated Sandpiper V (3)
- ☐ Red-necked Phalarope V (21)
- ☐ Grey Phalarope R (38*)
- ☐ Terek Sandpiper V (1)
- ☐ Common Sandpiper FM
- ☐ Spotted Sandpiper V (1)
- ☐ Green Sandpiper RM
- ☐ Solitary Sandpiper V (1)
- ☐ Spotted Redshank S
- ☐ Greenshank RM
- ☐ Lesser Yellowlegs V (3)
- ☐ Wood Sandpiper S
- ☐ Redshank CM
- ☐ Jack Snipe FM
- ☐ Long-billed Dowitcher V (2)
- ☐ Woodcock FM
- ☐ Snipe CM BS
- ☐ Great Snipe R (45)
- ☐ Collared Pratincole V (1)
- ☐ Black-winged Pratincole V (1)
- ☐ Pomarine Skua R
- ☐ Arctic Skua FM BS
- ☐ Long-tailed Skua R
- ☐ Great Skua FM BM
- ☐ Puffin CM BL
- ☐ Black Guillemot FM BL
- ☐ Razorbill FM BL
- ☐ Little Auk FM
- ☐ Guillemot CM BL
- ☐ Brünnich's Guillemot V (1)
- ☐ Gull-billed Tern V (1)
- ☐ Caspian Tern V (2)
- ☐ Black Tern V (2)
- ☐ White-winged Black Tern V (3)
- ☐ Sandwich Tern S
- ☐ Common Tern RM
- ☐ Roseate Tern V (2)
- ☐ Arctic Tern FM BM
- ☐ Ivory Gull V (2)
- ☐ Sabine's Gull V (6)
- ☐ Kittiwake CM BM
- ☐ Black-headed Gull FM
- ☐ Little Gull R (31)
- ☐ Laughing Gull V (1)
- ☐ Mediterranean Gull V (1)
- ☐ Common Gull FM BS
- ☐ Ring-billed Gull V (3)
- ☐ Lesser Black-backed Gull FM BS
- ☐ Herring Gull CM BS
- ☐ Iceland Gull S
- ☐ Glaucous Gull RM

- ☐ Great Black-backed Gull CM BS
- ☐ 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 (40)
- ☐ Wryneck RM
- ☐ Great Spotted Woodpecker S
- ☐ Golden Oriole R (45)
- ☐ 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 (5)
- ☐ Blue Tit V (9*)
- ☐ Great Tit R (38*)
- ☐ Coal Tit V (7)
- ☐ Calandra Lark V (4)
- ☐ Bimaculated Lark V (1)
- ☐ Short-toed Lark S
- ☐ Crested Lark V (1)
- ☐ Woodlark R (56)
- ☐ Skylark CM BS
- ☐ Shore Lark R
- ☐ Sand Martin RM
- ☐ Swallow CM
- ☐ House Martin FM
- ☐ Red-rumped Swallow V (9)
- ☐ Greenish Warbler R (42)
- ☐ Arctic Warbler R (85)
- ☐ Pallas's Warbler R (40)
- ☐ Yellow-browed Warbler RM
- ☐ Hume's Warbler V (3)
- ☐ 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 (80)
- ☐ Sardinian Warbler V (2)
- ☐ Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler R (23)
- ☐ Lanceolated Warbler R (84)
- ☐ Grasshopper Warbler RM
- ☐ River Warbler V (16)
- ☐ Savi's Warbler V (7)
- ☐ Thick-billed Warbler V (2)
- ☐ Booted Warbler V (13)
- ☐ Sykes's Warbler V (2)
- ☐ Eastern Olivaceous Warbler V (3)
- ☐ Icterine Warbler S
- ☐ Melodious Warbler V (17)
- ☐ Aquatic Warbler V (37)
- ☐ Sedge Warbler FM
- ☐ Paddyfield Warbler V (19)
- ☐ Blyth's Reed Warbler R (31)
- ☐ Marsh Warbler S
- ☐ Reed Warbler RM
- ☐ Great Reed Warbler V (14)
- ☐ Waxwing S
- ☐ Treecreeper V (8)
- ☐ Wren BS
- ☐ Starling FM BM
- ☐ Rose-coloured Starling R (40)
- ☐ Dipper R (37)
- ☐ White's Thrush V (12)
- ☐ Hermit Thrush V (2)
- ☐ Swainson's Thrush V (2)
- ☐ Grey-cheeked Thrush V (3)
- ☐ Siberian Thrush V (1)
- ☐ Ring Ouzel FM
- ☐ Blackbird CM
- ☐ Eyebrowed Thrush V (2)
- ☐ Dusky Thrush V (1)
- ☐ Black-throated Thrush V (13)
- ☐ 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 (57)
- ☐ Nightingale R (50)
- ☐ Bluethroat RM
- ☐ Siberian Rubythroat V (4)
- ☐ Red-flanked Bluetail V (9)
- ☐ Red-breasted Flycatcher S
- ☐ Collared Flycatcher V (4)
- ☐ Pied Flycatcher FM
- ☐ Black Redstart RM
- ☐ Redstart FM
- ☐ Rock Thrush V (1)
- ☐ Whinchat FM
- ☐ Siberian Stonechat R (35)
- ☐ Stonechat S
- ☐ Isabelline Wheatear V (1)
- ☐ Wheatear CM BS
- ☐ Pied Wheatear V (1)
- ☐ Black-eared Wheatear V (5)
- ☐ Desert Wheatear V (5)
- ☐ Dunnock FM
- ☐ Alpine Accentor V (2)
- ☐ House Sparrow BS
- ☐ Tree Sparrow R
- ☐ Yellow Wagtail RM
- ☐ Citrine Wagtail R (76)
- ☐ Grey Wagtail S
- ☐ Pied Wagtail FM BS
- ☐ Richard's Pipit S

- ☐ Blyth's Pipit V (4)
- ☐ Tawny Pipit V (17)
- ☐ Olive-backed Pipit R (88)
- ☐ Tree Pipit FM
- ☐ Pechora Pipit R (43)
- ☐ Meadow Pipit CM BS
- ☐ Red-throated Pipit R (77)
- ☐ Rock Pipit FM BS
- ☐ Buff-bellied Pipit V (4)
- ☐ Chaffinch FM
- ☐ Brambling FM
- ☐ Greenfinch RM
- ☐ Serin V (3)
- ☐ Citril Finch V (1)
- ☐ Goldfinch R
- ☐ Siskin FM
- ☐ Linnet RM
- ☐ Twite FM BS
- ☐ Lesser Redpoll S
- ☐ Common Redpoll FM
- ☐ Arctic Redpoll R (100)
- ☐ 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)
- ☐ Magnolia Warbler V (1)
- ☐ Blackburnian Warbler V (1)
- ☐ Blackpoll Warbler V (2)
- ☐ Yellow-rumped 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.



The south of the island, looking east from Malcolm's Head © I. Andrews



The view south west from Kenaby © I. Andrews



The Obs and the Havens looking north from Vaasetter © T. Loseby