



FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 2014



Plate 1. Ciaran Hatsell
with Paddyfield Warbler,
5th September 2014.
© David Parnaby



Plate 2. Marianna Chimienti with puffling,
21st July 2014. © David Parnaby



Plate 3. Chris Dodd, Ward Hill, 2014. © Carol Jefferies



Plate 4. Three men in a boat (Richard Cope, David Parnaby
and Ciaran Hatsell), 31st May 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell



FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY REPORT NO. 66 (2014)

Editor: David Parnaby

Photographic editor: Ian Andrews

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Front cover: Lanceolated Warbler, September 2014. © *Richard Johnson*

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FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY, FAIR ISLE, SHETLAND, ZE2 9JU.



Obs, 9th June 2014. © Ian Andrews

Telephone:

01595 760258

General email:

fibo@btconnect.com

Administrator:

fiboadministrator@btconnect.com

Reservations:

fibobooking@btconnect.com

FIBO website:

www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk

Warden's blog:

fibowarden.blogspot.co.uk

Facebook:

facebook.com/fairislebirdobservatory

Twitter:

twitter.com/fi_obs

Board of Directors:

Eric Meek (*Chairman from June 2014*)

David Okill (*Vice-Chairman*)

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Ian Cowgill (*from June 2014*), Louise Batchelor,

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Roger Riddington (*Chairman until June 2014*).

Honorary Director:

Roy Dennis (*President*)

Warden:

David Parnaby

Administrator:

Susannah Parnaby

Solicitors:

Anderson Strathern

1 Rutland Court, Edinburgh. EH3 8EY.

Bankers:

Bank of Scotland, 38 St Andrew Sq,

Edinburgh. EH2 2YR.

Accountants:

Momentum Ltd, Harelands Court, Melsonby,

North Yorkshire.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Eric Meek



Plate 5. Eric Meek (left) succeeded Roger Riddington as Chairman at the 2014 AGM, Obs, 8th June 2014.
© Ian Andrews

At the biannual meeting of FIBOT directors held on the island in June 2014, Roger Riddington retired from the position of Chairman after five very busy and productive years. Having taken over from Roy Dennis once the new Observatory had been officially opened, Roger had the task of overseeing the installation of our new Warden and Administrator, David and Susannah Parnaby, and ensuring that all went well. Inevitably, with a brand new building and brand new staff, there were a few minor hiccups but things have progressed steadily and everything is now running smoothly. Roger has done a superb job and we owe him an enormous vote of thanks for the time and energy that he has put into the task.

I first visited Fair Isle in 1967 and again in 1970 and 1971 before being appointed as assistant warden, under Roger Broad, in 1972. My late wife, Chris, joined me later that year, becoming cook towards the end of the season. Returning to teaching in Northumberland early in 1973, the Fair Isle experience stayed with me and I helped lead Workers' Educational Association trips to the island in 1976 and 1977. I always wanted to return to the Northern Isles to live and finally got the chance when, in January 1981 I was appointed Area Officer for the RSPB in Orkney, a position that I held until my retirement in 2012.

Despite this relative familiarity with the Northern Isles and especially Fair Isle, it was still with some trepidation that I took over the reins of the chairmanship of FIBOT in June. Roy and Roger will be very difficult acts to follow but we are fortunate in having David and Susannah who now have four years worth of experience behind them and who deal superbly with all the day-to-day problems that the running of the Observatory can throw at them. We also have an excellent board of directors, with expertise in a whole range of fields, in order to keep me on the straight and narrow.

“How does the tiny speck
of land that is Fair Isle
do it? With 381 species
already recorded, 2014
produced a further three”

The trustees held their usual two meetings during the year, in January in Aberdeen and in June on the island, but that apparent paucity of meetings belies the amount of work that is carried out by e-mail and 'phone. We attended both of the national Birdfairs, the Scottish, near Edinburgh, in May and the British, at Rutland Water, in August. We have also been working hard to improve the FIBO website and we are looking at ways in which it may be possible to improve our annual report. The John Harrison Memorial Fund helped bring more young folk to Fair Isle and, in addition, a new fund of a similar nature was set up. The Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund commemorates the life of



Plate 6. The FIBOT Board of Directors and staff, Obs, 8th June 2014 (from left to right): Roger Riddington (out-going Chairman), Peter Evans, Pete Ellis, Eric Meek (Chairman), Ian Andrews, Fiona Mitchell, Louise Batchelor, Mike Wood (Director of Finance), Alexander Bennett, Mark Bolton, Dave Okill (Vice-Chairman), Douglas Barr, Ian Cowgill, Susannah Parnaby (Administrator). [Roy Dennis (Honorary President), Jane Reid and David Parnaby (Warden) were not present] © Ian Andrews

Simon Aspinall, who was a frequent visitor to the isle and who died in 2011 at the tragically early age of 50. This fund was set up by Simon's parents, Jack and Sylvia, and his brother, Richard, and we are looking forward to 2015 perhaps being the first year that one or more recipients may benefit from it.

A major piece of research that is being funded by FIBOT is the analysis of the Observatory log data. Stretching all the way back to 1948, the Fair Isle observation logs provide a unique picture of bird migration through the island over some 65 years. All these data have been digitised and FIBOT have employed Will Miles, one of our previous assistant wardens, to analyse them under the supervision of one of our directors, Prof. Jane Reid. The work is going well and we look forward to seeing the first draft papers in the near future. Will has already given several talks on the subject, raising the profile of the island even more.

Following on from the traumatic year of 2013 when the island lost several of its residents or close associates, it is sad to have to report one more loss. Betty Best first came to the island as the nurse in 1973 and had been a stalwart resident until her death in December. That left yet another gap that is impossible to fill. Our sincere condolences go to her husband John and children, Ian, Fiona and Andrew and her grandchildren.

On a more cheerful note, it has been good to hear that the island's seabird populations rallied during the summer of 2014. After years and years of poor breeding success and declining numbers, many species had their best breeding season for a long time and we can only hope that this might be a turning point and not just a blip on the graph. Observatory staff continue to monitor the numbers and breeding success of the isle's seabird populations while RSPB researchers spent another season attaching tracking devices to a sample of adult seabirds to enhance our knowledge of just how far they are having to travel in order to find food.

2015 sees the start of a three-year national project to census all of Britain and Ireland's seabirds, the fourth time that this has been attempted. Fair Isle, of course, participated in the first of these, Operation Seafarer in the late 1960s and did so again in the Seabird Colony Register of the late 1980s. The work was repeated at the millennium for Seabird 2000 and now, 15 years on, we have to try to do it all again. One thing I know is that, on Fair Isle, it will be done with as much diligence and with as great accuracy as anywhere in the country and we look forward to seeing the results.

WARDEN'S REPORT

David Parnaby



Plate 7. David Parnaby with Mallard, Obs, 3rd June 2014.
© Ciaran Hatsell

Susannah and I's fourth year running the Obs proved to be another tremendous year on Fair Isle and brought many ornithological highlights: a fantastic spring for major rarities, much improved breeding for seabirds and a year-list record, making it a memorable season for everyone at FIBO. The year ended on a sad note however, with the loss of Betty Best in December. My favourite memory of Betty will always be being invited into Utra, having taken shelter against the wall from a particularly vicious storm, and being presented with a pot of tea and an astonishing array of biscuits that instantly put me in mind of my grandparents' in Sunderland. Betty, John and I sat and blethered for quite some time, long after the storm had passed; the warmth and friendliness I experienced will be no surprise to anyone who has called in at Utra and our thoughts go out to John and the rest of Betty's family. The autumn also saw the passing of my Nana Parnaby, who had been ill for some time with Alzheimer's disease. It is times like these, when your family seems most distant, that we're especially thankful for the caring nature of the

island community. Fair Isle feels very much like home for Susannah, the girls and I and that is thanks to the people who live here.

We were also lucky to get multiple visits from Susannah's and my parents during the year and they provided huge amounts of help and enjoyment as usual. My parents were on the island for Christmas and New Year and I think probably looked forward to getting home to Sunderland to relax after enjoying the extended hospitality of the Fair Isle festive period!

There was no doubt that the weather had a huge part in the success of the year for migration, with regular blasts of easterly winds throughout the year helping to deliver an astonishing number of birds. The rarity list was headed by Fair Isle's

- 1st** Bridled Tern, Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler and Glossy Ibis (as well as 'Caspian Stonechat' and 'Continental Cormorant')
- 2nd** Laughing Gull and Mandarin Duck (and the returning Swinhoe's Petrel)
- 3rd** Hermit Thrush, Cretzschmar's Bunting and Green-winged Teal
- 4th** Pallid Harrier and Roseate Tern (two of the latter were recorded)
- 5th** Calandra Lark, Grey-cheeked Thrush and 'Kumlien's Gull'
- 6th** Collared Flycatcher and Barn Owl
- 7th** Firecrest
- 9th** Treecreeper

In addition there was: White's Thrush, Lanceolated Warbler, two Red-flanked Bluetails, Paddyfield Warbler, five Blyth's Reed Warblers, two Arctic Warblers, Siberian Stonechat (possibly of the subspecies *stejnegeri*), three 'Western' and one 'Eastern' Subalpine Warblers, two Red-throated Pipits, six Olive-backed Pipits, two Greenish Warblers, 15 Little Buntings, seven Richard's Pipits, seven Short-toed Larks, Rose-coloured Starling,

Nightjar, six Great Grey Shrikes, 12 Red-breasted Flycatchers, 33 Yellow-browed Warblers, 32 Barred Warblers, nine Bluethroats, 25 Wrynecks, 23 Red-backed Shrikes, 27 Common Rosefinches, four Icterine Warblers, 11 Marsh Warblers, a Crane, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint, Red-necked Phalarope, two Grey Phalaropes, two Honey-buzzards, Rough-legged Buzzard, two Ospreys, Hobby, two Garganeys, six Quails, 12 Dotterels, four Pomarine Skuas, Little Gull, five 'Grey-headed Wagtails', four Hawfinches, Shorelark, Bullfinch and Blue Tit!

It's always interesting to look back at the sheer variety and volume of records of rare and scarce birds during the course of a year. There is surely still no single site in Britain with such a good track record of rarities and the best chance of 'finding your own'.

This variety of good birds contributed to a year-list record of 219 species (the previous record of 217 species had stood since 1992), although, as usual, there were some surprising omissions; Turtle Dove, Citrine Wagtail and Thrush Nightingale have become expected species in recent years but failed to make an appearance in 2014, whilst Brent Goose, Rustic and Ortolan Buntings continued their recent declines, with blank years. The absence of Turtle Dove is rather shocking, with the steady decline in records described in the last Annual Report culminating in the first ever blank year in FIBO's history for this species. It is not the only long-distance migrant to have undergone such a decline and a slightly more detailed ringing report this year shows how numbers of some of the common migrants trapped annually on Fair Isle have declined, with a trap round now being almost as likely to produce a Yellow-browed Warbler or Common Rosefinch as a Pied Flycatcher or Redstart. The FIBO migration project (begun after an SOC grant enabled us to digitise all of our Log data from 1948) should provide further insights into some of these changes in status and distribution, ensuring the daily work of FIBO remains relevant from a conservation perspective as well as being hugely enjoyable!

Other ornithological highlights included some good counts of a variety of species this year with Bean, Pink-footed and Greylag Goose, Herring

and Great Black-backed Gull, Common, Green and Wood Sandpiper, Greenshank, Fieldfare, Song Thrush and Manx Shearwater being amongst the species to record counts in the top five highest ever from Fair Isle.

Ringing provided the highest annual totals of Redwing, Woodcock, Chiffchaff and Mallard, whilst seabirds contributed a significant amount for the first time in several years, although perhaps the most memorable ringing experience from the year were the phenomenal numbers of Storm Petrels that were trapped during the summer sessions at the Havens and the Skadan. Standing at the net extracting birds and looking up to see clouds of dozens more swirling overhead was a particularly special experience, and Storm Petrel ringing again proved the highlight of many visitors' trips to the island.

Arguably the best part of the year though, was the success of the breeding seabirds, with many species registering their most productive breeding seasons for several years (over a decade in many cases). In a year in which Fair Islander Inge Thomson premiered her latest work *Da Fishing Hands* on the island, it seemed fitting that the sea should respond by at last providing the food needed for a successful breeding season. *Da Fishing Hands* was commissioned by Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative (FIMETI) with support from Creative Scotland and was the last piece of work that the much-missed Lise Sinclair wrote for; its performance at the Hall in May was a wonderful and emotional night, bringing together the island community in a way that sums up all that is best about Fair Isle. The actual music is a phenomenal piece of work that helped to shift my thoughts from the productivity statistics and population plots of our seabird work to the cultural impact that the decline in the state of our marine environment has on a community that has been so closely linked to the sea throughout its existence. Sadly, the heydays of the swirling clouds of Kittiwakes that inspired the track 'The Snowstorm' are still a long way off and we wait to see whether 2014 represented any form of recovery or, as sadly seems more likely, a temporary reprieve from continued declines. Whichever it turns out to be, I

will always treasure the memories of being stood on the patio at the Obs on a beautiful calm summers' evening hearing the murmur and whistles drifting across the island of a Guillemot colony in full swing - Fair Isle at its best.

Whilst not in the same league of cultural highlights, it was none the less good to see Fair Isle getting featured in the BBC drama 'Shetland', which aired in April, with the Obs (and my telescope!) getting cameo roles, although the insides of all the buildings (and a fair few of the outside shots) were recorded elsewhere. Another TV highlight was the football World Cup, with the final attracting a mixture of staff, guests and visiting yachties into the flat, with a peak of 37 people from five nationalities cramming into our lounge to watch - most people prefer having a holiday away from TV, but there are obviously a few exceptions!

We were very fortunate to share the year with a good team, with Ciaran Hatsell arriving from the Farne Islands as the new assistant warden with unlimited enthusiasm, whilst Richard Cope returned, providing valuable experience in his second year. Chris Dodd returned as ranger (a post supported by SNH), having previously volunteered at the Obs in a similar role in autumn 2013, and again proved a very valuable and popular member

of the team. The domestic team again worked their socks off for the Obs and thanks are due to Angela, Anne, Trixie, Rachel, Shaun, Kharis and Terri for all their efforts in keeping us fed, keeping the Obs clean and being responsible for so much good feedback from our guests. Always one of the most important roles for us is that of childcarer and the children were again very lucky to be looked after by Alice Best of Kenaby, then Marilyn Jones who returned to the island for her second spell, both of them fitting in very well with Obs life and becoming firm favourites of our girls. The Obs team was joined by Rob Hughes and Marianna Chimienti as part of the RSPB STAR project who, as well as acquiring valuable information on seabird movements (which was especially interesting as we were able to compare a successful breeding season with some of the ones that had gone before), were more than willing to help out the Obs in seabird monitoring and a variety of other tasks.

Volunteers are always an important part of Obs life, both in the help that they provide and the opportunities that coming to Fair Isle provides and this year Langdon Truscott, Alex Penn and Raeannon Sinclair all benefitted from a JHMF grants to enable them to visit, whilst Jo Hanle and Molly Heal, who were bar and domestic volunteers, also turned their hands to a wide range of other experiences.



Plate 8. The 2014 wardening team: Ciaran Hatsell (assistant warden), David Parnaby (Warden), and Richard Cope (assistant warden), 30th April 2014. © Tommy Hyndman

We were very sad to learn of the unexpected death of one of our very dedicated and enthusiastic 2013 volunteers, Rachael Redfern, in May and our thoughts go out to her family and friends.

The FIBOT directors again enjoyed their annual meeting and AGM on the island in mid-June and our thanks are due to them for the huge amounts of (unpaid) work that they put into maintaining the Obs. In particular, Dave and Roger are always willing to lend a hand on Shetland to get vans, boat engines and supplies moved around, whilst Mike is a constant supply of help at the end of the phone over all manner of issues. Roger stepped down as Chairman at the summer meeting and I'll miss our weekly catch-ups, although he has offered to be around whenever we need him. Susannah and I owe him a great deal of thanks for the help he has been whilst we found our feet at FIBO.

There are also many others who need thanking, starting with the islanders who provide a variety of services to the Obs, with Kenny and Deryk in particular often called into action at short notice. The friendship provided by the island is also important, with Susannah, Grace, Freyja and myself feeling very at home on Fair Isle thanks to those we share the island with. Angela, Darren (who, before he left, built a new ringing hut near the Plantation to replace the one that had blown away in the winter) and the rest

of their family left the island during the summer, causing the island population to dip to 55, its lowest level for many years, whilst the school role was down to five pupils by the start of the autumn term. In response, the island contracted a consultant to produce a development plan to help boost the island and ensure there are enough people for the island to function properly. We hope the Obs can continue to play a part in supporting the community that does so much to support us and we're pleased that we have been able to employ several islanders in various ways.

The Obs benefits from financial assistance from several organisations who we would like to thank, in particular JNCC (for our seabird monitoring programme), SNH (for the Ranger Service) and SOTEAG (who help with the cost of seabird rings). The visitors who stay at the Obs are vitally important in helping us to carry out our work, but also in providing the Obs with the special atmosphere that helps to make FIBO such a special place to stay and encourages many folk to come back year after year, so thank you to everyone who has come to visit us.

Of course, the most important person in the day-to-day running and functioning of the Obs is Susannah, who again put in a huge effort and my thanks especially go to her for keeping the Obs (and me) going throughout the year.



Plate 9. The Parnaby family (left to right: Grace, David, Freyja and Susannah), May 2014. © Dave Wheeler

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Susannah Parnaby

Having come to the end of only our fourth season on Fair Isle we can hardly be considered 'old hands', so it is perhaps premature to be picking favourite seasons at the Observatory, but it's certainly true that the 2014 season will be looked back on with great fondness.

We had a great staff team, to whom we are very grateful for all their hard work over a busy year, comprising Richard Cope and Ciaran Hatsell as assistant wardens, Chris Dodd as ranger, Angela Wiseman and Ann Prior (cooks), Trixie Muirhead and Rachel Challoner (assistant cooks), Kharis Leggate, Shaun Milner and Terri Bowley (domestic assistants) and Alice Best and Marilyn Jones (childminders). We were also lucky enough to have a number of domestic volunteers through the season, including Jacqueline McBeath, Pauline Wright and Molly Heal, with Jo Hanle doing some sterling work behind the bar. It may not be the most glamorous of roles, but our domestic volunteers are a really important part of the Obs team and it can be a good way to spend some time on the island, so if it's something that appeals look out for the volunteer roles on the website over the winter and get in touch. Also supporting the Obs through volunteering with the wardening team in 2014 were Langdon, Alex and Reannon.

As we hope comes across, it's the people that make FIBO, with the building at its best when it's full of folk. We'd like to thank everyone who visited for supporting the work of the Obs on Fair Isle - we had a great time seeing you all here and hope you enjoyed your visit. One of the best things about this job is getting to share Fair Isle with a bunch of like-minded folk, whether you've been coming for years, or have just caught the bug! Finally, we'd like to thank the directors for all the hard work they put in, often in the background, with those close enough often the recipients of 'Could you just...?' phone calls at regular intervals.

So what made 2014 such a good year? Well the birds certainly helped, with a fantastic spring that just kept going. I know there are people who prefer to get off the beaten track and bird alone, but I always find the buzz of sharing a good bird with others adds even more to the experience. Whilst the Shetland birders yo-yoing between Fair Isle and Mainland may not have seen it in quite the same light it felt good to be getting the birds that kept them coming! There were some great parties, with a staff team keen to get into the fancy dress spirit - an Eiffel tower costume and some psychedelic wigs still linger in the memory. There was a lot of very good food, including Angela's incredible cakes and Ann's cheese scones. Then there was the wedding in August, with Inness and Karen's big day coinciding with record-breaking rainfall, flooded roads and discussions about whether to get the pumps out to stop the water overflowing from the car park into the Observatory itself. Despite the weather it was everything you expect of a Fair Isle wedding, full of love, music and good food.

What else? There was watching the World Cup final with 37 people from five nationalities all squeezed into the warden's flat (we still don't know quite how), as final day coincided with a visit from a Swedish tall ship. There was a very enjoyable long weekend with the Shetland Wildlife Explorer group and the first of, we hope, many field trip visits by an Edinburgh school, as well as a visit early in the season by the Cape Farewell project. There were some important developments on the isle too as the proposal for a research and development Marine Protected Area was submitted and progressed through to the assessment stage and consultation on a Fair Isle Development Plan got under way.

But at the heart of it, as ever, was simply sharing a beautiful place with great people.

THE NTS ON FAIR ISLE IN 2014; 60 years on

Alexander Bennett

The National Trust for Scotland

Last year I reported that the Trust had undergone a few staff changes in Inverness and Edinburgh but that Fair Isle continued to be supported from Inverness by myself, Alan Barrow (Estates Surveyor), Glyn Young (Building Surveyor) and Rob Dewar (Nature Conservation Advisor). This has been further consolidated this year but my title has changed now to General Manager, Countryside and Islands North so Fair Isle remains firmly in my patch as it has done for 30 years!

The Trust on Fair Isle has suffered a bit recently from under-investment whilst it has reorganised itself and we now face a few years of catch up whilst we prioritise our commitments for the future and get the backlog of outstanding maintenance and capital works underway again. This has been an obvious time to reflect on our 60 years of ownership and consider how we continue to support the Fair Isle Community for the next sixty years. They too have been reflecting on that future so it is pleasing to see that they have initiated a study into strengthening and developing their relationship alongside the Trust to see how that partnership/stewardship can continue and in what form. Undoubtedly, Fair Isle is where it is today because of the relationship between the National Trust for Scotland and the community stretching back to 1954, but that relationship needs to grow and develop into a new form where the residents can become stronger and grow to a more sustainable level. The population is currently around 55 and is struggling to meet the day-to-day demands and fill jobs on the isle. There is a need for more able-bodied people to fill those gaps and to keep the school roll healthy! The Trust and Fair Isle believe that there needs to be further investment in housing and population growth to meet those needs, but to attract new families we need the infrastructure; housing; good telecommuni-

cations; an improved renewable electricity system; an upgraded water supply; an enhanced ferry service and more flights. Without doubt there is a growing market for all types of visitors to the isle but transport and accommodation on the isle is currently limiting that opportunity. More visitors create demands for local services and island crafts and the islanders are not lacking in ideas to fulfil those demands. So further investment is needed to provide for that growing economy, hence the need to strengthen the community and to prepare themselves to meet that demand.

There were two notes of sadness this year: Angela and Darren Wiseman decided that their time on Fair Isle had come full circle and they have now moved south to North-east Scotland to start another life, so we wish them well for their future. Betty Best was to me a stalwart of the Fair Isle community and made me better on a few occasions when I was struck down by a dreaded lurgie during my visits. The warmth of her and John's welcome to Utra was without question just what you expect on Fair Isle so I and the Isle will miss her dearly. Rest in Peace Betty.

Back in 2004 a plaque was erected at the Hall which recognised the 50 years of shared ownership. Maybe it is time to really consolidate that thought and use it to drive forward a shared future.



Home Coming for **Betty Margaret Best**

4th August 1933–16th December 2014

Jimmy Stout



Plate 10. Betty Best. © John Best

On Wednesday 7th January 2015 Betty was laid to rest in the Fair Isle graveyard. A service was held in the Chapel led by Jimmy and John to remember Betty and to give thanks for her life.

Betty was born on 4th August 1933 at Borehamwood, near Barnet. Betty came to Fair Isle with John in 1973 as the nurse. As Jimmy said at the service; 'They were a team - Betty doing the job but calling on John at certain times to remove fish bones from throats and pieces of metal from eyes. She joked with me about the proximity of the graveyard from Utra but, thankfully, we do not see into the future and so we are met here today to mourn her death - yes - but also to celebrate her life - a life that she shared with us and from which we should take

example and remember with gratitude and a lot of joy. But yet that light remains - in our hearts and in our lives to remind us that life goes on - here and in the hereafter.'

Betty had many talents and she had the common sense to realise that in this small place there was an opportunity and a need for someone with innovative ideas. Betty organised the first Burns supper at the nurse's house and in the old hall, she wrote the Christmas pantomimes and for many years she held an Easter egg hunt for the children at Utra. Betty had the idea to get Alastair Stout to write a piece of music for what turned out to be a choral production called 'Given Days' which was performed first on Fair Isle and then in Lerwick, led by the Fair Isle choir and accompanied by members of the Lerwick choral society and the ensemble Chroma.



Plate 11. Utra and South Light © Tom Best

John Best

A few words from me do not seem adequate...and I don't think I will get the last word.

In a letter this week an old lady of 90 retold the story of a special moment in her life she will never forget. Some 70 years ago walking with children and getting left further and further behind until Betty came back to her and took her arm, "come dear Ragny, we can walk quietly together you and me"...and she has been there for me ever since.

King's Fund Letter 1970...Quote:

Recent study by Mrs Best. I thought it a most courageous document and Mrs Best must be a most perceptive and humane person. I particularly appreciated what she wrote on pages 24 and 25. Nurses working in long-stay wards need all the help they can get from those like Mrs Best who can make an analysis of what is happening and suggest constructive proposals to help this most vulnerable group, i.e. the long stay patient.

It also made me appreciate that one constantly needs to re-examine the work one is doing in order to see and appropriately to achieve the objectives for which hospital care is provided. Would you tell Mrs Best that should she ever be in London we would be delighted for her to come see us.

Subsequently she lectured at their 'in-house' training sessions.

Last month, when Betty was in a side ward, a kindly nurse indicated that there was a nice wardrobe locker for her husband to keep her clothes. Betty just nodded and smiled at me, for it was one she had designed in 1963.

Glimster, in the north-west of Fair Isle, was the first point visible to the Good Shepherd's crew returning home from the weekly trip to Grutness, and the name subsequently used as the boat's

identifying radio call sign. The music was written as a hymn tune, echoes of which are woven through the 'Given Days' composition by Alastair Stout 2002. Betty initiated that production and later wrote the words for the hymn which reflects much of her feelings for the Isle, the concept of God given days. She always reserved her own special sigh when the engine noise changed and she was home. Music was her pleasure.

Glimster

When did dawn first frame this island,
Sunrise light an azure sea,
Etching out the rugged rock face
Glimpse of aeons yet to be?

When did seeds sprout from the bare earth,
Heralds of a living force,
Humankind create a haven:
Pilgrims from an unknown source?

Families dwelt in lonely beauty
Living with the calling seals,
Wind wisped sunsets, merry dancers,
Songs of skylarks, white-fringed waves.

For a thousand generations
Pulsed a rhythm, deep engrained,
Melding music, sad or joyful
Essence of eternity.

Celtic sages, Viking warriors
Brought their heritage of faith,
Christian stories have their echo
In this crofting way of life -

Working, singing, dancing, praying,
Fiddle's lift and organ's power
All can shout the Hallelujah,
Join the melodies of love!

On the corner of my Dad's headstone there is carved a simple O with a dot. An ancient symbol saying 'gone home', Betty appreciated this having seen something similar when the Canadian Indians used to say they were 'coming home'. Not all she learnt with the Arctic people proved correct. She asked an Inuit for words that she might greet patients in their own language with an 'How are you today?' 'nica buggy luggy' was duly practised and she immediately became the most popular nurse on the male wards...she was telling each and every man, 'I love you.' Canada was an important time nursing and lecturing and when we visited, following up on old patients, we were treated as honoured guests.

For the record she was rather well qualified, SRN, SCM, HV, BTA, Com Health Admin. I well remember a meeting of senior health professionals where one individual mentioned more than once that she was a Queen's Nurse implying we should therefore pay more attention to her opinions. Betty did not nor did she need to boast, that she too was a Queen's Nurse, that was not her way. In any case people were already listening to her professional observations. In a drawer or box somewhere is her King's Award. For a person who was the youngest Matron in the country at one time, a potential high flyer, being the Fair Isle Nurse was something extra special.

Alan Whitfield's book records his worst flying experience coming in for night ambulance landing. Dr.Ian Brooker told Alan, we go direct to Aberdeen, Betty has already saved that life and we must do the same.

Betty and I had a great partnership and not many can say, we met at interview, talked and are still talking, we were both appointed; an amazing opportunity to commission and organise the first Rehab Hospital in England. No box ticking in those days and we had a great time. My old Head Master said 'Best and cleverest thing you ever did was marrying Betty'.

I have often pondered the teaching she had as a junior at the Lister Institute preparing smallpox virus cultures for Porton Down. As recent as last

year two old professors were corresponding with her about bird flu. Politically we were well matched. It follows that there are one or two parliamentarians aware of her existence.

The family, children and grandchildren and me, we have had something special, love and caring. What pleasure she had observing their development into strong, mature, free thinking and socially conscious family folk. Betty often said 'We must have done something right.'

In hospital we had days of brief but lucid conversations and more than once I had to repeat a poem I was struggling with until 'errs' elicited a smile, which I took to mean agreement, rather than gentle tolerance.

“In the seeking
comes the finding,
in the living comes
the dying,
in the doubting
comes the truth.”

Some of her expressions were coded messages: 'When I die you can chuck me over the wall...' meant 'I don't want a lot of fuss', 'Dear Heart', spoken with feeling translated not as a term of endearment, but 'think again' perhaps even 'you forgot'. 'I was meant to be a lady', was more difficult, as I really thought she was indeed a lady.

In plain speech - her last word was a struggle...'Sorry'. Betty is home, we thank you for your welcome.

Rachael Redfern

22nd September 1967–10th May 2014

David & Susannah Parnaby



Plate 12. Rachael Redfern with young Great Skua. © Richard Cope

Rachael was one of those people you instantly like. Friendly, kind, enthusiastic and always willing to make time for others, she arrived on Fair Isle determined to make the most of her summer volunteering and quickly became one of the team. Part way through a Countryside Management course at South Staffordshire College and keen to get experience as she pursued her goal of retraining for a career in conservation, she opted to spend July and August 2013 with us as a bar volunteer, using her free time to get out with the wardening team whenever possible. Though she came with the hope of getting involved in the conservation side of Observatory work, Rachael was never one to shirk a job and was very efficient at running the shop and bar. Bar shift finished though, you'd always find her down in the Havens helping out with Storm Petrel ringing and many of

the team have fond memories of nights spent chatting outside the shed before the next batch of birds arrived. She was keen to improve her bird knowledge, and Richard Cope (assistant warden) recalls her excitement as a walk along the cliffs turned into a search for Two-barred Crossbills heard calling in the mist. Rachael fell in love with Fair Isle and we were very much hoping that in time we'd see her back here, helping out with the seabird work again, but sadly she passed away very suddenly in early May 2014. We are very grateful to her family and friends for their kind donations to the work of the Observatory in memory of Rachael; her impact on the places she loved still continues. For those of us who worked with Rachael it is hard not to remember her without a smile, as she was always smiling, and our thoughts continue to be very much with her family.

ORNITHOLOGICAL MONTHLY SUMMARY

David Parnaby

The year opened with a good count of 45 species on 1st, including the only records of Whooper Swan, Goldeneye and Meadow Pipit of the month and the only Velvet Scoter of the year. Along with the regular overwintering species, there were also two Red-breasted Mergansers, a Common Scoter, at least two Water Rails, two Jack Snipes and a Woodpigeon. A newly arrived Chaffinch at the Obs was unusual, but three Little Auks off South Light were more expected. There was little to report through the early stages of the month, with Long-tailed Ducks peaking at four on 4th, a blue Fulmar and Merlin on 5th and a peak of 18 Snow Buntings on 9th. The first Oystercatcher returned from 14th and a juvenile Iceland Gull on 16th preceded regular sightings. South-easterly winds had been a feature of the early part of the year and they brought a small arrival of Lapwings from 20th and ten 'Tundra Bean' and two Pink-footed Geese from 21st. The following day saw a small influx of Common Gulls that were accompanied by a Little Gull, along with a Bar-tailed Godwit, then 23rd saw the first Ringed Plover of the year, along with a Waxwing and a peak of 15 'Tundra Bean Geese', whilst 25 Fieldfares on 24th also represented an increase. With south-easterly gales continuing, the 29th saw the arrival of Coot and Pochard but the departure of the Ringing Hut which blew away! There was also an increase of Common Gulls to 100, bringing a 'Kumlien's Gull' (which lingered throughout the winter) with them and the following day saw a Little Gull along with an increase in Skylarks to four. The month ended with Common Gulls growing to 180, and an unseasonal Knot and a second Coot, the latter on the small pond in the Haa garden.

January

Species Recorded: **63**
Year List at end of month: **63**
Birds Ringed: **3**
Species Ringed: **3**



Plate 13. 'Tundra Bean Geese', 23rd January 2014. © Deryk Shaw



Plate 14. Fair Isle Wren, 10th October 2014. © Simon Colenut

February

Species Recorded: **62**
 Year List at end of month: **72**
 Birds Ringed: **13**
 Species Ringed: **5**

Two Barnacle Geese and a Reed Bunting arrived on 1st, but otherwise the start of the month was quiet. The 6th saw the Good Shepherd sail for the first time in a month, the worst disruption to the ferry service in at least 40 years, reflecting the regular south-east gales that had battered the island throughout the start of the year. The same day also brought a Cormorant, whilst the following day saw a bulging Stackhoull stores become the focus of the islanders' attention! A juvenile Glaucous Gull on 8th was followed by three Meadow Pipits the following day, the start of regular small numbers of this species. The 4.7 hours of sunshine on 10th was the sunniest day on the island since 1st October, but gloomier news came the following day when small numbers of Guillemots (and a Razorbill) washed up dead on the island beaches. A Glaucous Gull on 13th began a series of sightings of up to three individuals during the following week, whilst there was also a Rook and 45 Fieldfares, which represented a small increase. Valentine's Day saw the female Peregrine, that had been present throughout the month, take a Teal in spectacular fashion over Da Water, then the following day saw the 'Kumlien's Gull' joined by two Iceland Gulls. A few signs of spring saw a 'Fair Isle Wren' singing on 17th and a Long-eared Owl trapped in the Vaadal the following day, when there was also Greylag Goose passage and two Cormorants. Curlews were displaying from 19th, when Fieldfares increased to 52. More Skylarks started arriving from 21st, with Shelduck and three Ringed Plovers on 22nd, but the end of the month saw very little of note.

A Stonechat (on 1st) was a good start to the month, with Chaffinch (3rd), the first Pied Wagtail of the year and another Stonechat (both 4th) all signs that spring migration had begun early, although up to two Glaucous Gulls in the same period showed that winter species could still be expected. A Red-throated Diver on 6th was also early and the next few days had a similar spread of birds, with a light thrush passage and Skylarks continuing to build up. Southerly gales on 7th gusted up to 75mph and migrants in the following few days included Lapland Bunting, another Stonechat, Mistle Thrush, Yellowhammer, Woodpigeons and 'Scandinavian Rock Pipit'. The first Goldcrests returned on 15th, a day in which two Jack Snipes were found in Boini Mire by Grace testing her new wellies! There were still regular sightings of Glaucous, Iceland and 'Kumlien's Gulls' mid-month, then a calm day (following a couple of very wet ones) on 18th produced a Green-winged Teal (which apparently arrived by itself and joined the three Teal already present), the third Fair Isle record, although the same bird could perhaps have been involved in all the sightings. More excitement the same day came in the form of a Moorhen, and two new fridges and a freezer for the Obs that arrived on the Good Shepherd. A wet and windy spell followed, with the first Lesser Black-backed Gull of the year on 21st and a mass arrival of Razorbills the following day. Two Whooper Swans and a Siskin arrived in the strong north-west winds of 23rd, but with a switch to south-east winds the following day, migration kicked up a notch. The arrival of Ciaran Hatsell for his first season as assistant warden on 25th coincided with the first six Chiffchaffs and three Wheatears of the year amongst a small thrush fall, with a display of Northern Lights that night rounding off a decent first day at work. Richard Cope returned for his second season the following day and full census kicked off instantly (Richard being sent straight out into North more or less as soon as he stepped off the plane!), with a Hen Harrier being the highlight, along with an increase in many common migrants as the island was fully covered for the first time. The first 'Shetland Bee' of the year was also seen on this date. Overnight rain and north-east winds continued to bring a steady trickle of migrants, including three Black Redstarts on 27th and with the wind becoming a light easterly on 28th, a fall brought counts including 18 Chiffchaffs, 44 Robins, 21 Dunnocks, four Reed Buntings and also four Iceland Gulls (including the long-staying 'Kumlien's Gull'). Numbers of most species increased the following day, including 80 Robins and seven Mistle Thrushes and the 30th (Mothering Sunday) opened with a light easterly wind, sunshine and the distinct feel of promise. Counts of common species included 145 Robins, 39 Dunnocks, 34 Chiffchaffs, 30 Song Thrushes, 14 Mistle Thrushes, 20 Wheatears and singles of Hawfinch, Short-eared Owl, Ring Ouzel and Moorhen. That would have been good enough, but

March

Species Recorded: **82**
Year List at end of month: **100**
Birds Ringed: **178**
Species Ringed: **20**



Plate 15. Red-flanked Bluetail, 30th March 2014 © Deryk Shaw

just before 11am (and therefore diverting several people from the Kirk Service that was about to start), Ciaran found a Red-flanked Bluetail at Klinger's Geo, the first Fair Isle spring record. The last day of the month saw Jackdaw, two Short-eared Owls and three Grey Wagtails amongst the falling numbers of migrants, whilst five Bramblings were the first of the year.

April

Species Recorded: **128**
 Year List at end of month: **145**
 Birds Ringed: **485**
 Species Ringed: **34**

A promising start to the month saw 196 breeding-plumaged Black Guillemots on the first Tystie census of the year, the highest count for 17 years, whilst 23 'Fair Isle Wrens' were singing in what was to prove to be a good breeding season for that species as well. A *borealis*-type Eider was discovered off South Light on the same day and the first Harbour Porpoise was noted, whilst decent numbers of migrants still present included the year's first Kestrel. Numbers of migrants over the next few days remained reasonable, with two Common Crossbills (3rd) amongst the more unusual species. Remarkably, the Red-flanked Bluetail (or could it have been a new bird?) was relocated at Swarzie Geo on 5th, a day that saw an arrival of 434 Fieldfares as well as the first

Blackcap, Swallow, Sand Martin, Puffin and Bonxie of the year (the latter two species arriving on the same day for the second consecutive year). Fieldfares had increased to 665 the following day and the first Willow Warbler arrived on 7th, when the first Gannet egg was also seen. Pochard and Goldfinch arrived on 8th, but the main excitement on that date was the airing of the first episode of the BBC 'Shetland' drama set on Fair Isle, with the Warden's scope taking a starring role in the opening scene! A Peacock on 9th was the first butterfly of the year, but increasing westerly gales (rising to 'Storm force' in sea area Fair Isle) saw few migrants on the move. The first Whimbrel arrived on 14th, then a brief respite on 15th saw lighter winds bring the first Tree Sparrow of the year amongst a small arrival of birds, with Wheatear numbers jumping to 85. Common Crossbill on 17th–18th and Stock Dove on 17th–19th were the most unexpected migrants amongst continued small arrivals, but it became clear that the Peregrine nest on a west-facing cliff had failed due to the recent terrible weather. A selection of waders on 20th included Black-tailed Godwit, whilst several other migrants remained, but there was more than one mention of the forecast that saw a week of easterlies coming... The 21st was a bit of a disappointment, with thick fog not clearing until the evening, although a new Stock Dove was seen coming in off the sea. A harsh north-easterly wind on 22nd made birding difficult, but a Wryneck was the pick of a small selection of new migrants until a Crane was seen flying over Quoy in the evening and was successfully twitched by Obs guests (but not the wardening team who all ran out the Obs up random hills in a panic, so missed it when it doubled back to Da Water!). A promising start on 23rd made the thick fog that set in from just after breakfast all the more frustrating, although there was still a noticeable rise in common warblers as well as Great Grey Shrike and four Wrynecks. A combination of strong south-east winds, fog and heavy rain, made most of 24th a write-off, although the year's first Grasshopper Warbler was found, but a moderate easterly breeze with regular drizzle, that cleared at lunchtime, on 25th was much more promising. A flock of Bramblings that had roosted at the Obs was the first sign there'd been a decent fall as they erupted from the garden at first light, with 285 logged across the island during the day. A pair of Garganeys, three Wrynecks, year ticks in the form of Pied Flycatcher, 'Blue-headed Wagtail', Sedge Warbler, Whitethroat and Arctic Skua and counts including 44 Ring Ouzels, 321 Fieldfares, 57 Song Thrushes, 11 Redstarts, 25 'White Wagtails' and seven Common Crossbills made for an excellent day, which was rounded off by a male 'Western Subalpine Warbler' caught in the Obs mist nets just before dusk. The 26th opened with the first Gadwall on Fair Isle since 2011, but heavy showers in a fresh north-easterly wind saw few other birds found. A calm and sunny day with a light south-

easterly wind on 27th made for very pleasant conditions, census turned up some good birds and then a happy Warden enjoyed a fine Sunday lunch and a 4–0 win for Sunderland. Everything was knocked sideways into a hat though when a Cretzschmar's Bunting was found at Burkle at around 2pm. Although it wasn't seen again that day, the subsequent search turned up more birds including a cracking male 'Caspian Stonechat'. Other highlights from the day's Log included 'Western Subalpine Warbler', three Short-toed Larks, Red-breasted Flycatcher, seven Wrynecks, Great Grey Shrike and 'Blue-headed Wagtail' and a fantastic selection of common migrants, in one of the best ever April days on Fair Isle (see article on page 149). After an unsuccessful early search for the Cretzschmar's Bunting on 28th, fog cleared and afternoon census saw a Hen Harrier located before the bunting was refound in the Gilly Burn (feeding alongside a Wryneck!), with the first twitchers arriving from Shetland later the same day. A few migrants also increased in number and temperatures reached 12°C in a very enjoyable day all round. The 29th opened with a drake Mandarin Duck briefly off South Harbour and a Little Bunting was almost as surprising, although generally numbers and species remained the same. A fantastic month ended with the Cretzschmar's Bunting and 'Caspian Stonechat' both still present (remaining until 2nd and 31st May respectively), with the earliest ever 'Red-spotted Bluethroat' for Fair Isle and Goosander and Greenshank also found.



Plate 16. Caspian Stonechat, Upper Leogh, 30th May 2014 © Steve Arlow

Although most of the highlights present at the start of the month were lingering from April (including the 'Kumlien's Gull' that remained throughout the month), new birds were still coming through, with a Richard's Pipit on 1st being an unusual spring occurrence. A glorious sunny day on 3rd saw the wardening team start early for surveys of Tystie and 'Fair Isle Wren', whilst visible migration included a Short-eared Owl, and a light corvid passage with new migrants including 'Western Subalpine Warbler', Wood Warbler and Waxwing. Some poor weather saw few new birds, although there were three Dotterels on 6th, before a better day on 7th saw a few more common warblers arrive and the only Corncrake of the spring. The 8th was a calm day, suitable for carrying out the Breeding Bird Survey, and despite it being quiet for new migrants, an 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' was trapped in the Gully, which DNA would later prove to be the first of the race that breeds in central and southern Italy (meaning that Fair Isle now lays claim to the first records of both proposed subspecies of 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'). A fresher easterly breeze on 9th brought a reasonable fall, with highlights including Little Bunting, Short-toed Lark, Bluethroat and 'Grey-headed Wagtail' and the first Spotted Flycatcher of the year, whilst Reed Warbler and Cuckoo made their first Fair Isle landfall of 2014 on 10th. Hawfinch, Dotterel and a 'Blue-headed Wagtail' were new on 11th and the last Wryneck of the spring arrived on 12th. A breezy north-westerly on 13th seemed to have brought very little new except a Bluethroat, until a Hermit Thrush was found in the afternoon. The Hermit Thrush spent the next day leading Shetland twitchers a merry dance, with a happy outcome when it was finally pinned down near Stackhoull in the afternoon. Strong south-westerly winds and fog cancelled all transport on 15th and the winds continued in a blustery fashion from the same direction the following day. There was a light hirundine passage, but one Chiffchaff was the solitary bird to have been caught all morning, until a female *Sylvia* warbler was trapped just before lunch. DNA analysis later identified this as a Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler, with the species being split from Subalpine Warbler later in the year by the British Ornithologists' Union. With only three previously accepted British records, it was the rarest bird (in national terms) recorded on the island during the year. Remarkably, a Glossy Ibis was found later in the day and so 16th May 2014 became only the second time in FIBO history that two species were added to the island list on the same day, the last occasion being on 2nd June 1949, when a Buzzard flew over the Gully where the wardening team were trying to catch a Greenish Warbler! The Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler lingered until 27th May and a few migrants continued to trickle through over the next few days, with two Cuckoos and a late Iceland Gull (17th), then a hint of south-easterly wind on 18th brought Osprey, a light scattering of common warblers and a large arrival

May

Species Recorded: **153**

Year List at end of month: **176**

Birds Ringed: **410**

Species Ringed: **49**

of Wheatears, with 310 logged. Easterlies continued on 19th, with Red-backed Shrike and 'Grey-headed Wagtail' amongst the highlights and an Osprey was seen coming in off the sea at Malcolm's Head. Thick fog all day on 20th meant there were not many new birds, although Wood Sandpiper was picked out in the gloom, whilst another foggy day on 21st was enlivened by Bluethroat, Common Rosefinch, Greater Canada Goose and the year's first Swifts. A cold, northerly wind on 22nd blew the fog away but had very few new birds, so a Calandra Lark on Ward Hill was a surprise, although perhaps it had glimpsed the highest point on the island through the fog at some point in the preceding two days and had been lurking unseen there until a clearer day. A Bluethroat was also found at the Mast at the same time. One Shetland twitcher came in for the Calandra Lark in the afternoon but, despite seeing people watching the bird as he arrived at the airstrip, got up Ward Hill ten minutes after it was seen for the last time (his third unsuccessful Calandra Lark twitch to Fair Isle - better luck next time Dave)! The fog returned on easterly winds on 23rd and a Shoveler was the pick of the new birds, whilst slightly clearer conditions on 24th saw another small arrival of common species, but also the first Storm Petrels of the year from the Good Shepherd and the first ever 'Continental Cormorant' for Fair Isle. Common migrants increased slightly again in a cool north-east wind on 25th, with a Red-backed Shrike the best of the bunch, then a promising day of easterlies on 26th brought another record of (presumably the same) Glossy Ibis, Nightjar (the only bird caught in the traps all day!), Quail, Icterine Warbler and 'Blue-headed Wagtail'. A light to fresh south-easterly wind on 27th saw a continued arrival of birds in what was proving to be a most remarkable spring and Temminck's Stint (Richard finding one in the same place as he did last year) and Blyth's Reed Warbler were the highlights of a good day, whilst Bluethroat and Common Rosefinch also arrived amongst commoner migrants. By 28th thick fog had again returned, but delaying census until it cleared in the afternoon proved to be a good move, with a spanking male Collared Flycatcher found in South Naaversgill, Red-backed Shrikes rising to six and Gadwall and Tree Sparrow amongst the less common migrants turning up. A calm day on 29th saw yet more fog, but also Red-breasted Flycatcher and another Icterine Warbler arrive, whilst the Collared Flycatcher relocated to Guidicum. Conditions stayed largely the same on 30th, with a Honey-buzzard looming out of the fog before putting on a wonderful fly-past at Furse. A busy day on 31st saw beautiful conditions and a 16-hour day in the field for the wardening team as a breeding bird survey was followed by seabird monitoring trips to Greenholm and the west coast, whilst the first cruise ship of the year also visited the island. Ornithological highlights were represented by four Quails and a Greater Canada Goose whilst the three Chiffchaffs trapped



Plate 17. Collared Flycatcher, 29th May 2014. © Larry Dalziel

showed the turnover of small numbers of common migrants that had continued all month, and also represented the 72nd–75th individuals to be ringed during the year, a new ringing record for the species on Fair Isle. The last day of the month also saw the final sighting of the ‘Caspian Stonechat’, which had become a familiar part of the landscape throughout so much of the spring.

With localised easterly winds at the start of the month, it seemed that June could carry on as most of the spring had gone so far, with more birds. A Long-eared Owl on 1st and ‘Grey-headed Wagtail’ (2nd–3rd) were amongst the new migrants, whilst the ‘Kumlien’s Gull’ remained until 7th. The 2nd saw the first ‘Fair Isle Wren’ chicks of the year fledging and brief excitement over a gull that eventually transpired to be a Herring x Lesser Black-backed hybrid. Two Red-backed Shrikes arrived on 4th, when a Quail was also singing, then the continued south-easterlies on 5th saw an impressive fall, with Red-backed Shrikes, peaking at six, Marsh Warbler, Icterine Warbler, Dotterel and a scattering of common migrants as well as an impressive arrival of insects, largely consisting of thousands of Diamond-back Moths. The following day saw the return of fog that caused the abandonment of Guillemot counts, but as a direct result a Greenish Warbler was discovered in North Haven and another Marsh Warbler was found. The 7th combined the directors’ meeting and Susannah’s birthday, along with several cetacean sightings including 20 Killer Whales from a yacht 15 miles offshore, but new birds were restricted to another Marsh Warbler and ‘Grey-headed Wagtail’. On 8th another Marsh Warbler arrived at the Obs and there was also a Goldfinch, then fine conditions on 9th saw Honey-buzzard and

June

Species Recorded: **113**
 Year List at end of month: **184**
 Birds Ringed: **384**
 Species Ringed: **38**



Plate 18. Greenish Warbler, North Haven, 6th June 2014. © Steve Arlow

Hobby drifting south over the island and new migrants included Great Spotted Woodpecker and Common Rosefinch. The 10th saw thick fog and heavy rain, which, when it cleared, produced a Gadwall and yet another Marsh Warbler. A Common Rosefinch and two Red-backed Shrikes arrived the following day. The 13th saw a very calm and grey day that became clearer later with a light north-east wind and produced a Blyth's Reed Warbler, 'Western Subalpine Warbler' and yet another Marsh Warbler and Red-backed Shrike, along with six Killer Whales. A light south-westerly wind on 14th brought two more Marsh Warblers (joining a lingering bird). North-westerly winds slowed down migration, but the best ever Fair Isle spring for rarities reached a tremendous crescendo when a Bridled Tern was discovered on Bunness during monitoring of the Arctic Tern colony on 16th June. The third new species for the island this year lingered until 19th and was joined on its last day by a Laughing Gull, which had apparently overshot its American breeding grounds following strong westerly winds. A couple of murky days saw just a few new birds turning up, but tern monitoring again proved worthwhile for rarity finding when two Roseate Terns were discovered at Shalstone in a cool northerly breeze. The continued fresh northerly brought more new migrants on 25th, despite the late date including a Marsh Warbler (with two lingering birds still present), Pied Flycatcher, Whinchat and Common Redpoll, but the highlight was a Blyth's Reed Warbler. It was possible that all of these migrants were relocating from Shetland, as the Blyth's Reed Warbler had been ringed there three days previously. A Sandwich Tern the following day was the fifth species of this family to be recorded during the year (a new record), but northerly winds finally brought an end to most migration, with very few new birds arriving by the end of the month.

A selection of lingering birds present at the start of the month, including two Marsh Warblers (which remained until 5th and 17th), Chiffchaffs, Robin, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and a territorial 'White Wagtail', were able to enjoy light south-west winds and pleasant conditions. The first 'petreling' session of the year saw 26 Storm Petrels caught in the early hours of 1st (despite the bright conditions that enabled rings to be read at the net without a torch!) and two Killer Whales that surfaced in the South Haven next to an incredulous ringing team. A Lesser Whitethroat on 2nd was a late migrant, whilst the day also produced two additions to the year list: Leach's Petrel (one of several records from ringing sessions during the month) and Manx Shearwater (the start of daily sightings to 5th). A Quail was flushed on 3rd but things were generally quiet. Easterly winds from the end of the first week had little effect, although a Blackcap appeared on 7th, and the first Sheep Hill of the year (the round up of the hill sheep for clipping) took place. The Swinhoe's Petrel ringed in 2013 was retrapped in the early hours of 9th and was present for the rest of the month along with excellent numbers of Storm Petrels. Some hints at autumn on 11th included three Grey Herons and a House Martin, whilst the long-staying 'Kumlien's Gull' reappeared for a few more days. A Great Spotted Woodpecker in light westerlies on 12th was unusual, whilst the first Ruff of the year on the same date was more expected. The excitement on 13th was provided by squeezing 37 people into the lounge of the Warden's flat for the World Cup final, with the 24-hour Puffin feed watch the following day also producing a sighting of five Killer Whales. The 15th saw another small run of Manx Shearwater sightings and the 17th produced a Sand Martin and a visit to Goorn that found a number of successfully fledged Common, Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gull chicks. Seabird monitoring and ringing dominated large parts of the month, as the most successful breeding season for several years for many species was in full swing. The first Great Skuas fledged on 22nd, when a Sulphur Pearl photographed at the Obs was the first record of this moth for Scotland. A spell of warm, foggy east-south-easterly winds from 23rd brought good numbers of waders, including 36 Sanderlings and 62 Dunlins on 24th. The first Arctic Skua chick of a successful season fledged on 27th, then the 29th produced the first Sooty Shearwater of the year, the first Tufted Duck of the autumn and a four-metre Basking Shark off Skadan, whilst moderate westerlies on 30th produced 15 Manx Shearwaters, the month ending with the wind switching to the north-east and with three Shelducks arriving.

July

Species Recorded: **80**
Year List at end of month: **189**
Birds Ringed: **2109**
Species Ringed: **31**



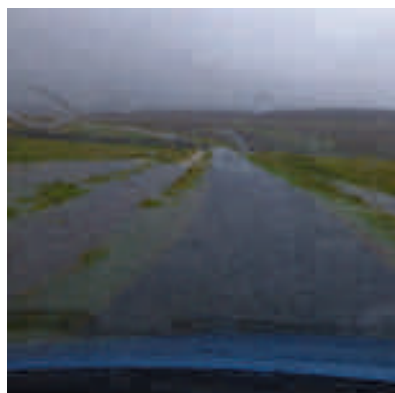
Plate 19. Swinhoe's Petrel, Havens, 9th July 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell

August

Species Recorded: **107**
 Year List at end of month: **193**
 Birds Ringed: **1679**
 Species Ringed: **34**

Although the month opened with an east-north-east wind, there was a familiar theme to proceedings, with the Swinhoe's Petrel trapped again on 1st, although it was to be its last appearance of the year despite several other trapping sessions taking place later in the month. Gannet chicks fledged from 4th, but with the easterly-based winds continuing, the focus increasingly switched to migrants, with the first Barred Warbler on 5th, then a Greenish Warbler trapped on 6th, with a Red-necked Phalarope found at Utra later the same day. Although the winds switched to the south-west on 7th, a Wryneck arrived ahead of more easterlies on 8th, which increased on 9th, before backing to strong north-westerlies. It also started raining on the morning of the 9th - and didn't stop! A record of around five and a half inches fell in a 24-hour period, although the wedding of Innes Thompson and Karen Veitch, and subsequent celebrations, carried on regardless (despite submerged roads and an almost flooded Obs!), with the whole island full of friends and relatives of the happy couple. There was also Wood Sandpiper, 19 Ruffs and 716 Common Gulls noted, whilst the following day's initial sunshine revealed the floodwaters had subsided (although several large landslides had occurred around the cliffs) and good numbers of waders included four Wood and 22 Common Sandpipers, whilst an unexpected small fall included the first Lesser Whitethroat, Fieldfare, Pied Flycatcher, 'White Wagtail', Peregrine and Black-tailed Godwit of the autumn. Wood Warbler, Merlin and Cuckoo all made their autumn debuts

on 12th when there were also ten Green Sandpipers, whilst gusty westerly-based winds continued for the next couple of days, bringing very little except the return of the 'Kumlien's Gull'. Although there was a slight lull in the wind on 14th, an elusive Blyth's Reed Warbler that was eventually mist-netted in the Gully was a real surprise, whilst other interesting observations from the day included a juvenile Blackbird that was probably reared on the island and a Fulmar-oiled Grey Heron that was seen to catch and eat a Starling. With continued north-westerly winds, a small fall on 15th was also unexpected but brought three Barred Warblers, Common Rosefinch and Marsh Warbler. Strong south-west winds on 16th remarkably brought another Blyth's Reed Warbler, but there was then little to report from several days of north-west winds, that reached near gale-force at times, other than Grace's first day at 'big school' on 20th. With winds switching to a light north-easterly on 21st there was a small arrival of migrants including Wryneck and Common Rosefinch, whilst five Killer Whales were seen from the Good Shepherd. A freshening northerly wind with a hint of west in it brought an unexpected fall throughout the day that included five Barred Warblers, Common Rosefinch, four Pied Flycatchers, five Garden Warblers and 45 Willow Warblers, all of which were topped by an Arctic Warbler found in the afternoon at Chalet. The following day saw blustery north-west winds produce a Black Redstart and the first Fulmar fledglings, whilst calm weather from 24th saw some lovely conditions and a period of 46 hours in which there were only 90 minutes in which the wardening team were not either catching or counting birds! The first Tree Pipit and Kestrel of the autumn were noted on 25th, along with a decent Meadow Pipit passage, with Wood Warbler, Common Rosefinch and three Barred Warblers also recorded and a collection of cetaceans off North Light including White-beaked, White-sided, and Risso's Dolphins. Another lovely day on 26th saw an Icterine Warbler and an increase in Common Rosefinches to three, whilst a freshening easterly wind on 27th brought a fall that included Wryneck, Red-backed Shrike, four Common Rosefinches, three Wood Warblers, 60 Willow Warblers, six Pied Flycatchers and 99 *alba* wagtails. Strong and gusty easterly winds on 28th brought the first Whinchat of the autumn and an increase in Pied Flycatchers to 11, whilst an unpleasant Good Shepherd crossing was partially compensated for by 20 White-beaked Dolphins. Rain overnight and a moderate easterly wind saw a quiet start on 29th, but more birds arrived later with the first two Sparrowhawks of the autumn, along with five Wrynecks, three Barred, a Reed and 47 Willow Warblers, two Fieldfares and the first Little Stint of the year. With easterly winds continuing on 30th there were more birds coming in and a good day's birding included the first records of Short-toed Lark, Grasshopper Warbler, Redstart and Blackcap of the autumn, along with five Little Stints, 13 Pied Flycatchers and 44 Willow Warblers.



Plates 20–21. (top) Flooding at Gilsetter and (bottom) flooding at Vaadal, 9th August 2014. © David Parnaby



Plate 22. Flooding at the Gully Trap, 9th August 2014. © David Parnaby

The last day of the month began calm, with a light easterly breeze developing, and an impressive arrival included ten Barred Warblers, four Wrynecks, Red-backed Shrike, 59 Willow Warblers, 23 Garden Warblers and a Lesser Whitethroat that had filtered down from Shetland where it had been ringed the previous day.

September

Species Recorded: **144**
 Year List at end of month: **205**
 Birds Ringed: **566**
 Species Ringed: **49**

Although September brings the inevitability of good birds on Fair Isle, it's always hoped that the winds will be easterly to bring the full 'Fair Isle experience', so it was with a twinge of frustration that the month opened to south-westerlies, which nevertheless brought the first Lapland Bunting (1st) and Goldcrest (2nd) of autumn. Common Rosefinch is a well-established autumn passage migrant to Fair Isle and, despite the unfavourable winds, four individuals were ringed at the Obs during 2nd–3rd (with numbers rising to five the following day), but the wind was clearly having an influence on the birds arriving on 3rd, with several 'Greenland Wheatears' being caught and a juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper arriving, the latter being found by torchlight at 10.30pm during a wader dazzling session! The grey, drizzly start to 5th, with a light westerly wind, hardly seemed like the best conditions for migration, but it encouraged some passage, with over 600 Meadow Pipits moving through and a decent arrival of migrants that produced Paddyfield Warbler, Wryneck, three

Dotterels and the year's only Pintail. In contrast, the light easterlies on 6th produced few new birds, although the calm weather enabled 43 Storm Petrels to be caught in the evening. The 7th was a fairly horrid day, with north-westerly winds and rain and, although it dried up on 8th and the winds decreased (although it was still pretty breezy), it was still a real surprise when a stunning juvenile Pallid Harrier arrived and showed very well for the afternoon (and went on to linger until 17th), whilst a flyover wagtail was most likely a Citrine, but couldn't be pinned down. The continued westerly winds brought a Red-backed Shrike on 9th, then a switch to light south-easterlies brought a Buff-breasted Sandpiper (found by a visitor who had just got out of the Obs vehicle to twitch Risso's Dolphins), as the arrivals continued to show little correlation with the weather conditions! As the wind went southerly on 11th it brought fog, probably the most despised weather on Fair Isle, as flights are cancelled or delayed, and birds struggle to see the island (and we struggle to see any birds that do arrive). By 13th, the fog was still lingering, although it cleared enough for a Pomarine Skua to be seen from the Good Shepherd. The 14th finally saw the fog lift and the wind switch to the south-east - this was more like it! The results were instant, with a small fall bringing the first Red-breasted Flycatcher and Yellow-browed Warbler of the autumn, along with an impressive 1,087 Meadow Pipits. Continued easterlies brought a decent arrival of warblers the next day, headlined by nine Yellow-broweds, then a day of heavy rain and low cloud on 16th brought the first Little Bunting of the autumn (found sheltering in the Quoy garage), with the forecast for continued easterlies but a drier day on 17th raising the excitement levels further. The rain eased early in the morning and, although the low cloud that lingered over the hills kept planes away for a second day, the continued south-easterly brought a decent fall with highlights including Richard's Pipit, Little Bunting and the first Grey Plover of the year, with decent counts including 68 Song Thrushes, 13 Kestrels and 17 Grey Herons, although sadly the second potential Citrine Wagtail of the month got away when it was heard calling over Pund, but was never refound. The 18th was again wet and murky, but it got brighter later as the south-easterly winds continued and two Bluethroats and a Short-toed Lark were amongst the arrivals, with the first Corncrake and Ring Ouzel of the autumn arriving on the last day of an impressive spell of easterlies on 19th. North-west winds on 20th brought the first Pink-footed Geese of the autumn, and also produced another example of the well-documented phenomenon of a switch from easterlies bringing a good bird in, or two in this case, when an adult Red-throated Pipit and a juvenile Rose-coloured Starling were both discovered, with three Yellow-browed Warblers trapped at the Obs before breakfast showing that there were still birds on the move. Winds increased from the north-west the



Plate 23. Rose-coloured Starling, 3rd October 2014. © Ian Cowgill



Plate 24. Lanceolated Warbler, Midway, 22nd September 2014. © Ian Andrews

following day, but that didn't stop a confiding Olive-backed Pipit from being found at Quoy. With the wind dropping right away on 22nd it felt a good 'drifty' day and, after a few new birds were trapped in the morning, an Arctic Warbler was discovered at Shirva, although that was later eclipsed by a Lanceolated Warbler near Midway that caused a classic, full-scale Fair Isle twitch, with departing and arriving guests all managing to get great views of this quintessential Fair Isle special. The wind again picked up from the west on 23rd, although Richard's Pipit and Short-toed Lark were both found and, with a more north-west element to the wind on 24th, it was no surprise to record 764 Pink-footed and 56 Barnacle Geese, although the main highlight was a group of five twitchable Killer Whales that toured the island. At least three Killer Whales were again present on 25th, with an increase in the westerly wind to a severe gale force nine on 26th bringing little of note. By 27th, Pink-feet had increased again to 668 and the first Whooper Swan of the autumn arrived. The flavour of the arrivals was still as westerly as the wind on 28th, with most of the 182 Wheatears that arrived being 'Greenland' birds, as well as 18 Whooper Swans. There was finally a return to light south-east winds on 29th, which brought Wryneck and Barred Warbler as well as a busy passage of 1,039 Pink-footed Geese and 30 Whooper Swans. The last day of the month brought a light southerly wind that delivered an arrival of 122 Redwings, 116 Bramblings and 41 Song Thrushes, although with White's, Eyebrowed and Swainson's Thrushes and Yellow-rumped Warbler to the north and south of us in the last three days, there was a slight 'what could have been' feeling as we waited to see what October would bring.

October opened with more westerlies and, whilst lingering birds included Rose-coloured Starling and Bluethroat, there was little new to report on 1st. The southerly wind increased to gale force on 2nd and delivered a Grey Phalarope before increasing further to a storm force ten overnight with heavy rain, although both the wind and rain had eased by the morning of 3rd, when two Richard's Pipits were found. The light north-west wind on 4th provided perfect conditions for wildfowl passage, with 1,105 Pink-footed and 72 Barnacle Geese passing and the Good Shepherd had a productive crossing with Pomarine Skua, Sooty Shearwater, Storm Petrel and blue Fulmar all noted. Once the heavy rain of the morning had cleared it became obvious there were a few migrants in, with a Little Bunting being eclipsed by a White's Thrush above Wester Lothar. The following day's fresh southerly brought 40 Whooper Swans and a Slavonian Grebe, but with the wind switching to the south-east later things started to look far more promising. The 6th opened with a strong easterly wind building to a force ten later and it brought a decent fall, including counts of 570 Song Thrushes, 293 Redwings, 25 Robins, 36 Goldcrests along with a Dotterel and a second Little Bunting. Some decent wildfowl passage saw a count of 131 Barnacle Geese along with two Pochards and a Scaup. The south-east storm continued overnight, dropping to an easterly gale with gusts of over 60mph and constant heavy rain until afternoon on 7th. It was inevitable that more birds would have arrived in that weather and, even though conditions were not especially favourable for birding, increased counts included 864 Song Thrushes, 246 Redwings, 19 Jack Snipes and ten Woodcocks, whilst highlights were Olive-backed Pipit, three 'Tundra Bean Geese', Quail, Long-eared and Short-eared Owl but most amazingly of all, a Barn Owl. A splendid day on 8th saw the north-east wind easing and veering to the south-east and another Fair Isle mega was found in the form of a Blue Tit, with Buzzard also new for the year and Great Grey Shrike, Gadwall and another Dotterel the other highlights, whilst counts included 1,921 Song Thrushes, 876 Redwings, 126 Robins and 24 Jack Snipes. A north-easterly wind and heavy rain opened the 9th that, when it eased, revealed good numbers of scarce and common migrants still present and a sparkling Treecreeper on the rocks below South Light, another impressive Fair Isle record. The wind switched to the west on 10th, with good numbers of migrants still present, then a light southerly on 11th saw a Barred Warbler arrive, and 24 Long-tailed Ducks and a Scaup also noted, with little new seen on 12th. A calm, beautiful day on 13th saw an impressive arrival of birds headlined by a Red-flanked Bluetail at the Obs, with Red-throated and three Olive-backed Pipits, Little Bunting, Barred Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat of one of the eastern races and a Grasshopper Warbler (that, by lingering until 25th, became the latest ever Fair Isle record). The Red-throated Pipit was relocated on Bunness on

October

Species Recorded: **149**

Year List at end of month: **217**

Birds Ringed: **934**

Species Ringed: **38**

14th and proved to be another smart adult, whilst other highlights on the same day included Waxwing, another Lesser Whitethroat, possibly of the subspecies *halimodendri*, a fall of 29 Chiffchaffs that included at least 18 *tristis* birds and a juvenile Pomarine Skua on the island. Easterlies on 15th brought a Firecrest, Red-breasted Flycatcher, an adult male Hen Harrier and an increase in Redwings, with more thrushes arriving in similar conditions the following day. On 16th the Red-flanked Bluetail was rediscovered on the west coast, a Little Auk was found dead but all were eclipsed by the two Humpback Whales that put on a magnificent show off the south coast. The easterly freshened further on 17th when the good numbers of lingering migrants were joined by more Redwings and a brief Rough-legged Buzzard. With strong south-east winds and heavy rain in the morning, more birds on 18th included two Olive-backed Pipits, Great Grey Shrike, 1,185 Redwings, 495 Song Thrushes and 20 Blackcaps. A fresh southerly on 19th brought fewer new birds but the south-westerly the following day delivered a few new things including the first Glaucous Gull of the autumn, Tree Sparrow, two Greenfinches and an increase in Short-eared Owls to five. The memories of glorious falls and continued scarce and rare migrants of the previous fortnight were somewhat blown away by a storm force ten north-westerly with heavy rain all day on 21st, although 12 White-fronted Geese (presumably 'Greenland' birds) were new for the year and calmer weather the following day saw a good count of 1,579 Redwings, the vast majority of which were of the Icelandic



Plate 25. Red-throated Pipit, Bunness, 18th October 2014. © Steve Arlow

subspecies *coburni*, along with Glaucous and Iceland Gull. The strong south-westerly on 23rd brought a deluge of American passerines to the United Kingdom, which Fair Isle missed out on, although birds arriving from the same direction included 2,527 Redwings, 1,249 Greylag Geese, 15 Whooper Swans, Gadwall and Slavonian Grebe. The following morning saw Fair Isle start to make up for missing out on the previous day's bounty, with a showy Grey-cheeked Thrush at the Obs, which brought the year list to 216 species, just one short of the all time Fair Isle record. The south-west wind increased to force ten again on 25th and a Grey Phalarope sought shelter in the Havens, whilst a Richard's Pipit was less expected. Slightly less windy conditions the following day saw two 'Greenland White-fronted Geese' and 41 Whooper Swans arrive, and even lighter winds on 27th saw five 'Greenland White-fronts' amongst 406 Greylag Geese, with four Great Northern Divers also seen. The light winds continued on 28th and brought a late House Martin, a Pomarine Skua from the Good Shepherd and an increase in Redwings to 2,256. The autumn felt like it was petering out somewhat as more south-west winds on 29th brought seven White-fronted Geese and 90 Snow Buntings, but a switch in winds to the south-east on 30th brought a small arrival of thrushes along with a Little Bunting and Hawfinch. The ten days of westerlies had obviously held up migration of birds attempting to leave Scandinavia, but the southerlies on the last day of the month brought a fresh deluge, with a carpet of thrushes involving 9,425 Fieldfares, 5,768 Redwings, 295 Blackbirds and five Ring Ouzels along with 103 Robins, and 96 Woodcocks. Other highlights included another Little Bunting (to join the lingering bird), Great Grey Shrike, 'Tundra Bean Goose', Long-eared Owl and an intriguing female Siberian Stonechat that appeared to match the criteria of 'Stejneger's Stonechat'. Hopes were high that there was still a chance of beating the year list record in November with more easterlies in the forecast...

The possible 'Stejneger's Stonechat' was amongst lingering birds at the start of the month and a fresh south-west wind on 1st brought a new Richard's Pipit and Great Grey Shrike (to join the lingering bird), whilst a dead Quail was presumably the bird seen in October. Strong south-west winds on 2nd deposited a Red-throated Diver on Easter Lother Water and a developing north-easterly breeze on 3rd saw a Waxwing, two Glaucous Gulls and a 'Greenland White-fronted Goose'. The next couple of days brought strong north-east winds, a male Hen Harrier and the exodus of the assistant wardens and ranger. With south-east winds on 6th increasing to gale force and carpeting the island with 10,000 Herring and 5,500 Great Black-backed Gulls, migrants included Long-eared Owl, Black Redstart and 31 Woodcocks. Birding on 7th was wiped out by a south-east gale

November

Species Recorded: **101**
 Year List at end of month: **219**
 Birds Ringed: **361**
 Species Ringed: **27**



Plate 26. 'Tundra Bean Geese', Kenaby, 16th November 2014. © David Parnaby

and heavy rain, but a much more pleasant day on 8th saw a moderate thrush fall, along with Long-eared and eight Short-eared Owls, 45 Woodcocks, five Black Redstarts, 106 Snow Buntings and late Great Skua and Wheatear, with a similar spread of birds on a very calm day on 9th. A fresh south-east breeze developed through the 10th and the undoubted highlight was a Shorelark found by Susannah at Upper Leogh, which equalled the Fair Isle year list record! Other migrants included more thrushes, three Sparrowhawks, two Goldcrests, four Chiffchaffs (including two *tristis*), five Black Redstarts and Goldfinch. With just one species needed to break the year list record and a week of south-east winds forecast, an intense period of birding was on the cards. A Long-eared Owl and Ring Ouzel were new on 11th, when 16 blue Fulmars included 15 on the sea together at Ditfield. Three days of very strong, often gale force winds followed, during which new birds were hard to find, although there was still a turnover of common migrants. A Bean Goose that arrived late on 14th heralded the start of an arrival that brought three Bean Geese (two definite 'Tundra' and one undetermined), 'European White-fronted Goose', 29 Pink-footed Geese and two Barnacle Geese the following day, along with a Ring Ouzel and Little Auk, with the 'Tundra Bean Geese' and 'European White-fronted Geese' increasing to 21 and two respectively on 16th. A calm start on 17th was full of promise with plenty of thrushes around the traps and new migrants obviously in as an east-south-east wind developed through the day. 'Tundra Bean Geese' peaked for the month at 26 and some decent counts of migrants in the north of the island (there being not

enough daylight to census the whole island by this time of the year) including 401 Fieldfares, 289 Blackbirds, 90 Redwings, six Mistle Thrushes, two Ring Ouzels, ten Woodcocks, two Chiffchaffs, two Blackcaps, Lapland Bunting, Black Redstart and late Great Skua and Wheatear, but the pride of place went to a smart male 'Northern Bullfinch' in the Wirvie Burn, a new species for the year and the one that saw the long-standing year-list record finally beaten. The fresh winds continued from the same quarter on 18th and brought a Goosander, six Whooper Swans and an Olive-backed Pipit on 19th that lingered until December, which arrived in a decent fall of thrushes, along with a Chiffchaff and Blackcap. Although the south-east winds continued for the next few days, they brought little else, with a Little Auk on 20th and a 'Taiga Bean Goose' on 21st the highlights. A spell of lighter south-west winds brought Long-eared Owl, a migrant Wren and small numbers of Woodcocks (all 23rd), Mistle Thrush (24th) and then calmer weather on 25th saw a small arrival of Redwings, two Common Redpolls, Black Redstart, Blackcap, two more Whooper Swans and a very late Great Skua, with lighter southerly winds for the remainder of the month bringing few new birds, although a Moorhen was trapped on 30th.

After the excitement of the previous month and the seemingly never-ending autumn, December was far wintrier, with only a few new arrivals amongst the regular strong westerly winds and rainy weather. The BOU announced early in the month that Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler was now an official British species, so we got one 'armchair' addition to the year list (although Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler is counted as a new species from May in the statistics in this article). There was an interesting selection of lingering birds though, with the Olive-backed Pipit remaining at Quoy until 6th and Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, a small group of 'Tundra Bean Geese', two Barnacle Geese and Grey Heron amongst those set to remain until the end of the year, along with decent numbers of thrushes, Robins and a few Water Rails and Woodcocks. There were regular sightings of several Glaucous and Iceland Gulls throughout the month, with a second-winter 'Kumlien's Gull' on 22nd. There were occasional Great Northern Divers and Whooper Swans recorded passing by, whilst a 7-spot Ladybird that snuck onto the island in the Obs Christmas tree was probably the most unexpected wildlife sighting of the month!

December

Species Recorded: **59**
 Year List at end of month: **219**
 Birds Ringed: **1**
 Species Ringed: **1**



Plate 27. Woodcock, Obs, 13th December 2014. © David Parnaby

SYSTEMATIC LIST 2014

David Parnaby

Notes

The species order is taken from the 'British List' published by the BOU in February 2015. 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 numbers	on average, less than 100 pairs per annum
Moderate numbers	on average, 101–1,000 pairs per annum
Large numbers	on average, more than 1,000 pairs per annum

Abbreviations used in the text

AON	Apparently Occupied Nest
AOS	Apparently Occupied Site
AOT	Apparently Occupied Territory
n/c	No count
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

The adult present from November 2013 was last recorded on 1st January, only the eighth year that a bird has overwintered (including one that became resident with domestic geese from 1999–2001). For the first time since 2010 there were no spring records, but an impressive autumn passage began with one on 27th September, 18 the following day and 30 (all adults) on 29th, with one lingering to 1st October. The next arrival saw 40 on 5th October, with three from this flock lingering until 8th, a further 19 passing through on 7th and one or two then seen daily until 22nd October. Another wave of arrivals saw 15 on 23rd October, four remaining to 24th, eight the following day, with the year's peak of 41 on 26th October. Numbers then decreased, with two lingering until 24th November, when one died, the other remaining until 1st December. During that time there were further flocks of four on 10th, five on 18th and two on 25th–26th November, with a late adult on 18th–22nd joined by two more on 21st December, giving a total autumn passage of a minimum of 182 individuals.



Plate 28. Whooper Swan, Field Pond, 23rd October 2014. © Steve Arlow

Bean Goose

Anser fabalis

Rare autumn and winter migrant, approximately 35 previous records of at least 141 individuals, including at least 63 in autumn 2011. Most records of Bean Geese have not been assigned to subspecies, but recent records suggest A.f.rossicus often occurs in autumn influxes and as an occasional winter visitor and spring migrant, whereas A.f.fabalis is perhaps a rare visitor, usually as an autumn migrant with occasional winter records.

‘Tundra Bean Goose’ *A.f.rossicus*

An influx in the early part of the year brought a flock from 21st January to 16th February, which peaked at 15 on 23rd January, although only five or six remained after 6th February. A strong autumn passage saw three from 7th-12th October joined by a fourth on 9th-10th and further singles on 23rd and 31st October. A Bean Goose unidentified to subspecies arrived in strong south-easterlies on 14th November and was joined by two ‘Tundra Bean Geese’ the following day. The 16th saw a flock of 21 ‘Tundra’ birds present, increasing to 26 on 17th–19th November, with single figures for the rest of the month, apart from 17 on 29th November. There were eight in early December, increasing to 14 on 10th, with 13 to 19th and nine to 23rd, with none then until three on 28th December that stayed until the end of the year, bringing the total in the second half of the year to around 53 individuals. Three of the four largest influxes on Fair Isle of this species have now occurred since 2011.

***‘Taiga Bean Goose’** *A.f.fabalis*

The first record since 2012 of this subspecies involved one at Utra in the company of ‘Tundra Bean Geese’ on 21st November.

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Two arrived with 'Tundra Bean Geese' on 21st January and lingered until 4th February. Spring passage saw six on 4th April, with two remaining to 9th, two on 17th–19th and three on 29th April, five on 7th and two on 12th–16th May, with a late bird lingering from 22nd May to 8th June. The first in autumn was a flock heard high over the Obs on 20th September, with seven the following day and daily sightings from 23rd September until November. Some impressive passage saw counts including 764 on 24th, 338 on 26th, 688 on 27th, 574 on 28th and 1,039 on 29th September. There were then smaller numbers until 1,105 on 4th October, the third highest ever count for Fair Isle. Further passage included 572 on 6th October, then up to 538 grounded from 7th–12th October, with between 114 and 197 remaining from 13th–20th October. Another 155 arrived on 24th October, with around 100 lingering during the following days, including an orange-legged individual, about 30 remaining until 24th November, the only later record being a juvenile on 13th December.

White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter

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

The first record since 2012 of this subspecies saw one on 15th November joined by a second the following day, with both lingering until 21st November. They arrived during a spell of strong south-easterly winds and accompanied an arrival of 'Tundra Bean Geese'.

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

Twelve White-fronted Geese that flew south in poor weather on 21st October were thought most likely to be Greenland birds (as were two on 25th October), with confirmed records of two on 24th, five on 26th, seven on 29th October and one on 1st November, in one of the best showings of recent years for this subspecies.

Greylag Goose

Anser anser

Common spring and autumn migrant

Table 1. Maximum monthly counts of Greylag Goose on Fair Isle in 2014

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
159	142	113	105	28	15	8	4	19	1,249	101	116

Numbers in the first winter period were generally around the 100 mark, although there were days of apparent movement that saw higher peaks. There was a similar situation in March and April, with counts of about 90 or less, other than days of passage. After the first week of May, counts were typically in single figures throughout the rest of the month into June, other than the occasional flock. None were reported after 8th July until records on six dates in August. Autumn passage was generally light until 457 on 12th October then 1,249 on 23rd October (a count bettered only by 2,128 in 2009, 2,100 in 2006 and 1,500 in both 1991 and 1996). Most counts in November were between 50 and 80, although numbers had built up slightly by the end of the year.

Greater Canada Goose

Branta canadensis

Rare visitor; 29 previous records of 76 individuals, mostly spring (predominantly May and June, with three records in April and singles in March and July), four winter records and one in October. Most thought to be of feral European stock, but a B.c.parvipes in May 2001 and one arriving with Pink-footed Geese (October 1997) were possibly transatlantic vagrants.

After an absence of two years (the longest gap in records since there were none in 1993 and 1994) there were two in May, the first in the south of the island on 21st, and one on 31st, when it spent a short while on the sea in South Haven.

Barnacle Goose

Branta leucopsis

Frequent autumn migrant, occasional in spring

Two on 1st February was the only record from the first winter period and a reasonable spring passage saw 18 on 1st, five on 7th and two on 13th May (with one lingering to 19th) and a late single on 6th June. Flocks of 16 on 22nd and 56 on 24th September began a decent autumn showing, with October seeing 25 on 1st, 72 on 4th, just four the following day then a flock of 131 that were grounded on 6th, which increased to 149 by 9th, the highest count of the year. The following three days saw a flock of up to 38 lingering, with counts of between five and eight until 20th October. A group of 17 on 22nd October was the last double-figure count of the autumn, with two remaining until the end of the year and a further five passing south on 17th November.



Plate 29. Barnacle Geese, 22nd September 2014. © Ian Andrews

Shelduck

Tadorna tadorna

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

An early individual was seen on 22nd February, with spring passage consisting of a single on 12th April, then four on 29th May, with one remaining to 12th June. In the autumn there were three on 31st July with one remaining to 3rd August, then further singles on 15th and 19th–20th August.

*Mandarin Duck

Aix galericulata

Vagrant; one previous record (September to October 2010)

A flighty male was in the South Harbour area on the early morning only of 29th April. This record fits in with established pattern of spring occurrences in Mainland Shetland and may have been one of the individuals seen there earlier in the month.

Wigeon

Anas penelope

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

There were up to 17 in early winter, but after 2nd February there were just single-figure counts throughout March and April, up to four on five dates in May then three late spring migrants on 3rd–4th June. The first in autumn was present from 13th–17th August, then from 29th August onwards there were regular sightings, with numbers rising gradually to a maximum in September of 44 on 22nd. An influx in early October brought 94 on 6th, with numbers then tailing off. A maximum of ten was recorded in November whilst December saw occasional records of up to six.

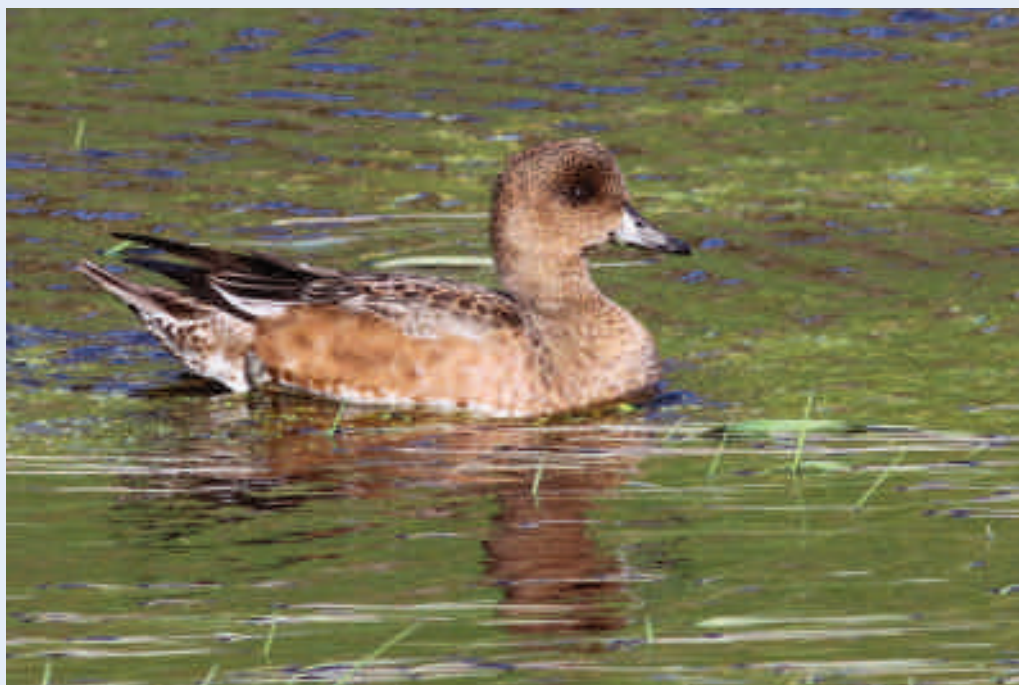


Plate 30. Wigeon, Obs scrape, 26th September 2014. © Ian Andrews

Gadwall

Anas strepera

Rare spring and autumn migrant, three winter records; total of 43 records of 65 individuals

After two blank years, 2014 proved to be a record one for this unassuming duck, with six records, the most in a year (although the two records in 1992 involved eight birds). The first was a male which circled the Havens before heading north on 26th April, with further spring records of one in South Harbour on 28th May and a male on Da Water on 10th–18th June. One lingered on Da Water and Utra from 10th–20th September, a male was on Da Water on 8th October and the final record was rather bizarre, when a juvenile tried to gain access to the Burkle chicken coop before crashing into Boini Mire.

Teal

Anas crecca

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

The first three months of the year saw a maximum of 15 in early February, then regular sightings in April also peaked at 15 later in the month. There were occasional records of up to three in May until 10th June. Numbers rose from two on 2nd August to 13 by the end of the month. September and October saw fluctuating numbers, with peaks of 60 on 20th September and 62 on 8th October. The later autumn and winter period was much quieter, with a maximum of 17 in early December.

*Green-winged Teal

Anas carolinensis

Vagrant; two previous records (April 2009 and March to May 2012)

A male was found on Da Water on 18th March and lingered both there and in Johnny Arcus' Park until 22nd March. With all three records for Fair Isle occurring in a six-year period, there is the possibility that a returning bird could be involved.

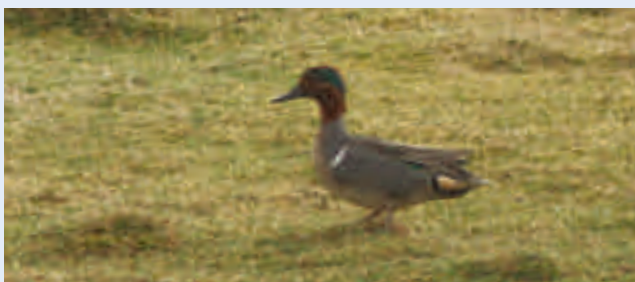


Plate 31. Green-winged Teal, 18th March 2014. © Deryk Shaw

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

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

The maximum in the first winter period was 33 in January, with no real movement noted in the spring. There was a minimum of five breeding attempts, with the first ducklings noted on 19th May and probably only six birds fledging (all from one brood). Migration was noted in mid-October, with a peak of 24 and small groups were seen arriving in off the sea at South Light. The highest count towards the end of the year was 30 on 26th December.

Pintail

Anas acuta

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One seen in flight off Meoness on 5th September was the only record, the quietest year since 1997, when there was also just a single record.

Garganey

Anas querquedula

Vagrant; 12 previous records of 21 individuals (11 from March to May, one in September)

A pair was on Da Water on 25th April, a typical arrival date and the first record since 2010 of this delightful duck.

Shoveler

Anas clypeata

Scarce and irregular spring and autumn migrant

A male was in Muckle Uri Geo on 23rd–25th May and there were further males on Da Water on 7th–8th July and 9th October.

Pochard

Aythya ferina

Rare migrant; 55 previous records of 69 individuals (most August to December)

A male on the pond in the Haa garden on 29th January arrived in strong south-easterly winds and was only the fourth January record. A male on Da Water on 8th–10th April was the first record for that



Plate 32. Pochard, Tufted Duck (2) and Scaup, 11th October 2014. © Simon Colenutt

month and only the sixth spring (March to June) occurrence. Daily records from 6th–11th October were at a more expected time of year, with two males seen throughout and a third male found dead during the same period (with one of the original males also found dead later in the month). With three records totalling five individuals it was the best year on Fair Isle since 1996 for this occasional visitor.

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

Another good spring showing began with a male at Utra on 9th–10th April, then daily sightings of up to two from 21st April to 7th May involved at least three individuals. A male from 18th–22nd May was joined by a female on 21st, then a pair arrived on 29th May with a male staying to 31st. The final spring record was a female on 7th June. Autumn passage began early with one on 29th July, then daily sightings from 4th–8th August peaked at two on 5th before regular sightings from 5th–29th September peaked at four on 12th. In October there were birds present from 4th to the end of the month, peaking at four on 5th, whilst the last of the year was one on Golden Water on 8th November.

Scaup

Aythya marila

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

There were probably only two individuals involved in the autumn's sightings. The first was a male in North Haven, then Easter Lothar (where it was, unusually, seen resting on the cliff face having possibly just evaded Bonxie predation) on 6th October. What was presumably the same individual was in Hjukni Geo the following day but was then found dead on 9th October. A female or juvenile was on Easter Lothar Water from 11th October before moving to South Harbour then Utra Scrape and Hegri Burn on 13th–19th October.



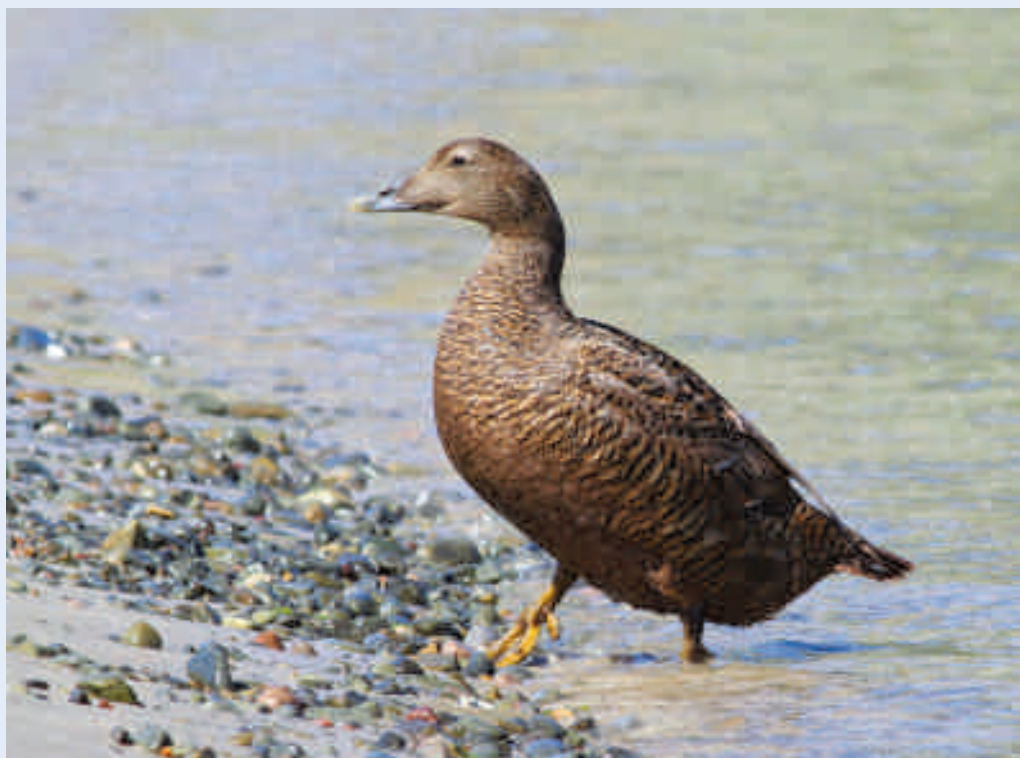


Plate 33. Eider, North Haven, 9th June 2014. © Ian Andrews

Eider

Somateria mollissima

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Stormy weather on 15th February saw 75 sheltering around the island, with the largest spring count being 119 on 2nd April, lower than in recent years. One of those was a drone that showed characteristics of 'Northern Eider' *S.m.borealis* and which lingered off South Light until 4th April. The first ducklings were noted on the slightly early date of 5th June and, although there were no counts of the breeding population, the Steensi Geo colony declined by one nest from 2013, to ten incubating females. A count on 26th August produced 136 birds, including just 25 juveniles, whilst the largest count of the autumn was 161 on 26th October, showing a continued decline in recent counts of the island population.

Long-tailed Duck

Clangula hyemalis

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

Typically for recent years, small numbers were present in winter, with up to four in January and two regularly until early April, with one remaining to 14th April. There was one on 5th May and a late male in the Havens from 24th–28th May, which closely mirrored a similar record in 2013 and may have been the same individual. After the first autumn record on 28th September birds were seen almost daily from 6th October, with most counts of single figures. Numbers peaked at 24 on 11th, the highest count since 2005, and included a male that toured the freshwater bodies of the island on 7th–9th October. The year ended with up to four in November and three in December, usually around Ditfield or Furse.

Common Scoter

Melanitta nigra

Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant

There were at least two wintering in the north of the island until 6th February. There were up to three regularly from 20th May to 7th June, with a peak of 11 on 25th May. In a very quiet autumn, the only records were of singles on 7th August and 15th October.



Plate 34. Common Scoter, 6th February 2014. © David Parnaby

Velvet Scoter

Melanitta fusca

Scarce migrant, mostly in autumn, rare at other times of year

A female in Furse on 1st January then flew south round Bunes, the first January record since 1989 and the first in any month since 2012.

Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant

There were none in the first winter period for the first time since 2006. Spring passage was restricted to seven dates in April from 7th–22nd, all singles apart from three on 21st. There were further singles on 2nd and 4th May. One on 25th September was followed by three on 17th October, with six the following day and one on 20th October. One or two were seen occasionally in November and a record of one in South Harbour on 21st December suggested possible overwintering.

Red-breasted Merganser

Mergus serrator

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred once (1934)

There were regular sightings of up to three during the first two months of the year and one through March. Spring passage was light, with occasional records of up to two in April, May and June and there were midsummer records of two on 7th July and a single from 21st–25th July. Autumn began with an unusual record of one on Da Water on 9th September, with regular reports later in month, peaking at five on 29th September. Sightings were virtually daily in October, peaking at ten on 4th, with occasional singles noted the following month, until the last of the year on 30th November.

Goosander

Mergus merganser

Rare migrant in winter, spring and late autumn

An immature male was in South Harbour on 30th April. A male that flew south from Easter Lothar on 7th May was presumably the same that lingered off Hesti Geo and around the Holms from 8th–16th May. There were two autumn records, with the first on 14th September and a male on 18th–27th November, which completed a good year for this species.

Quail

Coturnix coturnix



Plate 35. Quail, Midway, 31st May 2014.
© Ian Andrews

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

After two consecutive years of single records, 2014 proved much better for this often elusive species. The first was heard singing at Kenaby on 26th May and could have been one of four birds on 31st May, with at least three of those singing. One singing from Houll on 4th June could also have been one of the same. One was flushed from Mire of Vatnagaard on 3rd July and a late bird was near Shirva then Burkle on 7th–8th October and was presumably the bird found dead (although not freshly so) on 1st November.

Red-throated Diver

Gavia stellata

Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn

An early spring migrant was in Furse on 6th March, with April producing sightings on 1st (two) and 25th, before a total of 19 individuals was logged over 11 dates from 8th–31st May, peaking at five on 24th May, the highest count since 2008. There were sightings on seven dates in June, all singles apart from three on 21st and 23rd, and one on 28th July. Three singles were seen in August and there were one to two on five dates in September, with later records on 3rd, 4th and 22nd (two) October and an extremely unusual individual on 2nd November, which was not only rather late but was also found on Easter Lothar Water.

Great Northern Diver

Gavia immer

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring

One was off South Light on 26th and 28th May, with a different individual seen on 31st May and a late spring record of a breeding-plumaged bird on 17th June. Autumn passage saw singles on six dates in September from 14th, one or two on six dates in October and singles on 15th and 21st November. There were later sightings on 2nd (two) and 29th December.

Fulmar

Fulmarus glacialis

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

Fair Isle's commonest seabird had a decent season, with the plot counts showing an increase of almost 30% from 2013. Monitoring work seems to show a gradual, fluctuating increase in breeding numbers since 2000. Although copulation was seen from 28th March, the first egg was not noted until 16th May, with the first chick seen on 17th June and fledging noted from 23rd August. Although fledging success decreased compared to 2013, there was still roughly one chick fledged per two occupied nest sites and the pulli ringing total of 192 was the highest since 1998. Blue Fulmars were recorded on 5th January, three dates in April, four dates in September and 13 dates in October (totalling 21 birds) before an influx in mid-November brought 12 on 9th, 16 on 11th (15 of which were on the sea at Ditfield) and four on 19th, with later singles on 20th and 27th November.

Sooty Shearwater

Puffinus griseus

Regular autumn migrant

Singles from the Good Shepherd on 29th July and from Bunness on 23rd August were the only early autumn records. September saw sightings on ten dates totalling 20 birds, peaking at six on 23rd, the highest count since 2007. There were further singles on 4th and 11th October.

Manx Shearwater

Puffinus puffinus

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

A good year for this species began with daily sightings totalling 14 birds during 2nd–5th July, with a peak of seven on the first date. Further singles were seen from the Good Shepherd on 15th and 16th July, with two on 18th July. Seawatching on 30th July produced a total of 15 birds, the second highest Fair Isle count (after 40 on 4th September 1997), with one seen the following day. There were just four further singles during the autumn, on 16th and 23rd August and 2nd and 11th September.

Storm Petrel

Hydrobates pelagicus

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

The first of the year were two seen from the Good Shepherd on 24th May, with small numbers noted at the breeding colony in Kinn o' Skroo from 10th June (where seven birds, consisting of three new and four that had been ringed in previous years, were trapped later in the month) and another was seen from the Good Shepherd on 21st June. Regular trapping took place in the Havens, and



Plate 36. Storm Petrel, Havens, 24th August 2014. © David Parnaby

occasionally the Skadan, from 1st July to 10th September, when a total of 26 nights ringing produced 2,677 birds caught, 2,453 new birds and 224 recaptures which included nine Norwegian, two Danish (from the Faroes) and two Portuguese-ringed birds. A 'pure' Storm Petrel tape was used more often than in recent years (when a mix of different species was used most nights), which will have helped boost numbers to the third highest ever annual total of this species ringed on Fair Isle. It was clearly also a good year for the species, with birds caught in decent numbers on almost every night when trapping was attempted, irrespective of factors such as moonlight or direction of breeze. The highest total trapped was on the night of 28th/29th July when 308 were caught and there were regularly small clouds of 'Stormies' visible around and above the nets throughout the summer. Field observations included one off South Light on 2nd July and up to three on four dates in July from the Good Shepherd, with the ferry also providing the last sightings of the year on 16th September and 4th October. Perhaps the most unusual field observation was one seen at around 11pm in the Havens on 7th August as it apparently checked out the noise from a stag party taking place there!

Leach's Petrel

Oceanodroma leucorhoa

Scarce migrant, usually summer and early autumn, most recorded during petrel trapping sessions

The first of the year was trapped on 2nd July and was retrapped on 6th. It had been ringed in August 2013 on the island, providing a rare occurrence of a bird trapped in consecutive years (following the first such incident in 2013). After that, petrel ringing sessions were regularly accompanied by the distinctive chattering sound of Leach's Petrel song. Other than three on 28th July, only singles were heard on eight other dates to 27th August, so it is possible that just one bird was responsible for many of these records, although new birds were also trapped on 12th July (when another was heard), 22nd July (at Skadan) and 25th August. An unidentified petrel seen flying through the Havens on 26th October was most likely to have been this species.

*Swinhoe's Petrel

Oceanodroma monorhis

Vagrant; two previous records (July and August 2013)

The bird ringed on 7th August 2013 was retrapped on eight nights between the early hours of 9th July and 1st August, although after that there was no sight or sound of the bird despite regular petrel ringing sessions taking place. Although initially caught in the Havens, it was also trapped at Skadan when petrel ringing sessions took place there. Vagrant seabirds in the UK have often been recorded returning to the same site in successive summers and this record particularly recalls the Swinhoe's Petrel trapped at Tynemouth every year from 1990 to 1994.

Gannet

Morus bassanus

Breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year

Small numbers were offshore in both winter periods, with birds well established at the colonies in March. The first egg was noted at Yellow Head on 7th April, with the first chick seen on 29th May. The island population (counted on 13th June) showed an 8.5% decrease from the 2013 count, with 3,591 AON recorded, continuing an overall steady decline noted since 2011. The first chicks fledged from Dronger on 4th August, with productivity at the monitored plots remaining the same as 2013, a reasonable 0.68 chicks per AON.



Plate 37. Gannet, 19th June 2014. © Deryk Shaw

Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

February saw sightings on 6th and 18th (two), with one found dead on 22nd. Spring passage saw records in March on 28th and 30th (two), singles on 16th and 17th April, four dates in May, 6th and 8th June, with a long-staying immature on 17th–26th June and the last of the spring on 30th June. Autumn passage commenced on 10th August with records on seven further dates during the month, including the year's peak of seven on 24th August. There were sightings of up to three on 16 dates in September and ten dates in October until 28th, which was the last of the year. Although several sightings were of birds flying over, all those that were seen well enough were of the nominate subspecies *P.c.carbo*.

'Continental Cormorant' *P.c.sinensis*

Vagrant; no previous records

An immature on Easter Locher Water on 24th May was the first island record of this scarce visitor to Shetland (where most records are also in spring). Interestingly, it was the only Cormorant recorded on freshwater during the year.



Plate 38. 'Continental Cormorant', Easter Locher Water, 24th May 2014. © Claran Hatsell

Shag

Phalacrocorax aristotelis

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers (last count 204 AON in 2013)

As usual, present all year, with nest material noted as being collected from 18th March, although completed nests weren't recorded until 20th April. The first egg was seen at Johnny's Peats on 3rd May (a day later than 2013). An increase of 14.3% in birds on the monitoring plots actually equated to just 24 AON, three more than in 2013. Productivity news was even more positive though, with 1.85 chicks fledged per AON being almost three times better than 2013 and the highest since 2002.

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

Early spring records were of singles on 18th and 30th March and 5th April and there were then one or two regularly from 25th April until 5th May. Three moved south on 11th July, then up to four were seen frequently from 21st July and throughout August (when one was seen preying on a Starling). Regular sightings continued throughout September, with peaks of 13 on 10th and 17 on 17th–18th, and up to seven in October. Two lingered in early November, with one remaining to the end of the year.

*Glossy Ibis

Plegadis falcinellus



Plate 39. Glossy Ibis, over Obs, 16th May 2014. © David Parnaby

Vagrant; no previous records

With a series of recent irruptions into the British Isles, it was perhaps not a surprise that this species finally debuted on Fair Isle in 2014, with records of one seen circling Houll before flying north then eventually returning south and heading out to sea on 16th May, and one drifting north over the island on 26th May. During the year, there were a series of records from Shetland and North Ronaldsay, apparently referring to a single wandering individual, so it seems likely that the Fair Isle records both involved this bird.

Slavonian Grebe

Podiceps auritis

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring

A quiet year saw a moulting adult on the sea in Hjukni Geo on 5th October, with presumably the same individual in South Harbour on 8th–10th and found dead in Hesti Geo on 16th October, with the only other sighting on 23rd October.

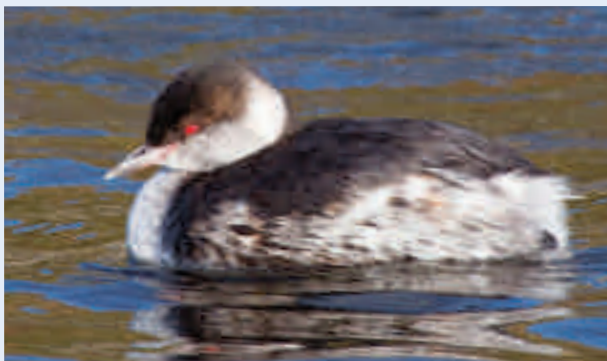


Plate 40. Slavonian Grebe, South Harbour, 10th October 2014. © Simon Colenutt



Plate 41. Honey-Buzzard, Furse, 30th May 2014. © David Parnaby

***Honey-buzzard**

Pernis apivorus

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 54 previous records (56 individuals)

A female on 30th May landed on the cliff tops at Furse before giving great views as it drifted north then returned south down the island. Photographs confirmed it was the same individual seen the previous day on North Ronaldsay. Another flew south down the island on 9th June having been seen earlier in the day moving south over Shetland.

Hen Harrier

Circus cyaneus

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A ringtail on 26th March was an early record, with another ringtail heading north on 28th April. In the autumn, one on 14th September was joined by a second from 15th until 18th, with one remaining until 22nd September. A juvenile male on 1st October was joined by a female from 10th and an adult male on 15th–17th October, both ringtails remaining until 2nd November. Another adult male passed south on 5th November and the final ringtail lingered until 24th November.

***Pallid Harrier**

Circus macrourus

Vagrant; three previous records (May 1931, August 2011 and September 2011)

A very smart juvenile was first seen over Da Water on 8th September before roaming the island until 17th September. It was regularly seen hunting around Pund and was noted preying on Meadow Pipits.



Plate 42. Pallid Harrier, Pund, 8th September 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell

Sparrowhawk

Accipiter nisus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A relatively quiet spring saw singles on 18th April, 27th–31st April and 1st May and on nine dates between 6th and 26th May, involving probably five individuals. Autumn began well, with up to three daily between 29th August and 8th September, then further singles on 11th–13th and 17th–19th September. In early October sightings on six dates between 1st–13th involved probably three individuals, with up to three from 31st October to 3rd November. One on 8th–9th November was joined by two more on 10th, no doubt following the large numbers of thrushes on the move at the time. It may well have been the decent thrush numbers lingering that encouraged a male to remain on the island from then until the end of the year, only the third apparent overwintering attempt (following individuals from December 1952 to January 1953 and November 1982 to February 1983), although there have been singles in December in about eight other years.

Buzzard

Buteo buteo

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The first since spring 2012 was found on 8th October and was recorded erratically until the end of the month. Despite a ten-day gap with no sightings, it seems likely that the bird recorded from 8th November until the end of the year was the same individual. It spent a large part of its time around Pund where it was often seen hunting rabbits and became only the third to overwinter, following singles in 1984/85 and 1994/95.



Plate 43. Buzzard, Vaasetter, 24th October 2014.
© Steve Arlow

*Rough-legged Buzzard

Buteo lagopus

Vagrant; around 44 previous records (47 individuals)

One hovering over Hoini on 17th October, before heading north over the airstrip, was the first record since 2011.

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Scarce migrant; 124 individuals, with 105 in spring (mostly May and June and four in April) and 19 in autumn (mostly September, but two in October and singles in July, August and November)

One drifted low over the Obs in the evening of 18th May and another was seen coming in off the sea over Malcolm's Head the following day. The latter record possibly involved the same bird seen leaving North Ronaldsay earlier in the day.

Water Rail

Rallus aquaticus

Regular spring and autumn migrant, occasionally overwinters

There were three or four at the start of the year until late February, with spring passage restricted to singles on 2nd, 18th and 19th April and 25th May. From 19th September there were sightings of up to two on three further dates in the month and 18 dates in October. A further arrival in early November saw birds scattered around the island and the year's peak of four on 3rd, with occasional sightings until the end of the year probably involving at least five individuals, the fourth consecutive year with birds wintering.

Corncrake

Crex crex

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred (last suspected in 2002)

For the second consecutive year there was just a single spring sighting, with one trapped in the Gully on 7th May. It was also a quiet autumn, with one in the Gilly Burn on 19th September the only record, making it the poorest autumn showing since 2009, when there were none.



Plate 44. Corncrake release (with Rob Hughes), Gilsetter, 7th May 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell

Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

An early record was of one on 18th–21st March at Pig Street (next to the Haa), with further spring records on 30th March and on four dates from 2nd–7th May. A quiet autumn saw sightings from 8th–15th October, possibly all just relating to one individual, with a late juvenile trapped in the Plantation on 30th November.

Coot

Fulica atra

Rare visitor; 89 previous records, most in spring, also late autumn and winter, has summered

One on Da Water from 29th January to 13th February closely mirrored the dates of one in 2013, with another on the small pond in the Haa garden on 1st–6th February.

Crane

Grus grus

Rare visitor, 24 previous records (20 in spring) of 33 individuals

One flew over Quoy on 22nd April, before settling briefly near Da Water, the first record since 2012.

Oystercatcher

Haematopus ostralegus

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first was on the typical date of 14th January, with numbers building to 11 by the end of month then to 34 in February. Numbers continued to increase through March, with 105 by the end of the month, whilst April saw a peak of 127. The highest counts of the year occurred in mid-May, with 184 on 17th the peak. The first eggs were seen on 9th May and chicks on 23rd June, although the breeding season again appeared to be poor, with around 25–35 pairs present but only small numbers of chicks apparently fledging. Counts in June were generally between 110 and 145, with a non-breeding flock again present in the south of the island. August began with a peak of 98 on 7th, but there were less than 20 from 19th and just small numbers through September, with no more than six in October and with the last of the year on 10th November.



Plate 45. Oystercatcher, 27th May 2014. © Deryk Shaw

Golden Plover

Pluvialis apricaria

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

In the early part of the year there were singles on 18th and 27th February and occasional sightings in March, rising to five by end of month. Regular counts in April peaked at 106 on 21st and up to ten were present throughout May, with smaller numbers occasionally until 18th June and a further single on 28th–29th June. Autumn passage commenced properly from 13th July, with sporadic sightings increasing to 24 by the end of the month. Small numbers were regular in August, rising in September to a peak of 94 on 17th, with another arrival in early October bringing the highest count of the year on 5th, with 132. Numbers declined rapidly after mid-October, with just single-figure counts occasionally throughout the last two months of the year.

Grey Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring and winter

A superb breeding-plumaged bird arrived on 17th September and was joined by a juvenile on 19th, with the adult remaining until 20th September and the juvenile lingering until 7th October, when a second bird was also present.



Plate 46. Grey Plover, Skadan, 23rd September 2014. © Steve Arlow

Lapwing

Vanellus vanellus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

There were up to eight in January and 14 in February, with a quiet spring passage seeing a peak of just 19 in late March. Displaying birds were noted from 5th March and four pairs were present around Da Water and the Rippack (another male displayed at Utra without attracting a mate), with eggs noted from 13th April, the first chicks seen on 14th May and chicks taking flight from 16th June, with seven fledging. After the last young fledged on 20th July (a bird which had hatched at Da Water but had walked to Barkland), there were just occasional sightings of up to three through August and September. October saw daily sightings from 5th, peaking at just nine on 8th, with a later arrival in mid-November peaking at 19 on 20th, the autumn's highest count. Up to 11 were present in early December, with smaller numbers until the end of the month.

Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first arrived on 23rd January, the earliest record since 2005, then occasional sightings throughout February built up to 12 by the end of the month. Numbers continued to rise throughout March, peaking at 32 on 29th with small numbers during April probably referring mostly to breeding birds. The same situation applied in early May until migrants starting appearing from 19th, rising to 103 on 24th May, the highest ever spring count (somewhat eclipsing the previous highest of 76 recorded on 5th March 2002). Numbers had dwindled to less than 30 from 26th May, the same date the first chicks of the season were seen, with at least 12 pairs breeding. Small numbers of migrants were still on the move in early June and the first fledged youngsters were noted on 3rd July. Waves of migrants in August included peaks of 44 on 11th and 48 on 31st, with numbers increasing in early September to 56 by 5th, declining to single figures from 21st, then regular records until 20th October, with the last on 9th November, the latest record since 2001.



Plate 47. Dotterel, Ward Hill, 5th June 2014. © Steve Arlow

Dotterel

Charadrius morinellus

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A good spring passage began with three on Mire of Vatnagaard on 6th May, with further records from Ward Hill on 11th May (a female), 18th May (a pair) and 5th June (a female). Autumn was also good, with three on Ward Hill on 5th–6th September, then one at Lerness on 6th October which moved to Shirva the following day. It was joined by a second on 8th October, with one of those seen again on 10th and 14th October.

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred (1973 and 1974)

The first two arrived in Gilsetter on 14th April then virtually daily sightings, from 18th April until early June, peaked at seven on 27th April then 11 on 20th May. Sightings of up to four from 21st–30th June, and

up to three from 12th–25th July may have represented southward passage, then scattered sightings from 9th August until the end of the month included the autumn’s peak of eight on 10th August. There were sightings on just three days in September, with the last two seen on 19th of that month.

Curlew

Numenius arquata

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

A count of 27 in the first winter period was the peak for the year, with spring passage consisting of a few small groups passing over and counts generally between ten and 26. Display was first noted on 19th February, with four pairs holding territory, but probably only fledging one or two chicks. Autumn passage began in late June, when a few small flocks were again on the move, but numbers were negligible, with a peak of just 12. Counts increased slightly towards the end of the year, with 21 present by late December.

Black-tailed Godwit

Limosa limosa

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A reasonable spring showing consisted of a single on 18th–25th April, two from 2nd–8th May (with one still on 9th), three on 7th, two on 9th and four on 14th June. In the autumn there were singles from 10th–12th and 15th–16th August before nine arrived on 2nd September, with further records of four on 4th, two on 5th and a single on 16th September.

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

Sightings on 22nd–25th January and 2nd and 5th February were all likely to refer to the same individual, only the fifth ever winter record for Fair Isle. Spring passage saw birds on 7th–8th and 12th May and a relatively quiet autumn saw sightings restricted to 3rd and 9th August then 5th–6th and 14th September.

Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Common winter, spring and autumn migrant

Table 2. Maximum monthly counts of Turnstone on Fair Isle 2014 compared with previous ten-year average.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2004–13	123	135	129	137	56	12	36	83	113	184	145	115
2014	210	145	134	127	59	23	40	68	90	196	174	165

Although the pattern of occurrence generally correlated well with the previous ten-year average it was interesting to note the second consecutive year of higher winter numbers, with the year’s peak on 8th January. Autumn passage was perhaps slower than usual to build up, with the largest numbers between 25th October and 2nd November.

Knot

Calidris canutus

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring, rare in winter

Although one on 31st January was only the 12th winter record for Fair Isle, it was the third consecutive year to produce one, suggesting the same individual may have been involved in all three records. Spring passage was very quiet, with singles on 18th and 25th–27th May the only sightings. An early autumn bird on 10th July was joined by two more by 14th, with daily sightings from 20th–25th July, peaking at 21 on 23rd, followed by two on three further July dates. There were records on 18 dates in August, with peaks of five on 6th and 16th, nine on 19th and six on 22nd and then regular records in September peaking at seven on 4th, whilst the last of the year were one on 8th–9th and two on 10th October.



Plate 48. Knot, 10th October 2014. © Simon Colenutt

Ruff

Calidris pugnax

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

A male on 12th July was the earliest autumn arrival since 2000, although there were no further records until 3rd August, after which sightings were regular until the last of the year on 19th September. There were only small numbers until 19 arrived on 9th August, with good numbers for the next few days including an unusual record of five on top of Ward Hill on 11th August. After that there were generally smaller numbers although further arrivals were indicated by counts of seven on 22nd and 29th August then 13 on 3rd September.

*Temminck's Stint

Calidris temminckii

Vagrant; 18 previous records (12 in spring, six in autumn)

With one in 2013 the first for 26 years, it was something of a surprise when one was found in the same area of Da Water on 27th May.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

Regular autumn migrant, less common in spring

There were sightings on 17 dates from 4th–24th May, usually just one or two, but peaking at five on 21st, with the only other spring sighting of three on 5th June. Four on 21st July saw the start of regular sightings, with another good showing seeing numbers rise to 36 on 24th July (the second highest Fair Isle count after 46 in August 2013). An unusual record during that period was of one on top of Ward Hill on 22nd July. There were regular sightings of up to nine through August and until 16th September, with up to four then recorded from 26th September to 11th October.

Dunlin

Calidris alpina

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

Up to six were recorded sporadically through January and until 5th February, an unusually strong winter showing. The next was on 21st April, with regular sightings of singles, until 19 on 5th May (which included a bird singing at Hill Dyke) and 28 the following day. There were then frequent sightings, with a peak of 56 on 22nd May, the third highest spring count on record (after 61 in 2004 and the remarkable numbers in 2010 when up to 172 were recorded). Small numbers until 17th June included a singing bird on Swey on 4th and a late bird on 24th June. The first southward migrants were noted from 3rd July, with numbers increasing to 62 on 24th July. Daily sightings in August were generally highest at the end of the month, with 33 on 30th and there were further monthly peaks of 39 on 19th September and 33 on 10th October, with later singles on 3rd November and 2nd December.

Purple Sandpiper

Calidris maritima

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, also overwinters

The maximum count in the early part of the year was 15, with spring passage peaking at 36 on 3rd April, with regular records until 24th May. Eight on 7th July rose to 35 by the end of the month, with autumn passage building up to a peak of 79 on 9th August, the fourth highest ever autumn count (with all higher totals having occurred in October or November). Thereafter there were monthly peaks of 14 in September and 29 in October, with just single figures recorded to the end of the year.



Plate 49. Purple Sandpiper, North Haven, 24th October 2014.
© Steve Arlow

Little Stint

Calidris minuta

Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

A juvenile at Skadan on 29th August preceded five (the highest count since 2008) over the next two days, with regular sightings around the island of up to three until 14th September.

*Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Calidris subruficollis

Vagrant; 14 previous records (of 15 birds), most arriving in September, one in October

One found on Brecks on 10th September remained until 15th September, occasionally associating with the Golden Plover flock.

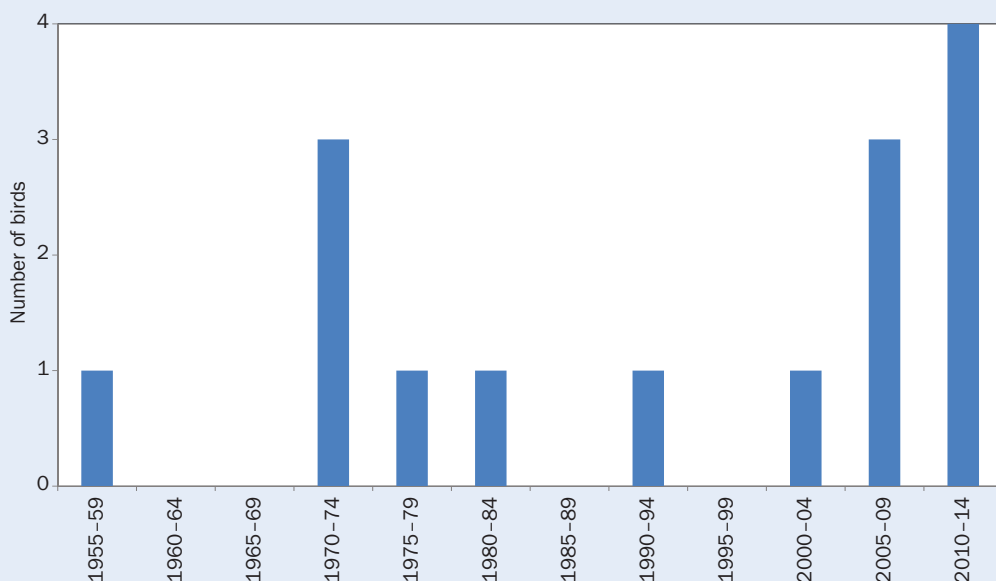


Figure 1. Records of Buff-breasted Sandpiper by five-yearly intervals.

Note the recent surge in records of this now almost annually expected species.

*Pectoral Sandpiper

Calidris melanotos



Rare visitor; 32 previous records, most from August to October, but four in spring

A juvenile at Muckle Uri Geo from 3rd–6th September also frequented Da Water during its stay. An early record for a juvenile, it was also notable for its method of discovery as it was initially found during a dazzling session at 10.30pm.

Plate 50. Pectoral Sandpiper, Da Water, 4th September 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell

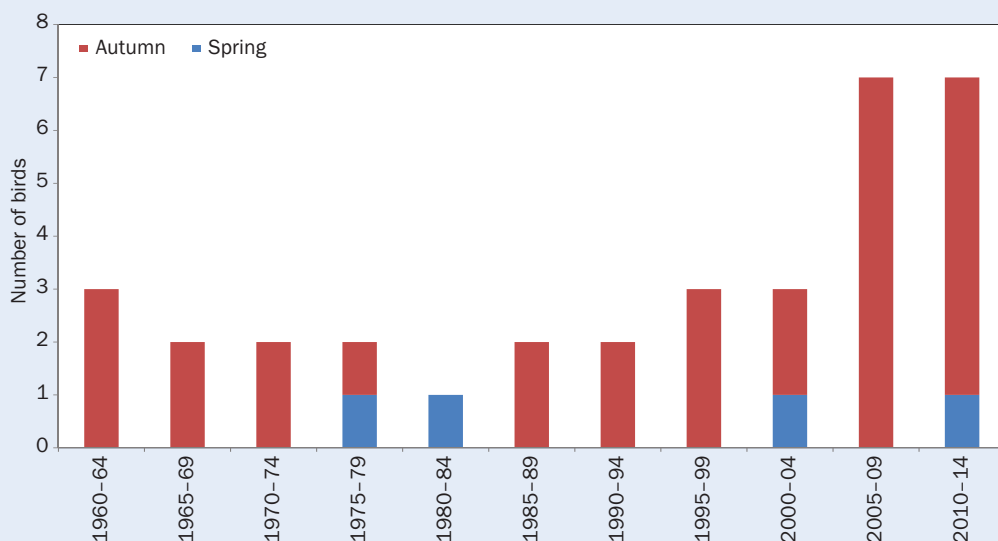


Figure 2. Records of Pectoral Sandpiper by five-yearly intervals.

Note the similarity to Buff-breasted Sandpiper in terms of the increase in records in the last decade.

Red-necked Phalarope

Phalaropus lobatus

Vagrant; 22 previous records of 24 individuals, 11 in spring (May to July), 13 in autumn (July to September)

A typically confiding juvenile on Utra scrape on 6th August was the ninth August record, but the first on the island in any season since 2005.



Plate 51. Red-necked Phalarope, Utra Scrape, 6th August 2014. © Alex Penn

*Grey Phalarope

Phalaropus fulicarius

Rare visitor; 48 individuals previously recorded (including several multiple records); most September and October, but also recorded in January, May, July, August and November

One was off Da Burrian on 2nd October, where it was briefly on the sea with Black Guillemots before flying west round Meoness. A more obliging individual arrived in the South Haven in south-westerly gales on 25th October, lingering until the 27th as it fed in the surf.

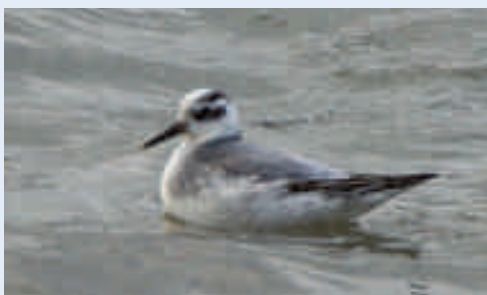


Plate 52. Grey Phalarope, South Haven, 25th October 2014. © Steve Arlow

Common Sandpiper

Actitis hypoleucos

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After the first on 22nd April there were regular sightings of up to three to the end of the month, singles on 13 dates in May, with two on 5th May, and one on 2nd June. The first spate of autumn records saw up to four from 23rd July to 4th August, then an impressive arrival saw 22 on 10th August, the second highest autumn count after 40 in September 1988 (with 35 in spring 1996 and 25 in May 1969 the only other higher counts). Numbers were generally between 11–15 for the next few days then decreased to five or less for the rest of the month, with up to three until 10th September. A final arrival saw records from 17th–30th September that peaked at four on 18th, with a late single on 7th October.

Green Sandpiper

Tringa ochropus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage was restricted to 26th–30th April, with three on 27th the peak count. An impressive autumn passage began with one at Easter Lothar on 20th July, with one to three until 27th July. From 1st August to 14th September there were regular sightings, with an arrival of five on 7th rising to ten on 11th (a count only bettered or equalled by over 20 in 1912, 15 in 1992, 12 in 1988 and ten in 1986), but just one to three seen from 15th August onwards.

Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

Spring passage saw singles on 19th and 30th April and 14th May, then daily sightings from 25th–28th May, peaking at two on 26th May. A good run in autumn saw daily records from 6th August to 6th September, with numbers rising to six on 11th August and peaking at nine on 17th August (the highest count since August 2000 and the third highest count for Fair Isle). There were further singles on 10th and 14th September.

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

There was one at Ditfield on 7th May, then one in the typical location of Da Water on 20th May. The same site played host to the first of the autumn on 9th August before four were seen over 10th–11th, with the Obs scrape and Utra proving the favoured locations for the highest ever count of this species on Fair Isle. There were still two on 13th and one on 14th August before two, probably new birds, on 17th August.



Plate 53. Wood Sandpiper, Obs scrape, 10th August 2014. © Alex Penn

Redshank

Tringa totanus

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

Around 35 were wintering at the start of the year, with counts in March and April generally between 12–28, with then just single-figure counts in May. There were occasional sightings of singles throughout June, with a flock of seven on 23rd–24th June the first sign of birds returning south. Numbers increased in early July to 32, with a further wave passing through from late July, then numbers building up in August to 46 on 20th before the year's peak of 53 on 4th September. Counts in October were highest in the last week, with a maximum of 45, with winter numbers again around 30–35 until the end of the year.

Jack Snipe

Lymnocyptes minimus

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

At least two were overwintering at the start of the year, with spring passage of up to four in late March to early April, occasional records throughout the rest of the month, daily sightings of up to three from 24th–30th April and a late single on 10th May. The first autumn record on 14th September preceded daily records from 17th September to 3rd November. A strong autumn passage saw peaks of 13 on 19th September, 14 on 5th, 19 on 7th, 24 on 8th (the highest count since 2006) and 13 on 17th October, with just single-figure counts from 19th October and then occasional sightings to the end of November.

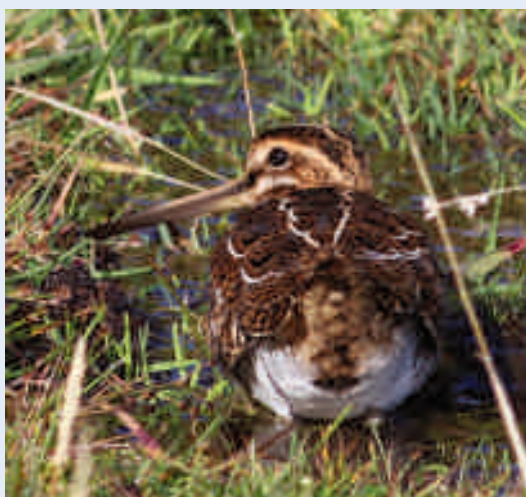


Plate 54. Jack Snipe, Obs scrape, 26th September 2014.
© Ian Andrews

Woodcock

Scolopax rusticola

Regular spring and frequent late-autumn migrant, occasionally overwinters

There were regular records in the first three months of the year, suggesting a low density of overwintering birds. Spring passage consisted of daily sightings from 31st March until 8th April, peaking at six on 2nd April. Ten on 7th October signalled the start of autumn passage, with up to ten virtually daily until the end of the month, before a large fall on 31st October produced 96, the highest count since 2009. Good numbers remained into early November, with further falls around the end of the first week of the month producing counts of up to 45 on 8th, which was likely to be a significant underestimate of the actual numbers present. Ten in the north of the island only on 17th signalled a further arrival, with small numbers seen frequently until the end of the year, including one which fed regularly in the Obs garden.

Snipe

Gallinago gallinago

Common spring and autumn migrant, some overwinter; breeds in small numbers

At least 40 were present in the first winter period, with numbers increasing from late March to 63 by early April and a spring peak of 64 on 25th April. Drumming was recorded from 2nd April, with perhaps up to 20 pairs present in the summer and the first chicks noted from 29th May. Counts in August were generally less than 30, but 60 on 15th and 45 on 29th both probably included migrants. There was also an increase in numbers around mid-September, including 68 on 14th and 85 on 18th, whilst October numbers were generally 35–70, apart from a clear peak on 8th when 139 were recorded. Smaller numbers remained to the end of the year, with at least 30 wintering on the island.

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

Rare spring and autumn migrant; at least 68 previous records, most May–June and September–October

A very good year began with an adult off the Good Shepherd on 13th September, with a juvenile also seen from the ferry on 4th October. A more unusual record was a juvenile seen in fields opposite Stackhoull on 14th October, then over Gilsetter the following day, the first sighting from land since 2009. The fourth of the year was another juvenile seen from the Good Shepherd on 28th October.

Arctic Skua

Stercorarius parasiticus

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in small numbers

The first two were seen on 25th April, with two more the following day, but sightings were not regular until 1st May. After 17 arrived on 5th May birds became established on the breeding sites. In a welcome turnaround from recent years there were 30 AOT located, a 58% increase from 2013 and the highest population since 2010. The first egg was noted on 31st May (a day earlier than 2013), but the early signs were not that hopeful, with eight territories occupied without a breeding attempt taking place and several pairs producing only one egg. However, only six pairs failed at egg stage and the first chicks were noted on 3rd July. The first chick fledged from the Parks on 27th July and, although four pairs failed at the chick stage (mostly due to Great Skua predation), 14 chicks went on to fledge, giving a productivity figure of 0.47 chicks fledged per AOT (compared to no chicks fledged in 2013), the highest productivity since 2006. Pleasingly, it was also noted that few, if any, of the fledged chicks went on to be predated by Great Skuas, which can normally be a major problem. By early September, there were few birds remaining on the island, with the last seen on 19th September.



Plate 55. Arctic Skua, Homisdale, 30th May 2014. © Steve Arlow

Great Skua

Stercorarius skua

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers

The first returning birds were somewhat late, not arriving on the island until 5th April, but numbers built up rapidly thereafter with the bulk of the population having returned by mid-April. It proved to be a record-breaking year for Bonxies on Fair Isle with 424 AOT recorded, a massive increase on the previous highest count of 300 AOT in 2012. The first egg was seen on the early date of 3rd May, with chicks noted from 11th June and the first fledged youngster seen on 22nd July. In contrast to the breeding numbers, productivity was disappointing, with just 0.21 chicks fledging per AOT, down by more than 40% from 2013 and the lowest since 2005. The population melted away through the autumn, with a major exodus noted by the first week of October, although double figures remained until the end of the month and daily sightings persisted until 4th November. Late birds were recorded on 8th, 17th and 25th November with both the latter sightings exceeding the previous latest record of 16th November.

Puffin

Fratercula arctica

Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers

The first was not seen until 5th April, but numbers had built up to four figures by mid-month. Copulation was noted from 27th April and, although there was no count of the population, it was a very good breeding season. The productivity of 0.78 chicks per egg laid was the highest since 1997, with a 24-hour feeding watch showing almost twice as many feeds coming in as in 2013 and diet studies showing that the average sandeel length was more than double that in 2013, whilst clupeids (sprats) were also an important part of the diet in 2014, unlike 2013. Most of the breeding population had departed by the start of the third week of August, although a few chicks still remained in burrows until the end of the month and there were sightings on just seven dates throughout September and October, with the last of the year on 15th October.

Black Guillemot

Cephus grylle



Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

The count of 196 breeding-plumaged adults on 2nd April on the east coast monitoring plot (from North Light to South Light) was an 12.6% increase on the 2013 count and was the highest since the population crash in 1998. The first fledged youngsters were noted on 11th August, although a lack of accessible nest sites prevented productivity monitoring.

Plate 56. Black Guillemot, 9th June 2014. © Deryk Shaw

Razorbill

Alca torda

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

A dead bird in the Havens amongst a small number of dead Guillemots on 11th February was an inauspicious start to what would prove to be a good year. The first ten birds returned on 10th March, although there were then none until a large arrival on 22nd March. Copulation was noted from 28th April, the first egg on 2nd May, chicks were seen on 5th June and fledging was recorded from 29th June. A slight rise in the numbers in the population plot at Lericum was enough to see the largest count recorded there since 2006 (after which the population there crashed substantially). Breeding success at 0.68 chicks fledged per egg laid was the highest since 1998 in what was generally a good seabird season. The majority of birds had departed by early August, although small numbers (generally less than 20) were recorded at sea in September and October, with two on 4th and 20th November being the last of the year.

Little Auk

Alle alle

Frequent late autumn and winter visitor

The only records in the first part of the year were three off South Light on 1st January and a long-dead individual on Utra Scrape on 5th February. The first of the autumn was also found dead, on 16th October, with records on six dates between 9th–29th November totalling 12 individuals, mostly from South Light. The highest count of the year occurred on 24th December when there were approximately 20 seen from the Good Shepherd.

Guillemot

Uria aalge

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

Small numbers were occasionally offshore early in the year, but a more worrying development was the presence of several washed up dead in mid-February. A large influx into Fair Isle waters on 17th February began several comings and goings of the Guillemot population in the run up to the breeding season, with birds returning to the cliffs from early March, but not really settling until the third week of April. Numbers on the monitoring plots showed an increase on 2013 and were the highest since 2010. After the disastrous breeding season in 2013, it was good to note the first chicks from 9th June, with productivity of 0.57 chicks per egg laid the highest since 2006. A feeding watch at the Pietron colony suggested that sandeels were the most important prey item. During this time, a survey of 5,720 breeding adults showed that just less than 20% were of the 'bridled' plumage variation, a decrease from the 23% bridled birds recorded amongst around 3,000 birds checked in 1981. Chicks starting fledging from 8th July, with most birds departing the island after the first week of August and very small numbers seen offshore occasionally throughout September, October and November, although the year ended with birds back on the cliffs on 28th December.



Plate 57. Bridled Tern (with Arctic Tern), Bunness, 16th June 2014. © Roger Riddington

***Bridled Tern**

Onychoprion anaethetus

Vagrant; no previous records

One found calling amongst the Arctic Terns on Bunness on 16th June showed very well in the colony there during the afternoon and evening and was seen briefly there the following morning, before relocating to Shalstane in the afternoon, where it was seen again on the morning of 18th and afternoon of 19th June (see article on page 144). It frequently displayed to Arctic Terns but, having been spurned by them, rapidly headed south and was relocated on the Farne Islands in Northumberland (where it had spent a large part of the previous summer) on 20th June.

Sandwich Tern

Sterna sandvicensis

Scarce spring and summer migrant, rare in autumn

Recorded for the third successive year when one was feeding in North Haven briefly on 26th June.

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

Summer visitor, formerly bred in small numbers (until 2005, with one pair in 2012)

After the first on 12th May there were scattered records of up to two, with a pair located incubating on Shalstane on 17th June. The pair raised three chicks to almost fledging stage, but unfortunately they disappeared in early July, presumably predated. The pair abandoned the area after 14th July, with the only later sightings being a single on 25th July and up to three from 29th August to 2nd September.

*Roseate Tern

Sterna dougallii

Vagrant; three previous records (one in May and two in July)

With the previous records falling in 1988, 1996 and 2013, a repeat performance so soon was a real surprise, especially as it concerned the first multiple occurrence for the island, with two found in the colony at Shalstane on 24th June. Although spending most of their time loafing below South Light, they also joined in the noisy throng of Arctic and a couple of Common Terns mobbing the wardening team as they monitored the colony. One of the birds was ringed on both legs, but the details could not be made out.



Plate 58. Roseate Terns, Shalstane, 24th June 2014.
© David Parnaby

Arctic Tern

Sterna paradisaea

Summer visitor, breeds in variable numbers

One in the Havens on 24th April was the earliest arrival since 1995, although there were no more until an en masse arrival on 8th May, when there were 59. Numbers built up rapidly, with 97 by 10th and 180 by 14th May. The first egg was noted on Buness on 25th May, with 98 AIA recorded (72 at Buness, 20 at Shalstane, five at South Light and one at Tarryfield), although a large number of empty nest scrapes were also recorded, with many of these apparently having been predated. The first records of first-summer birds occurred from mid-June, with numbers of these non-breeding immatures increasing to 13 by 18th June. By late July it was clear that most of the nests had failed, but from 23rd there was an influx of about 200 birds from elsewhere at South Light, which increased to 509 by 7th August. A count of 122 on 3rd August included 50 juveniles, whereas the first juvenile didn't fledge from a Fair Isle nest until 12th August. By early September only around 20 birds remained, with the last chick fledging from Buness on 4th, giving a productivity figure of just 0.06 chicks per AIA (still an improvement on the zero productivity of 2013). The Buness colony was deserted for the winter by 20th September, with late two birds appearing elsewhere on the island on 29th September and another from 1st–6th October, which was joined by a second individual on the latter date.

Kittiwake

Rissa tridactyla

Common passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers

One on 21st January was the only record in the first winter period, with birds returning to their breeding sites from 18th March. Nest building was first recorded from 18th May, with the whole-island census showing an increase of almost a quarter from 2013, with 963 AON counted (although the increase is largely related to widespread non-breeding in 2013 that resulted in the lowest ever population count). Eggs were first noted on 30th May, the first chicks hatched on 17th June and, for the first time since 2010, juveniles fledged from Fair Isle, with the first youngster taking to the wing on 1st August. Productivity went on to be 0.62 chicks per AON, the highest recorded since 2000. The rest of the year saw regular small numbers offshore.

Black-headed Gull

Chroicocephalus ridibundus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were scattered records of up to four in the first three months of the year. A slight increase in passage in April produced a peak of 12 on 25th and the highest count of the spring occurred on 3rd May with 32, including birds moving north. Small numbers were seen on and off throughout the summer, with the first signs of return passage occurring on 6th July when 12 arrived, with 18 the following day and the first juvenile from 9th July. A juvenile wearing a darvic ring in late July was almost certainly a Norwegian bird, although the details could not be confirmed. There were similar counts through the rest of the month and into early August, with numbers then typically in single figures until the next wave of passage in early October, which peaked at 13 on 5th, after which counts were again usually of less than ten, with odd birds noted until the end of the year.

Little Gull

Hydrocoloeus minutus

Vagrant; 31 previous individuals, most in autumn (July to November), two in winter and four in spring

A spell of south-easterly winds early in the year brought the island's first January record when an adult was seen on 22nd and 30th, the first since 11 individuals were recorded in a purple patch from 2010–2012.



Plate 59. Little Gull, 22nd January 2014. © Deryk Shaw

*Laughing Gull

Larus atricilla

Vagrant; one previous record (September 1975)

An adult discovered at Shalstane on 19th June was totally unexpected, although it coincided with a small influx into the Canadian Atlantic coast at around the same time, so may well have been an overshoot from the American breeding population. It was seen on the same rocks as the Bridled Tern before eventually drifting off east round Meoness.



Plate 60. Laughing Gull, Shalstane, 19th June 2014. © David Parnaby

Common Gull

Larus canus

Common spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers

Small numbers were present at the start of the year, then an unusual influx in the last week of January saw a peak of 180 on 31st, with 80–90 remaining throughout February, comfortably the largest ever winter count for Fair Isle. Counts throughout March and April were generally of 20–30, although passage on 25th April saw 95 recorded. A similar picture the following month saw peaks of 61 on 2nd and 54 on 13th May. The colony of nine pairs on Bunes failed to reach chick stage, but a pair on Goorn fledged three young and at least one pair around the Kirki Mire/Da Water area fledged two chicks. Passage from early July included an eye-catching leucistic individual on 7th July, with the first juvenile arriving from elsewhere on 14th July (three days before the first Fair Isle bird fledged). Numbers rose to 107 by 21st July and the next large influx peaked at an impressive 716 on 9th August. September counts were generally low, with a peak of just 61 on 18th, with most counts in October in single figures apart from an arrival of 121 on 6th that rose to 135 the following day. After 69 on 1st November, there were far fewer through the rest of the month, with up to five seen sporadically in December.

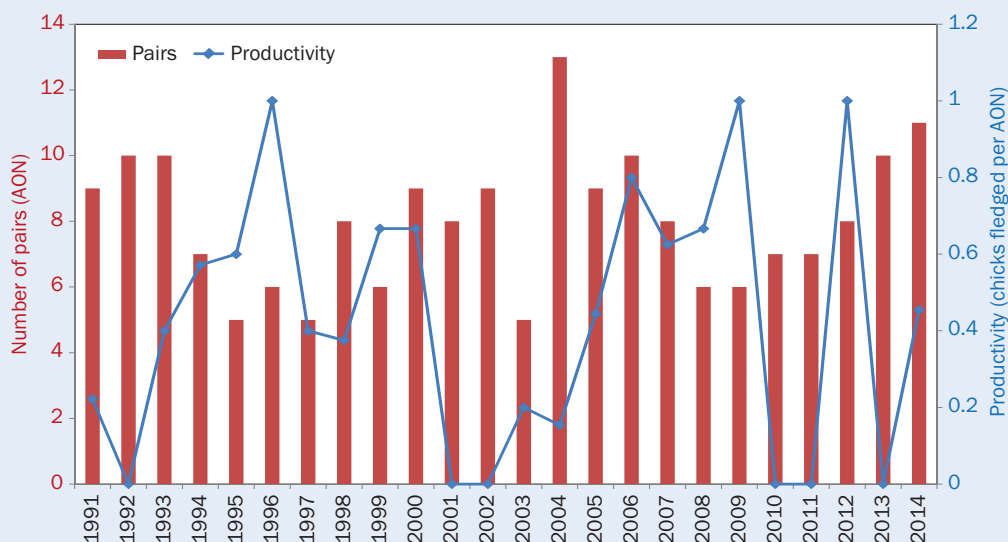


Figure 3. Number of breeding pairs and productivity of Common Gull on Fair Isle since 1991.

After an unsuccessful breeding attempt in 1966, the species colonised the island in 1973, with numbers rising to 12 pairs in 1986. The 11 pairs recorded in 2014 was the third highest ever total. Note that productivity has been generally poor in recent years.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Larus fuscus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

After one on the relatively early date of 21st–22nd March, there were no more sightings until 2nd April, with birds returning to the breeding colony on Goorn by 5th April. Spring passage was fairly light, with 13 (away from Goorn) on 15th April and other counts of migrants including 17 on 19th, 23 on 31st May and 14 on 12th June. Three AONs were noted on Goorn, a decrease of one pair from 2013. There were only small numbers by late August, whilst a few days of passage in September peaked at 11 on 4th before a late juvenile was present on 14th–17th October.

Herring Gull

Larus argentatus

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

The breeding population of 54 pairs (46 at Goorn, five on Greenholm and singles at Klavers, Da Burrian and Toor o'da Ward Hill) showed a slight increase from the 50 AON in 2013, with breeding success apparently reasonable. Typically, the largest numbers were recorded in autumn storms, with very strong south-easterly winds on 6th November carpeting the island with an exceptional 10,000 birds, the second highest Fair Isle count.

Herring Gull x Lesser Black-backed Gull

Larus argentatus x *L. fuscus*

An adult (or possibly fourth-summer) gull on 2nd June appeared most likely to be a hybrid of these two species.

Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull

Larus argentatus x *L. hyperboreus*

Single first-year birds, apparently of this hybrid combination, were recorded on 15th May and 15th December.



Plate 61. Probable Herring Gull x Lesser Black-backed Gull hybrid, 2nd June 2014. © David Parnaby

Iceland Gull

Larus glaucoides

Scarce migrant in winter and spring

There were regular sightings of a juvenile from 16th January to 15th February, with a second juvenile on the latter date. There were also regular records of a bird of the same age in March, with up to three juveniles from 28th–31st March. Autumn sightings were restricted to juveniles on 22nd and 25th–26th October and 4th November with no further records until December, when there were regular sightings of a juvenile and a second-winter.



Plate 62. 'Kumlien's Gull', 10th February 2014. © David Parnaby

'Kumlien's Gull' *L.g.kumlieni*

Vagrant; four previous records published as showing characteristics of this subspecies (April–May)

A smart juvenile found on 29th January lingered until 7th June, with probably the same seen on four dates from 11th–20th July and again on 13th–17th August, becoming the fourth July and first August record of Iceland Gull for Fair Isle. A second-winter was in South Harbour on 22nd December and could perhaps have been the same bird returning.

Glaucous Gull

Larus hyperboreus

Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter

The early part of the year saw juveniles on two dates in January, an adult and two juveniles in February and a peak of two in March, involving at least four birds (two juveniles, a second-winter and third-winter), with a late juvenile on 15th–16th May. A juvenile was recorded on four dates from 20th October to the end of the month, with two juveniles and an adult occasionally throughout November and December.

Great Black-backed Gull

Larus marinus

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

Just four pairs bred (two on Sheep Rock and singles pairs on Goorn and Greenholm), with the first chicks seen on 30th May. Stormy weather brought huge numbers of large gulls to the island on 6th November, including approximately 5,500 Great Black-backed Gulls, a record count for Fair Isle.

Rock Dove

Columba livia

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Numbers in the spring were generally around 30–40, with copulation first noted from 28th March, but no formal count of the breeding population was made. The largest count in the autumn was of at least 70 on 30th August.

Stock Dove

Columba oenas

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A single, first seen at Nether Taft on 17th April, lingered in the south of the island until 19th, whilst one seen coming in off the sea at Meoness on 21st April was likely to be a second individual.

Woodpigeon

Columba palumbus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One, which arrived on 22nd December 2013, was last recorded on 14th February, an extremely rare incidence of overwintering. Spring passage began in early March and built up slowly through the month, peaking at 17 on 30th March. Numbers fluctuated throughout April, with regular records peaking at 13 on 15th and 19th. May also saw small numbers frequently, although an arrival on 7th brought 30 to the island. Dwindling numbers were present through June and two occurred on 8th–13th July, which were the last until an isolated record on 7th August. There were no further sightings, until up to three daily from 17th–28th September, then no more until an arrival of 25 on 7th October. Numbers generally decreased after that, although 21 were noted on 19th October. There were still ten in early November but numbers gradually dwindled until the last on 7th December.

Collared Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

The first arrived on 26th March, but there were then no more until 2nd April, when counts of up to three became regular throughout the month. There were sightings on 20 dates in May, peaking at four on 18th, and a bird was singing at Pund early in the month, although there was no further sign of breeding activity. The annual peak occurred on 1st June when nine were seen, with daily sightings until 18th, and further occurrences of one or two on 23rd and 30th June and on 11 dates in July. Autumn passage was typically more restricted and was limited to singles on 17th and 23rd August and 20th–21st September.

Cuckoo

Cuculus canorus

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn, has bred (most recently in 2002)

The first on 10th May arrived the same day as the first in 2013, with sightings of up to two on seven dates from 17th May to 8th June probably involving seven individuals. The second consecutive year with autumn records saw a juvenile present from 11th–15th August (found dead on the last date) and one on Meoness on 21st September, the latest since 2000.

*Barn Owl

Tyto alba

Vagrant; five previous records between 1924 and 1958 (singles in January and April and three in October–November)

One of the more remarkable records of the year involved a white-breasted bird (thought probably to be a young female) found in the Meadow Burn during easterly gales on 7th October. It was clearly exhausted and made its way to Steensi Geo to roost, where it was unfortunately found dead the next day. Four of the previous records have also been of the race *T.a.alba*.



Plate 63. Barn Owl, Meadow Burn, 7th October 2014.
© David Parnaby

Long-eared Owl

Asio otus

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

One on 18th February was the earliest since 2007, whilst the only other 'spring' bird was on the late date of 1st June. Autumn saw four singles in October from 7th, then records on five dates from 6th–11th November (involving at least three individuals) and later birds on 23rd and 28th November.

Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A scattering of spring records saw the first on 30th March, with two the next day and singles on seven dates in April and seven further dates until 31st May. An early autumn migrant occurred on 27th August, with singles on 11th and 21st–25th September, then records from 7th–10th October that peaked at 13 on 8th, up to five from 16th–20th October and a single on 30th October. Three on 3rd November were followed by eight on 8th with the last of an impressive autumn on 14th November.

*Nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus

Vagrant; 28 previous records, 19 in spring (mostly May), three in July, five in autumn (August–October) and one undated

A female was trapped in Gully on 26th May, a typical arrival date. Although there was a juvenile in September 2013, this was the first spring record since 2009.

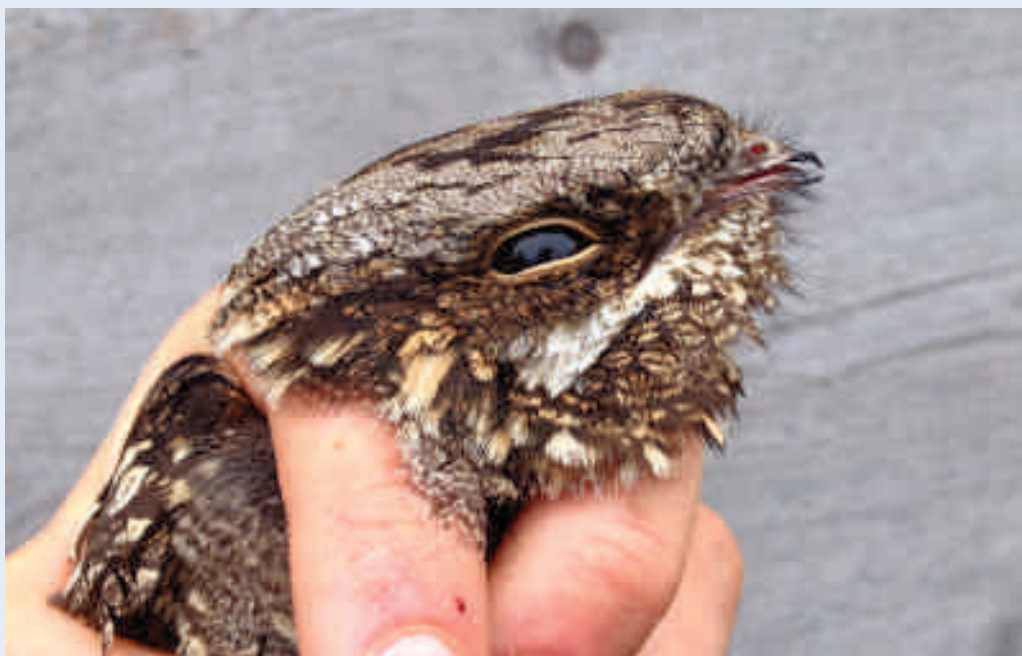


Plate 64. Nightjar, trapped Gully, 26th May 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell

Swift

Apus apus

Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant

The first four on 21st May were over a month later than the (record-breaking) earliest arrival in 2013, with further spring passage of up to five from 23rd–27th May and 2nd–16th June. A single on 27th–28th June probably indicated the start of birds returning south and there was then an arrival of 24 on 1st July preceding one or two until 7th, with four on 14th and two on 15th July. August records comprised up to five from 4th–9th, then up to three from 29th August to 4th September, with further singles on 8th and 14th September.

Wryneck

Jynx torquilla

Regular spring and autumn migrant

One in South Raeva on 22nd April was followed by four the following day, none on 24th, then three on 25th with two still the following day. A remarkable total on 27th April reached seven, with decreasing numbers then daily until 9th May, including a new bird trapped on 7th May. The last in spring was on 12th–13th May, bringing the total for this season to an estimated 15, the highest in spring since 1985. One trapped in the Plantation on 7th August was the earliest autumn record for Fair Isle, with further singles on 21st and 27th August before a fall brought five on 29th August, with up to four remaining until 31st and one until 1st September. Later birds on 5th and 29th September brought the autumn tally to an impressive ten individuals.

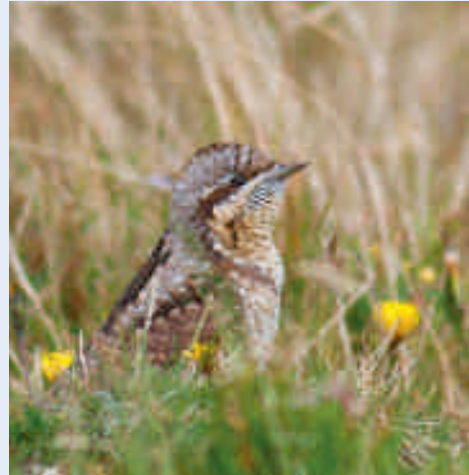


Plate 65. Wryneck, 29th August 2014. © Alex Penn

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Dendrocopos major

Rare (and irruptive) migrant, mostly in autumn

The tenth year to produce a spring record on Fair Isle saw one at Haa on 9th June, the first to arrive in that month (although others have lingered into June). Another, which headed south over the Obs on 12th July and relocated to South Green on 15th July, was the first ever July arrival.

Kestrel

Falco tinnunculus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A male on 1st–5th April was the first of the year, then a good spring passage saw sightings of up to three on 37 dates between 22nd April and 9th June, probably involving a minimum of 13 individuals, before a late single on 22nd June. A good autumn passage saw virtually daily sightings from 23rd August to 14th October. During that time, there were up to four in late August, then numbers rose the following month to a peak of 13 on 17th September, with 11 until 20th and up to six until the end of the month. Five remained into October before there was a late adult male on 31st October to 1st November. The 13 in September was the fourth highest Fair Isle count following 16 in September 1998 and counts of 15 in September 1953 and September 1960.

Merlin

Falco columbarius

Regular spring and autumn migrant, small numbers overwinter

At least one was present early in the year to 28th March, with spring passage of two on 16th April, one the following day and singles on four dates from 8th–21st May. There were early autumn migrants on three August dates from 11th then regular sightings from 19th September until the end of the year, with a peak of four on 29th September, three regularly in October and at least two wintering.

***Hobby**

Falco subbuteo

Rare visitor; 56 previous records, 44 in May–June, six in July and six in autumn (August–September)

One passed south over Easter Lothar Water on 9th June, a typical arrival date, bringing the all-time June total to 31 records.

Peregrine

Falco peregrinus

Regular spring and autumn migrant; bred regularly until 1973 then again in 2008–2009 and 2013

After early singles on 6th–17th February and 6th March, sightings became regular from 22nd March, with an occupied nest discovered later in the month, when a peak of three was also recorded. The nest was abandoned by 13th April and, although the female had been lightly Fulmar-oiled, it was thought that a westerly gale and heavy rain was probably responsible. There were still regular sightings throughout April and May, with occasional records in June. A juvenile from 10th–12th August and one on 22nd August preceded regular sightings of up to three from 5th September until the end of October. One or two were seen occasionally in November and an adult was present on 10th–15th December. Prey items recorded through the year included Teal and Woodcock.

Red-backed Shrike

Lanius collurio

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A female on Dronger on 19th May began a good spring passage with a male at Shirva on 25th followed by daily records from 27th May to 1st June peaking at six on 28th and involving at least nine birds. Another series of daily records followed from 4th–9th June, peaking at six on 5th before three more arrived on 11th–13th June, bringing the spring total to 20 individuals. Autumn was, typically, quieter with singles at Grey Geo on 27th August, Shirva on 31st August and Wirvie Burn on 9th–10th September.



Plate 66. Red-backed Shrike, Obs, 4th June 2014. © Steve Arlow

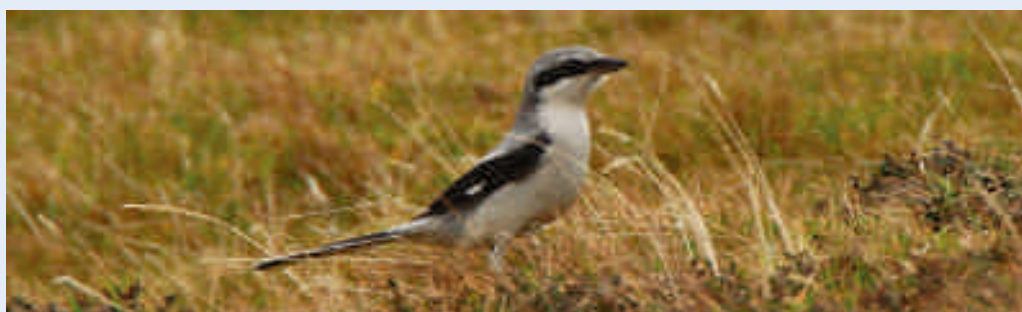


Plate 67. Great Grey Shrike, Obs, 22nd October 2014. © Steve Arlow

Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

Another decent spring saw one at Setter on 1st April and a first-summer bird at Pund on 23rd April which then roamed widely across the island until it was last seen on Meoness on 1st May. In the autumn there was one at Lower Leogh on 8th October, an adult which lingered in the north from 18th–29th October and first-winter birds at North Light from 31st October to 1st November and the Obs area from 1st–10th November. A total of six individuals made 2014 the best year for this species on Fair Isle since 1979.

Jackdaw

Corvus monedula

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

There were singles from 31st March to 2nd April and 6th April before regular sightings of up to three from 8th–19th April. Later spring migrants were seen on 3rd May (two) and 14th May. There was only one in the autumn, which lingered from 7th–12th October.

Rook

Corvus frugilegus

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

A single on 13th and 17th February was the earliest arrival since 2001, with spring passage consisting of two on 21st March, three on 15th April and regular sightings from 18th April to 3rd May, peaking at five on 20th April, with a small turnover of individuals likely. The last of the year was on 9th May, with no autumn records for the second consecutive year.

Carrion Crow

Corvus corone

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

After one on 30th March there were regular sightings in April (peaking at 13 on 18th) and May, when there were up to 23 in the first week (when one was seen being killed by a Bonxie) and a peak of 32 on 20th–21st May. Two were present in mid-June and occasional sightings of a bird in July and from 29th August to 10th November were all thought to relate to a single individual, which was usually to be found on the west coast between Hill Dyke and Skinner's Glig. This mirrored records from 2013 and suggested that the same individual, which was associating with a Hooded Crow at times but appeared not to be breeding, may have been involved. The only other autumn sighting was of a second bird on 18th October.

Hooded Crow

Corvus cornix

Resident, breeds in small numbers

The resident population appeared to be in the region of ten birds in the early part of the year, with migrants noted on just a few dates from 7th April, when 18 birds in total were recorded, to 16th May. Two nests were found, with one of these being successful: the first eggs were noted on 13th May, chicks were seen from 1st June and the first fledgling took flight on 1st August.

Carrion Crow x Hooded Crow *Corvus corone x C. cornix*

As usual, small numbers of hybrids were observed amongst corvid passage in spring, with dates ranging from 16th April to 23rd June, with a peak count of two.

Raven

Corvus corax

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

Three or four pairs were resident on the island, with nesting material being collected from 25th March and three chicks fledging from a nest in Gunnawark by 25th May. There was very little evidence of migration, with a single on 22nd March being the only possible candidate, although odd birds could easily slip through unnoticed.

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

An early spring passage saw the first on 12th March, with irregular sightings before an arrival of eight on 26th then 12 by 28th March. There were records of up to eight on 13 dates in the first half of April, but just one or two were seen on five dates in the second half of the month, with the last of the spring on 3rd May. After a few from 2nd September, the first fall was of 13 on 17th September with generally small numbers until 36 on 6th October. A good spell of arrivals included falls of 46 on 8th, 64 on 9th, 53 on 15th and 65 on 17th October, with numbers dwindling to a single on 24th–26th October before a late fall of 13 on 30th October. There were one to two on four dates in early November, then eight in the north of the island only on 17th November and three on 19th, the latest records since 2003.

*Firecrest

Regulus ignicapilla

Vagrant; six previous records (three in April–May, three in October–November)

A splendid male was found at Linni Geo on 15th October before relocating to South Raeva, where it lingered until 23rd October. Previous records occurred in 1981, 1989, 1992, 2007, 2009 and 2012 so despite its rarity on Fair Isle, it appears to be increasing in frequency.

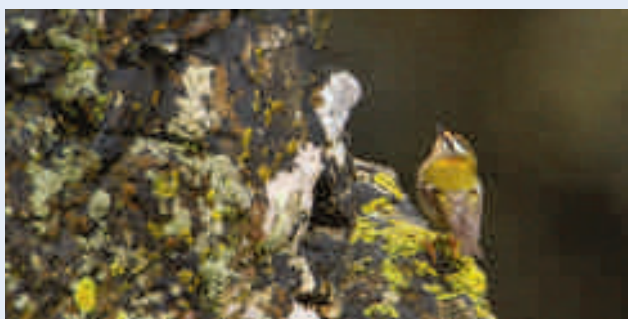


Plate 68. Firecrest, North Reava, 19th October 2014. © Steve Arlow



Plate 69. Blue Tit, Midway, 10th October 2014. © David Parnaby

Blue Tit

Cyanistes caeruleus

Vagrant: nine previous records of 12 individuals (one April, 11 from October to December)

After the long wait for a record between 1988 and 2012, it was a surprise when one was found at Upper Stoneybrek in the afternoon of 8th October, although it turned out to be part of one of the largest arrivals recorded in Shetland. It disappeared shortly afterwards, then what was presumed to be the same bird was seen in North Haven later that evening, before moving to the Midway area the following day, where it showed well until 16th October.

Skylark

Alauda arvensis

Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers overwinter; breeds in small numbers

Four on 30th January were the first of the year, with small numbers regularly recorded through February and counts rising in March to 290 by the end of the month. April totals were typically in the region of 120–160, with numbers in May settling around 85–110. The first fledged youngsters were seen on 6th June, although no estimate of the breeding population was made. Counts in August were low, with migrants evident from mid-September and numbers rising to a peak of 288 on 22nd September. There was still a strong passage in early October, peaking at 184 on 8th, with counts slipping below 100 from 19th and gradually dwindling to single figures by mid-November, with small numbers overwintering.

Shore Lark

Eremophila alpestris

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One at Upper Leogh on 10th November may well have been the same individual seen near the Raevas on 14th November, the second consecutive year with an autumn record.

*Short-toed Lark

Calandrella brachydactyla

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

An excellent spring saw three individuals on 27th April (at the Havens, Meoness and Midway), with the Havens bird lingering to 2nd May and the Meoness individual to 6th May; a remarkable arrival that equals the largest Fair Isle counts (in October 1973 and May 1999). The fourth of the spring was a particularly rufous individual which lingered very elusively on Malcolm's Head from 9th–30th May, making it the best spring since 2006. In autumn one, discovered on Meoness on 30th August, lingered in the Kenaby tattie rig until 6th September, with another on Ward Hill on 18th September and one behind North Naaversgill on 23rd–24th September.

*Calandra Lark

Melanocorypha calandra

Vagrant; four previous records in 1978, 1999, 2000 and 2008, all in April and May

The latest Fair Isle record was found on 22nd May on the lower slopes of Ward Hill during cold, northerly winds that had not delivered many other migrants. Although disappearing at times, it returned to the same spot on several occasions allowing all the birders on the island to catch up with it.



Plate 70. Calandra Lark, Ward Hill, 22nd May 2014. © Rob Hughes

Sand Martin

Riparia riparia

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

One on 5th April was the earliest since 2006, then daily sightings during 15th–20th April peaked at seven on 19th before records of up to six became regular from 27th April until 27th May, with the last of the spring on 9th June. After one on 17th July there were frequent sightings of up to three during 13th–25th August, then up to four from 17th–19th September.

Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Common spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds (most recently 2010–2012)

There was one on 5th April then regular sightings from 15th April, with the peak for the month occurring on 27th, when 41 passed north. Frequent sightings in May saw peaks early in the month of 45 on 3rd and 63 on 7th, then heavier passage mid-month peaked at 122 on 16th, the highest count since 1997. After 101 on 19th May there were no more than 30 for the rest of the month, with single figures throughout the summer, although no breeding was noted despite a pair summering at Setter. Small numbers recorded in August peaked at just 12 on 26th, whilst 13 on 1st September was the only double-figure count for the month. October opened with 11 on 1st, with single figures until the last on 27th, the latest since 1997.

House Martin

Delichon urbicum

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred (last recorded in 1986)

One at Wirvie on 24th April was a typical arrival date, with daily sightings until 29th peaking at six on 27th April. After one on 2nd May, sightings were almost daily from 6th throughout the month, with numbers rising to ten on 10th and 16 on 16th May. After seven on 1st June there were irregular sightings of up to four throughout the month and then just one in July, on 11th, with no repeat of the nest-building noted in 2013. Autumn passage was incredibly quiet, with just one record, a very late bird on 28th October.

*Greenish Warbler

Phylloscopus trochiloides

Rare migrant; 44 previous records with 36 in autumn (August–September) and eight in spring (five in June, two in July and a single in May)

The first spring record since 2011 was an initially elusive bird found on 6th June in the Good Shepherd noost in North Haven, which went on to show well later in the day. A first-winter bird trapped in the Gully on 6th August was the earliest ever autumn arrival.

*Arctic Warbler

Phylloscopus borealis

Rare migrant; 88 previous records, most in August and September, also recorded in June (two), July (four) and October (six)

The species maintained its record of annual occurrences for the seventh year, with one found at Chalet on 22nd August, whilst another, flighty individual was found at North Shirva on 22nd September.



Plate 71. Arctic Warbler, Chalet, 22nd August 2014. © Alex Penn

Yellow-browed Warbler

Phylloscopus inornatus

Regular autumn migrant

There were daily sightings from 14th September (the earliest arrival since 2008) to 19th October with peaks of nine on 15th and eight on 19th September. There were further smaller peaks of five on 24th and 30th September, three on 9th October and four on 13th October, indicating further arrivals. The peak count was the lowest since 2009, although a minimum estimate of 33 individuals was still a reasonable total.



Plate 72. Yellow-browed Warbler, Haa, 25th September 2014.
© Steve Arlow

Wood Warbler

Phylloscopus sibilatrix

Regular spring and autumn migrant

The only spring record was of one at Hoini on 3rd May, the worst showing at that season since 2010, when none were seen. Autumn was better, with singles at South Raeva on 11th, Mid Geo on 14th and the Gully on 15th August, then one lingering at Chalet from 25th August to 1st September. During that time there was a peak count of three on 27th August (singles at Furse and South Naaversgill as well as the Chalet bird) and another at Guidicum on 31st August, with the last of the year trapped in the Gully on 11th September.



Plate 73. Wood Warbler, Gully, 15th August 2014. © Alex Penn

Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A strong early spring passage saw six on 25th March rising to 34 on 30th March with another arrival seeing 24 on 5th April. Records were virtually daily throughout April and included a large turnover of birds, with a further peak of 32 on 27th, before daily records in May saw a peak of 20 on 2nd and then smaller arrivals throughout the month. There were still up to eight in early June, with three in the second half of the month. There were up to three in July and August involving summering individuals (the fifth consecutive year of birds present throughout the breeding season) with the occasional new bird also during that period. Summering birds were still present in early September, with the first fall, of six, occurring on 15th September, increasing to 13 two days later. After that there were just single figures until 12 on 8th October with regular small counts until a fall of 29 on 14th October that included 18 'Siberian Chiffchaffs' *P.c.tristis*. Numbers decreased after that, although there were still daily sightings until 20th October, then continued scattered records, a small fall of up to four from 8th–12th November (including two *P.c.tristis* and one *P.c.abietinus*, with the latter and one of the former being confirmed by DNA analysis), with records decreasing until the last of the year on 19th November (the same date as 2013).

Willow Warbler

Phylloscopus trochilus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One on 7th–8th April was the earliest since 2010, and after two on 15th–16th April, there were daily records from 19th April to 2nd June. The peak count for the spring came early, with 33 on 27th April, with the only counts in May to exceed ten being 13 on 5th, 19 on 9th and 11 on 12th. Scattered records the following month peaked at four on 5th and 13th June. One bird summered elusively before autumn passage began with a juvenile at Springfield on 2nd August. There were occasional records of small numbers during the following week until nine arrived on 10th, increasing to 13 on 12th August. The first large fall occurred on 22nd August when there were 45, with further peaks of 60 on 27th and 59 on 31st August. Daily sightings in September peaked at 50 on 15th, with numbers falling to single figures from 21st and up to three at the start of the following month, with the last on 10th October.

Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Common spring and autumn migrant

Two on 5th April began occasional records until 20th April, after which daily sightings rose to a peak of 27 on 28th April. Daily records continued throughout May, peaking with a fall of 20 on 9th and then single figures until 14th June, before a late arrival brought two on 26th June, with one until 7th July. Autumn migrants were daily from 30th August to 4th November, with just single-figure counts until mid-September, when an influx peaked at 34 on 18th. Further waves of migrants the following month brought counts including 13 on 2nd, 61 on 8th, 20 on 18th and 15 on 31st October. Another arrival on 8th–11th November peaked at eight on 9th, with later birds on 17th (two), 19th and 25th November.

Garden Warbler

Sylvia borin

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One in Field Ditch on 7th May was the first, with another on 10th May and there were then sightings on ten dates from 17th May until the end of the month, peaking at just three on 27th May. An arrival on 5th June brought five, with smaller numbers until 14th, the last of the spring. Autumn arrivals were first noted on 5th August, increasing to eight by 10th, with smaller numbers regular until the end of the month, when there were counts of five on 22nd and 27th, seven on 29th and then 23 on 30th August. There were smaller numbers regularly in September, including arrivals of six on 5th and 14th, 12 on 15th and then single-figure counts until the last two were seen on 9th October.

Barred Warbler

Sylvia nisoria

Regular autumn migrant, vagrant in spring (four records)

One at Schoolton on 5th–8th August was the earliest arrival since 2001 (and the first to be seen in the United Kingdom in 2014) then, after three arrived on 15th August, there were regular sightings to 23rd September. During that time there were peaks of five on 22nd August, then ten on 31st August and five on 11th September. The count of ten has only previously been matched or bettered by 12 and 14 in September 1969 and ten in August 1983. Later individuals occurred on 29th September, then 11th and 13th–14th October, giving a total of around 32 individuals during the year.



Plate 74. Barred Warbler, Upper Stoneybrek, 23rd August 2014. © Alex Penn

Lesser Whitethroat

Sylvia curruca

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A relatively early start to the spring saw the first arrive on 26th April, with daily sightings to the end of the month, increasing to six by 28th April. There were then daily sightings to 30th May, mostly of up to four, but with a peak of 11 on 9th, before another small arrival from 4th–12th June peaked at four. An unusual record concerned one on 2nd July, the first July record since 2008, and the first to arrive in this month since 2004. Autumn passage began with one on 10th August, with one or two on ten further August dates and into early September. Census records were daily from 9th–30th

September, peaking at eight on 18th, when the first 'Siberian Lesser Whitethroat' *S.c.blythi* of the autumn was noted, although most individuals were not assigned to subspecies. In October, one around North Shirva, then Quoy, on 13th–16th was joined by a second on 14th–15th, with both appearing closest to 'Desert Lesser Whitethroat' *S.c.halimodendri* based on plumage and call.

Whitethroat

Sylvia communis

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

Three arrived on 25th April and there were then virtually daily sightings until 13th June, with peaks including eight on 19th and 12 on 27th May. Occasional sightings in June and July all involved a summering bird (which had been ringed on 20th May), which went on to linger well into September. The first autumn migrant arrived on 11th August and there were just occasional migrants throughout the rest of the autumn, peaking at five on 20th September, with the last on 8th October.

*Subalpine Warbler

Sylvia cantillans

Rare migrant; 85 previous records (81 in spring and four in autumn). Most currently unraced, although at least 14 thought to be S.c.albistriata

'Western Subalpine Warbler' *S.c.cantillans*
[note: under proposals from Svensson (2013), which advocates the split of Western and Eastern Subalpine Warblers, this would become *S. inornata iberiae*].

A male with a partially regrown tail was trapped at the Obs on the evening of 25th April, seen there again on 27th April, then relocated in South Feltsigeo on 2nd May. Another male found at Burkle on 3rd May carried on the recent tradition of long-staying birds, lingering until 21st May, during which time it was heard in song. The third male of a good spring for the species was a confiding bird at Schoolton on 13th June.

'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' *S.c.albistriata*
[*S.c.cantillans* if Svensson (2013) is adopted]
A first-summer male trapped in the Gully on 8th May was identified in the field and in the hand as an 'eastern' bird, with DNA analysis proving it to be the first British record of the race that breeds in central and southern Italy and Sicily.



Plate 75. 'Western Subalpine Warbler', Burkle, 8th May 2014. © Deryk Shaw



Plate 76. 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler', 8th May 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell



Plate 77. Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler, Obs, 17th May 2014. © David Parnaby

***Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler**

Sylvia subalpina

Vagrant; no previous records

A female 'Western Subalpine-type' Warbler trapped in the Vaadal on 16th May, that went on to linger at the Obs until 27th May, was proven by DNA analysis to be a Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler. There are currently no known reliable characteristics for separating silent females of Moltoni's and Western Subalpine Warblers, although the fact that this bird showed an adult-type tail may have been a clue to its true identification as the moult strategies of the species are different. This currently represents only the fourth record for Britain, although some are likely to have been overlooked in the past.

***Lanceolated Warbler**

Locustella lanceolata

Scarce autumn migrant; 88 previous records (between 4th September and 1st November)

The only record was a single found between Midway and Upper Leogh on 22nd September, where it was typically confiding as it sheltered in a roadside dyke. It was the earliest arrival since 2006.

Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella naevia

Regular spring and autumn migrant

One in the Wirvie Burn on 24th April was a day later than the first in 2013 (with the first records in 2011 and 2012 falling on 23rd and 24th April respectively as well), whilst there were further sightings daily from 30th April to 3rd May and later singles on 9th and 18th May. Autumn commenced with daily sightings (involving at least two individuals) from 30th August to 1st September and there were then up to two seen daily from 18th–22nd September and later individuals on 1st October and 13th–25th October. The latter bird, which frequented Field Ditch during its stay, became the latest ever Grasshopper Warbler on Fair Isle (breaking the previous record of 23rd October shared by birds in 2000 and 2003).

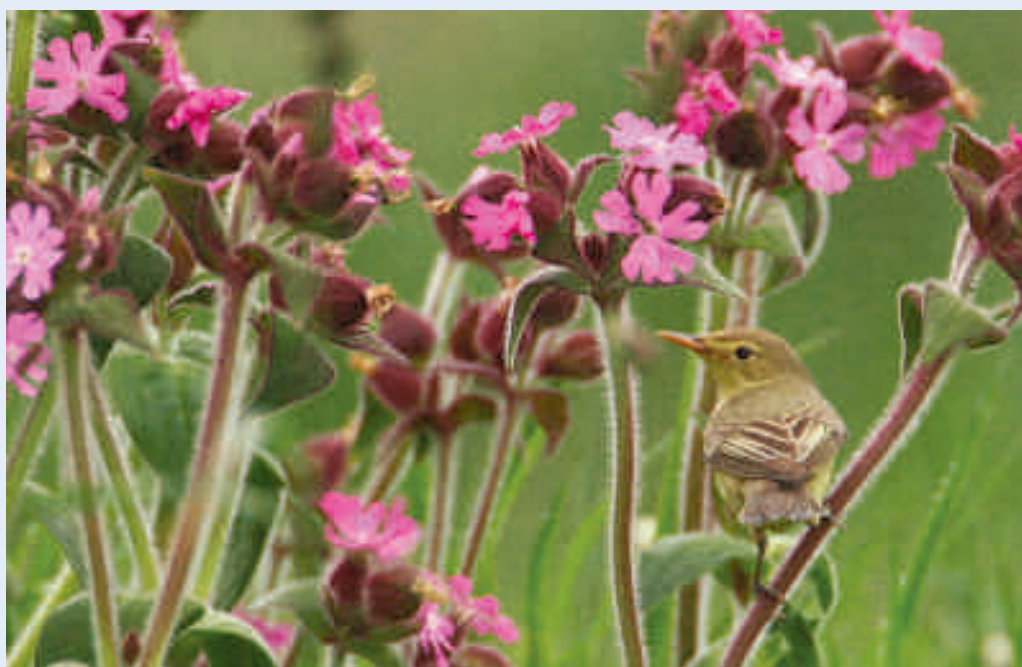


Plate 78. Icterine Warbler, Schoolton, 6th June 2014. © Steve Arlow

Icterine Warbler

Hippolais icterina

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A very quiet year saw spring sightings at Plantation on 26th May, Quoy on 27th May and Haa on 29th May all possibly relating to a single individual, with a second seen (along the Hill Dyke) on 29th May. The only other in spring was one around the Schoolton area from 5th–7th June. The sole autumn record was one trapped in the Plantation on 26th August.

Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

The first was on 25th April, a relatively early arrival date, with three on 27th April and daily sightings until 1st May. From 5th–28th May there were regular sightings of up to five, including a couple of singing individuals, with a peak of eight on 19th, then a late bird on 11th June. Autumn passage began early on 1st August but there were no more until sightings from 14th–18th August, which peaked at three on 17th, and singles on four dates the following month, with the last on 14th September.

*Paddyfield Warbler

Acrocephalus agricola

Vagrant; 22 previous records, 16 in autumn (14 September, two October) and six in spring (May and June, one lingering until July)

Recorded for the third year in succession, with one at Lower Leogh on 5th September the earliest autumn arrival date for Fair Isle (the previous earliest being 8th September 1993 and only two others having arrived in the first half of the month).

*Blyth's Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus dumetorum

Rare migrant; 35 previous records, 26 in autumn (September–October) and nine in spring (May–June)

With spring records in three of the previous four years, one on the Hill Dyke on 27th May was perhaps not a huge surprise (although it was the joint second-earliest spring occurrence). Another was at Schoolton on 13th June, the peak spring arrival period, whilst the third of a record-breaking spring was at the Obs on 25th–28th June, the latest spring record for Fair Isle. The latter bird was trapped and was found to have been ringed at Virkie, in south Mainland Shetland, on 22nd June and was perhaps re-orientating after overshooting its breeding grounds. It was the first Blyth's Reed Warbler ringed elsewhere to be caught on Fair Isle, although a bird ringed on the isle in October 1993 was retrapped six days later in the south of Shetland. An elusive first-winter bird trapped in the Gully on 14th August was the earliest Fair Isle autumn record by three weeks and also the joint-earliest British occurrence, so it was remarkable that another first-winter bird was trapped at the Obs on 16th August, bringing the annual total to a record-breaking five.

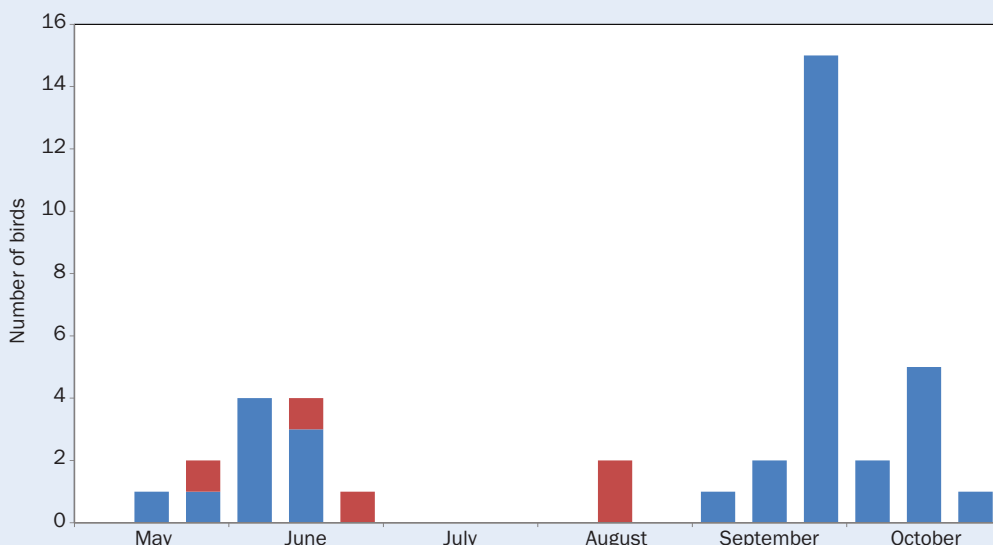


Figure 4. Blyth's Reed Warbler arrival dates on Fair Isle.

Note. The occurrences show a clear peak in the last third of September, whilst spring occurrences are most likely in the first 20 days of June. The remarkable date of the autumn records in 2014 is clearly highlighted.

Marsh Warbler

Acrocephalus palustris

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

A singing bird at Pund arrived on the typical date of 5th June, with further birds at Kroga Geo on 6th and three individuals arriving at the Obs on 7th, 8th–12th and 9th June. There was also a singing bird at Schoolton from 10th–14th June. Further birds were trapped at the Obs on 13th and 14th June, both of which went on to linger, until 5th and 17th July respectively. The ninth of the spring was trapped in the Gully on 14th June (a date on which three were recorded, the peak count for the year) whilst the tenth was singing at Skerryholm on 25th June. Autumn was, as usual, much quieter, with the only record being one at Haa on 15th August.

Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Scarce spring migrant, regular in autumn

There was an early bird on 10th May, with the rest of the spring passage restricted to six dates over 4th–11th June, peaking at two on 7th June. Autumn passage saw singles on 7th–8th and 12th August, before almost daily sightings from 29th August to 6th September that peaked at just two. Daily sightings of singles from 14th–17th September involved three individuals and there were further birds on 19th, 21st–28th and 30th September.

Waxwing

Bombycilla garrulus

Scarce/irruptive autumn migrant, rare in spring and winter

For the fourth consecutive year there was a winter sighting, with one seen at Haa on 23rd January. The only spring migrant was a late bird that lingered around Stackhoull from 2nd–6th May. Another quiet autumn saw just one, from 14th–15th October.

*Treecreeper

Certhia familiaris

Vagrant: eight previous records; five in October and singles April, September and December

One was found on the Cletts, below South Light, on 9th October before relocating the short distance to Smirri Geo, where it probed the rocks and lichen for invertebrates. As with all the other records that have been seen well enough to be identified to subspecific level, it belonged to the crisp, clean-looking, nominate northern race *C.f.familiaris*.



Plate 79. Treecreeper, Smirri Geo, 9th October 2014.
© David Parnaby

Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes

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

One in the Havens was tempted into some early singing on 17th February, although most did not become vocal until the first week of March. Dedicated survey work and casual sightings produced a total of 41 territories, the highest since the late 1960s. Food carrying was first noted from 19th May and the first fledged youngsters were seen on 2nd June in Furse (two days earlier than 2013 and only a day later than the earliest ever recorded fledging). Recently fledged chicks at Kenaby on 21st August (presumably from the pair at Swarzie Geo) were probably from a late second brood, with the high breeding numbers and apparent good productivity at least partially responsible for the ringing total being the second highest in FIBO history. There were occasional sightings in the autumn that were likely to involve nominate *T.t.troglodytes* birds from mainland Europe, including one trapped at the Obs on 23rd November.



Plate 80. Starlings, Shirva, 28th September 2014. © Ian Andrews

Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

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

Although there are no counts of the entire population, regular monitoring of marked nests takes place, which revealed relatively high numbers breeding. The modal laying date of 1st May was a week earlier than in 2013 and average clutch size was slightly higher than 2013, at 4.69, close to the long-term average. Hatch success was fairly low at 80%, but fledging success was very high at 92.3%, making for a relatively productive season, with the first fledged youngsters seen on 30th May, nine days earlier than 2013.

Rose-coloured Starling

Pastor roseus

Rare migrant; 40 previous records (of 41 individuals), with 11 in spring (May–June), nine in summer and 21 in autumn (August–November)

A juvenile first found near Steensi Geo on 20th September eventually settled around the Walli Burn, where it was present until 3rd October, although it was seen looking rather unwell on the latter date. Only the second record in the last six years and the first since 2011.

*White's Thrush

Zoothera dauma

Vagrant; 13 previous records, 12 in autumn (September–October), one in February

The second consecutive year with a record saw one found at Wester Lother on the afternoon of 4th October, where it showed well on the heather-clad slope leading to Swey for the rest of the day, mostly sitting stationary under an overhang, but occasionally feeding and performing the characteristic bobbing motion of the species.

*Hermit Thrush

Catharus guttatus

Vagrant; two previous records (June 1975 and October 1995)

A major surprise was when one of these North American thrushes was discovered at South Green on 13th May before showing well in Hesti Geo for the rest of the day. After a brief visit to Aesterhoull on the morning of the 14th, it disappeared until it was found later in the day at Vaila's Trees. It then wasn't seen for a day, before reappearing in Furse on 16th, where it showed well. Of the eight previous British records, two were in the spring, so Fair Isle's second spring record begs the question as to why such a high percentage of records are at this season - are they more prone to spring overshooting or are they better at surviving Western Palearctic winters than the other *Catharus* thrushes that appear more regularly in Europe?

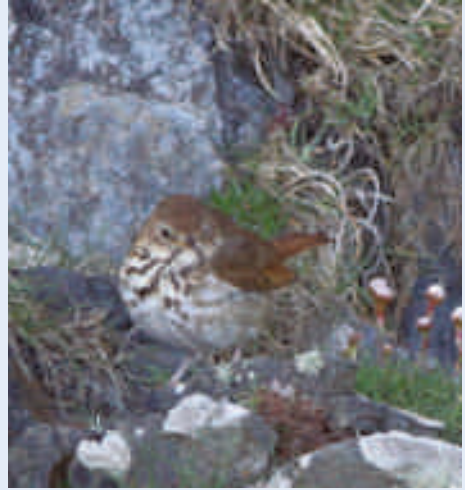


Plate 81. Hermit Thrush, Hesti Geo, 13th May 2014. © David Parnaby

*Grey-cheeked Thrush

Catharus minimus

Vagrant; four previous autumn records (September–October)

Sixty-one years and 19 days after the first British record of the species was found in exactly the same place, one of these dinky thrushes was located at the Obs on 24th October, where it showed very well as it fed in the short grass just behind the plantation. It remained in the area the next day and represented our third record of the species in seven years.



Plate 82. Grey-cheeked Thrush, Obs, 24th October 2014. © Steve Arlow

Ring Ouzel

Turdus torquatus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first was on 30th March, with daily counts of up to four from 3rd–8th April, three on 19th then daily census counts from 22nd April to 9th May, including a peak of 44 on 25th April, the highest spring count since 2000, before tailing off to 13 or less. The last of the spring were up to three from 12th–17th May. The first autumn bird was from 19th–24th September, then a good passage saw almost daily sightings in October, with two distinct surges of arrivals, the first of which was from 5th–10th, peaking at 34 on 8th, the highest autumn count since 2000. The second wave was from 15th–25th, which peaked at five, with the same count on 31st October. There were still three on 1st November, two the following day then singles on 11th and 15th before two on 17th November, the latest since 1997.

Blackbird

Turdus merula

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

At least 15 were wintering in the first part of the year, then the first fall of the spring occurred, with 50 on 1st April, increasing to 81 by 5th April. Numbers dropped to single figures from 10th April, then from mid-May the only records were of summering individuals. A male and a female were at Easter Lothar throughout the summer and two juveniles appeared on the island from 14th August (about a month earlier than is typical for the first autumn migrants, which would also not be expected to be in juvenile plumage), so it seems likely that breeding took place for just the second time since 1973. The first autumn migrants were noted from 18th September, with small numbers from then on until 129 arrived on 8th October, with further fluctuations in counts as birds continued to pass through, resulting in peaks of 144 on 18th and 295 on 31st October. Further waves of migrants in November saw a minimum of 292 on 8th and 289 in the north of the island only on 17th November (with counts from the south in following days suggesting the total number on the island was likely to be at least 500). With a late fall followed by mild weather, it was not that much of a surprise that wintering numbers appeared higher than usual, with at least 50 regularly observed in December.

Fieldfare

Turdus pilaris

Common spring and autumn migrant, often overwinters

At least 25 were present in January, with numbers rising to 52 by late February but then just single-figure counts through most of March and early April, until a minimum of 434 arrived late on 5th April, with 665 present the next day. Numbers then dropped off until the last substantial fall of the spring, with 321 on 25th April. There were scattered singles from 1st–14th May and one on 5th June, the latest in spring since 2007. August saw records on 10th–20th and up to three from 29th until 5th September. A quiet early autumn followed with up to four from 17th–24th September and daily records from 7th–25th October, peaking at just 61 on 17th October. With so few having come through, it was no surprise when suitable conditions saw a massive arrival, resulting in 9,425 on 31st October, the second highest count for Fair Isle (topped only by 15,000 on 20th October 2004). Numbers dropped away rapidly (there were less than ten by 6th November), but further falls saw 193 on 8th and 401 on 17th November, with at least 20 remaining through December.

Song Thrush

Turdus philomelos

Common spring and autumn migrant, sometimes overwinters; has bred (last recorded 1926)

One stayed throughout the first three months of the year, with spring passage beginning in mid-March and numbers building to 30 on 30th March and 35 in early April. Another fall late in the month brought a spring peak of 57 on 25th April, with the last of the season on 14th May. One on 4th and 6th July was the first record in that month since 2008. Sightings were regular in September from 4th, building to a monthly peak of 68 on 17th. October opened with an impressive 157, with another fall from 6th October rising to 1,921 on 8th, a count only previously bettered by 2,500 in October 1987 and 2,000 in September 1968. Numbers dropped away rapidly after that, although there was another fall of 495 on 18th October. There were never more than 60 after 24th October and only a few small arrivals occurred in November, with at least six remaining into December.

Redwing

Turdus iliacus

Common spring and autumn migrant, sometimes overwinters; has bred once (1935)

Up to 15 were regular during the first winter period ahead of an unimpressive spring passage, peaking at just 37 on 5th April, with small numbers occasionally into the following month, with the last of the spring on 18th May. Autumn began quietly, with up to four from 15th–21st September, then none until 122 arrived on the last day of the month. Numbers then decreased until 293 arrived on 6th October, rising to 876 two days later. With continued easterly winds, another fall on 18th October brought 1,185, but with winds switching to the west another wave of arrivals from 22nd was of Icelandic birds (of the subspecies *T.i.coburni*), with numbers peaking at 2,527 on 23rd October. After dropping to around 800 birds for two days, numbers again rose to 2,256 on 28th October. With the wind then switching back to the east, Scandinavia birds of the subspecies *T.i.ilicac* arrived and numbers rose from around 500 on 29th–30th October to the autumn's peak of 5,768 the following day. Numbers dropped off rapidly after that, with smaller increases noted during falls on 8th and 17th November, then around 20–40 birds remained until the end of the year.

Mistle Thrush

Turdus viscivorus

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

After singles on 9th and 12th March there were regular records from 28th March to 14th April, peaking at 14 on 30th March, with the last of the spring on 27th April. Autumn began quietly, with singles on 27th and 29th September, 6th–8th October and 15th–31st October, although there were six in the north on 17th November and later singles on 19th and 24th November.

Spotted Flycatcher

Muscicapa striata

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After arriving on 8th May for the last three years, the species was a day late in 2014, with the first found in Skinner's Clig on 9th May. There were no further sightings until 18th May, when daily records to the end of the month saw numbers rising to six on 19th, eight on 24th, ten on

27th and 13 on 29th May, with up to four seen regularly until 10th June. Autumn was quiet, with sightings on 15th, 17th and 19th September then daily from 21st September to 1st October that involved perhaps as few as two individuals.

Robin

Erithacus rubecula

Common spring and autumn migrant, often overwinters in small numbers

The year began with about six scattered across the island. Spring passage was evident from late March and built up to a decent count of 152 on 1st April. Numbers then declined through April until another small fall brought up to 30 at the end of the month. By mid-May there were only two remaining, which may have been the birds that went on to summer, although there were also late migrants noted on 11th and 25th June. The first autumn migrant appeared on 9th September, but numbers that month peaked at just nine. A fall in early October saw 126 on 8th with another arrival later in the month seeing 103 on 31st October. Numbers were generally smaller in November, with further falls on 8th and 17th both bringing around 30 individuals. Birds were again present at several sites in December, with about six trying to see out the Fair Isle winter.

Bluethroat

Luscinia svecica

Regular spring and scarce autumn migrant

A male 'Red-spotted Bluethroat' *L.s.svecica* in the Walli Burn on 30th April and 1st May was the earliest ever record of this subspecies, with further males on the more expected dates of 9th and 13th May. A female was present from 21st–25th May with another on 22nd–23rd May, whilst the last of a quiet spring for this species was found on 27th May. The three autumn arrivals were concentrated in a two-day period, with two arriving on 18th September, another on 19th, with two on 20th probably both lingerers, with one then remaining around Setter and Pund until 5th October.



Plate 83. Bluethroat, May 2014. © Larry Dalziel

*Red-flanked Bluetail

Tarsiger cyanurus

Vagrant; nine previous records (September to October)

Fair Isle's first spring Bluetail, found on 30th March in Klinger's Geo, was also the earliest British spring record (one found in February 2014 was presumably wintering). It associated with a large movement of Robins and was presumably the same individual that was then found in Swarzie Geo on 5th April, although given the turnover of other species in the same period it is possible that two were involved. A first-winter bird was a surprise find in the Obs mist nets shortly after breakfast on 13th October, having not been seen beforehand, although it went on to show well around the garden for the rest of the day. The same individual was then relocated at Skinners Glig on 16th October.



Plate 84. Red-flanked Bluetail, Obs, 13th October 2014 © Simon Colenut

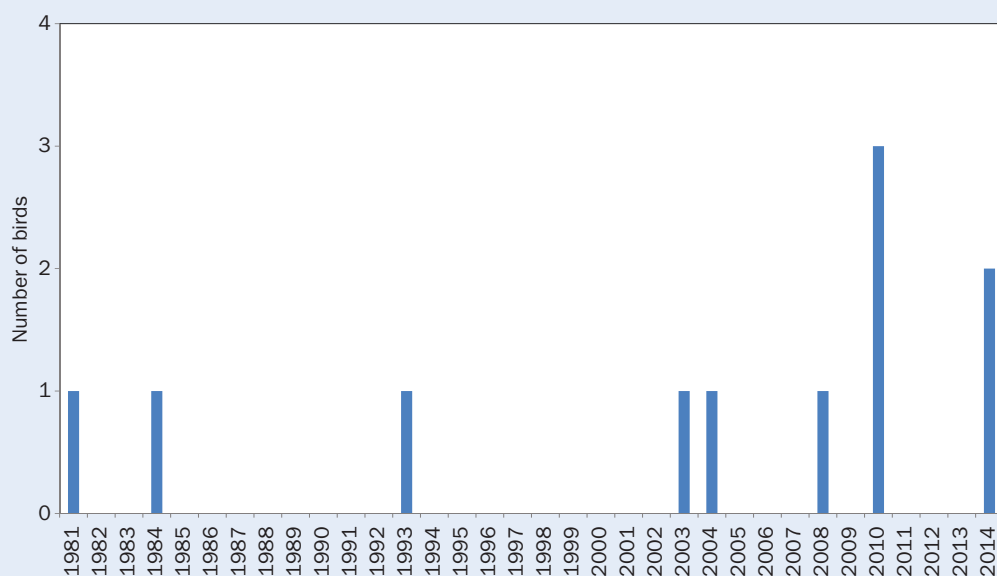


Figure 5. Annual occurrences of Red-flanked Bluetail on Fair Isle.

Although still a great find, note the increasing frequency of occurrences in the last ten years.

Red-breasted Flycatcher

Ficedula parva

Rare in spring (33 previous records), scarce autumn migrant

One at Burkle then South Harbour from 27th April to 1st May was comfortably the earliest ever record for Fair Isle, with another spring record involving one at Setter on 29th May. Another very good autumn began with daily records from 14th–21st September, peaking at four on 19th and involving seven individuals. There were two on 14th October, one lingering to the next day, with the tenth of the autumn briefly at the Mast on 24th October.

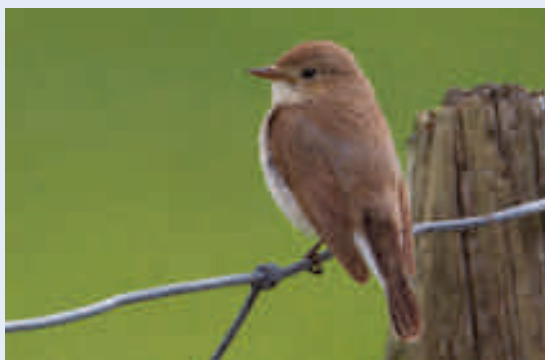


Plate 85. Red-breasted Flycatcher, Setter, 29th May 2014.
© Larry Dalziel

*Collared Flycatcher

Ficedula albicollis

Vagrant; five previous records, four in spring, one in autumn

A first-summer male was discovered in South Naaversgill on 28th May before it moved to Guidicum the following day. Remarkably, it was the third record in four years, with previous birds occurring in 2013, 2011, 2004, 1998 and 1986.



Plate 86. Collared Flycatcher, Guidicum, 29th May 2014. © Larry Dalziel

Pied Flycatcher

Ficedula hypoleuca

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were daily records from 25th April to 3rd May, peaking at five on 27th April. After a single on 7th May there were up to five from 9th–13th May, up to two on five dates from 22nd–29th May, then singles on 2nd and 25th June. Five singles from 10th–17th August preceded daily sightings from 22nd August to 2nd September, with peaks of 11 on 28th and 13 on 30th August, then up to five on 12 further September dates to 20th, with later singles on 30th September and 8th October.

Black Redstart

Phoenicurus ochruros

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

There were almost daily records from 27th March to 8th April, peaking at six on 4th April then scattered records of up to four from 18th April to 9th May. The final spring passage was of up to two regularly recorded from 19th May to 5th June. Autumn began with early migrants from 5th–7th, 22nd–23rd and 31st August, then none until up to two regularly from 5th–17th October. A late surge in records saw birds on ten dates between 31st October and 25th November, peaking at five on 8th and 10th November.

Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A male in the Kirn o'Scroo on 20th April was on a typical arrival date, with sightings then regular to 12th May. During that time, waves of arrivals included 11 on 25th April, ten on 27th April, eight on 1st May and six on 9th May. Later sightings came on 19th, 29th (two) and 30th May and singles on seven further dates until 16th June. Autumn passage got underway with one in Dog Geo on 30th–31st August, and then from 13th September to 1st October there were daily sightings during census, with a peak of nine on 17th September and further singles on four dates until 17th October.

Whinchat

Saxicola rubetra

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage was largely restricted to 23rd April to 21st May when there were records on 21 dates, peaking at just four on 30th April, with later records on 29th May and 1st and 25th June. In the autumn, there were daily sightings from 28th August to 17th October, with peaks including ten on 31st August and 6th September, 11–13 regularly between 17th–25th September and eight on 4th October.



Plate 87. Whinchat, Upper Leogh, 28th September 2014. © Ian Andrews

*Siberian Stonechat

Saxicola maurus

Vagrant; 40 previous records, most in autumn (13 in September, 22 in October and three in November) and two in spring (April and May). All previous records accepted as S.m.maurus/stejnegeri, although most thought to refer to S.m.maurus

'Caspian Stonechat' *S.m.variegatus*

Vagrant; no previous records

A highlight of the spring was a beautiful adult male of this distinctive subspecies found at the Meadow Burn near Upper Leogh late on the evening of 27th April, which lingered in this area until 31st May. It represented just the fifth British record of 'Caspian Stonechat'.

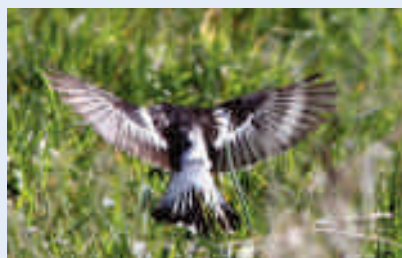


Plate 88. 'Caspian Stonechat', 14th May 2014. © David Parnaby

'Stejneger's Stonechat' *S.m.stejnegeri*

Vagrant; no confirmed records, but at least one bird (November 1991) thought to possibly refer to this subspecies

A first-winter female Siberian Stonechat at Barkland from 31st October to 3rd November showed various plumage features suggestive of this subspecies, although unfortunately it avoided attempts to catch it. After being a fairly regular feature of the autumn from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, Siberian Stonechat has now become a rather rare bird on Fair Isle (mirroring a national decline in records), with only three autumn records in the last 17 years.

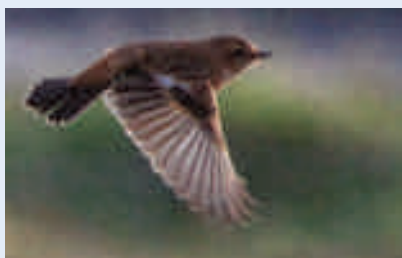


Plate 89. Probable 'Stejneger's Stonechat', 3rd November 2014. © David Parnaby

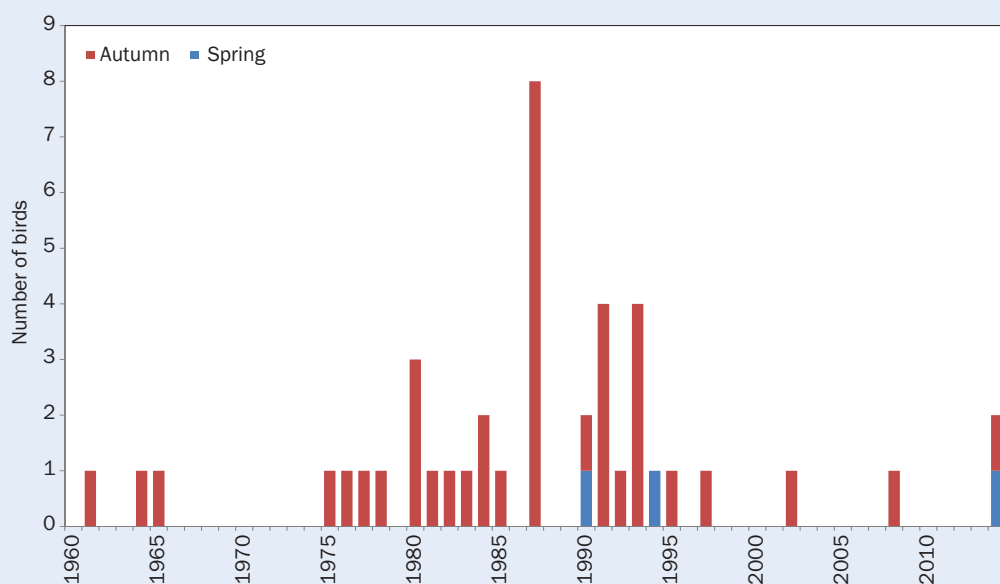


Figure 6. Annual and seasonal occurrence of Siberian Stonechat (all subspecies) on Fair Isle. Note that a previously accepted spring record in 2000 was later found not proven in a review of the species' spring occurrences by BBRC (Rogers, 2004).

Stonechat

Saxicola rubicola

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The strongest spring passage since 2010 began with a female at Setter on 1st March, a pair on 4th–5th March, with one until 6th March. Another male arrived on 12th March, with a female on 13th–16th March, a male on 25th–26th March and a new bird on 28th March, with the last on 21st April. Autumn was relatively quiet; records of a male from 8th October to 3rd November probably all involved the same bird, with a second on 2nd November.

Wheatear

Oenanthe oenanthe

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

There were daily sightings after the first on 25th March, with the first significant arrival of 20 on 30th March, but numbers remained generally low until 85 on 15th April. Another fall on 19th April brought 129 and, with 'Greenland Wheatears' *O.o.leucorhoa* joining the migration in decent numbers, counts rose to 225 on 30th April and 269 on 3rd May. Although breeding birds were established during May, there were further peaks of 205 on 8th and 310 on 18th as migrants continued to move through. The first fledged young were seen on 17th June, with a plethora present from 21st, the number of juveniles around the island indicating a good breeding season. August saw passage begin mid-month, with 154 present on 14th and September saw counts generally less than 50, other than during 4th–6th, when numbers peaked at 153 on 5th, and 27th September to 1st October, when there was a peak of 182 on 28th September. Both these falls were largely composed of 'Greenland Wheatears', with the latter arrival being notable for its late date and also for being the largest autumn fall since 2008. A further small arrival saw 68 on 8th October and there were then single-figure counts from 19th October regularly until 4th November, with another on 8th November. Records in November are not that unusual, but a late bird on 17th was just short of the latest ever occurrence, 19th November 1959.

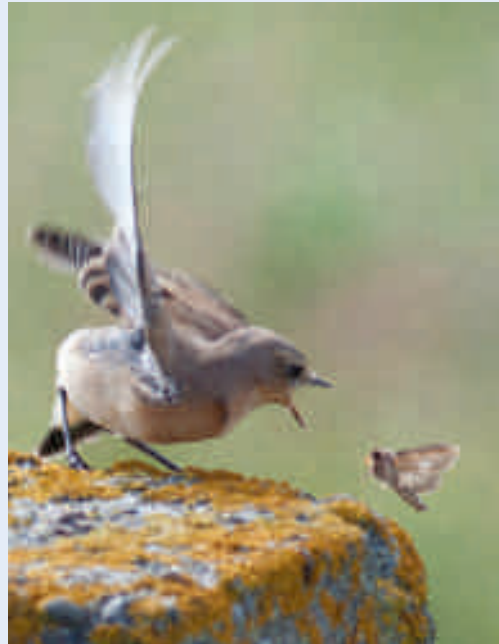


Plate 90. Wheatear, 3rd August 2014. © Alex Penn

Dunnock

Prunella modularis

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

Nine arrived on 26th March signalling the start of a good spring passage, with numbers rising rapidly to 60 on 1st April and, although counts tailed off after that, there were still daily records until 5th May and up to three regularly until 24th May. Autumn passage saw almost daily records from 17th September until 19th November, but the only double-figure count was 15 on 8th October.

House Sparrow

Passer domesticus

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Counts in the spring suggested around 30–40 pairs were present, a slight increase on recent years. A partially leucistic female with an orange bill noted from 28th March was interesting, the fact it had not been seen around the island previously, opened up the possibility that it may have been a new arrival. Nest material was noted being carried from 15th April and the first chicks fledged on the relatively early date of 30th May. The breeding season appeared to be a relatively good one with the peak autumn count of 113, on 22nd August, the highest since 2011.

Tree Sparrow

Passer montanus

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly rare and irregular breeder (last recorded 1972)

An early bird at Haa on 15th–19th April was the first in a decent spring showing, with another arriving on 27th April and numbers increasing to three on 3rd May and five on 7th, with one remaining to the following day. There were further singles on 28th–29th May and 1st–5th June. A recently fledged juvenile trapped at the Obs on 7th August may well have come from a breeding pair on Foula and another bird was seen on 20th–21st October.

Yellow Wagtail

Motacilla flava

Regular spring and autumn migrant

‘Yellow Wagtail’ *M.f.flavissima*

One arrived on 16th May, with two the following day and one still on 19th. The only other records confirmed as belonging to this subspecies involved two on 27th and one on 28th May.

‘Blue-headed Wagtail’ *M.f.flava*

A male in the Havens on 25th April was the first *flava* wagtail of the year and there was then one in South Harbour from 27th–29th April that was joined by another on 30th April, both staying until 1st May. There were also singles on 11th–13th May and 26th–30th May.

‘Grey-headed Wagtail’ *M.f.thunbergi*

Singles were noted on 9th, 11th–13th and 19th May, 2nd–3rd and 7th–10th June.



Plate 91. ‘Yellow Wagtail’, Barkland, 27th May 2014.
© David Parnaby



Plate 92. ‘Blue-headed Wagtail’, Havens, 25th April 2014.
© Deryk Shaw

Unidentified *flava* wagtail

There were several sightings in May and June, mostly of birds seen in flight only, which included two on 19th and one on 28th May, both days which produced a total of four *flava* wagtails, the peak count of the year. In the autumn all the *flava* wagtails seen were unassigned to subspecies, with sightings of one or two on four dates between 11th and 18th September and further singles on 29th September and 14th–16th October.

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred twice (1950 and 1989)

From 30th March to 7th April there were almost daily records, peaking at three on 31st March and 1st April, before further spring passage saw up to two on eight dates from 18th April to 6th May and further records on 13th–15th and 25th–27th May. Autumn passage began on 20th September, with singles on four further September dates, then virtually daily records until 25th October, with a peak of four on four dates. A good autumn showing was rounded off with two on 31st October, with one remaining until 3rd November.

Pied Wagtail

Motacilla alba

'Pied Wagtail' *M.a.yarrelli*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers

The first returning *alba* wagtail was a Pied on 4th March, with occasional records until 22nd March, after which birds were present daily. Numbers of Pies built up to 24 on 29th March, when there were also two unidentified *albas*, which proved to be the peak count for this subspecies in the spring. There were counts of generally less than 20 through April and May that mostly involved breeding birds. A record seven breeding pairs was noted (at Mavers Geo, Ditfield, South Harbour, Hesti Geo, Steensi Geo, Lerness and Easter Lothar), whilst a bird carrying food at Hesswalls in late June suggested the possibility of another pair on the east coast. Food carrying was first noted on 19th May, with the first fledged young seen on 15th June. Autumn migration was unspectacular, with counts of confirmed Pied Wagtails not exceeding 20 (although the majority of *alba* wagtails often go unidentified on days of passage) and the last *alba* wagtail of the year was a Pied on 14th October.

'White Wagtail' *M.a.alba*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant, formerly bred occasionally, but last pure *alba* pair recorded in 1986, although occasional mixed pairings have occurred since*

The first confirmed White Wagtail was seen on 1st April, with passage regular from mid-month and a peak of 25 on 25th and 39 *albas* (the majority of which were Whites) on 27th April. Passage was generally light in May, with up to 13 Whites recorded and the last of the migrants seen on 30th May. A male White Wagtail held territory around the Kiln o' Skroo from late May until 15th July, but was unsuccessful in attracting a mate. *Alba* counts in early August were likely to be mostly resident birds, with the first migrant Whites recorded from 10th August and with peak counts of 99 on 27th August and 76 on 6th September (both counts involved mostly unidentified *alba* wagtails, but the majority were likely to have been Whites). Numbers were generally low from late September, with the last White Wagtail on 12th October.

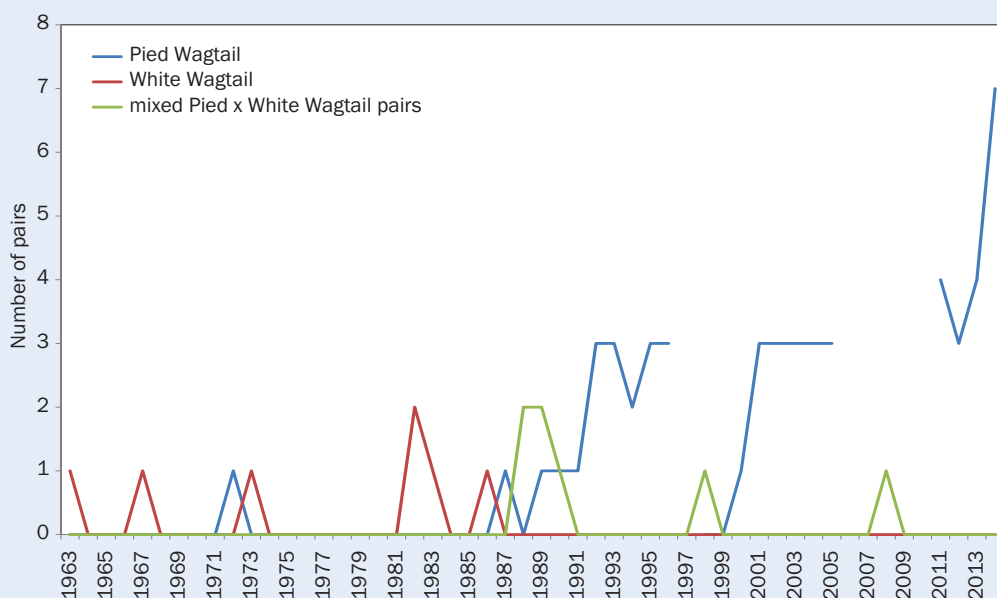


Figure 7. Number of pairs of Pied Wagtail, 'White Wagtail' and mixed pairs nesting since 1962. Note that numbers of pairs of Pied Wagtails have not always been counted since 1997. Single pairs of 'White Wagtails' also bred in 1909–1911, c1933 and c1944.

Richard's Pipit

Anthus richardi

Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring (four spring records, all in May)

The earliest ever spring record occurred on 1st May, when one was on Meoness (previous spring records were in 1998, 2002, 2005 and 2009). One on Ward Hill on 17th September was relatively early, with another near Field on 23rd–24th September. Two arrived on 3rd October, with one remaining until the following day and there were then late arrivals on 25th October and 1st November in the strongest autumn showing since 2007.



Plate 93. Richard's Pipit, Midway, 3rd October 2014. © Steve Arlow

*Olive-backed Pipit

Anthus hodgsoni



Plate 94. Olive-backed Pipit, Kenaby, 13th October 2014. © Simon Colenutt

Scarce migrant; 91 previous records, 89 in autumn and two in spring

Another excellent year saw a minimum of six, beginning with an early individual at Quoy on 21st–22nd September, which was predated by a cat. Favourable conditions in mid-October brought a further four individuals, with singles at Hjukni Geo then Pund from 7th–13th, the Gully then Ditfield from 8th–18th, Kenaby on 13th and Hill Dyke and Pund on 18th–25th, the latter being found dead after some very poor weather. The final individual, found at Quoy on 19th November, was the second latest arrival for Fair Isle (following one on 24th November 1974) and went on to become the latest ever individual when it lingered until 6th December. There have now been 23 records in the last four years, compared to just one in the previous four.

Tree Pipit

Anthus trivialis

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first on 21st April was on the same arrival date as 2013 and there were then regular sightings until the end of the month, with the year's peak occurring on 27th when 27 were recorded. After 18 on 1st May, there were daily records until 28th, including the only other double-figure count when there were 12 on 11th, with the final sightings of singles on 30th May, 1st and 6th June. The first of the autumn on 24th August preceded up to three on four further dates in the month, then on 16 September dates (mostly in the second half of the month), peaking at six on 17th, with late records of two on 8th October and four singles until 15th October.

Meadow Pipit

Anthus pratensis

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

One was seen on 1st January but there were no more until 9th February, after which small numbers were regular. Increased passage from the third week of March saw numbers rise to 117 by the end of the month. Numbers rose throughout April to 287 by 16th then another surge saw 379 on 21st, with fluctuating numbers then decreasing to 80–140 by 5th May through to the end of the month. The first fledged birds were seen on 2nd June, 17 days earlier than in 2013. August saw very variable numbers, although clear passage from 21st saw numbers rise to a peak of 341 on 27th August. Some impressive passage in September included 727 on 6th, with a slight lull (although there were still daily counts of over 500) before a very large count of 1,087 on 14th, with a similar number the following day. Around 200–400 were seen daily during the rest of the month and into early October, with numbers tailing away sharply after 22nd October. A scattering was seen daily in November until 27th, with the last two of the year on 2nd December.

*Red-throated Pipit

Anthus cervinus

Rare migrant, around 80 previous records; 48 in spring (most in May, but ten in June) and 32 in autumn (most in September, but ten in October and one in August)

An adult was at Setter on 20th–24th September, followed by another smart adult which flew over the Hill Dyke on 13th October before being relocated on Bunes, where it showed well from 14th–20th October.

Rock Pipit

Anthus petrosus

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

Due to the habitats preferred by this species, census counts are unlikely to indicate the actual numbers on the island, but they do appear to give an indication of times of passage. In spring, census counts were generally around 70, with a peak in April of 88 on 18th (when two obvious 'Scandinavian Rock Pipits' *A.p.littoralis* showed that passage was taking place) and a seasonal peak of 113 on 3rd May. Breeding activity showed at least 65 possible territories, with nesting noted from 23rd April, chicks being fed from 13th May and the first fledglings taking wing on 5th June, 11 days earlier than in 2013. Although the figures for breeding should be regarded as a very rough estimate (it seems likely to be an undercount given that several areas that almost certainly held birds were not mapped for example), it is interesting that they would tally with the lower end of the estimate given in Pennington *et al.* (2004) of two to six pairs per kilometre of coast in Shetland, given that the Fair Isle coast is estimated at around 32km in length. It also suggests a population somewhat larger than the only other Fair Isle census of the species, which produced a count of at least 54 pairs in 1983. Autumn passage saw numbers rising towards the end of August, with a peak of 290 on 27th August, a count only exceeded by estimates of 300 both on 6th September 1982 and 2nd September 1997. High counts in September were 227 on 6th and 233 on 12th, both of which coincided with Meadow Pipit passage. There were fewer in October, with counts only once exceeding 100 after mid-month, with numbers dwindling away into the winter.



Plate 95. Rock Pipit, 17th June 2014. © Deryk Shaw

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

There were records from 11th March to 29th May, with a peak of just two on 18th April, although it is likely that this subspecies is underestimated as a visitor, as not all individuals will be identifiable.

Brambling

Fringilla montifringilla

Common spring and autumn migrant

Five on the typical date of 31st March were the first of the year and were followed by a minor fall in early April that peaked at 14 birds. After small numbers throughout the month a large fall saw 285 on 25th April, the fifth highest spring count on record, before numbers tailed off rapidly. Smaller numbers remained daily until 20th May, with later birds on 24th May, 31st May to 8th June and 16th June. Autumn passage began with low numbers from 13th September, with the first major arrival bringing 116 on 30th September. Reasonable numbers remained throughout October, with a further fall bringing the autumn's peak of 169 on 9th October. Counts thereafter were generally less than 30, although a further small arrival brought 52 on 18th October, with fewer recorded until 19th November.

Chaffinch

Fringilla coelebs

Common spring and autumn migrant

A male arrived on 1st January and lingered to 6th, with no further records until 3rd March. Spring passage began properly from 24th March to 21st April, with peaks of 14 on 31st March and 13 on 5th April. A late male arrived on 27th April and lingered around the island, often singing, until 12th May and a very late female was seen on 12th June. One on 15th September was the first of the autumn, with then 26 on 17th, the highest count of regular sightings throughout the month. There were almost daily records during October, with a peak of 33 on 8th October. A small fall in November saw 13 on the first day of the month, then smaller numbers lingered until early December, with one remaining until 13th December.

Hawfinch

Coccothraustes coccothraustes

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A relatively early individual was at Schoolton on 30th March, with another at the same site on 24th April and the third of the spring at nearby Quoy on 11th–13th May, which relocated to the Obs towards the end of its stay. The fourth latest ever Fair Isle record was one that dropped into Haa briefly on 30th October, continuing the regular run of autumn records that began in 1988 (prior to which there had been no records in that season).



Plate 96. Hawfinch, trapped Obs, 12th May 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell

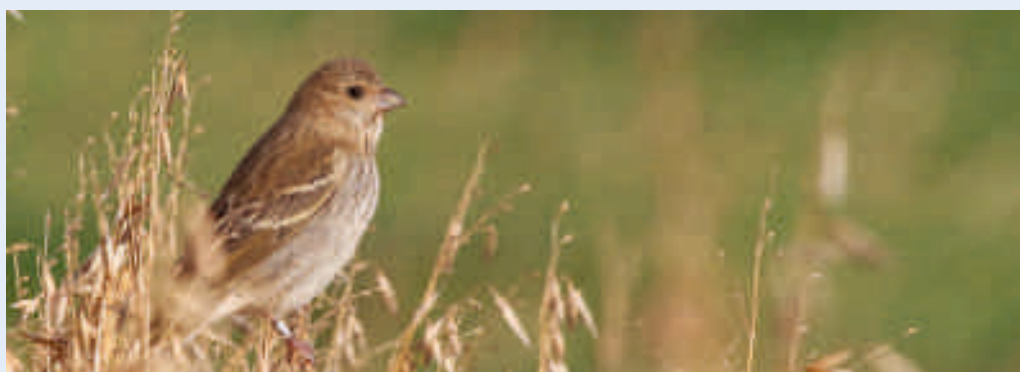


Plate 97. Common Rosefinch, Kenaby, 29th September 2014. © Steve Keighley

Common Rosefinch

Erythrina erythrina

Regular spring and autumn migrant

An immature male with an unusual song (often apparently mimicking Willow Warbler) was at Upper Leogh from 21st–25th May, with further spring records on 27th–29th May, 9th and 11th June. With just four individuals, it was another quiet spring for the species. The autumn began with one in the Gully on 15th August, with sightings on ten further dates until the end of the month, with a peak of four on 27th August. There were then daily census sightings until 30th September, although the peak was just five on 4th–5th, with an estimated minimum of 23 individuals recorded throughout the autumn.

Bullfinch

Pyrrhula pyrrhula

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring. All except one (June 2006) have been 'Northern Bullfinch' P.p.pyrrhula

A resplendent 'Northern' male was in the Wirvie Burn on 17th November, the latest arrival since 2010.

Greenfinch

Chloris chloris

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage was restricted to daily records from 30th March to 10th April, peaking at four on 1st April, although five ringed during this period indicated some turnover. Autumn passage was similarly uninspired, with regular records from 20th October to 5th November, peaking at just three on 22nd October.

Linnet

Linaria cannabina

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

As usual, there were regular sightings throughout the spring, spanning the period 4th April to 14th May, with a later single on 5th June. Most records were of one or two, with three on 30th April and 7th May the peak counts, although there was a reasonable turnover of birds during that period. Two arrived on 22nd September and there were regular records of up to two through to 22nd October, with the autumn peak of three on 23rd September and 11th October.

Twite

Linaria flavirostris

Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers breed and overwinter

Maximum monthly counts of Twite on Fair Isle 2014

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
n/c	19	45	65	56	41	n/c	400	348	243	38	n/c

The wintering population was again very small, with virtually none recorded in January and December (although small numbers could easily evade detection with limited observer coverage in those months). Spring passage was again most notable in April and the counts in the summer were similar to recent years, suggesting a breeding population in the region of 10–20 pairs, with the first fledged youngsters recorded on 13th June. The peak occurred on 31st August, with numbers remaining high in the first week of September.

Lesser Redpoll

Acanthis cabaret

Scarce migrant in spring, summer and autumn

A decent spring passage of Common Redpolls was accompanied by several Lesser Redpolls, including daily records from 23rd–25th May involving at least two individuals, up to two from 1st–3rd June and singles on 9th–10th June. It is likely that others were overlooked during that time as there were several redpolls left unidentified due to brief views and, even in the hand, some individuals were somewhat intermediate in appearance. Autumn records involved two on 18th–20th September and singles on 10th–11th and 18th–21st October and 3rd November.

Common Redpoll

Acanthis flammea

'Mealy Redpoll' *A.f.flammea*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After the first on 31st March, there were sightings from 4th–10th April then virtually daily from 20th April to 11th June, with peaks of ten on 25th April and 15th May and 12 on 26th May. Later records involved a single on 25th–29th June and up to two during 14th–20th July, keeping up the recent run of summer reports. Autumn passage was very poor, with just five singles from 11th–20th September and scattered records through October of no more than three. An arrival from 2nd–6th November saw the autumn peak of just seven on 5th, with later singles on 25th and 26th November and four on 13th December.

'North-western Redpoll' *A.f.rostrata/islandica*

Scarce autumn migrant

Up to three typically large, dark, streaky birds were regular during 3rd–17th October, whilst an interesting paler bird that was considered to be *A.f.islandica* was at Springfield from 22nd–25th October.

Common Crossbill

Loxia curvirostra

Irregular irruptive summer and autumn migrant

There have only been five previous years with April records, so 2014 proved unusual in that most of the records fell in that month. The first were two on 3rd in the Havens, with a single on 17th–18th,

seven on 25th and a single on 27th April. The only other records were one on 13th June, with possibly the same male lingering from 16th–18th June.

Goldfinch

Carduelis carduelis

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Another decent spring passage saw singles on 8th–10th and 18th–19th April, with one on 2nd–7th May joined by a second on 5th and further singles on 14th, 16th May and 8th June. Autumn was relatively quiet, with the only records being one on 9th–10th October and a late bird on 10th–12th November.

Siskin

Spinus spinus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A strong spring passage saw regular records between 23rd March and 2nd May, although all counts were of three or less other than seven on 3rd April and up to five from 29th April to 1st May. There were then up to three from 12th–25th May, four on 27th and five on 28th May with singles on 7th–8th and 10th June. Midsummer records are not unusual and a male on 20th July was joined by another on 23rd July. Autumn passage was restricted to 6th–25th October, with two main waves of arrivals indicated by peak counts of 29 on 8th, then 11 on 17th–18th October.

Snow Bunting

Plectrophenax nivalis

Common spring and autumn migrant, often overwinters

Small numbers appeared to be wintering, with up to 18 in January. Records became more regular from late March through April as spring passage commenced, with numbers rising to a peak of 30 on 20th April. There were still 16 in early May, then a late arrival brought up to three from 22nd May to 1st June. Autumn passage saw regular counts of single figures from 15th September to the end of the month, with numbers rising throughout October to 90 on 29th, then peaking at 106 on 8th November. Small numbers were then regular to the end of the year, although 72 were present on 26th December.



Plate 98. Snow Bunting, Bunness, 28th September 2014. © Ian Andrews

Lapland Bunting

Calcarius lapponicus

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

The quietest spring passage since 2010 involved one that was found dead on 12th March, then sightings of a male in Suka Mire on 9th, 15th and 19th April that were presumed to relate to the same individual. After one on 1st September, there were two on 5th, one on 8th–11th then more regular sightings from 17th to the end of the month peaking at 11 on 24th September. Sightings on all but two October dates to 27th peaked at 11 on 15th, before a very late bird was at Loangie on Dronger on 17th November.

Yellowhammer

Emberiza citrinella

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A male at Barkland on 10th March was the earliest spring migrant since 1961 (although birds were recorded in January or February in five years between 1965 and 1986) with the only other spring bird occurring on 18th May. Autumn was again quiet, with one from 19th September to 4th October joined by a second from 30th September to 1st October, another on 18th–23rd October and a final bird trapped at the Obs on 31st October.

*Cretzschmar's Bunting

Emberiza caesia

Vagrant; two previous records both in June (1967 and 1979)

One of the undoubted highlights of the spring was Fair Isle's third record of this beautiful overshooting bunting, which took advantage of the south-easterly airflow over Europe to make it to Fair Isle, having passed over its breeding grounds in the opposite corner of the European continent. Found at Burkle on 27th April, it roamed the island for two days before settling in Boini Mire until 2nd May. Like the previous two Fair Isle records, it was a male that lingered for several days, although it arrived comfortably earlier than any of the four previous British occurrences.

Little Bunting

Emberiza pusilla

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

The first spring record since 2010 was a bird at Steensi Geo on 29th April, whilst one at Easter Lothar on 9th May made it the first spring with multiple records since 2002. A very good autumn for the species in the Northern Isles was reflected on Fair Isle, where a total of probably 13 individuals made it the best autumn since 2000 for the species. The first was at Quoy on 16th September, with a new bird at Chalet from 17th–20th September and the third of the month on 30th September. October began with one on 4th, then two arrived on 6th and sightings from across the island until 10th were presumed to relate to one of these birds. One frequented the Sheep Cru from 13th–15th October, whilst another was at Schoolton on 14th–15th. The 17th also saw two birds, with one at Pund and Setter lingering to 24th and one at Easter Lothar remaining to 23rd, with another on 27th October. The 30th–31st produced a mobile bird in the south of the island with the last of the year at Shirva from 31st October to 4th November.



Plate 99. Little Bunting, Setter, 22nd October 2014. © Steve Arlow

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One at Schoolton on 1st February was the earliest record since 1995, with the start of spring passage bringing regular sightings of up to four from 25th March to 8th April. From 17th April there were frequent records, rising to a spring peak of 18 on 30th April. Records throughout May to 29th, including a male singing at the Obs on 18th, there were just single-figure counts after 12 on 1st May. Autumn passage began with up to two on 18th–24th September, with the next arrival of four on 30th September preceeding a good fall early the next month, which peaked at 25 on 8th October, with smaller numbers throughout the rest of the month and one lingering at Chalet until 17th November.

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CORRECTIONS TO PREVIOUS ANNUAL REPORTS

The continued computerisation and sorting of old Obs data has resulted in occasional changes to the accepted statistics of rarity records, whilst some errors also occasionally appear in print. The following are a list of corrections and updates to previously published statistics.

Manx Shearwater

The count of 40 in 1997 (the record count for the species on Fair Isle) was erroneously missed out of the species' accounts in the 2008 and 2012 Annual Reports.

Dotterel

The latest record, as given in the table of migrant arrival and departure dates should be 3rd December 1986 and not 6th November 1976 as was previously stated.

Firecrest

The 2009 record was inadvertently overlooked in the 2012 Annual Report systematic list, the statistics having been corrected in this report.

Collared Flycatcher

Although the statistic of four previous records was correct in the 2013 Annual Report, the text in the species account refers to birds having occurred in five previous years: the 1999 record referred to an abnormal Collared Flycatcher or a hybrid Pied x Collared Flycatcher.

White's Thrush

The statistics for White's Thrush were incorrect in the 2013 Annual Report, there having been 12 (not 11) previous records and this has been corrected in the current report.

RINGING SUMMARY

Ciaran Hatsell & David Parnaby

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Birds ringed	3	13	178	485	410	384	2109	1679	566	934	361	1
Species ringed	3	5	20	34	49	38	31	34	49	38	27	1

The year proved to be a good one for ringing, with a total of 7,123 birds of 109 species ringed, the highest total of new birds ringed in a season since 1998. In contrast to recent years, seabirds accounted for a large proportion of the overall total, whilst an abundance of Storm Petrels and good falls of several species in the spring and autumn also added to the impressive year. Perhaps the most significant total was of 419 Guillemots (352 pulli) ringed at the colonies during the summer, representing the best year since 2010 for this species, which has suffered some very poor breeding seasons in recent years. A number of other seabirds also recorded their best breeding season for several years and the ringing totals often reflected this.

The Helgoland traps accounted for the majority of the passerines ringed during the year, with standardised trap rounds allowing a comparison of data from previous years. During the peak migration periods (mid-April until mid-June and again from early August until the end of October) the traps are run six times a day (weather permitting), the times more or less falling before and after every meal.

As the Obs garden has developed over the years, the two mist nets that are permanently stationed there have become increasingly effective, with the weather in 2014 often being quite kind for mist-netting (long spells of light easterly winds in spring and autumn allowing the nets to be used frequently at times when many birds were about), and this helped contribute to the impressive overall ringing totals. The use of the spiral traps in the Obs garden also helped bolster the totals of species such as Starling and Twite.

Ringing sub-sites at Barkland (Helgoland trap) and Chalet (single nine-foot mist net) also yielded some good totals. Barkland proved a particularly fruitful sub-site, with 78 birds of 26 species ringed there. Notable species included a Long-eared Owl, three Barred Warblers, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Common Rosefinch and Lesser Redpoll. The Chalet mist net also turned up some scarcities with Bluethroat, two Barred Warblers, two Yellow-browed Warblers and a Common Rosefinch. Another ringing sub-site at Burkle saw 58 birds of 14 species ringed, mostly in a single mist net. Highlights included 'Western Subalpine Warbler', Icterine Warbler and two Barred Warblers.

A small number of birds were 'dazzled' during the night, a method of capture involving hand-netting birds by momentarily dazzling them with torchlight. During a night on which conditions were far from ideal (it was fairly calm and bright, rather than the dark and stormy conditions usually necessary for catching birds), two of the wardening team came within a metre or so of a Pectoral Sandpiper which narrowly evaded capture as it took off at the last minute, calling into the night. It was present the next day and showed well, dispelling rumours that the wardening team may well have been going slightly crazy! Other memorable dazzling sessions included two Pink-footed Geese caught at Easter Loch Water and a very windy night that saw 12 Great Black-backed and six Herring Gulls netted at a time when huge numbers of gulls were roosting on the island.

Storm Petrel and Starling consistently feature highly in the list of most birds ringed in the year, but the reappearance of Guillemot and Fulmar in the top

A comparison of the top ten most commonly ringed species in 2014 and 2013, showing totals of new birds ringed (with totals for the previous year in brackets).

Species	2014
Storm Petrel	2,453(1,211)
Starling	546 (360)
Guillemot	419 (5)
Redwing	406 (161)
Brambling	284 (92)
Blackbird	275 (361)
Robin	272 (98)
Great Skua	238 (129)
Fulmar	229 (76)
Blackcap	183 (159)

Species	2013
Storm Petrel	1,211(870)
Blackbird	361 (223)
Starling	360 (389)
Redwing	161 (97)
Blackcap	159 (87)
Great Skua	129 (320)
Meadow Pipit	126 (157)
Robin	98 (399)
Brambling	92 (222)
Puffin	86 (113)



Plate 100. Great Skua chick, 11th June 2014.
© Ciaran Hatsell

ten this year reflects the improved breeding year for seabirds. The intensive monitoring of the Great Skua population means that this species has been a regular entry into the top ten list in recent years. Blackbird, Redwing and Blackcap are often amongst the passerines caught in the largest numbers, with the latter two benefitting this year from good arrivals in October, whilst a strong early spring movement of Bramblings and Robins saw the numbers of those species ringed rise considerably (and produce the third and tenth highest ever totals respectively).

One new species was added to the ringing list in 2014, with a female Moltoni’s Subalpine Warbler trapped on 16th May in the Vaadal. This species was ‘split’ from the Subalpine Warbler by the BOU in December 2014 and became the first record for the island and just the fourth confirmed record for Britain.

There were many highlights throughout the ringing year, including retrapping the Swinhoe’s Petrel ringed originally on 7th August 2013, with other more unusual birds ringed including the 3rd Red-flanked Bluetail, 8th Nightjar, 18th Coot, 18th–21st Mallards, 19th–20th Pink-footed Geese, 22nd–23rd Blyth’s Reed Warblers, 26th Greenish Warbler, 27th–28th Goldfinches, 32nd Hawfinch, 38th–40th Subalpine Warblers, 43rd Little Bunting and 45th Corncrake. The Little Bunting was brought to the Obs in a shoebox by Stewart Thomson of Quoy, after he trapped it in his garage!

The totals of four species ringed in 2014 were new records for a year on Fair Isle: 406 Redwings (previous record 391 in 1978), 101 Chiffchaffs (previous record 79 in 2009), 39 Woodcocks (previous record 30 in 1976) and four Mallards (previous record two in both 1992 and 1998), whilst three other species equalled previous highest totals: three Subalpine Warblers, two Pink-footed Geese and a single Red-flanked Bluetail.

The Chiffchaff total was undoubtedly aided by the increased mist-netting in the Obs garden, with 42 new birds trapped there during the year. All bar one of the ten best years for Chiffchaff ringing on Fair Isle have occurred since 2000 and the development of the Obs garden will undoubtedly have helped, although further analysis of the original ringing records would be required to see whether there has also been a genuine increase. Interestingly, the majority of the Redwings caught were of the Icelandic race *Turdus iliacus coburni*, which arrived in large numbers in westerly winds in October.

Storm Petrels, as ever, accounted for a large percentage of the birds ringed in 2014. The 2,453 birds ringed was the third highest ever total (the highest total being 2,716 new birds ringed in 1999) and the sessions provided some special moments that will go down in Fair Isle folklore. Despite the moon being a mere waxing crescent, it was a very bright night for a petrel ringing session on 1st July. It was still quite a productive session when, from the glass calm seas just behind the mist nets, the loud blow of two Killer Whales was heard over the Storm Petrel tape. They surfaced several times just off the South Haven beach before providing spectacular views from above as they hugged the cliffs along Landberg, presumably in search of seals. There were some large catches of petrels (over 300 in a night was the best total), with the number of ringers being the main limiting factor in the numbers of birds caught on some nights. Looking above the nets during one ringing session, a 'cloud' of around 40–50 Storm Petrels could be seen circling above and whizzing around in the near darkness. Although a pure Storm Petrel tape was used during most sessions (as opposed to a mixed tape including Leach's and Swinhoe's Petrel), which will have boosted the total of birds trapped, it was also clearly a very good year for Storm Petrels, with more than double the number of birds trapped in comparison to 2013, despite ringing taking place on fewer nights. Birds were also lured at the Skadan, a site not used for several years, with 500 (457 new) Storm Petrels trapped there in total.

Other interesting totals included good numbers of some of the resident breeding species, with 36 Wrens (the second highest ever total, possibly as

a result of a good breeding season), 25 Rock Doves (the joint third highest ever total) and 81 House Sparrows (the sixth best ringing total) ringed during the year.

The ringing table shows some interesting changes in numbers of birds trapped over the years. In particular, a marked decrease in 'common' long-distance migrant species such as Redstart and Pied Flycatcher can be seen, especially in comparison to totals of 'scarcities' that are now trapped. Just seven Pied Flycatchers and six Redstarts were ringed in 2014 compared with 14 Barred Warblers, 12 Yellow-browed Warblers, and 11 Common Rosefinches. Other species including Whinchat and Tree Pipit (the latter of which registered a blank year in the ringing totals for the first time since 1993) have also shown a notable decline in numbers ringed on a yearly basis since FIBO was established. This trend is also reflected in the census data collected, with a general pattern of decline for several common migrants yet an increase in scarcities.

Two colour-ringing projects continued on Fair Isle in 2014: the long-term Starling research project started in 1980 and the Shag colour-ringing project, run by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology which looks at the dispersal, survival, distribution and movement patterns of juvenile and adult Shags. There were 90 Shags (72 pulli and 18 adults) colour ringed as part of the project, again indicative of a good season for Fair Isle's seabirds.

It was also a good year for colour-ring sightings of wildfowl on Fair Isle, with four Barnacle Geese and three Whooper Swans seen with colour rings (see recoveries section for details).

One of the Whooper Swans was originally ringed at Martin Mere in Lancashire in 2011 and stayed on Fair Isle from 8th October until 1st December. During its stay it was diligently fed by an islander who devised an elaborate plot to feed it. To stop the sheep eating the grain, she took to digging a hole, filling it with seed, covering it with a lid attached to a piece of string which ran several hundred metres away, where she would wait for the bird to come in and before lifting the lid. A quite remarkable effort!

Ringing summary

Species	Total 1948–2013	Average/year										Ringed 2014		Highest/Lowest	Since	Year ranking
		1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2013	adult	pullus	Total					
Whooper Swan	51	0.3	0.6	1.5	0.6	0.9	1.1	0.3	1	0	1			Highest	2011	Joint 10th
Pink-footed Goose	18	0	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.0	2	0	2			Highest	2009	Joint 1st
Mallard	17	0	0.6	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.0	4	0	4			Highest	ever	1st
Eider	172	1.8	3.1	3.2	4.5	3.4	1.2	0.0	2	0	2			Highest	2003	Joint 24th
Fulmar	17833	50.7	346.3	363.5	641.3	244.2	99	89.0	36	193	229			Highest	2009	Joint 27th
Storm Petrel	34172	3.7	160.5	575.4	446.6	1640	301.5	723.3	2453	0	2453			Highest	1999	3rd
Leach's Petrel	128	0	0.3	1.2	0.5	5.2	2.7	7.3	3	0	3			Lowest	2010	13th
Gannet	645	0.2	1.3	1.2	11.5	20.4	17.4	31.0	1	0	1			=	2013	Joint 33rd
Shag	23763	87.5	579	383.5	674.5	375.9	267.2	17.0	12	83	95			Highest	2007	50th
Sparrowhawk	441	3.3	2.9	6	8.7	12.5	6.6	9.8	7	0	7			Highest	2012	Joint 25th
Water Rail	341	6.6	5.4	7.4	4.6	4.4	4	1.8	4	0	4			Highest	2007	Joint 32nd
Corncrake	44	0.9	1.3	1.1	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.3	1	0	1			Highest	2011	Joint 11th
Moorhen	107	1.5	2.5	2.3	1.9	1.3	0.7	0.8	1	0	1			Highest	2012	Joint 30th
Coot	17	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.5	1	0	1			=	2013	Joint 3rd
Oystercatcher	1595	24.7	27.6	33.1	32	25.8	8.9	9.5	0	7	7			=	2013	Joint 60th
Lapwing	381	8.5	12.7	1	4.5	5.5	4.1	4.5	0	5	5			Highest	2010	Joint 20th
Ringed Plover	818	7.5	14.3	11.7	15.4	16.9	11.9	10.3	8	3	11			Highest	2012	Joint 31st
Turnstone	117	0.8	3.5	1.8	0.2	1.2	2.4	4.5	1	0	1			Lowest	2011	Joint 19th
Sanderling	129	2.7	3.6	1.4	1	0.4	2.9	2.0	1	0	1			Lowest	2011	Joint 28th
Dunlin	631	5	16.7	17.3	4.3	10.2	7.1	6.0	14	0	14			Highest	2005	19th
Common Sandpiper	70	0.7	1.7	1.2	1.9	1.2	0.1	0.3	1	0	1			Highest	2012	Joint 18th
Jack Snipe	155	0.8	1.4	8.7	0.7	1.7	1.8	1.0	1	0	1			=	2013	Joint 22nd
Woodcock	572	4.7	6.9	9.2	9.6	8.4	11.1	17.3	39	0	39			Highest	ever	1st
Snipe	585	2.8	8.1	14.3	7.8	10.9	10.7	9.8	6	3	9			Lowest	2012	Joint 21st
Arctic Skua	4057	71.7	38.2	131.8	61	67.7	27.3	16.0	0	16	16			Highest	2010	51st
Great Skua	4242	16.9	13	19	51.5	110.8	134	195.5	0	233	233			Highest	2012	4th
Puffin	14197	128.2	277.3	318.8	294.8	216.9	131.7	120.3	55	59	114			Highest	2011	48th
Black Guillemot	1679	11.3	45.6	52.1	25.2	26	6.7	2.5	1	8	9			Highest	2007	42nd

Ringing summary

Species	Total 1948–2013	Average/year							Ringed 2014			Highest/Lowest	Since	Year ranking
		1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2013	adult	pullus	Total			
Razorbill	11875	6.5	60.9	173.5	231.6	412.5	281.8	51.8	27	41	68	Highest	2010	43rd
Guillemot	37859	7.9	82.6	468	1268	1314.8	588.8	139.5	67	352	419	Highest	2010	31st
Common Tern	485	0.1	1.1	13.2	30.1	3.3	0.7	0.0	0	3	3	Highest	2000	Joint 22nd
Arctic Tern	11900	0.1	0.4	0	16.4	954.8	216.5	4.5	0	15	15	Highest	2012	Joint 19th
Kittiwake	7188	8.8	85.9	158	266.7	162.5	33.8	7.3	5	3	8	Highest	2011	Joint 50th
Common Gull	322	0.5	1.3	4.6	8.8	3.9	10.6	6.3	0	2	2	Highest	2012	Joint 32nd
Lesser Black-b Gull	1473	10	25.7	49.7	40.4	13.8	5.7	2.5	0	1	1	Lowest	2011	Joint 64th
Herring Gull	4628	12.1	64.9	163.6	140.8	34.8	34.6	26.0	5	28	33	Highest	2012	Joint 40th
Great Black-b Gull	2872	8.8	39.1	92.2	51	92	2.2	4.5	12	2	14	Highest	1998	Joint 33rd
Rock Dove	196	0	0.2	0.9	1.1	4.8	7.9	11.8	25	0	25	Highest	2008	Joint 3rd
Woodpigeon	76	0.6	1.6	0.5	1.6	2.6	0.5	0.5	3	0	3	Highest	1998	Joint 4th
Collared Dove	421	0	1.1	10.5	7.2	10.6	10.8	4.8	4	0	4	Lowest	2012	Joint 35th
Cuckoo	113	2.1	2.3	2.5	1.9	1.5	0.6	1.0	1	0	1	Lowest	2012	Joint 32nd
Long-eared Owl	279	1.4	3	7.6	5.8	5.7	2.7	4.0	4	0	4	Highest	2012	Joint 22nd
Nightjar	7	0	0.3	0	0	0.1	0.2	0.3	1	0	1	=	2013	Joint 2nd
Wryneck	262	2.3	4.4	7.1	4.8	2.2	4.2	3.0	5	0	5	Highest	2011	Joint 17th
Kestrel	54	0.9	1.4	0.6	1.4	0.3	0.6	0.5	1	0	1	=	2013	Joint 15th
Merlin	199	7	4.2	2.7	2.4	1.4	1.8	0.5	1	0	1	Highest	2011	Joint 36th
Red-backed Shrike	375	2	4.4	11.5	7.8	4.2	5.4	4.8	4	0	4	Lowest	2011	Joint 28th
Great Grey Shrike	120	0.5	3.3	5.5	1.2	0.6	0.4	1.0	4	0	4	Highest	1978	Joint 12th
Goldcrest	2001	17	28.7	47.9	28.7	33.9	31.4	23.3	20	0	20	Highest	2012	Joint 40th
Skylark	1434	16.6	22.4	27.4	7.4	48.4	15.2	11.8	8	0	8	Highest	2012	Joint 38th
Swallow	324	3.6	9.9	9.9	2.1	1.7	2.1	7.3	4	0	4	Highest	2012	Joint 27th
Greenish Warbler	25	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.8	0.3	0.0	1	0	1	Highest	2009	Joint 3rd
Yellow-br Warbler	203	1.1	2.3	3.3	1.9	2.8	5.2	9.3	12	0	12	Lowest	2012	3rd
Wood Warbler	119	0.5	2.3	3	2.3	2	1.2	1.5	2	0	2	Highest	2012	Joint 15th
Chiffchaff	1768	4.9	16.6	24.7	30.9	32.5	44.9	55.5	101	0	101	Highest	ever	1st
Willow Warbler	4320	44.2	80.9	94.6	66.6	56.3	65.8	57.5	93	0	93	Highest	2008	14th

Ringing summary

Species	Total 1948–2013	Average/year							Ringed 2014		Highest/Lowest	Since	Year ranking	
		1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2013	adult	pullus				Total
Blackcap	6543	15.2	59.8	158.7	149.4	105.1	115.5	126.3	183	0	183	Highest	2011	8th
Garden Warbler	3940	30.7	78.1	74.6	88.2	59.2	50.4	30.3	36	0	36	Highest	2010	Joint 45th
Barred Warbler	474	5.3	9.6	12.9	4.8	5.8	6.4	6.5	14	0	14	highest	2006	Joint 9th
Lesser Whitethroat	918	7.4	11.9	19.7	12.1	13.4	20.3	16.0	20	0	20	Highest	2012	Joint 13th
Whitethroat	1103	19.7	28.8	17.7	10	14.7	14.8	10.3	16	0	16	Highest	2012	Joint 25th
Subalpine Warbler	37	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.6	1.5	3	0	3	=	2013	Joint 1st
Moltoni's Warbler	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	1	0	1	Highest	ever	1st
Grasshopper Warbler	162	0.8	2.4	3.6	2.1	2.2	3.5	4.0	4	0	4	Highest	2012	Joint 10th
Icterine Warbler	143	1.5	2.6	1.5	1.7	3	2.9	2.8	2	0	2	Highest	2012	Joint 20th
Sedge Warbler	617	7	9.5	7.8	11.2	5.5	14.1	14.0	14	0	14	Highest	2011	Joint 13th
Blyth's Reed Warbler	21	0	0	0	0.1	0.6	0.6	2.0	2	0	2	=	2013	Joint 3rd
Marsh Warbler	166	0.8	1.7	2.1	3.2	2.9	4.3	4.0	6	0	6	Lowest	2012	Joint 5th
Reed Warbler	358	1	4.9	4.8	4.4	7.5	10.9	5.5	5	0	5	=	2013	Joint 24th
Wren	1048	20.8	15.7	15.6	8.1	15.6	19	16.3	36	0	36	Highest	1976	2nd
Starling	31271	269.2	337.4	662	746.9	445.8	424.3	533.5	370	176	546	Highest	2010	23rd
Ring Ouzel	548	1.4	16.8	12.7	13.1	4.6	3.6	6.5	10	0	10	Highest	2012	Joint 22nd
Blackbird	25671	414.7	591.2	464	384	277.3	306.1	286.3	275	0	275	Lowest	2012	48th
Fieldfare	686	7.9	33.6	12	5.7	2.7	3.7	6.3	3	0	3	Lowest	2011	Joint 47th
Song Thrush	3307	19	76.6	72.1	52	53.1	40.1	40.8	88	0	88	Highest	1998	Joint 9th
Redwing	10153	139.1	184.1	231.3	143	144.4	121.8	111.8	406	0	406	Highest	ever	1st
Spotted Flycatcher	881	7	16.6	15.6	13.2	19.9	10.4	12.3	10	0	10	Highest	2012	Joint 37th
Robin	10045	64.3	196.1	196.9	199.7	143.8	132.2	171.8	272	0	272	Highest	2012	10th
Bluthroat	317	5.4	4.6	5.3	6.4	4.2	4.5	3.0	1	0	1	Lowest	2012	Joint 60th
Red-flanked Bluetail	2	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.3	1	0	1	Highest	2010	Joint 1st
Red-b Flycatcher	63	1.6	1.3	0.5	1.1	0.8	0.7	0.3	2	0	2	Highest	2006	Joint 6th
Pied Flycatcher	1035	16.2	23.1	24	14.3	12.6	9.1	8.0	7	0	7	Lowest	2012	Joint 54th
Black Redstart	167	1.6	2.5	4.2	3.4	3	1.4	1.0	3	0	3	=	2013	Joint 19th
Redstart	1935	36.6	41.4	51.4	20.4	24.7	14	10.0	6	0	6	Lowest	2007	60th

Ringing summary

Species	Total 1948–2013	Average/year							Ringed 2014		Highest/Lowest	Since	Year ranking
		1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2013	adult	pullus			
Whinchat	697	14.7	14.4	11.5	13.5	7	6.6	4.3	3	0	3	Highest	2011
Stonechat	62	0.6	1.1	2.1	1	0.7	0.6	0.3	1	0	1	Highest	2010
Wheatear	18980	505	407.8	284	229.8	142.8	212.8	235.5	93	0	93	Highest	2011
Duncock	2901	11.2	50.2	67.8	65.7	41.1	35.3	46.3	94	0	94	Highest	2000
House Sparrow	2013	46.7	31.4	11.8	22.2	18.3	35.3	47.5	81	0	81	Highest	2012
Tree Sparrow	123	0.1	3.1	5.6	1	0.4	1.8	0.8	3	0	3	Highest	2006
Grey Wagtail	61	0.4	0.2	0.5	1.3	0.5	2.7	1.3	1	0	1	=	2013
Pied/White Wagtail	1034	13	15.5	10.7	10.7	14.6	18.8	43.3	14	0	14	Lowest	2009
Meadow Pipit	12144	214	243.3	191.1	162	140.6	183.9	166.5	133	5	138	Highest	2012
Rock Pipit	10101	208.6	187.8	221.4	171.6	108	82.6	40.5	32	0	32	Lowest	2011
Brambling	4427	15.1	29.6	139.1	79.5	72.1	63.6	108.3	284	0	284	Highest	1977
Chaffinch	3438	26.4	30.4	69.5	103.6	59.1	40.1	31.8	44	0	44	Highest	2010
Hawfinch	31	0	0	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.9	1.5	1	0	1	Highest	2012
Common Rosefinch	270	1	1.2	3.4	5.9	6	6.3	8.0	11	0	11	Highest	2011
Greenfinch	543	0.2	2.3	4.8	8.2	9.1	28	4.3	7	0	7	Highest	2010
Linnit	214	0.2	2.7	7.2	2.9	1.9	4.5	5.0	11	0	11	Highest	2008
Twite	7074	114.1	69.1	162	96.5	96.6	110.3	117.3	138	0	138	Highest	2012
Lesser Redpoll	38	0	0	0	0	0	1	7.0	4	0	4	Lowest	2012
Common Redpoll	927	7	6.4	34.2	8.2	6.5	17	33.0	34	0	34	Highest	2010
Goldfinch	26	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.6	1	1.3	2	0	2	Lowest	2012
Siskin	662	3.6	9.4	7.3	7.7	11.4	19.6	18.0	13	0	13	Highest	2012
Snow Bunting	680	8.9	8.7	31	1.6	11.6	4.8	1.0	1	0	1	=	2013
Yellowhammer	74	0.4	1.8	1.4	1.5	0.7	1.2	0.8	1	0	1	=	2013
Little Bunting	42	0.4	0.8	0.4	1	0.8	0.4	1.0	1	0	1	=	2013
Reed Bunting	548	3.4	7.8	14.2	8.9	8.4	7.5	10.5	17	0	17	Highest	2005
Total									5885	1238	7123	Highest	1998
													16th

Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed during 2014

Species	Total	Average/year						
	1948–2013	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2013
Bean Goose	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
White-fronted Goose	3	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0
Greylag Goose	101	0	0.4	0.7	0.8	2.3	5.8	0.3
Barnacle Goose	4	0	0.1	0	0.2	0	0.1	0.0
Shelduck	5	0	0	0.1	0.3	0.1	0	0.0
Wigeon	58	0.1	0.6	0.3	0.4	4.1	0.2	0.3
Teal	88	0.3	2	1	0.5	3.2	1.4	1.0
Pintail	2	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0	0.0
Shoveler	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Pochard	3	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0.0
Ring-necked Duck	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Tufted Duck	26	0	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.7	0.5
Scaup	8	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0.2	0.5
Lesser Scaup	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.3
Long-tailed Duck	19	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.0
Velvet Scoter	2	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0.0
Goldeneye	23	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.0
Red-breasted Merganser	3	0.1	0	0	0.2	0	0	0.0
Goosander	3	0	0.2	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Quail	8	0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0
Red-throated Diver	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Swinhoe's Petrel	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5
Cormorant	7	0.2	0.3	0.2	0	0	0	0.0
Grey Heron	23	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.3
Little Grebe	10	0	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.1	0	0.0
Great Crested Grebe	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0
Red-necked Grebe	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Slavonian Grebe	3	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0
Marsh Harrier	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Hen Harrier	2	0	0	0	0.2	0	0	0.0
Goshawk	2	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0	0.0
Spotted Crake	20	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.3
Little Crake	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Baillon's Crake	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Great Bustard	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Golden Plover	27	0	1.2	0.5	0	0.6	0.4	0.0
Grey Plover	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Little Ringed Plover	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0
Dotterel	4	0	0.2	0.1	0	0.1	0	0.0
Whimbrel	18	0.2	0.6	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5
Curlew	221	0.3	1.6	1.9	5.6	5.4	5.7	4.0
Black-tailed Godwit	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0
Bar-tailed Godwit	9	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.2	0	0	0.0

Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed during 2014

Species	Total	Averages/yr						
	1948–2013	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2013
Knot	109	1.1	2.5	2.8	1.2	2	1.1	0.0
Ruff	41	0.3	1.3	1.5	0.1	0.9	0	0.0
Curlew Sandpiper	6	0	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.1	0	0.0
Temminck's Stint	2	0	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0
Purple Sandpiper	193	2.5	5.6	5.7	0.9	0.7	3.5	1.0
Baird's Sandpiper	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Little Stint	123	0.2	1.2	4.9	0.6	5.2	0.2	0.0
White-rumped Sandpiper	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Pectoral Sandpiper	5	0	0.3	0.2	0	0	0	0.0
Semipalmated Sandpiper	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Red-necked Phalarope	5	0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0	0	0.0
Grey Phalarope	3	0	0	0.3	0	0	0	0.0
Green Sandpiper	63	0.2	1.4	0.8	1.5	1.7	0.3	1.0
Spotted Redshank	3	0	0.3	0	0	0	0	0.0
Greenshank	15	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.3
Wood Sandpiper	19	0	0.9	0.6	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0
Redshank	294	1.3	8.7	10.1	2.7	4.8	1.2	1.5
Great Snipe	2	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0	0.0
Pomarine Skua	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0
Little Auk	14	0.3	0.2	0	0.1	0.7	0.1	0.0
Black-headed Gull	51	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.4	1.2	0.6	0.0
Little Gull	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.3
Iceland Gull	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0
Glaucous Gull	40	0.4	1	1.3	0.8	0.4	0.1	0.0
Turtle Dove	82	0.9	0.6	3.5	2.1	0.8	0.3	0.0
Scop's Owl	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.2	0.0
Snowy Owl	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Short-eared Owl	18	0.1	0	0.8	0.8	0	0.1	0.0
Swift	19	0.1	1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0
Hoopoe	3	0	0	0.1	0.2	0	0	0.0
Great Spotted Woodpecker	34	0.3	0.8	0.7	0.2	0.8	0.1	1.3
Red-footed Falcon	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Peregrine	6	0	0.6	0	0	0	0	0.0
Golden Oriole	9	0	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0	0.3
Brown Shrike	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0
Isabelline Shrike	2	0	0.1	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Lesser Grey Shrike	7	0.3	0.2	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.0
Woodchat Shrike	13	0.1	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.2	0	0.0
Jackdaw	16	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.2	0.0
Rook	10	0.2	0.2	0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.5
Carion Crow	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.75
Hooded Crow	49	0.2	1.6	2.2	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.0

Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed during 2014

Species	Total	Averages/yr						
	1948–2013	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2013
Raven	29	0	0.3	1.4	0.9	0	0.3	0.0
Firecrest	2	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.0
Blue Tit	2	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0.0
Great Tit	15	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.25
Coal Tit	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0
Short-toed Lark	8	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0	0.0
Woodlark	3	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Shore Lark	5	0	0.1	0.2	0	0.2	0	0.0
Sand Martin	8	0	0.5	0.2	0.1	0	0	0.0
House Martin	150	1.5	4.1	7.9	0.9	0.5	0.1	0.0
Arctic Warbler	39	0.4	0.9	1	0.3	0.6	0.1	1.5
Pallas's Warbler	4	0	0	0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0
Hume's Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0
Radde's Warbler	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0
Dusky Warbler	7	0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0
Western Bonelli's Warbler	2	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.1	0.0
Sardinian Warbler	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	14	0.1	0	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.3
Lanceolated Warbler	42	0.1	0.2	0.9	1	0.7	0.9	1.0
River Warbler	11	0	0.2	0	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.5
Savi's Warbler	4	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0
Thick-billed Warbler	2	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0
Booted Warbler	8	0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.0
Sykes's Warbler	2	0.1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.0
Melodious Warbler	13	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0
Aquatic Warbler	25	0.2	0.8	1	0.2	0	0.3	0.0
Paddyfield Warbler	12	0.1	0	0	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.5
Great Reed Warbler	8	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0	0.2	0.0
Waxwing	250	0.3	1.1	1.9	0.3	0.1	3.1	45.5
Treecreeper	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Rose-coloured Starling	3	0	0.2	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Daurian Starling	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0
Dipper	17	0.1	0.7	0	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.0
White's Thrush	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Hermit Thrush	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Grey-cheeked Thrush	2	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Eyebrowed Thrush	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0
Dusky Thrush	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0
Black-throated Thrush	2	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.3
Mistle Thrush	24	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.3	0.1	0	0.5
Brown Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Rufous-tailed Robin	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0

Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed during 2014

Species	Total	Averages/yr						
	1948–2013	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2013
Thrush Nightingale	38	0.2	0.2	1	0.8	0.9	0.4	0.8
Nightingale	31	0	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.3
Siberian Rubythroat	2	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.0
Collared Flycatcher	2	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.3
Rock Thrush	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0
Black-eared Wheatear	3	0	0.2	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Pied Wheatear	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0
Yellow Wagtail	11	0.4	0.5	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.0
Citrine Wagtail	7	0.2	0.1	0.2	0	0	0.1	0.3
Richard's Pipit	13	0	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3
Blyth's Pipit	2	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.0
Tawny Pipit	3	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0
Olive-backed Pipit	10	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0	0.3
Tree Pipit	683	9.2	14.2	20.2	12.3	6	4.4	2.8
Pechora Pipit	10	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.0
Red-throated Pipit	9	0	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0
Pallas's Rosefinch	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0
Bullfinch	309	0.3	1.2	1.1	1.5	7.2	19.4	0.5
Arctic Redpoll	25	0	0.3	0.3	1.1	0.2	0.4	0.5
Two-barred Crossbill	7	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.6	0.0
Common Crossbill	575	12.7	13.7	2.6	0.9	16	10.2	3.5
Parrot Crossbill	37	0	3.5	0	0.1	0.1	0	0.0
Citrl Finch	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0
Lapland Bunting	105	1.4	2.2	0	0.5	0.6	1.2	11.3
Savannah Sparrow	2	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.0
Song Sparrow	3	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0
White-crowned Sparrow	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
White-throated Sparrow	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Pine Bunting	2	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.0
Ortolan Bunting	20	0.2	1.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0
Cretzschmar's Bunting	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0
Yellow-browed Bunting	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0
Rustic Bunting	17	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.4	0	0.0
Chestnut-eared Bunting	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0
Yellow-breasted Bunting	6	0.1	0.3	0.2	0	0	0	0.0
Pallas's Reed Bunting	2	0	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0
Black-headed Bunting	4	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0.1	0.0
Red-headed Bunting	5	0.1	0.4	0	0	0	0	0.0
Corn Bunting	4	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.0
Chestnut Bunting	2	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.0
Tennessee Warbler	2	0	0	0.2	0	0	0	0.0
Blackpoll Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0

Ringling recoveries and controls

Notes

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

Order of data for each record:

Ring number - age (and sex if known) 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, but exact year unknown

Sex: M = male, F = female

Condition at recovery:

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

Listed below are ringing recoveries and controls which were reported to Fair Isle in 2014 by the BTO.

Whooper Swan

'Red BLL'

ZY0886	3	28/02/2012	Martin Mere, Lancashire
	W	08/10/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (662km, 7°, 953 days)
	W	21/10/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (662km, 7°, 966 days)

'Yellow BTB'

A8846	3	05/08/2013	Fornholar, Ljosavatnsskard, Iceland
	W	20/04/2013	Tjorn, Svarfadardalur, Eyf, Iceland
	W	29/09/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland

'Yellow BTD'

A8848	3	05/08/2013	Fornholar, Ljosavatnsskard, Iceland
	W	20/04/2013	Tjorn, Svarfadardalur, Eyf, Iceland
	W	29/09/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland

The red ringed bird 'BLL' was also sighted at Welney on 9th December 2013, the last sighting before it arrived on Fair Isle on 8th October. This bird became quite a fixture and was fed by an islander during its stay. It was last sighted on 1st December.

The two birds with yellow rings were ringed as siblings in Iceland and were photographed flying over Fair Isle together on 29th September.

Barnacle Goose

'Green SAZ'

CA36622	6M	28/07/2000	Ny-Alesund, Svalbard
	VV	07/10/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (2212km, 193°, 5184 days)

'Green SID'

CA36790	5F	28/07/2000	Ny-Alesund, Svalbard
	VV	07/10/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (2212km, 193°, 5184 days)

'Green NAP'

PB02669	3F	02/08/1996	Storvannet, Svalbard
	VV	07/10/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (2210km, 193°, 6640 days)

'Green PVI'

CA36589	6F	23/07/1999	Ny-Alesund, Svalbard
	VV	07/10/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (2212km, 193°, 5555 days)

An interesting set of sightings, all of Svalbard ringed birds seen in strong winds on 7th October. 'Green SAZ' is thought to be the male partner of 'Green NAP'; an 18-year old female. They were also sighted together on the Norwegian island of Tenna on spring migration in May 2013. There are three previous records of birds ringed in Svalbard to be seen on Fair Isle, with one bird shot in North Haven in 1962 and two individuals sighted in 1982, their colour marks read in the field.

Fulmar

FH06161	1	15/08/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	SR	14/09/2014	Winterton-on-Sea, Norfolk

The bird was found exhausted on the shore and released, its fate unknown. A variety of birds were retrapped on the island during the summer, mostly birds that had been ringed within the previous six years.

Storm Petrel

With so many Storm Petrels trapped in 2014 it was inevitable that there would be a lot of movement between sites, with the table above showing all those movements for which details have been received. In addition to those birds that moved to and from Fair Isle in 2014, a small number of movements from birds trapped in 2013 were reported during the year, and are included in a separate table below.

The results show a classic pattern for this highly mobile seabird, with most of the birds caught being those that were originally trapped in the last couple of years at other non-breeding colonies. Only two of those that were trapped on Fair Isle in 2014 had been ringed as chicks, both on Mousa: in 2011 and, more unusually, 2002. A few other birds from previous years are presumed to be failed breeders, although there is the chance that the occasional breeding bird could be caught (and this may refer to some of the Fair Isle ringed birds from previous years that were retrapped in 2014).

The locations are all fairly typical, with most movements involving Shetland, Orkney and Highland and a scattering from elsewhere in the United Kingdom, mostly from established petrel ringing sites, but including the first movement of a Fair Isle trapped Storm Petrel involving Cornwall.

Table 1. Summary of Storm Petrels retrapped on Fair Isle in 2013 and 2014, with their site and year of ringing.

Trapped in 2014

Site	Year of ringing														
	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006	2005	2004	2002	2001	1999	1997	1996	1995
Fair Isle	105	29	9					1	1		1		1	1	1
Sumburgh	29/11	4/0	1/0			1/0									
Mousa			1/2	0/1						0/1					
Other Shetland		0/2													0/1
North Ronaldsay		2/9	1/2	0/1											
Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney	3/0	1/1	1/1												
Other Orkney	2/1	1/7			0/1				0/1						
Eilean nan Ron, Highland	2/1	3/2													
Other Highland		0/3	0/1									0/1	0/1		
Western Isles			0/1					0/1							
Craig Stirling, Aberdeenshire		0/2													
Isle of May, Fife		0/1													
Whitburn, Co. Durham	1/1														
Lizard, Cornwall		0/1													
Ballyreagh, Northern Ireland			0/1												
Donegal, Ireland		0/1													
Annagh Head, Mayo, Ireland	0/2														
Norway	1/1	0/4						0/1	0/1						
Faeroe Islands	2/3	7/0	2/0												
Portugal	0/2														

Key: Fair Isle to other site / other site to Fair Isle

Trapped in 2013

Site	Year of ringing														
	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006	2005	2004	2002	2001	1999	1997	1996	1995
Holms of Ire, Sanday, Orkney			0/1												
Highland			0/2	0/1											
Western Isles			0/1												
Aberdeenshire			0/2		1/0										
Annagh Head, Mayo, Ireland			0/1												
Norway			1/0												
Faeroe Islands		0/1													

A late report involves a bird trapped on Fair Isle in July 2000 which was recaptured in Portugal in June 2007

Key: Fair Isle to other site / other site to Fair Isle

The foreign locations featured in the table are the only three countries from outside the UK and Ireland from which Storm Petrels have been found on Fair Isle and are ones that tend to feature regularly in Storm Petrel movements to and from Fair Isle. Pre-2014 totals from the countries involved include Norway (114 ringed in and 71 found in), Faeroes (18/46) and Portugal (16/9). Other locations in which Fair Isle ringed Storm Petrels have been recovered in previous years are France, Iceland, Portugal, South Africa and Switzerland, along with birds recovered off the coasts of west Africa and South Africa (and one other confidential site in the North Atlantic). The high ratio of birds ringed in Fair Isle and moving to the Faeroes compared to movements in the other direction is interesting.

Leach's Petrel

NB84931	4	28/07/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	09/08/2014	Sumburgh, Shetland (41km, 30°, 377 days)

The first record of a Leach's Petrel ringed on Fair Isle to be retrapped on Shetland, although it is an extremely common movement for Storm Petrel. There was also a record of a bird ringed on Fair Isle on 11th August 2013 that was retrapped on 2nd and 6th July 2014, see species accounts for further details.

Swinhoe's Petrel

NB84938	4	07/08/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	09/07/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland

The returning bird that was present until 31st July 2014 (see the species accounts for details)

Gannet

1348019	1	15/07/1997	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	03/02/2014	Seamill, West Kilbride, North Ayrshire (471km, 205°, 6047 days)
1226644	1	18/07/1989	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	11/08/1990	Baie d'Audierne, Finistere, France (1301km, 189°, 389 days)

The fourth record of a Fair Isle ringed Gannet to be recovered in France, with three records of deceased birds and another found moribund.

Shag

1319451	1	22/06/1995	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	10/03/2014	East Voe of Scalloway, Scalloway, Shetland, details missing on this bird
1393283	1	27/06/2006	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	07/08/2014	Lamb Holm, Holm, Orkney (102km, 225°, 2963 days)
1387797	1	24/06/2014	Halcro Head, South Ronaldsay, Orkney
	XF	24/11/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (114km, 41°, 153 days) Dead by roadside - weather casualty?

90 birds were colour ringed on Fair Isle in 2014, which will hopefully increase the re-sightings of this enigmatic species. In addition a number of adults were retrapped during the year at their nest sites, including birds ringed as chicks in 1997, 2002 and 2003 and adults ringed in 2006 (2) and 2012 (2).

Oystercatcher

FC00922	1	16/06/1994	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	06/09/2014	Phisligar, Orkney (48km, 248°, 7387 days) Not fresh
FH74749	6	26/02/2013	Boosterstown, Dublin, Ireland
	VV	21/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (746km, 23°, 419 days)

The sighting of a colour-ringed individual from Ireland constitutes the first record of a bird to be ringed in Ireland and found on Fair Isle. The bird was in a small group of birds and this early spring sighting may suggest it was staging on Fair Isle and heading further north to breed.

Dunlin

NB84729	3	04/08/2003	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	23/08/2014	Paraque Natural Marismas del Odiel, Huelva, Spain (2503km, 189°, 4037 days)

Just the second Dunlin to be ringed on Fair Isle and recovered in Spain. The other recovery was of a bird ringed on 23rd May 1961 and found dead in Oviedo on 10th May 1962.

Ringed Plover

NW28943	6	14/04/2008	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	07/08/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 1941 days) Road casualty

Woodcock

EX79935	3	08/11/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	26/12/2014	Naran, Donegal, Ireland (666km, 219°, 48 days)

The third Woodcock to be ringed on Fair Isle and recovered in Donegal.

Arctic Skua

ES18157	1	20/06/1994	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	16/09/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 7028 days) Taken by Bonxie
EG84893	1	23/07/2009	Foula, Shetland
	X	13/08/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (71km, 161°, 1482 days) Taken by Bonxie

Great Skua

HT78296	1	11/07/2002	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	19/07/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 4026 days) Ring only
HT78352	1	28/06/2006	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	08/05/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 2506 days)
3042377	1	29/06/2004	Graamyre, Skyvoy, Sandoy, Faroe Islands
	R	13/05/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (377km, 132°, 3240 days)
MA22013	1	15/07/2008	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	12/04/2014	Wimereux, France (996km, 169°, 2097 days)
MA22500	1	20/07/2010	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	28/10/2014	Rod, Tombsletta, Rade, Ostfold, Norway (705km, 92°, 1561 days)
MA31415	1	03/07/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	24/01/2015	near Den Hoorn, Texel, The Netherlands (823km, 152°, 205 days)
HT55256	1	26/06/1995	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	08/08/2014	Petten, Schagen, Noord-Holland, The Netherlands (846km, 153°, 6983 days)
HT12467	1	24/07/1992	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	28/12/2014	Ward Hill, Fair Isle, Shetland (1km, 270°, 8192 days)

Just the second Faroese-ringed Great Skua to be recovered on Fair Isle and the second record of a Fair Isle ringed bird to Norway, along with the fourth and fifth records of Fair Isle ringed birds to The Netherlands. A post-mortem of HT55256 was carried out in The Netherlands: it was found to be a female and had some plastic in its stomach. A number of rings were found on Fair Isle, mostly birds that had died before fledging, whilst HT12467 was found as a ring only, so is likely to have died many years before it was found.

Puffin

EW47084	6	02/07/2012	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	04/02/2014	Plage du Grand Crohot, Gironde, France (1638km, 180°, 582 days)
ET84117	1	06/07/2005	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	05/08/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 2952 days)

EW19968	6	19/07/2010	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	27/02/2014	Saint-jean-de-monts, Vendée, France (1417km, 182°, 1319 days)
ET06192	1	29/06/1998	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	23/02/2014	Pointe de la Loire, Ile de Noirmoutier, Vendée, France (1399km, 182°, 5718 days)
EW47147	1	26/07/2012	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	01/04/2014	Mimizan, Landes, France (1704km, 180°, 614 days) Violent weather
EP44190	6	26/07/1990	Fair Isle, Shetland
	SR	17/02/2014	Anglet, Pyrenees-Atlantiques, France (1784km, 180°, 8607 days)

Five Puffins washed up on the shores of France around the same period create a worrying set of recoveries and suggests a very poor winter for Fair Isle birds. Many birds from other colonies suffered a similar fate, with the birds discovered amongst a large wreck of auks during a period of violent weather.

In addition, a number of birds were retrapped on Fair Isle during the summer, including individuals ringed in 1986, 1990, 1996, 1999 (2), 2000 and 2003, with several others that had been ringed in the previous ten years. The oldest recorded bird on Fair Isle is just short of 30 years old (the national record is almost 37 years old) and this year saw the second and fourth oldest birds to be retrapped on the isle.

Black Guillemot

The only retrapped bird was caught near North Light where it had been ringed as an adult approximately a year earlier.

Razorbill

M36673	1	30/06/1980	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	17/02/2014	Bruichladdich, Islay, Argyll and Bute (503km, 214°, 12285 days)
M91739	1	28/06/1999	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	01/03/2014	Rhoscolyn, Isle of Anglesey (722km, 195°, 5360 days)
K27908	6	09/07/2011	Garbh Eilean, Western Isles
	X	21/06/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (328km, 57°, 1078 days) Not fresh

The bird found freshly dead on the shores of Islay becomes Fair Isle's oldest recorded Razorbill by a considerable margin, at 33 years, seven months and 18 days old. The previous longevity record for Fair Isle was a bird aged 28 years and six days.

Guillemot

R09391	6	04/07/2000	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	13/03/2014	Algeroyosen, Fjell, Hordaland, Norway (376km, 77°, 5000 days)
R49043	1	23/07/2005	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	07/07/2014	Canna, Highland, (399km, 227°, 3271 days)
R59326	1	25/06/2010	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	09/06/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 1080 days) Poor condition - starvation
T72379	1	21/06/1992	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	11/07/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 7690 days)
T72243	1	21/06/1992	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	10/02/2014	Tommervag, Tustna, More og Romsdal, Norway (649km, 52°, 7904 days)
T10262	1	26/06/1986	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	26/01/2014	Vidlin, Shetland (97km, 17°, 10076 days) Violent weather
R59883	1	11/07/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	+	23/12/2014	Haraldssund, Kunoy, Nordoyar, Faroe Islands (406km, 319°, 165 days)

X45861	1	22/06/1996	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	03/04/2014	Vistestranden, Rogaland, Norway (416km, 99°, 6494 days)
X75675	8	24/06/1997	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	26/08/2014	Hirtshals, Nordjyllands Amt, Denmark (705km, 108°, 6272 days)

The bird found dead in Vidlin becomes the third oldest Guillemot recorded on Fair Isle, at 27 years, seven months old. The second oldest bird was 27 years, nine months and 28 days old, ringed on Fair Isle in 1980 and found dead in 2008. The oldest recorded Guillemot was ringed as a nestling on 27th June 1979 and found dead in Sweden on 22nd September 2011, making it 32 years, two months and 26 days old.

Arctic Tern

SX96450	1	30/06/1997	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	27/06/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 5841 days)
SX32382	1	22/06/1992	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	29/07/2014	Ythan Estuary, Newburgh, Aberdeen (248km, 185°, 8072)

The Arctic Tern retrapped on the Ythan Estuary in Aberdeen becomes the oldest Arctic Tern to be recorded from Fair Isle, at 22 years, one month and seven days old. The previous record was of a bird ringed on Fair Isle on 22nd June 1992 and found freshly dead (having hit wires) on Burra, Shetland on 11th August 2013, making it 21 years, one month and 20 days old. The British longevity record for this species is currently 31 years and 18 days. Two dead birds were found in breeding colonies on Fair Isle on 24th June and had both been ringed as chicks on the island, in 1996 and 2009.

Kittiwake

Birds retrapped at breeding colonies on Fair Isle included one ringed as a chick in 1999, with the others having been ringed as adults in recent years.

Great Black-backed Gull

MA22432	10	24/07/2010	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	28/02/2014	Coquet Island, Amble, Northumberland (467km, 180°, 1315 days)

One that had its ring read as it fed outside the Obs had been ringed as a chick on the island in 1994.

Rock Dove

Birds trapped at the Obs in early spring included two ringed in spring 2013 and one ringed on 9th May 2012, whilst one found dead at Quoy on 21st June had been ringed on 15th April 2010.

Collared Dove

EW47252	4	02/07/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	06/04/2014	Halkirk, Highland (159km, 222°, 278 days)

The third Collared Dove to be ringed on Fair Isle and found in the Highland region, suggesting that a proportion at least of the birds passing through Fair Isle are migrants that return south. Where there are headed in the spring isn't clear - presumably Shetland, although the majority of Shetland birds are thought to be resident according to Pennington et al. (2004).

Great Spotted Woodpecker

LE13668	3	13/10/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	20/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 189 days) Long dead

The bird was found long dead, having perished last autumn during the large invasion of this species to Fair Isle.

Skylark

One trapped in the Obs garden spiral trap on 23rd March had been ringed on 20th March 2013 in the same place.

Chiffchaff

ETK085	4	07/05/2014	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay
	R	29/05/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 22 days)

A typical movement of a north-bound migrant. In addition three birds that were ringed on the island in May or early June were retrapped during the summer, with two present until August and one until early September. These records prove that the sightings during the summer involve lingering birds, not new individuals moving through.

Blackcap

TP75772	3F	17/09/2013	Chotec, Zapad, Czech Republic
	R	12/10/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (1468km, 317°, 25 days)
N825237	3F	29/10/2008	Marismas del Palmones, Algeciras, Cadiz, Spain
	R	28/05/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (2611km, 7°, 1672 days)

The recovery of a Czech-ringed individual further demonstrates that the Blackcaps that now overwinter in Britain are originating from central and eastern Europe. The Spanish-ringed bird was the first Blackcap ringed in Spain to be recovered on Fair Isle. There is however a record of a Blackcap ringed on Fair Isle on 19th October 1959 and recovered in Elche, Alacante, Spain on 26th April 1960. In addition, details were received of two birds that were ringed on Fair Isle in 2013 that were found dead on the isle after two and three days respectively.

Lesser Whitethroat

Y479665	3	30/08/2014	Virkie, Shetland
	R	31/08/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (44km, 206°, 1 days)

An example of 'trickle-down' from Shetland, an oft-suspected, but surprisingly rarely proved movement, of autumn migrants.

Blyth's Reed Warbler

Y479662	4	22/06/2014	Virkie, Shetland
	R	25/06/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (44km, 206°, 3 days)
	R	26/06/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (44km, 206°, 4 days)

The first of this species to be ringed elsewhere and recovered on Fair Isle and an interesting insight into the migration patterns of rarities that occur here in the spring. A bird ringed on Fair Isle on 22nd October 1993 was recovered in Shetland on 29th October in the same year.

Wren

DLE832	3	16/08/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	29/08/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 13 days) Road casualty

Starling

LE13493	3J	24/06/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	07/11/2013	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 136 days)
LA56604	4M	13/05/2009	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	06/05/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 1819 days) Not fresh
LH79240	1	01/06/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	28/09/2014	Cunningsburgh, Shetland (60km, 22°, 119 days)

Blackbird

LC43435	4M	06/10/2010	Fair Isle, Shetland
	X	16/08/2014	Drangedal, Telemark, Norway (608km, 95°, 1410 days)
LE13773	5F	01/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	05/11/2014	Portland Bill, Dorset (1004km, 183°, 218 days)

The 130th Blackbird ringed on Fair Isle to be recovered in Norway and the first to be recovered in Dorset. A bird ringed on Fair Isle on 12th November 2013 was retrapped on 5th March 2014, proving that birds recorded during the winter involve at least some which linger throughout.

Redwing

An Icelandic bird ringed on 26th October 2013 was retrapped on 22nd October 2014, suggesting that some individuals use Fair Isle as a regular staging post on their migrations.

Robin

BB61406	3	14/10/2013	Warns, Nijefurd, Friesland, The Netherlands
	R	28/10/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (860km, 330°, 14 days)
	R	05/11/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (860km, 330°, 22 days)
	R	09/11/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (860km, 330°, 26 days)
D070580	4	24/09/2012	Kilnsea Clays, Spurn Point, East Yorkshire
	R	02/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (668km, 555 days)
D190322	5	01/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	18/10/2014	Guoda, Zuid-Holland, The Netherlands (927km, 155°, 200 days)

The ninth Robin ringed in The Netherlands to be recovered on Fair Isle, where it made an interesting autumn movement to the north-west, and the sixth bird ringed on Fair Isle to be recovered in The Netherlands. In addition to a couple of birds found dead within a few days of being ringed on the island, there were birds retrapped in June and August that had been ringed in April and June respectively, showing the long-stays of some spring migrants.

Wheatear

Y123085	3	18/08/2012	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	17/06/2014	Skaw, Whalsay, Shetland (101km, 23°, 668 days) hit window

Duncock

TP38674	5	31/03/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	01/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 1 days)

House Sparrow

Although, unsurprisingly, there were no movements of birds to or from Fair Isle, four birds were retrapped that had been ringed in earlier years, all of which were initially caught in 2012.

'White Wagtail'

D008678	3	13/08/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	16/05/2014	Valþjófsdalur, Onundarfjörður, Vestur-Ísafjarðar, Iceland (1323km, 303°, 276 days)

The second 'White Wagtail' ringed on Fair Isle to be recovered in Iceland.

Meadow Pipit

Two birds ringed on Fair Isle in 2013 were retrapped in 2014, on 10th April and 8th September, probably both movements involving birds that were breeding on the island (although the Fair Isle Meadow Pipit population departs in the winter).

Rock Pipit

2611325	5	20/03/2012	Cairnbulg, Aberdeenshire
	VV	31/03/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (209km, 6°, 741 days)
	VV	02/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (209km, 6°, 743 days)
	VV	05/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (209km, 6°, 746 days)
2611301	3	07/11/2011	Rosehearty, Aberdeenshire
	VV	28/03/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (208km, 8°, 872 days)
	VV	05/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (208km, 8°, 880 days)
	VV	03/05/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (208km, 8°, 908 days)

The Grampian Ringing Group's colour-ringing project of the species continues to show some interesting movements, with both of these birds being returning breeding individuals to Fair Isle. It was previously considered that Rock Pipits were mostly resident, although some of the young birds emigrated in the autumn (Dymond, 1991), but these birds have been seen moving between their ringing site and Fair Isle for several years, showing that some adults at least are regular migrants.

Chaffinch

D190354	5M	11/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	09/05/2014	Revtangen, Klepp, Rogaland, Norway (416km, 103°, 28 days)

The second Chaffinch ringed on Fair Isle to be recovered in Norway.

Brambling

D809563	5F	16/04/2013	Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	R	22/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (49km, 68°, 6 days)
	R	23/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (49km, 68°, 7 days)
	R	25/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (49km, 68°, 9 days)
D190397	5M	23/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	02/05/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 9 days)
D975424	3M	20/10/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	27/12/2014	Dallcharn, near Tongue, Highland (196km, 233°, 68 days)

Linnet

Y123067	3J	02/08/2012	Fair Isle, Shetland
	6F	05/04/2014	Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (49km, 248°, 611 days)
Y479879	3	05/09/2013	Scousburgh, Shetland
	R	12/10/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (48km, 202°, 37 days)

Y123067 was ringed along with two other juveniles and a moulting adult female within a few days of each other in 2012 and were considered to have possibly been raised on Fair Isle. One of Y123067's presumed siblings (Y123068) has also been trapped on North Ronaldsay (in September 2013) having been caught in Highland in its first autumn.

Twite

X712924	3J	20/08/2011	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	02/11/2013	Kirbist, Orkney (50km, 246°, 805 days)
X712877	3	27/09/2011	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	22/09/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 726 days)
D089290	5	05/02/2013	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	4F	18/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 437 days)
D089371	4	28/02/2013	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	R	15/10/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 229 days)
D397062	4M	18/04/2013	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	R	02/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 349 days)

	R	07/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 354 days)
	R	13/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 360 days)
D679097	5F	05/01/2014	North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	4F	11/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (49km, 68°, 96 days)
L274128	3	01/10/2011	Fair Isle, Shetland
	4F	14/01/2014	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay, Orkney (51km, 247°, 836 days)
L717353	4M	31/01/2012	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	6M	04/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 794 days)
Y982887	2	10/11/2012	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay, Orkney
	4M	16/05/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 552 days)
	4M	27/05/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (51km, 67°, 563 days)
L741407	5M	20/01/2013	Stromness, Orkney
	4M	10/06/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (115km, 56°, 506 days)

A classic set of recoveries demonstrating the connection between Fair Isle and Orkney, where the majority of Fair Isle birds spend their winter. A number of Fair Isle ringed birds were retrapped during the year, most of which were ringed in the previous couple of years, although two were first caught in spring 2010.

Lesser Redpoll

D008993	3	17/10/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	26/03/2014	Tarbet, Cnoc, Loch Lomond, Argyll and Bute (413km, 207°, 160 days)
D190746	4	24/05/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	24/05/2014	Cott, Sanday, Orkney (61km, 239°, 0 days)

Common Redpoll

HD41086	3	07/10/2013	Sore Merkeskog, Utsira, Rogaland, Norway
	R	15/10/2013	Fair Isle, Shetland (369km, 275°, 8 days)
D190747	5	24/05/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland Trapped at 1700hrs
	R	24/05/2014	Cott, Sanday, Orkney (61km, 239°, 0 days)

The movement of the redpolls to Orkney is quite remarkable. The birds were ringed at 1700 hrs on Fair Isle and re-trapped together 61 km away at 2030 hrs. This means that the birds would have had an average speed of around 17.43 km per hour (if they travelled non-stop, left Fair Isle immediately and were caught immediately on arrival in Orkney).

The recovery of a Norwegian-ringed bird on Fair Isle is also the first of this species to make the movement from Norway to Fair Isle.

Siskin

L274584	4F	07/05/2012	Fair Isle, Shetland
	R	21/03/2014	Branch End, Stocksfield, Northumberland (512km, 182°, 683 days)

The first recovery of a Fair Isle ringed Siskin to Northumberland.

Reed Bunting

D190583	5M	28/04/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland
	XF	01/05/2014	Fair Isle, Shetland (0km, 0°, 3 days)

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FAIR ISLE'S SEABIRDS IN 2014

Ciaran Hatsell

Overview

2014 proved to be one of the best seasons in recent history for the seabirds of Fair Isle, with many species experiencing their highest breeding numbers and best productivity for many years. Fulmar numbers on the plots were the highest since 2000, although productivity dipped slightly from 2013. With the exception of Gannet, all our seabirds experienced their highest populations on the monitoring plots for some years. Most notably, Arctic Skuas reached 30 AOT's (the highest total since 2010), Great Skuas reached their highest ever population at 424 AON, Razorbills had the highest count at the monitoring plot since 2006 at 25 individuals and Black Guillemot hit their highest total since 1997 at 196 breeding-plumage adults along the east coast plot.

Despite reaching the highest ever number of pairs, Great Skuas had a very poor year for breeding success. Many dead chicks were found around the breeding areas, chicks were recorded eating each other and food seemed generally in short supply. Unusually, this was in stark contrast to the majority of our seabirds, for which food seemed plentiful throughout. Remarkably, Arctic Skuas had a very good breeding season, with 14 chicks fledging from the 30 AOTs.

As a measure of just how successful the season was, having worked on Fair Isle since 2011, the Warden got to ring his first Kittiwake and Arctic Skua chicks in his tenure. For those who have lived on Fair Isle for many years, the sight of fledging auks and Kittiwakes was most welcome, even though it didn't quite distract from the bigger picture. Despite the many successes of the year, the still harrowingly reduced populations of many species served as a reminder that though the seabirds may well have had a relatively successful year, the overall picture is still looking rather bleak.

However, the year will live long in the memory of the wardening team and all at the Obs. There were many positive highlights from the seabird season including visits to the north coast Guillemot colonies to ring hundreds of chicks, actually hearing the whistling of fledgling Guillemots from the Obs, seeing Kittiwakes fledge from monitoring plots and colour ringing 72 Shag chicks. The sights, sounds and smells of the island colonies were a throwback to bygone times and it was an absolute privilege to be a part of it.

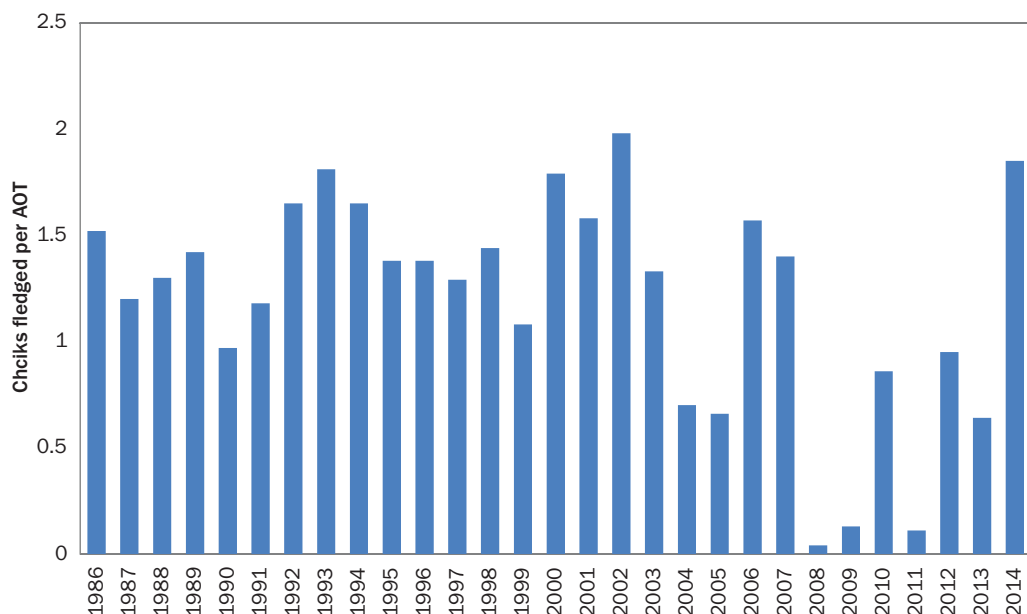
Fulmar: An increase of 29.9% was recorded at the population monitoring plots in 2014 (395 AOS), in comparison with 2013 (304 AOS). Although numbers at the monitoring plots showed a gradual, fluctuating decline, this appears to have been reversed since the early 2000s, with a fluctuating increase being noted since then. Mean Fulmar breeding success on the monitoring plots decreased (-8.4%) between 2013 and 2014, from 0.59 to 0.54 chicks fledged per AOS. The long-term trend in breeding success is

neither one of consistent increase or decrease, but rather is of relatively short-term fluctuations. Phenology records: eggs were first seen on 16th May (Wester Lother) and chicks on 17th June (Easter Lother).

Gannet: In comparison with 2013, the island population of Gannets decreased by 8.5% in 2014, from 3,924 to 3,591 AON. After a gradual increase following colonisation in 1975, a rapid expansion was noted from 2008 to 2010, although numbers have shown a slight downward trend since 2011. Gannet productivity in 2014 was 0.68 chicks fledged per AON, representing no change since 2013, when productivity was also 0.68. The 2014 figure maintains the trend for productivity values to be relatively high during the last 14 years: above 0.6 in all years with data from 2001 to 2014. The sample size of nests monitored in 2014 was 251. Phenology records: eggs were first seen on 7th April (Yellow Head) and chicks on 29th May. All chicks were ready to fledge from monitored nests by 25th September.

Shag: Long-term whole-island monitoring and plot counts have shown that the Fair Isle population of Shags has declined considerably since 1969. However, the total count from plots in 2014 numbered 24 AONs, an increase of 14.3% since 2013. It appears that the population decline may have stabilised since around 2011. Shag productivity was 189.1% higher in 2014 (1.85 chicks fledged per AON) than in 2013 (0.64). 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; however 2014 saw the highest productivity since 2002. 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: 13 in 2014 compared with 68 in 1986. Phenology records: nest material was seen being collected from 18th March, with the first eggs seen on 3rd May (Johnny's Peats).

Figure 1. Breeding success of Shags on Fair Isle, 1986–2014 (sample size of monitored nests has ranged between 12 and 95).



Arctic Skua: Numbers of breeding Arctic Skuas increased by 57.9% in 2014 to 30 AOT (from 19 AOT in 2013, the lowest number on record since Arctic Skuas became re-established on Fair Isle in the 1950s). The long-term trend in the population has been a gradual decline with occasional fluctuations. Arctic Skua productivity in 2014 was 0.47 chicks per AOT, a substantial increase on recent years, which has seen zero productivity in 2011 and 2013 and just one chick raised in 2012 (a productivity of 0.05 chicks per AOT). 2014 saw the highest productivity since 2006 and only the second time productivity has risen above 0.4 chicks per AOT since 2000. Of the 30 AOT, 12 fledged at least one chick, four failed at chick stage, six failed at egg stage and eight involved birds on territory that appeared not to attempt breeding. Pleasingly, most of the fledged chicks went on to avoid predation by Great Skuas, which has been a problem in some previous years. Phenology records: the first egg was first seen on 31st May (Buness) and a chick on 3rd July (Parks).



Plate 101. Arctic Skua, juvenile, 4th August 2014. © Alex Penn

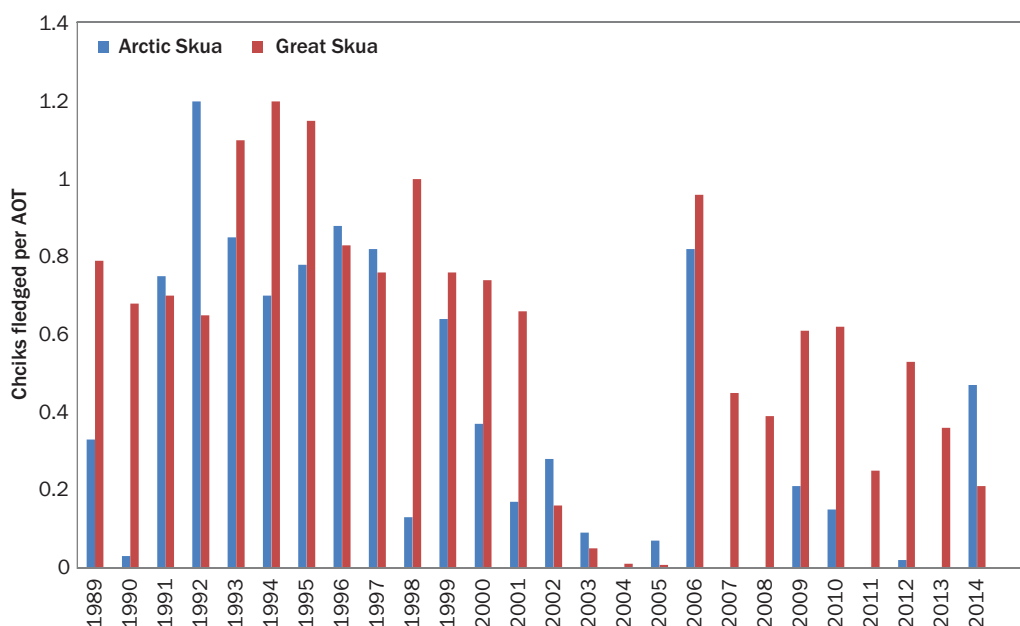


Figure 2. Breeding success of Arctic Skuas and Great Skuas on Fair Isle, 1989–2014 (data are representative of the whole island population).

Great Skua: Great Skuas increased by 59.4% to 424 AOT in comparison with 266 AOT in 2013. The overall trend for Great Skua has been a long-term increase, which was particularly rapid between 2004 and 2008, although numbers appeared to have stabilised between 2008 and 2013 until the increase this year, which is the highest number of AOT ever recorded on Fair Isle. Breeding success was 41.7% lower in 2014 (0.21 chicks fledged per AOT) than in 2013 (0.36 chicks fledged per AOT). Recent increases in the population of Great Skuas on Fair Isle have not been mirrored by breeding success, which has continued to fluctuate with no obvious pattern. Phenology records: eggs were first seen on 3rd May (Homisdale) and chicks on 11th June (Swey).

Puffin: Puffin productivity was 6.8% higher in 2014 (0.78 chicks fledged per egg laid) than in 2013 (0.73). This represents the highest productivity since 1997 on Fair Isle. In comparison with Guillemots and Razorbills, Puffin breeding success in the last decade has remained relatively high, with no years of zero productivity.

The total number of occasions when fish were observed being brought back to burrows by Puffins during a 24-hour feeding watch was 39.4% more in 2014 (152 return flights with fish) than in 2013 (109 return flights with fish). Large sandeels (>100mm) were the most common identified prey-type seen during the feeding watch in 2014 (49.7% of fish brought back were this species), then second most abundant were clupeids (16.6%); By comparison, in 2013, small sandeels were the most common prey-type (33.0%) and then gadoids (8.3%). As in other recent years, when coming ashore, the Puffins at Roskilie in 2014 were seen mostly to land very close to their burrow entrance, run very quickly the short distance to their burrow, and then disappear underground out of sight. This is possibly an adaptation to minimise predation risk from Great

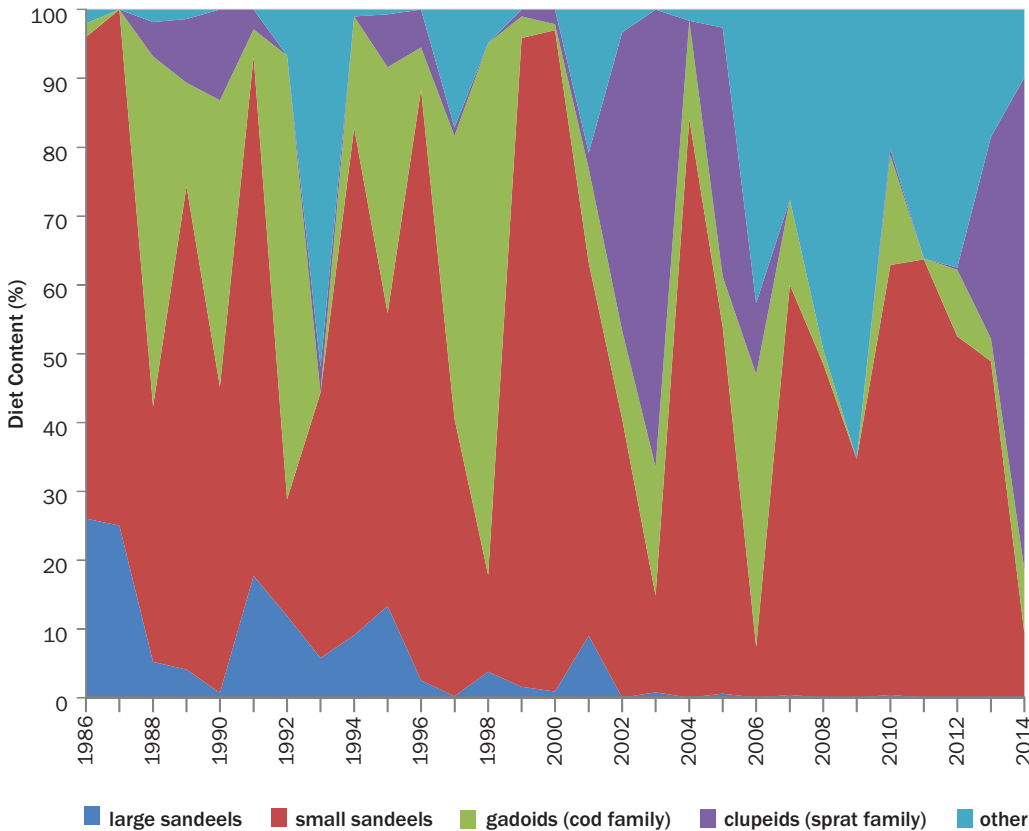
Skuas hunting the colony, but meant the identification of prey again proved to be difficult in 2014 during the 24-hour feeding watch (29.1% of feeds were too quick for prey identification, although this is less than the 52.3% recorded in 2013). In 2014, clupeids were the most abundant prey-types in food samples collected from Puffins (71.5% of fish recorded), whereas in 2013, small sandeels were the most abundant prey-types.

On average, the prey-types of longest length in Puffin food samples collected in 2014 were small sandeels (mean = 77.3mm), as was true in 2013 (mean = 33.9mm). The mean mass of food samples collected in 2014 (= mean mass of one 'beak-full' in 2014 = 1.3g, SE = 0.13) was 45.8% lower than in 2013 (mean mass = 2.6g, SE = 0.24). 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.

The dissection of some of the clupeid samples showed 12 out of 15 to be small Herring, with the other three identified as Sprats.

Phenology records: eggs were first noted on 29th May (Dronger) and chicks were first located on 30th June (Greenholm) during a productivity monitoring visit.

Figure 3. Percentages (by number) of different fish prey-types in the diet of Puffins on Fair Isle, 1986–2014 (data from collected food samples).



Black Guillemot: The number of Black Guillemots in breeding plumage counted along the east coast of Fair Isle (North Lighthouse to South Lighthouse) was 12.6% higher in 2014 (196 individuals) than in 2013 (174 individuals). The count of 196 individuals in 2014 was the maximum day-count from counts made on 2nd April and 3rd May (counts of 196 and 171 respectively). The recent trend of gradual increase continued this year, with the count being the highest since the population crashed between 1997 and 1998. Black Guillemot productivity was formerly monitored at nests in the boulder beaches along the east coast of Fair Isle. However, use of these nest sites has greatly declined, possibly due to predation by feral cats, and since 2000 either too few nests were found and accessed for any meaningful data on breeding success to be collected, or none was found. Data collected between 1987 and 2000 showed productivity fluctuating, with no obvious long-term pattern of increase or decrease. Accessible Black Guillemot nest sites are extremely rare now, and new sites containing accessible nests for productivity monitoring have not been found, despite searches being made annually since 2011.

Razorbill: Razorbill numbers at the Lericum monitoring plot increased by 13.6% in 2014 (25 individuals) compared with 2013 (22 individuals), the second consecutive year of increase. Although this is the highest count at the monitoring plot since 2006, there is little sign of a recovery from the large decline noted between 2006 and 2007. Razorbill productivity was 0.68 chicks per egg laid, a 1600% increase from the 0.04 recorded in 2013. From 1990 to 2002, productivity fluctuated but remained relatively high at between 0.47 and 0.8, but since 2003 productivity has consistently been low (<0.5) or, in four years, been zero, so the 2014 productivity figure went against the recent trend and was also the highest recorded since 1998. Phenology records: eggs were first seen on 2nd May (Mavers Geo) and chicks on 5th June (Easter Lothar).

Guillemot: Plot counts showed an increase of 45.9% in numbers of Guillemots in 2014 (1,354 individuals) compared with 2013 (928 individuals). Since 1999, the pattern of change is one of decline in numbers recorded by plot counts and whole-island counts although this has perhaps started to stabilise since 2008. In 2013, Guillemot productivity was 0.57 chicks per AIA, an increase from the zero productivity recorded in 2012 and the highest productivity recorded since 2006. From 1988 to 2002, Guillemot 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. Phenology records: the first chicks were noted on 9th June (Gunnawark)

Common Tern: One pair nested in 2014 (0 in 2013), only the second nesting attempt since 2005. Productivity was zero for Common Terns in 2014, with the single nesting pair having their three chicks predated (possibly by a cat) just before fledging. There were no breeding attempts on Fair Isle for this species in 2006–2011 and 2013, with a pair raising a single chick in 2012.



Plate 102. Arctic Tern, 30th June 2014. © Deryk Shaw

Arctic Tern: The whole-island count showed an increase of 237.9% in 2014 (98 AIA) in comparison with 2013 (29 AIA). Breeding numbers have fluctuated greatly since 1987 although a general upward trend until 2001 has now clearly been reversed. Although the species' breeding ecology, in which they often prospect for nest sites in large, cohesive flocks and do not always nest at the same site every year, may be partially responsible for the fluctuations, a genuine decline also seems to be occurring. Arctic Tern productivity was 0.06 chicks per AIA in 2014, an increase from the zero productivity of 2013. Since 2001, chicks have been raised to fledging stage in only three other years (2006, 2009 and 2012), with productivity in those years ranging from 0.03 to 0.39. Predation appeared to be the biggest problem for Arctic Terns in 2014, with cats, Great Skuas and Herring Gulls all being implicated in taking eggs, chicks and adults. Phenology records: eggs were first seen on 25th May (Buness) and chicks on 24th June (Shalstane). Second attempts were presumably responsible for birds still incubating on 15th August.



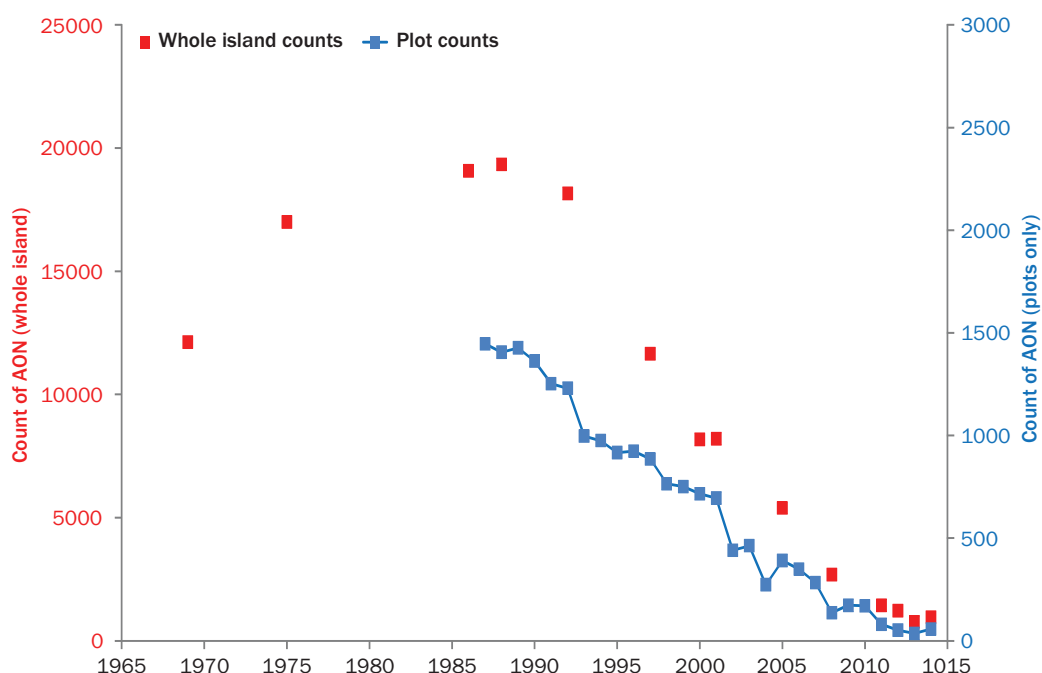
Plate 103 (left). Richard Cope with Arctic Tern chick, 6th July 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell



Plate 104 (right). Arctic Tern feathers from assumed cat-predated corpse, 27th June 2014. © David Parnaby

Kittiwake: Since 1987, Kittiwakes have severely declined on Fair Isle. However, plot counts in 2014 (58 AON) revealed an increase of 61.1% compared with 2013 (36 AON, the lowest on record). Similarly, the 2014 whole-island count of 963 AON equated to a 24.9% increase since 2013 (771 AON, also the lowest count on record). Productivity for Kittiwake was 0.62 chicks per AON, a welcome increase from the zero productivity recorded six times in the last decade (including 2011, 2012 and 2013) and the highest recorded productivity since 2000. No nesting attempts were made in 2014 at six of the ten monitoring plots (South Gunnawark, Lericum, Stroms Heelor, Shaldi Cliff, Da Swadin and Trottie Kame). No Kittiwakes have yet returned to the productivity plot at Lericum since a substantial landslide occurred there in the winter of 2010/2011. Phenology records: adults were first seen collecting nest material on 18th May, eggs were first seen on 30th May (Inner Sound o' Holms) and chicks on 17th June (Dog Geo).

Figure 4. Population change of Kittiwakes on Fair Isle, 1969–2014 (whole island counts and plot counts of apparently occupied nests - AON). Plot counts for each year are the sum of counts from ten study plots.



Other seabird studies on Fair Isle in 2014: Seabird tracking work carried out by the RSPB continued once again this year (see report on pages 174–175).

In addition to this, 90 Shags were colour ringed as part of the long-term studies carried out by the Centre of Ecology and Hydrology around north-east Scotland. This included 18 fully grown birds and 72 chicks. The aim of this project is to look at dispersal, survival, distribution and movement patterns of juvenile and adult Shags. This represented the best year for colour ringing Shags since the project began on Fair Isle in 2012, with only 24 colour ringed previous to 2014. It was very encouraging to see broods of two and three all surviving to fledging age.

FIRST AND LAST MIGRANT DATES

David Parnaby

Species	Earliest ever	Earliest 2014	Latest ever	Latest 2014
Quail	30.04.61	26th May	13.10.89	8th October
Osprey	25.04.66	18th May	04.11.35	19th May
Corncrake	10.04.66	7th May	03.11.77	19th September
Dotterel	25.04.73	6th May	03.12.86	14th October
Whimbrel	09.04.13	14th April	12.12.1907	19th September
Common Sandpiper	05.04.83	22nd April	02.11.1908	7th October
Green Sandpiper	08.04.79	26th April	12.11.70	14th September
Arctic Skua	04.04.88	25th April	25.10.	19th September
Great Skua	17.03.09	5th April	16.11.	25th November*
Sandwich Tern	23.04.07	26th June	18.09.77	26th June
Common Tern	25.04.83	12th May	18.10.75	2nd September
Arctic Tern	No data	24th April	30.10	6th October
Lesser Black-backed Gull	02.02.11	21st March	12.12.57	17th October
Turtle Dove	23.04.71	no records	01.11.82	no records
Cuckoo	17.04.87	10th May	08.10.77	21st September
Swift	16.04.13	21st May	26.10.75	14th September
Wryneck	18.04.81	22nd April	17.10.74	29th September
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.84	19th May	08.11.93	10th September
Goldcrest	27.02.	12th March	19.12.03	19th November
Sand Martin	02.04.89	5th April	19.10.78	19th September
Swallow	31.03.02	5th April	02.11.84	27th October
House Martin	10.04.11	24th April	02.11.11	28th October
Wood Warbler	14.04.81	3rd May	06.10.73	11th September
Chiffchaff	12.03.73	25th March	no data	19th November
Willow Warbler	25.03.10	7th April	23.11.27	10th October
Blackcap	27.03.12	5th April	20.12	25th November
Garden Warbler	21.04.68	7th May	20.11.76	9th October
Lesser Whitethroat	20.04.09	26th April	08.11.	16th October
Whitethroat	11.04. pre 1959	25th April	21.10.78	8th October
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.00	25th April	29.10.07	13th June
Grasshopper Warbler	07.04.02	24th April	23.10.00	25th October*
Icterine Warbler	08.05.13	26th May	13.10.76	26th August
Sedge Warbler	19.04.87	25th April	11.11.75	14th September
Marsh Warbler	18.05.13	5th June	06.10. pre 1963	15th August
Reed Warbler	28.04.01	10th May	31.10.80	30th September
Ring Ouzel	16.03.88	30th March	18.12.1909	17th November
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.49	9th May	26.10.85	1st October
Bluethroat	22.03.1908	30th April	13.11.83	5th October
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.83	25th April	29.10.85	8th October
Black Redstart	09.02.1989	27th March	22.12.86x	25th November
Redstart	12.04.1981	20th April	11.11.81	17th October

Species	Earliest ever	Earliest 2014	Latest ever	Latest 2014
Whinchat	14.04.81	23rd April	26.11.90	17th October
Wheatear	13.03. pre 1959	25th March	19.11.59	17th November
Yellow (flava) Wagtail	25.03.54	25th April	20.11.57	16th October
Pied (alba) Wagtail	20.02.03	4th March	17.11	14th October
Tree Pipit	14.04. pre 1963	21st April	09.11.1908	15th October
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.36	20th September	01.11.1908	20th October
Common Rosefinch	08.05.77	21st May	30.11.91	30th September
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.64	no records	01.11.00	no records
Rustic Bunting	25.04.80	no records	08.11.75	no records
Little Bunting	04.04.58	29th April	19.11.75	4th November

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



Plate 105. Red-backed Shrike, Obs, 4th June 2014. © Steve Arlow

Bridled Tern, 16th June 2014; the first for Fair Isle

David Parnaby

After a superb spring for migrants, there was boundless enthusiasm from the wardening team and an unshakeable belief that we would get more goodies. So much so that, as we headed out to Buness to count the Arctic Tern colony, Richard's guess for the 'how many tern nests would we find?' was 'we'll not get to count them, we'll find something good first'. As predictions go, it was one of the better ones I've heard on Fair Isle!

Sure enough, the team had no sooner lined up ready for the first 'sweep' across the rocks when an unfamiliar call caught my attention and made me look up. The 'honking' tone put me in mind of Common Gull, but wasn't quite right, but before I'd had the chance to think what it could be, a dark-backed tern with an obvious white forehead cruised past just a few metres away.

It was the first time that I can recall that a bird had left me lost for words as my brain struggled to get my mouth to make a series of grunts and my arm to point in the direction of the bird in question. The team realised something was up and flags, clickers and even cameras were thrown to the floor as we all realised that we had a stunning Bridled Tern circling us with a small knot of Arctic Terns. Phone calls were quickly made and the rest of the Obs staff, visitors and interested islanders quickly assembled to witness this first for Fair Isle, whilst Shetland listers set about booking spaces on the afternoon plane.

Identification was relatively straightforward, with only Sooty Tern likely to present a potential confusion species. In comparison with that species, the Bridled Tern showed a paler mantle (contrasting with the darker flight feathers) and a longer, tapering white 'bridle' that extended beyond the eye - the point-blank views allowed these features to be easily seen. The call was also distinctive, with a simple 'honking' being quite different from the 'kerwackity-wack' call of Sooty Tern.

Luckily the bird continued to perform on Buness (although occasionally wandering off for up to an hour) for the rest of the day. Rumours that birders on the incoming flight got the pilot to change his route to avoid flushing the bird remain unconfirmed! After that, its appearances became more erratic, being present on Buness on the morning of 17th, then moving to Shalstane that evening, where it was seen again the following morning. Although it was not seen at all during the morning of 19th, it reappeared at Shalstane that afternoon, with Shetland birders who had come in to twitch the bird also discovering a Laughing Gull with it! That proved to be the final sighting though, with the bird relocating to the Farne Islands the following day, where



Plate 106. Bridled Tern, Bunness, 16th June 2014. © Roger Riddington

it had spent a large part of the previous summer. It must have travelled at an average speed of 14mph, assuming it flew the 270 miles non-stop in a straight line and departed immediately after being seen and was discovered as soon as it arrived at the Farnes.

The Bridled Tern spent a large part of its time on Fair Isle displaying to Arctic Terns, joining in display flights and bringing fish into the colony, much as it had done for most of the previous summer on the Farne Islands (with Common and Sandwich Terns also the subject of its affections there), although, like then, it failed to elicit any response.

It was very much an unpredicted first for Fair Isle (and Shetland), being just the 24th British record and it seems remarkable it was drawn in by the small tern colony here (less than 100 pairs of Arctic Terns nested on the island in 2014), especially as it seemed in such a hurry to get back to the Farne Islands when it left (ignoring several other suitable tern colonies elsewhere on the Northern Isles and the east coast on its way south). What made it even more special for me was that in 2013, the bird had frequented two sites where I had previously lived (the Farne Islands and the Ythan Estuary) where it was seen by both of my 2014 assistant wardens and an attempt to twitch the bird was foiled by fog, with a second attempt scuppered by the bird choosing the day I headed south to disappear for a few days! I think this element of 'personal history' for me with the bird, combined with this being a self-found lifer on my own patch, made this my bird of the year, against some very stiff competition.

Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler, 16th May 2014; the first for Fair Isle

Richard Cope

I was returning from SW census and checking the traps on what was a pleasant, sunny day with a moderate south-westerly breeze. Curiously enough as I walked through the Plantation trap and didn't see a bird I thought to myself 'oh well no Subalpine Warbler in here this time'.

As I walked up to towards the Vaadal trap a small *Sylvia* flew ahead of me. I was initially suspicious that it looked good for a Subalpine Warbler, so was trying to see clinching features as it moved towards the back of the trap (I was cautious not to run straight in after it, having had a female dive back over my head last season when I thought it was certain to be caught). This bird had other ideas and flew round to the ramp by the catching box before I was able to confirm any features. Having caught it I returned to the Observatory to process it.

In the hand, it showed a greyish head, prominent red eye-ring and pale throat. The breast had an orangey-buff wash to it. The tail was greyish-brown, with white outer tail feathers and white restricted to the tips of the next three feathers. The shape of the feathers I considered to be suggestive of an adult bird (age 6), although the possibility of it being a first-year bird that had lost its tail couldn't be ruled out. It had orangey coloured legs. The pattern of white on the tail feathers was suggestive of 'Western Subalpine Warbler', although the biometrics were inconclusive.



Plate 107. Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler, 16th May 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell

Having ruled out 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' and completed processing the bird, it was released into the Obs garden, where it remained until 27th May. It was not especially shy and would spend a lot of time feeding in the relatively open areas outside the assistant wardens' office and in the small stand of roses next to the back gate, where it was admired by many visitors. During its stay, it was not heard to call (which would have made a big difference...).

The bird would almost certainly have been accepted as a 'Western Subalpine Warbler' (the description above was written assuming that was the bird's identity), but DNA analysis of a couple of feathers that were shed when the bird was in the hand changed things dramatically.

Professor Martin Collinson of Aberdeen University kindly analysed the DNA for us and sent us an email stating 'D190710 (our ref Subalp49), is a *moltoni*! The cytb sequence is novel but 1 bp different from *moltoni* sequence m3 recorded from multiple birds in northern Italy, 1–10 bp different from other *moltoni* sequences, but 40 bp different from any other Subalp (*albistriatas*)'.

At the time, 'Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler' was still considered a subspecies of Subalpine Warbler, but the BOU split the two before the end of the year and so this bird became the first Fair Isle record of the species. Shetland had already amassed two of the three previous records of the species (both in 2009), although it is likely that others have been overlooked in the past, particularly given the difficulty of identifying anything other than spring males.

Subalpine Warbler has become an expected visitor to Fair Isle; the species has been recorded annually since 2000, with 34 records in that time (including those seen in 2014). In all there have been 89 records of Subalpine Warbler on Fair Isle, 15 of those have been assigned to 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' (this includes records published with the caveat that they were 'showing the characteristics of' this subspecies), with the rest mostly published without their race being specified and assumed to largely relate to 'Western' birds. The statistics from the last four years make interesting reading, with seven 'Western', five 'Eastern' and two unraced females recorded, suggesting that there may be more to learn about the occurrence of the various forms of Subalpine Warbler on Fair Isle as the identification criteria are further clarified. Interestingly, DNA analysis also proved that the 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' trapped in the spring was of the form that breeds in Sicily and central and southern Italy, the first British record of this race.

Ringling details

Ring no.	D190710
Age /Sex:	4 Female
Wing:	62mm
Fat:	2/8
Pectoral Muscle:	2/3
Weight:	8.5 grams
Tail length:	51 mm
Time of ringing:	1255hrs

Glossy Ibis, 16th May 2014; the first for Fair Isle

Ciaran Hatsell



Plate 108. Glossy Ibis, over Obs, 16th May 2014. @ David Parnaby

The day had started with the re-appearance of the Hermit Thrush (which had been found on 13th, but had disappeared on 15th) in Furse, pleasing the newly arrived visitors who were whisked off the plane to their first mega of the day - classic Fair Isle! After a good bit of *hirundine* passage during the morning but not much else, Richard trapped an interesting female 'Subalpine Warbler' in the Vaadal just before lunch. It was tentatively identified as a 'Western Subalpine Warbler', but DNA later proved it to be Fair Isle's first and Britain's fourth Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler! Then the day went from the Subalp to the ridicul-ibis; the Moltoni's wasn't to be the only first for Fair Isle that day. Dum dum duuuuuuum.....

Judd Hunt, the leader of a tour group from Shetland, had been on superb rare finding form, turning up the Hermit Thrush on the 13th. Just after lunch he found the second first for the island of the day: a Glossy Ibis circling da Houll! The Obs team scrambled into life, rushing down to find it had disappeared! After going up and down the island a few times, the distinctive purple-sheened beast was eventually picked up flying just north of the Obs and gave decent fly-over views. It was last seen attempting to land on Da Water but after being mobbed by most of the breeding waders and skuas on the island, decided Fair Isle wasn't the best place to be for a rest and headed off south.

On 26th May a Glossy Ibis was again seen over the south-east of the island before passing over the airstrip (to the delight of Deryk Shaw, who had missed the previous record as he was crewing on the MV Good Shepherd IV and thought he was going to miss this one as he was on fire duty waiting for an incoming plane!) and appeared to head off high to the north.

There were a number of records of Glossy Ibis from the Northern Isles during 2014 and, remarkably, it appeared that just one bird was involved in sightings from Unst to North Ronaldsay between 6th January and 12th June as it commuted from Orkney to Shetland on a regular basis. It was assumed that both sightings on Fair Isle involved the same bird on one of these trips.

With the upsurge in British records in recent years it was perhaps one of the more predictable firsts for Fair Isle and one which may well become more of a regular around the Northern Isles in years to come. Nonetheless, for the island residents and Fair Isle list keepers, it was a cracking bird to see and added another coat of gloss to an already superb spring.

27th April 2014; a day to remember

Ciaran Hatsell

I jumped out of bed on the morning of 27th April, eager to see what the day had to offer. The preceding days had seen more migrants passing through and a south-east wind gave us that extra spring in our steps. Having been around Buness, I was coming back down and had two birds drop out the sky together; a male Reed Bunting and a pale, dumpy lark. It was to be the first of three Short-toed Larks that day!

Census was fairly productive, with a good selection of migrants including several Wrynecks, lingering 'Western Subalpine Warbler', Great Grey Shrike and then Rich turned up a smart female Red-breasted Flycatcher just before lunch. Then, it all went a bit nuts.



Plate 109. Cretzschmar's Bunting, 29th April 2014. © Roger Riddington

Deryk Shaw phoned the Obs just after lunch to say he'd had a male Cretzschmar's Bunting at Burkle! He'd been photographing the Red-breasted Fly (an addition to his garden list) and out it had hopped! AAAA!! Panic ensued, I dived in the Transit with the rest of the team and before we knew what was happening, we were whisked off down south. Leaping out of the van, bins at the ready, we were greeted by Del and his camera, with some mouth-watering, frame-filling pictures of an incredible blue and orange spud. But the real thing had done a bunk and he'd lost it behind the wall of his garden. AAAA!!! A search commenced - a search that was to last the rest of the day...

The birding was brilliant. Around every corner there seemed to be new birds turning up. Warblers flitting out of every ditch, Redstarts perching on every other fenceline, Ring Ouzels hopping around every field. A splendid 'Blue-headed Wagtail' bounced around, Tree Pipits burst from every tussock. A little investigation confirmed at least three Short-toed Larks! We were almost tripping over Wrynecks! It was brilliant! But still no sign of that little Cretz...

Parners then turned up something equally as incredible, with the stunning, angelic apparition of a male 'Caspian Stonechat' along the Meadow Burn. What a stunner! Was this ever going to stop? Sometimes Fair Isle, if anything, is too rare! This eastern gem showed well and was to go on to spend the entirety of May on the isle, admired by a steady stream of visitors.



Plate 110. 'Caspian Stonechat', 14th May 2014. © Deryk Shaw

As light faded, the foot soldiers admitted defeat and headed back to the Obs for conciliatory/celebratory beer and as always, lots of cake. It was an odd atmosphere in the Obs that night, one of such euphoria and dejection in equal measure.

The roll call for Log that evening read:

CRETZSCHMAR'S BUNTING, CASPIAN STONECHAT, Western Subalpine Warbler, three Short-toed Larks, Red-breasted Flycatcher, seven Wrynecks, Great Grey Shrike, 'Blue-headed Wagtail', 33 Willow Warblers, 32 Chiffchaffs, 25 Blackcaps, three Sedge Warblers, three Lesser Whitethroats, two Whitethroats, ten Redstarts, three Black Redstarts, Whinchat, five Pied Flycatchers, 27 Tree Pipits, 13 Ring Ouzels, 167 Fieldfares, nine Redwings, 33 Song Thrushes, Mistle Thrush, 28 Robins, six Dunnocks, 22 'White

Wagtails', Tree Sparrow, 51 Bramblings, eight Common Redpolls, Crossbill, Chaffinch, 12 Reed Buntings, 13 Snow Buntings, 41 Swallows, six House Martins, two Sand Martins, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, three Green Sandpipers, two Jack Snipes, seven Whimbrels, 'Kumlien's Gull', Iceland Gull, 174 Wheatears, 204 Meadow Pipits, two Linnets, two Collared Doves, seven Woodpigeons and two Tufted Ducks.

It wasn't until the next day that, after a frantic police-style search of several areas, we decided to step back, take a deep breath, stop looking and just carry on with census. Amazingly, it worked! It didn't take long for Rich to re-find the bunting, feeding in the Gilly Burn alongside a Wryneck - classic Fair Isle! After hurdling several fences and reaching Rich, I put my bins up and there it was. It was more blue and orange than an Atlantic sunset! I nearly knocked Rich to the floor celebrating as he reminded me we had to stay on it till everyone else arrived! It was a great moment as islanders and visitors alike gathered round to watch a fifth for Britain in glorious sunshine. This place is crazy.

The Cretzschmar's Bunting was the icing on the cake for what was the best day of birding I'd ever had in April. It was to be just the beginning of what was to be arguably the best spring migration season of all time on Fair Isle...

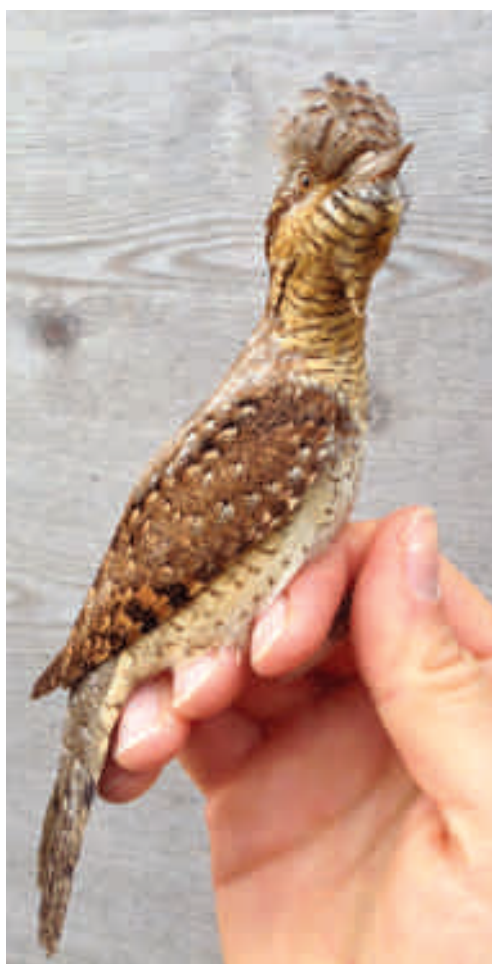


Plate 111. Wryneck, 23rd April 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell



Plate 112. Pied Flycatcher, 27th April 2014. © Deryk Shaw

COMMITTEE DECISIONS ON RARITIES FROM 2013

Species	Date, Location, Observers	Decision
Swinhoe's Petrel	27 Jul, South Haven, R.Cope, D.McGibbon, W.Miles <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Swinhoe's Petrel	7 Aug–3 Sep, South Haven, K.Lawrence, W.Miles, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Honey-buzzard	28 May, Malcolm's Head, P.Harvey	Accepted by SBCRC
Hobby	29 May, Springfield, P.Harvey	Accepted by SBCRC
American Golden Plover	12 Sep, North Light, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Temminck's Stint	7–8 Jun, Da Water and Utra, R.Cope, R.Riddington <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	9–10 Oct, North Naaversgill and Hoini, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Pectoral Sandpiper	6 May, Stackhoull, R.Cope <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Pectoral Sandpiper	22–24 Jul, Kirki Mire and Da Water, G.Gordon <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Roseate Tern	6 Jul, South Light, G.Gordon <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Ring-billed Gull	9–14 Jan, Setter and Parks, W.Miles <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Nightjar	26 Sep, Gully, G.Gordon, R.Cope <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Red-eyed Vireo	6 Oct, Easter Lother, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Short-toed Lark	9–10 Oct, Havens, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Greenish Warbler (two)	26–27 Aug, Kenaby, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Arctic Warbler	4 Sep, Gully, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Arctic Warbler	5–6 Sep, Kristal Kame then Pund, R.Cope, W.Miles <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Arctic Warbler	13 Sep, Taft, G.Gordon <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Arctic Warbler	14 Oct, Obs, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Dusky Warbler	13 Oct, North Feltsigeo, I.Andrews <i>et al.</i> (<i>same as one on 15th</i>)	Accepted by SBCRC
Dusky Warbler	15–17 Oct, Lower Leogh, J.Hunt <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Dusky Warbler	15 Oct, Setter, G.Gordon <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
'Western Subalpine Warbler'	3–14 Jun, Plantation then Obs, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
'Western Subalpine Warbler'	17–27 Jun, Plantation then Obs, R.Cope <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
'Western Subalpine Warbler'	5 Jul–14 Sep, Haa then roaming, B.Dykes <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'	25 May, Gully, W.Miles <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Subalpine Warbler (unraced)	26 Jun, Plantation then Chapel, R.Cope <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Lanceolated Warbler	25 Sep, Da Water, K.Britten, C.Gooddie, G.Hogan <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Lanceolated Warbler	28 Sep, Shirva, C.Gooddie, G.Hogan <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Lanceolated Warbler	6 Oct, Wirvie Burn, G.Gordon <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Lanceolated Warbler	20 Oct, North Shirva, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
River Warbler	5–6 Jun, Schoolton, W.Miles, T.Murphy, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Booted Warbler	22–28 Aug, Chalet then roaming, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Sykes's Warbler	26–30 Sep, Lower Stoneybrek, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Melodious Warbler	15–16 May, North Raeva then Field, R.Cope <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Paddyfield Warbler	16 Jun, Charlie's Trees, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Paddyfield Warbler	22 Oct, Barkland, G.Gordon, A. & L.Leitch <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	27 May–2 Jun, Obs, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	7 Sep, Gully, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	11 Oct, Springfield, W.Miles <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	12–15 Oct, Schoolton, G.Gordon <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
White's Thrush	25 Sep, Bullock Holes', J.Beaumont, C.Thomas <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Grey-cheeked Thrush	11 Oct, School, A.Tongue <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Thrush Nightingale	8–10 May, Pund, W.Miles <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Thrush Nightingale	29 May, Haa, P.Harvey <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC

Species	Date, Location, Observers	Decision
Thrush Nightingale	29 May, Utra, W.Miles <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Thrush Nightingale	26–30 Aug, North Haven then Haa and Schoolton, D.Shaw, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Siberian Rubythroat	21–23 Oct, Upper Stoneybrek, G.Gordon <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Collared Flycatcher	9 Jun, Mast, R.Cope, W.Miles, D.Parnaby, R.Riddington <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Citrine Wagtail	12–21 Aug, Landberg then roaming, G.Gordon, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Citrine Wagtail	16–19 Aug, Da Water, D.Hennessy, J.Wood <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Citrine Wagtail	31 Aug–3 Sep, Easter Lothar Water, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Olive-backed Pipit	25 Sep, Obs, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Olive-backed Pipit	2 Oct, Sheep Cru, N.Andrews, C.Holden, C.Fulcher & L.Woods	Accepted by SBCRC
Olive-backed Pipit	8 Oct–2 Nov, Hesswalls then roaming, W.Miles <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Olive-backed Pipit	14 Oct, Midway, G.Gordon	Accepted by SBCRC
Red-throated Pipit	12–24 Oct, Utra and Haa, W.Miles <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
'Homemann's Arctic Redpoll'	25–28 Sep, Nether Taft, Gully & Burkle, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Two-barred Crossbill (8)	27 Jul–4 Aug, Hoini, S.Davies, R.Hughes, W.Miles <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Two-barred Crossbill	4 Aug, Buness, D & S. Parnaby	Accepted by BBRC
Ortolan Bunting	12–19 May, South Harbour, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Ortolan Bunting	10–14 Jun, Schoolton and Hjukni, M.Neumann, H.& T.Hyndman	Accepted by SBCRC
Rustic Bunting	19 May, Hill Dyke, K.Kelly <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC
Rustic Bunting	3 Jun, South Raeva, D.Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by SBCRC

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

Purple Heron	16 Oct, North Raeva	Found not proven by SBRC
Pallid Harrier	3 Jun, Da Water then roaming	Found not proven by BBRC
Upland Sandpiper	25 Sep, Furse	Found not proven by BBRC
Red-necked Phalarope	23 May, Mid Geo	No description received
Roller	11 Jun, North Light	Found not proven by BBRC
'Coues's Arctic Redpoll'	14–23 Oct, South Light and Boini area	Found not proven by SBCRC

Recently published records from previous years:

'Black-bellied Dipper'	28 Apr–6 May 1951 Gully, K.Williamson <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	30 Mar–5 Apr 1983 Gully, N.J.Riddiford <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	9–15 Apr 1984 Gully, P.V.Harvey, K.Osborn, N.J.Riddiford <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	1–4 Apr 1985, Gully, P.V.Harvey, N.J.Riddiford, K.B.Shepherd <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	26 Mar 1986, Wirvie, M.G.Penningtn, N.J.Riddiford, A.Whittaker <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	7–17 Apr 1998 Gilly Burn, C.Holt <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	30 Oct–4 Nov 2000 Gully, D.Shaw <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	26 Oct–5 Nov 2005 Wirvie and roaming per Fair Isle Recorder	Accepted by BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	26–31 Mar 2006 Obs, M.Warren <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'	6 Jun 2011, Schoolton, N.J. & E.Riddiford <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
'Eastern Grasshopper Warbler'	20 Sep 2012, Obs, W.Miles, J.Moss, D.Parnaby, B.Rosser <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC and BOURC
Arctic Warbler	12–14 Aug 2011 Schoolton, N.J.Riddiford <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Western Bonelli's Warbler	17–18 Sep 2008 Hjukni Geo, P.Mayer <i>et al.</i>	Accepted by BBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	5 Nov 2011, Dronger	Found not proven by BBRC

Key to abbreviations:

BBRC - British Birds Rarities Committee, **BOURC** - British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee,

SBRC - Scottish Birds Records Committee, **SBCRC** - Shetland Bird Club Records Committee.

CETACEANS AND OTHER MARINE WILDLIFE

David Parnaby

For recording purposes Fair Isle cetacean sightings include all those in 'Fair Isle waters' (i.e. half way from Fair Isle to Shetland, usually made from the Good Shepherd) 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.



Plate 113. Humpback Whales, 16th October 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell

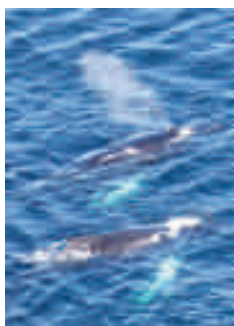


Plate 114. Humpback Whales, 16th October 2014. © Logan Johnson

Humpback Whale

Megaptera novaeangliae

Vagrant; one previous record in Fair Isle waters (August 2001)

Two of these magnificent animals were first seen from Quoy as they passed South Harbour on 16th October. They then spent over an hour circling off the south-west of the island before coming in very close to Malcolm's Head and the west cliffs as they headed north.

Minke Whale

Balaenoptera acutorostrata

Annual visitor in small numbers, most records from May to September, usually seen singly

The first of the year in Fair Isle waters was seen from the Good Shepherd on 8th May, with land-based sightings in the spring on 14th and 22nd June. Autumn sightings consisted of a single off Meoness on 28th September and two sightings from the Good Shepherd and one from Bunes from 11th–14th October.

There were also sightings of singles from the Good Shepherd in Shetland waters on three dates from 3rd–29th May and six individuals on five dates between 21st August and 14th October.

[Cuvier's Beaked Whale

Ziphius cavirostris]

Vagrant; no previous records

One was reported five miles off Fair Isle on 7th June. Although potentially the first live beaked whale to be recorded in Fair Isle waters (a Cuvier's Beaked Whale was washed up dead on Fair Isle in 1949 and Sowerby's Beaked Whale *Mesoplodon bidens* is known to occur in Shetland waters), with no further details the record must remain unconfirmed.



Plate 115. Risso's Dolphins, 10th September 2014. © David Parnaby

Risso's Dolphin

Grampus griseus

Annual visitor, most records in August and September, usually in groups of up to a dozen

A good series of sightings began with one off North Light on 25th August, with four from the same location on 9th September, six off Da Burrian the following day and one off Buness on 24th September. The following month saw four, including a calf, off South Light on 9th, with six from North Light on 11th October.

[Bottle-nosed Dolphin

Tursiops truncatus]

Vagrant: no confirmed records (a possible was noted five miles north of Fair Isle on 7th June 2003)

Three animals believed to be this species were seen off Buness on 11th October. Unfortunately, with no description received, the record (which would represent the first confirmed Bottle-nosed Dolphins for Fair Isle, a surprisingly rare species in Shetland waters, where they are possibly overlooked) remains unsubstantiated.

White-sided Dolphin

Lagenorhynchus acutus

Scarce visitor, most records from July to October, usually in small groups

The only record was five off North Light on 25th August.

White-beaked Dolphin

Lagenorhynchus albirostris

Regular visitor, most records from July to September, usually in small groups

The only record from land was of four off North Light on 25th August at the same time as the above species, but there were also a group of around 20, including calves, bowriding the Good Shepherd on 28th August, with four also seen from the boat in Fair Isle waters on 2nd September.



Plate 116. Killer Whales © Richard Johnson

Killer Whale

Orcinus orca

Annual visitor, often with several sightings of individuals or small groups during the year. Can occur in any month, but most regular between March and September

The first sighting of the year in Fair Isle waters was of around 20 animals seen 15 miles east of the island from a yacht on 7th June. A bull and two juveniles were amongst six seen off North Light on 13th June. One of the more remarkable cetacean sightings of the year was two (including a male) that came close into the shore in South Haven at half past midnight on 1st July, surprising the crowd gathered there for Storm Petrel ringing. July also produced five (including two bulls) off North Light on 14th whilst the only sighting in August was on 21st, when there were three seen from the Good Shepherd four miles north of Fair Isle. Five on 24th September put on a good show around the north of the island and the three that moved down the east coast the following day may have been part of the same group.

In addition, there were three on 20th May and a young male on 28th October in Shetland waters from the Good Shepherd.

Harbour Porpoise

Phocoena phocoena

Recorded in small numbers from May to October

The first was off Lerness on 1st April, with three singles in May off Meoness. There were up to four on five dates in June and four dates in July produced sightings of up to three. The five records in August were restricted to the last ten days of the month and peaked at 18. There were up to 11 on seven September dates, with two off Bunness on 3rd October the last of the year.

In addition, there were records from the Good Shepherd in Shetland waters of up to 12 on five dates between 7th June and 9th November.

Unidentified cetaceans

Sightings of a large whale, with no visible fin, in Fair Isle waters on 7th June and the left-hand leaning blow of a large cetacean 1.3 miles north of Fair Isle on 19th June may both have related to the same animal, which was thought to have possibly been a Sperm Whale. Another large cetacean was again seen from the Good Shepherd on 1st July.

Unidentified dolphins were seen on 7th June, 5th August (two), 6th September (two) and 11th September (probably a White-beaked Dolphin).

Other Marine Wildlife

Grey Seal

Halichoerus grypus

Although the first pup was born on the rather early date of 28th September, it proved to be another very disappointing breeding season, with a minimum of just 41 pups counted. Large haul-outs of adults were regularly seen at various locations during the year, although they were not counted.

Common Seal

Phoca vitulina

One was in South Harbour regularly from 25th March to late April and there was one in North Haven from late October into early December.

Basking Shark

Cetorhinus maximus

Recorded for the second year in succession with one, estimated at about four metres in length, off Skadan on 29th July.



Plate 117. Grey Seals, Muckle Uri Geo, 24th September 2014. © Ian Andrews

A REPORT ON THE RESEARCH INTO KILLER WHALES OBSERVED AROUND FAIR ISLE

Andy Foote & Filipa Samarra

A recent research programme on Killer Whales around Scotland started in 2006, with the development of a sightings network built up through talks in local community centres and village halls around the mainland coast and on Shetland. This was followed up by field seasons mainly based in Shetland during 2007–2009. Whilst the dedicated fieldwork provided valuable data on the behaviour of particular groups, it was the sightings reports and photographs from local naturalists, fishermen, coast guards and of course the Fair Isle Bird Observatory, which proved a vital source of broader information on the occurrence of Killer Whales around Scotland's shores. This so-called 'Citizen Science' proved most effective when contributors were able to provide high quality photographs, which could then be used for 'photo-identification', in which distinctive markings on the Killer Whale's fin and back can be used to recognise individuals.

What quickly became apparent from these photographs was that the same Killer Whales were being seen around Scotland each year, and that these individuals were most frequently encountered around the north-east of Scotland and the Northern Isles during the Common Seal pupping season in the summer. Furthermore, these individuals appeared to stay in relatively stable groups of on average five individuals. In total, seven of these groups have been identified and in addition to two males who are often encountered travelling alone, this totals approximately 45 individuals. These groups appear to regularly join up and form a temporary association between two or more groups, sometimes for socialising, other times also for hunting. The same groups were seen moving between Caithness, Orkney, Fair Isle and Shetland. However, they have only rarely been sighted on the west coast of Scotland, with just a handful of observations of these groups off St Kilda, North Rona and the Shiant. Most of the observations of hunting behaviour suggest that these individuals are mainly feeding upon seals when they are sighted close to shore, with the whales often cruising right up against the shoreline in relatively shallow water. They have also been observed chasing and apparently feeding upon Eiders whilst the ducks were moulting. They may also take other prey such as Otters and Harbour Porpoise. The observations are largely biased towards those made close to shore and it would be of great interest to better understand the broader habitat usage and diet of these individuals.



Plate 118 (left).
Photo-identification shot of 997/19 taken in Kolgrafafjordur, Iceland in February 2013.
© Filipa Samarra

Plate 119 (right).
Photograph of 997/19 taken in June 2011 off Fair Isle during an encounter in which the group tried to wash a seal from a skerry using their wake.
© David Parnaby



We have also been able to investigate longer-range movements of these individuals through photo-identification. One group has been photographed during several different years around the Faroe Islands, where they were seen chasing Eiders. Interestingly, some individuals were also matched to the photo-identification catalogue of the Marine Research Institute of Iceland. The photographs in the Iceland catalogue were from the 1980s and 1990s and were mainly from the south-east of Iceland, in an area where, at that time, the Icelandic summer-spawning Herring stock would overwinter. During those months large aggregations of Killer Whales could be encountered in this area as they fed on the dense Herring shoals. The individuals that were photographed both in Scotland and Iceland, were photographed in several different years in Iceland, and seemingly always on the Herring grounds during observations when they were feeding on Herring. This raised several questions, including whether these individuals were still seasonally moving between Iceland and Scotland, or whether the move to Scotland had been a more permanent one. Additionally, it suggested that these individuals may shift in their diet when they moved from Iceland to Scotland. This would be in contrast to many other well-studied populations of Killer Whales, which have very specialised diets.

Recent research in the waters around Iceland has re-established this link between Scotland and Iceland and has addressed some of these questions. A team led by Dr Filipa Samarra has re-identified these same individuals

previously sighted off both Scotland and Iceland, but this time in a new location, on the west coast in Kolgráfjörður. This change in location is likely due to the shifts in the distribution of the Icelandic Herring stock. Thanks to the efforts of the research team in Iceland and the network of observers in Scotland, this has led to the first records of movement between the two locations within the same year. For example, an adult female with a distinctive nick in her dorsal fin and scars on her 'saddle patch' (ID number 997/19), has been recorded in Iceland during the past two winters and was one of the first Killer Whales to be photographed in Kolgráfjörður in 2015, but has also been photographed during the past summers in Scottish waters. This included an encounter off Fair Isle in June 2011 in which a Killer Whale group, including whale 997/19, appeared to be trying to wash a Grey Seal from a submerged skerry using their wake. However, the observations of the research team in Iceland suggest that this same female appears to be foraging on Herring while she is in Icelandic waters. The importance of fully understanding the ecology of these top marine predators across their range can perhaps be illustrated by observations of another female (IF-4/21) often seen in association with 997/19. This female was observed by the research team in Iceland in March 2014, but when sighted in May 2014 in the Pentland Firth was in very poor nutritional condition and, based on observation in other populations, would be unlikely to have survived into 2015.

The opportunistic data collected by the Fair Isle Bird Observatory and others has greatly contributed towards our understanding of the movement, ecology and behaviour of Killer Whales in the water around Scotland. The continued work of the observatory will have an important role in the long-term monitoring of these groups to help ensure their future survival in Scottish waters.

Andy Foote

Dept of Evolutionary Biology, Evolutionary Biology Centre,
Uppsala University, Norbyvägen 18D, SE-752 36 Uppsala, Sweden

Filipa Samarra

Marine Research Institute, Skulagata 4,
PO Box 1390, 121 Reykjavík, Iceland

Sea Mammal Research Unit, Scottish Oceans Institute,
University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Fife KY16 8LB, U.K.

LEPIDOPTERA REPORT

David Parnaby, Ciaran Hatsell & Nick Riddiford



Plate 120. Red Admiral, Lower Leogh, 5th June 2014. © Ian Andrews

Butterflies

White sp?

The only 'white' recorded during the year was one unidentified to species on 18th September.

Pieris sp?

Painted Lady

In spring there were two on 29th May and singles on three further dates until 9th June. Autumn passage began on 15th July, with up to two on five further dates in the month. Sightings on ten dates in the first fortnight of August were all in single figures except for a peak of 26 on 10th and there were three further singles between 5th and 10th September.

Vanessa cardui

Red Admiral

A good spring began with early records on 27th–28th April then 11th May and up to two on six dates from 23rd–31st May. There were sightings on 13 dates from 5th–23rd June, peaking at 16 on 8th and 12 on 13th, before singles on four dates in July. A good showing in the autumn included records on 17 dates in August and 14 dates in September, with peaks of 14 on 10th August and ten on 5th and 6th September. Later individuals were recorded on 1st, 3rd, 8th and 16th October.

Vanessa atalanta

Peacock

A good showing began with one at Lower Stoneybrek on the early date of 9th April, which may have been disturbed from roosting in an outbuilding. The next was not until 21st July and there were then sightings on 12 dates in August that peaked at five on 27th, before later records on 8th (two) and 16th October.

Aglais io

Small Tortoiseshell

There were singles on 13th May and 28th July, before up to three were recorded on five dates in August and the last of the year on 9th September.

Aglais urticae

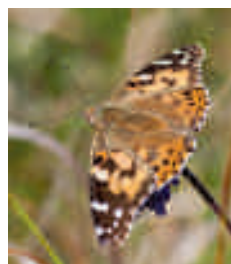


Plate 121. Painted Lady, 10th August 2014.
© Alex Penn

Plate 122 a–f (opposite).

(a) Sulphur Pearl, Obs, 22nd July 2014. © David Parnaby (b) Antler, 25th July 2014. © David Parnaby (c) True-lover's Knot, 2nd July 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell (d) Twin-spotted Plume *Stenoptilia bipunctidactyla*, 1st July 2014. © David Parnaby (e) Red Sword Grass, Obs, 4th October 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell (f) *Acleris aspersana*, 25th July 2014. © David Parnaby

Moth summary

The Observatory moth trap ran on 35 dates between 21st April and 14th September, with a total of 310 moths of 24 species trapped (18 macro moths and six micro moths).

In addition to the moths trapped, there were a number of interesting field observations. The highlight amongst these was the first Scottish record of Sulphur Pearl *Sitochroa palealis* which was photographed in the Warden's garden on 22nd July. The most northerly previous British record was from East Yorkshire and it seems most likely that this insect originated from Scandinavian populations, with the weather at that time providing suitable conditions for a North Sea crossing.

An arrival of Silver Y *Autographa gamma* from 27th May to 16th June peaked at 11 and the species was also recorded on 10th July and on 11 dates between 1st August and 9th September (with a peak count of four), with the last of the year on 30th September. That other classic day-flying migrant moth,

Table 1. Summary of moths trapped at FIBO in 2014.

Macro Moths							
Name	Scientific name	First date	Last date	No. of nights trapped	Max. catch	Max. catch date	Total individuals
Map-winged Swift	<i>Hepialus fusconebulosa</i>	25th May	13th Jul	12	9	10th Jun	39
Silver-ground Carpet	<i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i>	17th Jul		1	1		1
Garden Carpet	<i>Xanthorhoe fluctuata</i>	1st Sep		1	1		1
Northern Rustic	<i>Standfussiana lucerneae</i>	13th Jul	9th Sep	6	3	2nd Sep	9
Large Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	13th Jul	14th Sep	7	4	13th Jul	14
True-lover's Knot	<i>Lycophotia porphyrea</i>	1st Jul	2nd Aug	5	21	13th Jul	37
Ingrailed Clay	<i>Diarsia mendica</i>	13th Jul	14th Sep	7	4	13th Jul, 30th Aug	15
Small-square Spot	<i>Diarsia rubi</i>	23rd Jun	3rd Sep	9	4	2nd, 3rd Sep	24
Setaceous Hebrew Character	<i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>	2nd Sep		1	1		1
Square-spot Rustic	<i>Xestia xanthographa</i>	30th Aug	30th Aug	1	5	30th Aug	5
Shears	<i>Hada plebeja</i>	24th May	7th Jun	9	3	27th, 30th May, 6th Jun	17
Marbled Coronet	<i>Hadena confusa</i>	8th May	6th Jun	14	4	23rd, 30th May	29
Antler	<i>Cerapteryx graminis</i>	13th Jul	10th Sep	7	11	24th Jul	32
Angle Shades	<i>Phlogophora meticulosa</i>	30th May	10th Sep	4	1		4
Dark Arches	<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	13th Jul	2nd Sep	6	4	2nd Aug	12
Small Wainscot	<i>Denticuillus pygmaea</i>	30th Aug		1	1		1
Rosy Rustic	<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	30th Aug	14th Sep	8	7	2nd Sep	25
Silver Y	<i>Autographa gamma</i>	27th May	7th Jun	5	9	5th Jun	16
Micro Moths							
Name	Scientific name	First date	Last date	No. of nights trapped	Max. catch	Max. catch date	Total individuals
Diamond-back Moth	<i>Plutella xylostella</i>	24th May	7th Jun	4	18	6th Jun	21
Bilberry Tortrix	<i>Aphelia viburnana</i>	23rd Jun		1	1		1
	<i>Eana penziana</i>	24th Jul		1	3		3
	<i>Acleris aspersana</i>	24th Jul		1	1		1
	<i>Crambus lathoniellus</i>	29th May		1	1		1
	<i>Agriphila staminella</i>	24th Jul		1	1		1

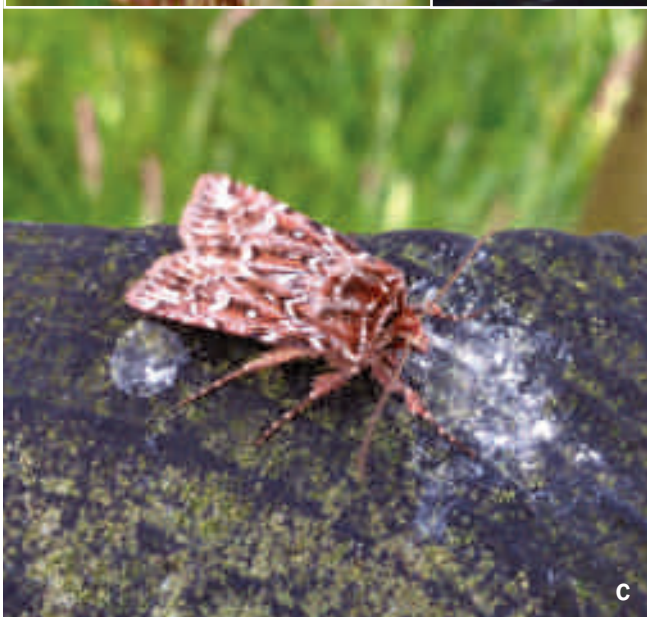


Plate 123. Moth trap and moon, Obs, 14th July 2014. © Ciaran Hatsell



the Diamond-back Moth *Plutella xylostella*, arrived in large numbers from 4th–16th June, peaking at over 250 on 5th, although these were just the individuals counted on census, the actual number is likely to have been much higher with the only other records being four on 23rd June and a single on 19th September.

A Red Sword Grass *Xylena vetusta* found on one of the Observatory's external lights on 4th October was a good record and other species which were recorded usually either around the Obs or during census included Rush Veneer *Nomophila noctuella* (Burkle, 27th April), Netted Pug *Eupithecia venosata* (Obs, 30th June), Yellow Shell *Camptogramma bilineata* in July, *Eucosma cana* (Obs, 3rd July), Nettle-tap *Anthophila fabriciana* (Pund 27th July) and *Acleris effractana* (Obs, 1st August). Angle Shades were recorded around the Obs until 11th October.



Plate 124 (above). Green Lacewing, 3rd August 2014. © David Parnaby.

Other Noteable Insects

Other species recorded during census included:

'Shetland Bee'

Bombus muscorum agricola

An early individual on 26th March then recorded regularly from May until 27th September.

Green Lacewing

Chrysoperla carnea agg.

After singles on 28th May and 5th June, which coincided with a movement of migrant moths, there were five during 20th–24th July and up to three on five dates during 1st–10th August.

OTHER NON-AVIAN HIGHLIGHTS IN 2014

Nick Riddiford & Stewart Thomson

Flora and Vegetation

Oysterplant

The aggregate count for the Oysterplants *Mertensia maritima* at and around Muckle Uri Geo was 171. The 2013 count, after the big storm of February 2013, was 157.

The counts were as follows (with 2013 counts in parentheses):

	Small	Medium	Large
Inside MUG enclosure	22 (40)	27 (47)	59 (6)
Outside, north	30 (12)	3 (0)	
Outside, east	0 (1)	1 (0)	
Outside, south	0 (0)	0 (0)	
Outside, west	1 (0)	0 (0)	
Peerie Uri Geo	0 (0)	0 (0)	
Sma Geo	12 (51)	16 (0)	

Key:

MUG = Muckle Uri Geo

There was the expected conversion of individual plants to a larger size compared with last year: small converting to medium and a strong increase of large from medium. However, there was also a pattern of suppressed recruitment. This is to be expected as the productivity from just six large plants in 2013 will be relatively low. Greater recruitment may be predicted next year from 59 large, flowering plants if the storms of winter 2014–15 allow. The Oysterplant distribution within the enclosure is still concentrated in the north-central sector but with clear evidence of an extension westwards.

In Sma Geo there was conversion of 16 from small to medium, but low recruitment to the 2014 population. There was plentiful evidence of sheep grazing in this unprotected site and this may lead to long-term suppression of this population.

Other plants

There was re-colonisation by Scots Lovage *Ligusticum scoticum*, a small non-flowering plant just outside the enclosure on the north side; and by Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima* just inside the enclosure in the north-west corner - a rosette of leaves and little more than a seedling. The one substantial maritime Curled Dock *Rumex crispus maritima* remained present while the Orache *Atriplex* population had increased. Goosegrass *Galium aparine* remained as just one plant.



Plate 125. Oysterplants at Muckle Uri Geo near South Light. © Ian Andrews

The ongoing monitoring of this location provides an excellent study of coastal plant recovery after severe storm damage. The maintenance of the enclosure remains in the capable hands of the Bird Observatory and its staff.

Orchids

The number of flowering Northern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* spikes at the Schoolton study site was way down compared with 2013 after a very wet winter, and totalled just 456. The most notable aspect was the shift in area. A patch of 20 was much further up the slope, extending the south-east sector of their distribution up towards the west end of the wall which marks the border of the field. This testified to an aquifer which was still high and the soil damper in this traditional well-drained, dry portion of the field. There were more plants north of the Meadow Burn, ten in all, including two well into the area cut over for silage - other indications of damper conditions on these slopes than usual.

Two Frog Orchids *Dactylorhiza viridis* in flower at South Green constituted a new UK grid square (HZ1970) for the species and thus an extension south-west of its Fair Isle distribution.

Other notable plants

Allseed *Radiola linoides* was also found at South Green, again constituting a new site and extension south westwards. Allseed has experienced a drastic population decline in the UK from the impact of modern agricultural practices. The plant remains abundant on Fair Isle and it is no exaggeration to put the total number at substantially over a million. The species enjoys damp, disturbed ground but retreats in the face of agricultural chemicals and pesticides. Low intensity agricultural management coupled with widespread suitable habitat makes Fair Isle a refuge for this increasingly rare species.

Another rare and declining plant which continues to prosper is the Lesser Marshwort *Apium inundatum*. The seeds of this aquatic plant remain dormant in the mud but respond quickly to disturbance and removal of denser vegetation. Thus it is an early coloniser of newly opened ditches and can “reappear” with ditch maintenance. A fine example was the appearance of several plants in the North Grind ditch, cleaned out two years previously. A strong population of the stonewort *Nitella flexilis* var. *flexilis* established itself in the same ditch. This is another early colonist, emerging from spores in the substrate once conditions become right. Clearly a lot of the ditches hold dormant seeds and spores as the plants “come and go” in different localities over the years. In recent years the stonewort has been found in the burns of Gilsetter, Vaadal and Sukka Mire.

The traditional Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica* population at Boini Mire continued to thrive and spread. A second compact but substantial colony appeared in 2014, occupying a wet patch at Chinatown. Livestock had been moved from this field for the summer months and it is now the best field on the isle for flora with, in particular, colourful swathes of Tufted Vetch *Vicia cracca*.

Meanwhile, the female plants of the Prostrate Juniper *Juniperus communis alpina* on the hill were covered in berries, including plants a mere 30 cm across. Several islanders of long memory also noted the phenomenon and said that in all their life time they had never seen the like. Normally it is a shy producer of fruits with fruiting confined to a few plants more than one metre in diameter. These may be as much as 100 years old. At least one plant on Swey is over 200 years old. The reason for the unprecedented productivity in 2014 is not known.

Svalbardia

One of the most significant finds of the year was the discovery by Neil and Pat Thomson of Svalbardia at the southern end of the Rippack. This is a new site but with similar geology to the known site at Bunes. Recent extreme storms may have exposed the site.

Svalbardia is a fossil plant with high evolutionary importance. The original location at Bunes is a Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site. The statement attached to the Fair Isle Site of Special Scientific Interest reads "the GCR site on Bu Ness contains the remains of primitive fossil plants including a species not recorded elsewhere in Britain."

Biodiversity

New species

The vigilance and enthusiasm of islanders for their biodiversity ensures that new species are discovered every year. The list was particularly long in 2014. Newcomers were Pale-shoulder *Brocade Lacanobia thalassina*, Sulphur Pearl *Sitochroa palealis*, Banded Mosquito *Culiseta annulata*, the dolichopodid fly *Chrysotus cilipes*, the caddis *Limnephilus griseus*, the sawfly *Pachynematus clitellatus*, Northern White-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus magnus*, the ladybird *Adalia angulifera*, European Blackcurrant Aphid *Cryptomyzus galeopsidis*, the lichen *Bacidia sabuletorum*, St George's mushroom *Calocybe gambosum*, Knobbly Branched Seaweed *Stilophora tenella*, Cross Jelly *Staurophora mertensii*, a purse sponge *Pseudosuberites sulphureus*, Red-thread Marine Worm *Cirriformia tentaculata* and the sea-squirt *Corella parallelogramma*.

Pennant's Nut-crab *Ebalia tuberosa* was recorded inshore for the first time. The only previous record was offshore at 40 m depth.

The majority of novelties listed above were probably previously overlooked. The marine species owe a lot to the sharp eyes of Fair Isle youngsters exploring the shore. The bumblebee was, however, a new arrival. Historically the isle had played host to just one species, the Shetland Bumblebee *Bombus muscorum agricolae*. Now the list stands at three, Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris* having been recorded in 2012. The newcomer showed characters of Northern White-tailed Bumblebee but a capture will be needed to absolutely confirm the identification and rule out a similar more southerly species. Hopefully next year!



Plate 126. Northern White-tailed Bumblebee, Obs, 24th May 2014 © Ciaran Hatsell

The appearance of the Sulphur Pearl moth and the Banded Mosquito came as a complete surprise. In the UK the Sulphur Pearl is largely confined to the English south-east and Midlands and this was the first record for Scotland. Analysis of weather patterns suggested that it had arrived on south-east winds from southern Scandinavia or continental Europe. The mosquito is known in the UK up to the north coast of Scotland, so it has not made such a leap. The Pale-shouldered Brocade was not unexpected; it has a wide distribution in Britain.

The Cross Jelly and branched seaweed records were notable too. Their arrival is discussed more fully below under 'invasive species'.

Not all newcomers arrive of their own accord. European Blackcurrant Aphid, the ladybird *A. angulifera* and an unidentified scale insect on ginger are all adventives. The aphid was, not unnaturally, on blackcurrants. The ladybird is a resident of Chile and parts of Argentina. It was intercepted in the island shop where it had no doubt been imported along with goods from that part of the world.

Invasive species

In early July North Haven was full of the Blue Jellyfish *Cyanea lamarckii*, not previously recorded in such numbers on the isle. At least 100 had been cast on to the beach and many more were in the sea. The beach also held lots of tiny jelly-like buttons (probably a hundred or more). Those on the shore lacked colour but at least five just offshore retained bright blue fringes and interior cross over the transparent body. They proved to be the Cross Jelly *Staurophora mertensii*, a bipolar jellyfish which can reach as far south as the North Sea. Suspended in the sea just off the beach were substantial concentrations of a brown alga, identified as Knobbly Branched Seaweed *Stilophora tenella*. Both the *Staurophora* and the *Stilophora* were new to the isle.

This unprecedented arrival followed a few days of northerly winds which must have pushed these biota south. It is worth noting that these occurrences coincided with a drop in mean surface sea temperatures.

The seaweed, suspended just offshore, provided a refuge for hundreds of fish fry in individual shoals - each fish was approximately 30mm long, extremely thin, glassy transparent with red gut and long tail section, and thought to be very young sandeels *Ammodytes sp?* It will be interesting to see whether this leads to good recruitment of adult sandeels in 2015.

Stewart Thomson, Quoy

This has been a strange season with changes in the local fish populations. To begin with, there were few fish of any kind, except for the occasional Pollock *Pollachius pollachius*. Gradually, about three weeks later than normal, it was possible to find good quality Saithe *Pollachius virens*, but only at the North Light ground. A sudden change followed, with large amounts of fish showing on the fish-finder. These proved to be very interesting in content, as the species which would normally shoal separately were very mixed, consisting initially of young Coal-fish *Pollachius virens*, Whiting *Merlangius merlangius* and Greater Sandeels *Hyperoplus lanceolatus*. Later they were joined by Mackerel *Scomber scombrus*, which were also about three weeks late.

One of the strangest aspects was the relative sizes of the species. The Greater Sandeels were of a size one would expect, as were the immature Whiting but the Coal-fish from June through to September were of a size one would expect from December to February and it was noticeable around the North Haven pier that there was no recruitment of this year's cohort. A sample of captures was taken to analyse stomach contents. The main food was the normal small planktonic copepods but later on a number was found to contain Herring *Clupea harengus* fry.

The larger fish, when they could be found, lived mainly on the small Whiting and Herring fry and on Mackerel. Unlike farther north around Shetland the Mackerel were prolific, whereas whitefish were completely absent. Just one or two Cod *Gadus morhua* per boat were taken in the entire season and no Haddock *Melanogramma aeglefinus* or adult Whiting were found on the inshore grounds - something the commercial boats were experiencing in Shetland waters where there were, however, significant numbers of Cod.

For the second year running there were practically no Ling *Molva molva* to be had, but that could be due to the huge quantity of predatory species in the water. Poor weather at the end of the season prevented Fair Isle's small boats from accessing the grounds where Ling are normally present.

A feature of the summer season was the enormous numbers of small fish. There were masses of tiny Whiting approximately 30mm in length at and just below the surface around the isle. The skipper of the Good Shepherd, Neil Thomson, reported dense shoals of small fish, of which Norway Pout *Trisopterus esmarkii* were plentiful, for the entire ferry trip between Fair Isle and Shetland.

The fish monitoring detected some hopeful signs. The presence of plentiful plankton, small fish and a better season for the seabirds suggested a return to a more balanced ecosystem for the first time in nearly 30 years. Monitoring will continue to ascertain whether this becomes a long-term change.

Reflections on Fair Isle ecosystem dynamics in 2014

Nick Riddiford

The marine ecosystem in 2014 - implications for research

The fish summary and seabird successes (reported elsewhere) indicate a sudden and considerable change in the local ecosystem. Fortunately, the isle has a 50-year run of climate data, held by Dave Wheeler at the Fair Isle Meteorological Station, including surface sea temperature and salinity levels. For the last 40 years there has been a gradual but steady mean sea temperature increase of approximately 0.1°C per decade. In 2014, however, the mean sea temperature in late spring was 2° below the long-term mean - a change first noted the spring before. The hypothesis that the warmer waters had driven zooplankton such as *Calanus finmarchicus* to cooler water farther north - leading to severe disruption to the food chain - is further supported by the coincidental nature of a sea-temperature dip and a return to a more dynamic ecosystem, as demonstrated by seabird success and the density of small fish. No direct monitoring of plankton availability was done, but qualitative information in the guise of numerous Fulmars close inshore in calm weather successfully picking food items off the sea surface, pecking to left and right at a rate of four to five pecks per second, suggested that zooplankton levels were high.

Dave Wheeler considered that the drop in sea temperatures could be attributed to the effects of the Greenland ice melt, with a tongue of cold water extending down to northern Britain. Should this be the case, the beneficial effects of cooler temperatures may be relatively short-lived. A major component of the research programme proposed by FIMET1 is to use Fair Isle's large and wide-ranging long-term datasets to get a fuller understanding of the contributory factors affecting the functioning of the ecosystem. The changes witnessed in 2014 make this even more needful and apposite. The isle sees such a study as beneficial on a Scotland-wide scale, for sustainable marine management, environmental conservation and the fishing industry. In addition to Fair Isle data, additional long-term datasets such as the Continuous Plankton Recorder managed by the Sir Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science and physical oceanographic data are available. There can be few places in Scotland so ideally situated and so rich in scientific data as Fair Isle.

LADYBIRDS ON FAIR ISLE

Nick Riddiford

Two ladybirds were recorded on Fair Isle in 2014. Commonplace farther south, ladybirds rarely feature on the isle. In fact there are only eight records, of six species. Arguably some of the records could involve individuals arriving of their own accord but the evidence points to casual importation for most if not all.

The Fair Isle records are as follows:

Adonis ladybird

Hippodamia variegata

One record: one flying round Stackhoull Stores on 19th April 2005 presumably arrived with shop produce.

Fair Isle status: accidental

Twenty-two spot ladybird

Psyllobora vigintiduopunctata

One record: one on path leading into Vaila's Trees, Stackhoull, 26th June 2009, provenance unknown but note proximity to shop.

Fair Isle status: accidental

Two-spot ladybird

Adalia bipunctata

Two records: a small individual, so probably a male, on the side of the Good Shepherd IV in harbour, North Haven, 10th June 1993; one of the melanic form on a Christmas tree recently installed in Busta on 23rd December 2013.

Fair Isle status: the 2013 individual is clearly accidental; the 1993 record is better treated as of unknown provenance

Adalia angulifera

One record: one in Stackhoull Stores, 11th August 2014.

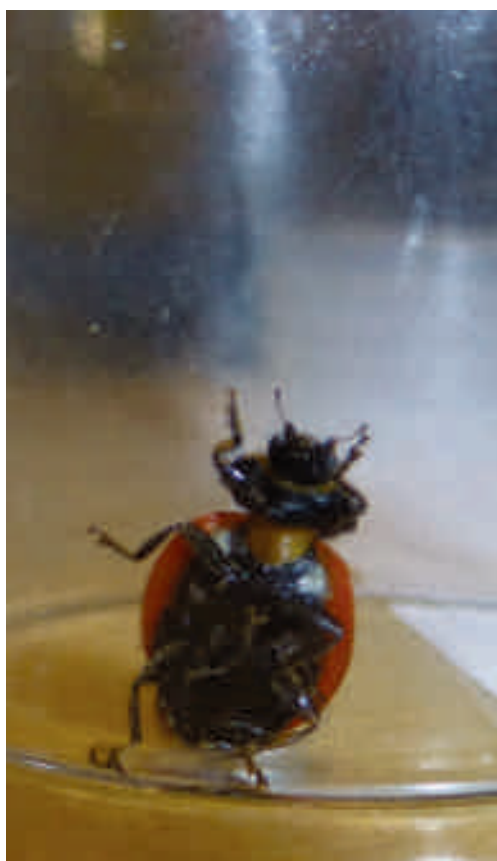
Fair Isle status: accidental, alien; denizen of Chile and adjacent countries; presumably arrived with shop produce

Seven-spot ladybird

Coccinella septempunctata

Two records: one in a box shipped from UK mainland, dead, dry and partly damaged when found at Aesterhoull, 4th February 1995; one, alive, on Christmas tree in the Obs, 17th December 2014.

Fair Isle status: accidental; the 1995 individual was probably already deceased before arrival and thus not strictly a Fair Isle record, even as an adventive



Southern ladybird

Cleobora mellyi

One record: one, long dead, entangled in raw llama wool sent from Melbourne, Australia, to Stewart Thomson, Shirva, for spinning, 2nd March 2013.

Fair Isle status: accidental, alien; native of the Melbourne area of Australia; probably already deceased before arrival and thus not strictly a Fair Isle record, even as an adventive

Plates 127–129.
Seven-spot Ladybird,
Obs, 17th December
2014. © David Parnaby

Adonis ladybird is predominantly coastal in the UK and thus a potential candidate, but clearly not in this case. Another possible to arrive under its own steam is the Two-spot ladybird. It is one of the commoner species in mainland Britain, but its find circumstance throws considerable doubt on a natural arrival. Even more of a candidate is the Seven-spot ladybird. It is a known migrant, and some very big influxes have been recorded in southern Britain, however, a true migrant remains to be discovered.

I challenge the reader to allocate an English name to *Adalia angulifera*; I have yet to find one. The finding of a South American species in the shop testifies to the modern 'global market' with goods transported all over the world, even to Robert and Fiona Mitchell's humble shop. There can be few more original finds than that of the Southern ladybird. Stewart informed me that the llama wool came from Melbourne before an internet search established it as precisely a species from that part of Australia.

RSPB STAR SEABIRD TRACKING PROJECT

Rob Hughes

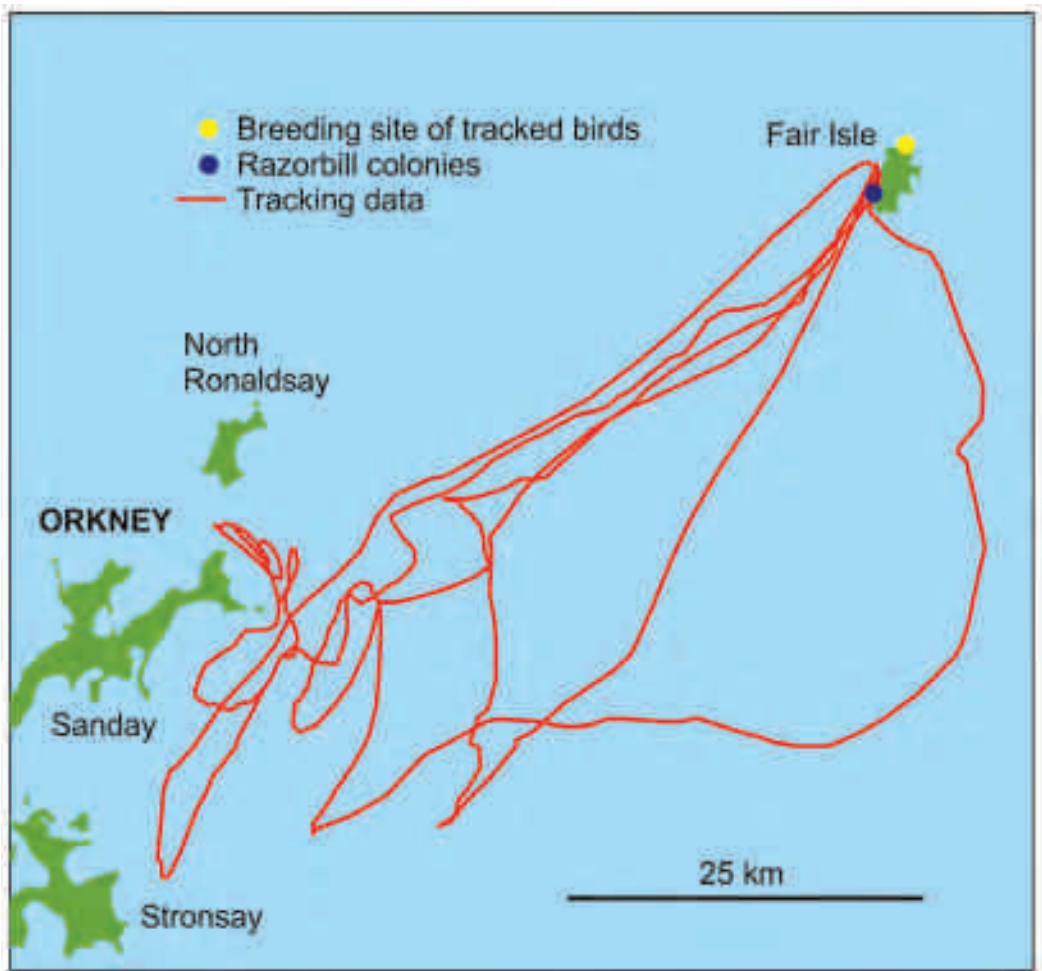
2014 was the RSPB's fifth year of GPS tracking the breeding seabirds on Fair Isle. This was the second year of tracking under the name of STAR (Seabird Tracking and Research) following three previous years under the Future of the Atlantic Marine Environment Project (FAME). The project aims to find out where UK seabirds are foraging in order to help inform the Marine Protected Area (MPA) designation process. The study uses miniature GPS tags, temporarily attached to the birds' dorsal feathers, to track birds to their foraging areas. The tags provide extremely high resolution data, which are used to provide information on the location of persistent seabird foraging aggregations.

This year I was accompanied by Marianna Chimienti, a PhD student from Aberdeen University, tracking two Kittiwakes, five Guillemots, 17 Razorbills and four Fulmars. We also retrieved four Guillemot and five Razorbill time/depth recorders. Seabird breeding productivity was much higher than in recent years for the species we tracked. From the GPS data, the auks were generally feeding much closer to Fair Isle, around the north and east coasts of Orkney. This is in contrast to the greater distances travelled to the Aberdeenshire coast in the previous, poorer breeding productivity years. Birds were bringing fish into the colony more frequently and bringing in a variety of fish, rather than sandeels alone.

Marianna's PhD in collaboration with the RSPB and Marine Scotland aims to characterise the foraging behaviour of different species of diving seabirds in order to understand the potential impact that the development of tidal renewable devices might have on their foraging activities. This year we attached accelerometers in combination with GPS on Razorbills aiming to observe in detail their movements underwater while foraging and searching for the prey. Marianna is currently analysing the data from the five retrieved accelerometers from Fair Isle and comparing them to data retrieved from Guillemots on Colonsay, on the west coast of Scotland.

As part of a Research Masters at Bangor University Marianna analysed and compared the time/depth recorder data from Razorbills at the Fair Isle colony (a declining population) with the Colonsay data (a stable population). Birds from Fair Isle were foraging much further from their colony and shifting their time budgets to maximize foraging success through using a higher percentage of certain dive shapes.

Data from FAME and STAR are publicly available and can be accessed by emailing RSPB's conservation data management unit cdmu@rspb.org.uk who also hold an up-to-date list of the tracking data available.



We are very grateful to Fair Isle Bird Observatory for providing us with food and accommodation throughout the breeding season. Thanks again to David and Susannah Parnaby and the rest of the Observatory's staff and volunteers for their kind hospitality.

Figure 1. A Razorbill track from Fair Isle, 2014.

ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION AT FIBO

Fair Isle Bird Observatory has inspired and educated many visitors over the years and many leading ornithologists cite a visit to FIBO as an important part of their formative years. To keep that trend going, FIBO aims to support younger visitors in a number of ways and we encourage anybody who is interested in visiting the Observatory in any capacity to get in touch.



Plate 130. John Harrison, Fair Isle, June 1966, © Richard Richardson/FIBO Archive

John Harrison Memorial Fund

The JHMF provides financial assistance in the form of grants to anyone between the ages of 16 and 24 (inclusive) to enable them to visit Fair Isle and take part in the daily work schedule of the Observatory. The fund was established in 1968 by Richard Richardson in memory of John Harrison who visited Fair Isle three times before he died at the early age of 19. Grants normally cover the cost of travel by the most economical means possible to the Observatory and back home. Whilst at the Observatory awardees were required to pay £12 per night in 2014, which covered full board and lodgings. 'JHMFs' are a full part of the wardening team whilst staying at the Obs and may end up helping out with any of the work that the Observatory undertakes (see Langdon's write up below).

Ornithological Volunteers

For £14 a night, visitors of any age can join the wardening team in their duties when space at the Obs allows. The Obs also regularly takes domestic and bar volunteers (who stay for free in return for working at the Obs), who get spare time to enjoy the island and are often able to help out with the wardening team's work.

Young Person Discount

For anyone aged 25 or under, there is a special rate of £35 per night (full board) for staying at the Obs as a visitor throughout the year (other than the 'peak period' of late September to early October).

My Fair Isle experience

Langdon Truscott - recipient of JHMF grant

As the boat approached the Island, with the sun high in the clear blue sky, I managed to get a good look at what was to be my home for the next few weeks. It was stunning. The cliffs rose up above my head, the cries of seabirds could be heard as they wheeled over the deep blue waters, and I took a deep breath. I was nervous.

I had applied to the John Harrison Memorial Fund the year before, after discovering the stall at the Rutland Birdfair. It was a perfect opportunity. I had been dying to get a more practical view on seabirds and how conservation worked, so I gave myself a month. One month to learn as much as possible, surrounded by experts in a beautiful setting. Starting 1st July, my 19th birthday, I was ready to get involved with everything offered to me.

As I was a volunteer, most of my time would be used shadowing a member of the wardening team, as they went about their tasks for the day. The most common of these was surveying the Great Skua's breeding ranges, and trying to pair the right chicks for the right nests. This was amazingly difficult as the chicks were camouflaged perfectly against the heather, and the nests were mere scrapes in the ground lined with grass to begin with, but we managed (virtually) unscathed from the adult birds. Other tasks included nesting tern surveys, trapping and ringing passerines and petrels, and going out on a RIB and visiting the local auk colonies. It stank to high heaven, a smell which now a part of me misses, but it was worth it just to see these beautiful birds up close. The variety, and density, of wildlife seen during my stay was utterly incredible. Ranging from gulls to wayward herons, and seals to Killer Whales, there was never a dull moment during my stay. Many of the species I saw were brand new to me, such as the Black Guillemot and the Storm Petrels, and getting much closer to the more common species was utterly fantastic. No matter where I stood on the island I could always hear the calls of nesting seabirds, from the dinosaur-like raucousness of the Guillemot to the harsh yapping of the Bonxie, the island felt like it was bursting with life.

Aside from the surveying and the trapping, there were also more routine jobs which I needed to perform. The most common one was the data entry of the ringing information collected, making sure it is all inputted and saved into the computer. Other tasks included compiling all past data on the Leach's Petrel, rewiring Helgoland traps, helping round up sheep for sheering and digging shallow pools for migratory birds to drink from. I even enjoyed clearing the surrounding area of the Obs of thistles, a job which took place over many days, and was very satisfying when I finally finished though I knew that every single one will have grown back by my next visit. Whenever I was out digging or pulling, no matter the weather, I always saw something interesting.

The highlight of my allocated tasks occurred during the third week of my stay. I was instructed to survey the Gannet colony at Yellow Head, observing and recording the nesting status of the birds. After an unsuccessful first attempt at finding the colony, as I wasn't close enough to the cliff edge, I found it. It was an amazing experience. Peering down from the top of the cliff, watching the intricate movements of the colony as adults fly to and from the nests made me realise this is the type of work I wanted to do in the future.

As the island disappeared into the pale grey mist, the bird calls became muffled and eerie. The boat chugged on, and I cast my mind back over the last month. It was a unique experience, with almost all highs and no lows, I realised I did not want to change a single second of it. I had been wrong to be nervous.



Plate 131. Langdon Truscott, 9th July 2014. © David Parnaby

FIBOT FINANCIAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2014

Mike Wood

The 2014 season was another brilliant year from the perspective of the Observatory as a business. New records were set for the number of guest-nights (3,277) and guest house income (£191,467) which covers accommodation, meals, shop and the bar. The relevant figures for the years since 2003 (excluding the 'rebuild' years) are below.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2011	2012	2013	2014
Bednights	2,272	2,567	2,739	2,610	3,047	2,977	2,972	2,905	3,147	3,277
Revenue (£)	81,064	94,343	101,388	99,328	119,400	111,897	146,977	164,011	181,262	191,467

Our target is to maintain the number of revenue-earning guest-nights at around 3,000 per year, so the recent years are encouraging steps against that target. Key to achieving the target is the value-for-money, comfort and welcome enjoyed by our guests. Approximately 96% of our recent guests rate the Observatory as "Excellent" or "Very Good" according to Trip Advisor. Many of our guests have commented favourably on the quiet, warm and comfortable accommodation, excellent food, well-stocked bar and the unique, friendly ambience of the Observatory.

With flights to and from the 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 and from the island is much easier and more predictable than in past years.

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 important 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 our other staff for their hard work and skill in making the Observatory such a brilliant place to stay. It is not just the comfort of the new building and excellent food that determines whether or not a guest has an enjoyable stay at the Observatory, it is the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff that contributes massively to the high levels of visitor satisfaction.

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. A summary of FIBOT's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2014 appears on the following page. The full statutory accounts can be seen at the Observatory on Fair Isle.

Mike Wood
Finance Director

Income and Expenditure Report

for the year ended 31st October 2014

Sales Income	2014 (£)	2013 (£)
Accommodation & Meals	160,627	150,151
Shop Sales	9,199	11,203
Bar Sales	21,641	19,908
	191,467	181,262
Cost of Sales		
Purchases	70,884	64,975
Wages & Salaries	55,108	47,351
	125,992	112,326
Trading Profit	65,475	68,936

Other Income		
Interest Received	6,518	7,910
Deferred Grant Income released	112,000	112,000
Subscriptions	6,989	5,313
Donations	2,713	3,010
Grants Received	21,110	24,503
Other Income	0	0
	149,330	152,736
Gross Profit	214,805	221,672

Other Expenses		
Administration	11,347	9,468
Establishment	58,408	64,583
Sales & Marketing	5,706	7,982
Financial & Legal	6,102	5,932
Depreciation	125,689	125,533
	207,252	213,498
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	7,553	8,174

Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2014		
Fixed Assets	31/10/14 (£)	31/10/13 (£)
Tangible assets	3,721,390	3,810,212
Investments	0	0
	3,721,390	3,810,212
Current Assets		
Stocks	24,227	16,513
Debtors	35,562	33,254
Cash at bank and in hand	56,722	40,714
	116,511	90,481

Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(54,270)	(20,860)
Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)	62,241	69,621

Total Assets less Current Liabilities	3,783,631	3,879,833
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Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(0)	(0)
	3,783,631	3,879,833

Representing:		
Accumulated Surplus	3,783,631	3,879,833
Appeal Reserve	0	0
	3,783,631	3,879,833

WATER FEATURES

BM Boini Mine
DA Da Water
ELW Easter Lothar Water
FD Field Ditch
G Gilsetter
GB Gilly Burn
GW Golden Water
H Homisdale
HB Hegri Burn
KM Kirk Mine
MB Meadow Burn
MV Mine o' Vatnagard
OS Oba Scrape
SM Suka Mine
US Ultra Scrape
V Vaadal
WB Wirvle Burn
W Wall Burn

MAIN OBS TRAPS

V Vaadal
P Plantation
DD Double Dyke
SD Single Dyke
HD Hion Dyke
G Gully
H Ringing hut

TOILETS

FIBO
Stackhoull
Airstrip
Hall

SHOPS

FIBO (gifts)
Stackhoull
(groceries and gifts)

KNITWEAR

Schoolton
Buhle
Nether Taft
Upper 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 2014. All decisions follow those of the BBRC and BOURC (although note that the totals include all 2014 records, which may remain subject to ratification by the relevant committee), 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 Glossy Ibis, Bridled Tern and Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler, the Fair Isle list stands at 384 at the end of 2014.

Status Categories:

Vagrant	V (no. of records)	ten records or less in the past 20 years
Rare	R (no. of records)	11–40 records in the past 20 years
Scarce	S	averaging 10 records or less per annum
Regular Migrant	RM	averaging 11–40 records per annum
Frequent Migrant	FM	averaging 41–500 records per annum
Common Migrant	CM	averaging more than 500 records per annum

Breeding Categories:

Small Numbers	BS	on average less than 100 pairs per annum
Moderate Numbers	BM	on average 101–1,000 pairs per annum
Large Numbers	BL	on average more than 1,000 pairs per annum
Occasional Breeder	OB	

Species	Status	Records (individuals)	Last record	Species	Status	Records (individuals)	Last record
Mute Swan	V	9 (12)	2010	King Eider	V	14	2010
Bewick's Swan	V	6 (17)	2011	Steller's Eider	V	1	1971
Whooper Swan	FM			Harlequin Duck	V	2 (3)	1999
Bean Goose	R	37 (208)	2014	Long-tailed Duck	RM		
Pink-footed Goose	CM			Common Scoter	RM		
White-fronted Goose	S			Surf Scoter	V	2	2008
Greylag Goose	CM			Velvet Scoter	R	126 (177)	2014
Greater Canada Goose	R	31 (78)	2014	Goldeneye	RM		
Barnacle Goose	FM			Smew	V	7	1985
Brent Goose	R		2010	Red-breasted Merganser	RM		
Shelduck	S			Goosander	R	93 (129)	2014
Mandarin Duck	V	2	2014	Quail	S		
Wigeon	FM			Red-throated Diver	RM		
American Wigeon	V	1	1986	Black-throated Diver	V	5	2006
Gadwall	R	48 (71)	2014	Great Northern Diver	S		
Teal	FM			White-billed Diver	V	4	1979
Green-winged Teal	V	3	2014	Fulmar	CM		
Mallard	RM			Cory's Shearwater	V	3 (90)	2005
Black Duck	V	1	2006	Great Shearwater	V	16 (140)	2007
Pintail	S			Sooty Shearwater	RM		
Garganey	V	13 (23)	2014	Manx Shearwater	S		
Shoveler	S			Storm Petrel	CM		
Pochard	R	58 (74)	2014	Leach's Petrel	SM		
Ring-necked Duck	V	1	1978	Swinhoe's Petrel	V	2	2014
Tufted Duck	RM			Gannet	CM		
Scaup	S	104 (138)	2014	Cormorant	RM		
Lesser Scaup	V	1	2011	Shag	CM		
Eider	FM			Little Bittern	V	1	1940

Species	Status	Records (individuals)	Last record
Night-heron	V	2	2008
Grey Heron	FM		
Purple Heron	V	3	1970
White Stork	V	4	2002
Glossy Ibis	V	1	2014
Little Grebe	R	40	2008
Great Crested Grebe	V	14 (15)	2011
Red-necked Grebe	V	22 (25)	2011
Slavonian Grebe	S		
Honey-buzzard	R	54 (57)	2014
Black Kite	V	1	2008
Red Kite	V	8	2010
White-tailed Eagle	V	9	2012
Marsh Harrier	R	46	2013
Hen Harrier	S		
Pallid Harrier	V	4	2014
Montagu's Harrier	V	3	2013
Goshawk	V	5	1996
Sparrowhawk	RM		
Buzzard	R		2014
Rough-legged Buzzard	V	45 (48)	2014
Golden Eagle	V	1	1961
Osprey	S	126	
Water Rail	RM		
Spotted Crake	R	45 (47)	2012
Little Crake	V	1	1970
Baillon's Crake	V	2	1991
Comcrake	S		
Moorhen	S		
Coot	R	80 (87)	2014
Crane	R	25 (34)	2014
Sandhill Crane	V	1	1981
Little Bustard	V	1	1994
Great Bustard	V	1	1970
Stone-curlew	V	8	2009
Avocet	V	1	1947
Oystercatcher	FM		
American Golden Plover	V	11	2013
Pacific Golden Plover	V	2	2000
Golden Plover	FM		
Grey Plover	R	136 (212)	2014
Lapwing	FM		
Little Ringed Plover	V	3	1979
Ringed Plover	FM		
Kentish Plover	V	1	1949
Caspian Plover	V	1	2008
Dotterel	S	102 (188)	2014
Upland Sandpiper	V	2	1975
Hudsonian Whimbrel	V	2	2007
Whimbrel	FM		
Curlew	FM		
Black-tailed Godwit	S		
Bar-tailed Godwit	S		
Turnstone	CM		
Knot	RM		
Ruff	RM		
Curlew Sandpiper	R	61 (144)	2011
Red-necked Stint	V	1	1994
Temminck's Stint	V	19	2014
Sanderling	FM		

Species	Status	Records (individuals)	Last record
Dunlin	FM		
Purple Sandpiper	FM		
Baird's Sandpiper	V	4	2011
Little Stint	S		
White-rumped Sandpiper	V	5	2007
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	V	15 (16)	2014
Pectoral Sandpiper	R	33	2014
Semipalmated Sandpiper	V	3	2003
Red-necked Phalarope	V	23 (25)	2014
Grey Phalarope	R	40 (47)	2014
Terek Sandpiper	V	1	2007
Common Sandpiper	FM		
Spotted Sandpiper	V	1	1986
Green Sandpiper	RM		
Solitary Sandpiper	V	1	1992
Spotted Redshank	R	105 (119)	2013
Greenshank	RM		
Lesser Yellowlegs	V	3	1999
Wood Sandpiper	S		
Redshank	CM		
Jack Snipe	FM		
Long-billed Dowitcher	V	2	1990
Woodcock	FM		
Snipe	CM		
Great Snipe	R	43 (44)	2011
Collared Pratincole	V	1	1971
Black-winged Pratincole	V	1	1927
Pomarine Skua	R	92 (104)	2014
Arctic Skua	FM		
Long-tailed Skua	R	49 (66)	2009
Great Skua	FM		
Puffin	CM		
Black Guillemot	FM		
Razorbill	CM		
Little Auk	RM		
Guillemot	CM		
Brünnich's Guillemot	V	1	1980
Bridled Tern	V	1	2014
Gull-billed Tern	V	1	1971
Caspian Tern	V	2	1987
Black Tern	V	2	2001
White-winged Black Tern	V	3	2011
Sandwich Tern	S		
Common Tern	RM		
Roseate Tern	V	4 (5)	2014
Arctic Tern	FM		
Ivory Gull	V	2	1952
Sabine's Gull	V	5	2011
Kittiwake	CM		
Black-headed Gull	FM		
Little Gull	R	25 (32)	2014
Laughing Gull	V	2	2014
Mediterranean Gull	V	1	1996
Common Gull	CM		
Ring-billed Gull	V	4	2013
Lesser Black-backed Gull	FM		
Herring Gull	CM		
Iceland Gull	S		
Glaucous Gull	RM		
Great Black-backed Gull	CM		

Species	Status	Records (individuals)	Last record	Species	Status	Records (individuals)	Last record
Pallas's Sandgrouse	V	1 (40)	1888	Swallow	FM		
Rock Dove	FM			House Martin	FM		
Stock Dove	S			Red-rumped Swallow	V	9	2012
Woodpigeon	FM			Greenish Warbler	R	46	2014
Collared Dove	FM			Arctic Warbler	R	90	2014
Turtle Dove	S		2013	Pallas's Warbler	V	24 (40)	2005
Rufous Turtle Dove	V	1	1974	Yellow-browed Warbler	RM		
Cuckoo	SM			Hume's Warbler	V	3	2012
Barn Owl	V	6	2014	Radde's Warbler	V	6	2010
Scops Owl	V	2	2006	Dusky Warbler	V	15	2013
Snowy Owl	V	23 (24)	2005	Western Bonelli's Warbler	V	3*	2008
Long-eared Owl	RM			Wood Warbler	RM		
Short-eared Owl	RM			Chiffchaff	FM		
Nightjar	V	29	2014	Willow Warbler	CM		
Swift	FM			Blackcap	CM		
Pallid Swift	V	1	2001	Garden Warbler	FM		
Alpine Swift	V	5	2002	Barred Warbler	RM		
Little Swift	V	1	1991	Lesser Whitethroat	FM		
Hoopoe	R	40	2012	Whitethroat	FM		
Bee-eater	V	8 (10)	2009	Dartford Warbler	V	1	2000
Roller	V	1	1981	Subalpine Warbler	R	89	2014
Kingfisher	V	1	1999	Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler	V	1	2014
Wryneck	RM			Sardinian Warbler	V	2	1994
Great Spotted Woodpecker	S			Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	R	23	2012
Lesser Kestrel	V	1	1987	Lanceolated Warbler	S	89	2014
Kestrel	RM			Grasshopper Warbler	RM		
American Kestrel	V	1	1976	River Warbler	V	17	2013
Red-footed Falcon	V	5	1992	Savi's Warbler	V	7	2008
Merlin	RM			Thick-billed Warbler	RM	2	2003
Hobby	R	57	2014	Booted Warbler	V	13	2013
Gyr Falcon	V	13	2005	Sykes's Warbler	V	3	2013
Peregrine	RM			Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	V	3	2011
Red-eyed Vireo	V	1	2013	Icterine Warbler	RM		
Golden Oriole	R	44 (45)	2012	Melodious Warbler	V	18	2013
Brown Shrike	V	1	2000	Aquatic Warbler	V	37	2006
Isabelline Shrike	V	4	1994	Sedge Warbler	FM		
Red-backed Shrike	RM			Paddyfield Warbler	R	23	2014
Lesser Grey Shrike	V	20 (21)	2007	Blyth's Reed Warbler	R	40	2014
Great Grey Shrike	S			Marsh Warbler	S		
Southern Grey Shrike	V	2	1964	Reed Warbler	RM		
Woodchat Shrike	V	28	2011	Great Reed Warbler	V	14	2009
Magpie	V	1	1987	Waxwing	S		
Jackdaw	S			Treecreeper	V	9	2014
Rook	RM			Wren	RM		
Carrion Crow	FM			Starling	CM		
Hooded Crow	RM			Rose-coloured Starling	R	42	2014
Raven	RM			Dipper	R	37	2011
Goldcrest	FM			White's Thrush	V	14	2014
Firecrest	V	7	2014	Hermit Thrush	V	3	2014
Blue Tit	V	10 (13)	2014	Swainson's Thrush	V	2	2010
Great Tit	R	35 (50)	2013	Grey-cheeked Thrush	V	5	2014
Coal Tit	V	7	1997	Siberian Thrush	V	1	2008
Woodlark	V	53 (70)*	2012	Ring Ouzel	FM		
Skylark	CM			Blackbird	CM		
Crested Lark	V	1	1952	Eyebrowed Thrush	V	2	1992
Shore Lark	R		2014	Dusky Thrush	V	1	1961
Short-toed Lark	S	160 (175)	2014	Black-throated Thrush	V	13	2012
Bimaculated Lark	V	1	1976	Fieldfare	CM		
Calandra Lark	V	5	2014	Song Thrush	CM		
Sand Martin	RM			Redwing	CM		

Species	Status	Records (individuals)	Last record
Mistle Thrush	RM		
Brown Flycatcher	V	2	2008
Spotted Flycatcher	FM		
Robin	CM		
Rufous-tailed Robin	V	1	2004
Thrush Nightingale	R	61	2013
Nightingale	R	53	2012
Bluethroat	RM		
Siberian Rubythroat	V	5	2013
Red-flanked Bluetail	V	11	2014
Red-breasted Flycatcher	S		
Collared Flycatcher	V	6	2014
Pied Flycatcher	FM		
Black Redstart	RM		
Redstart	FM		
Rock Thrush	V	3	1970
Whinchat	FM		
Siberian Stonechat	V	42	2014
Stonechat	S		
Wheatear	CM		
Isabelline Wheatear	V	1	1998
Desert Wheatear	V	5	1991
Black-eared Wheatear	V	5	1997
Pied Wheatear	V	1	1989
Alpine Accentor	V	2	1959
Duncock	FM		
House Sparrow			
Tree Sparrow	S		2014
Yellow Wagtail	RM		
Citrine Wagtail	S	73	2013
Grey Wagtail	S		
Pied Wagtail	FM		
Richard's Pipit	S		
Blyth's Pipit	V	4	2007
Tawny Pipit	V	17	2005
Olive-backed Pipit	S	97	2014
Tree Pipit	RM		
Pechora Pipit	R	43	2012
Meadow Pipit	CM		
Red-throated Pipit	R	82	2014
Rock Pipit	FM		
Buff-bellied Pipit	V	4	2012
Brambling	FM		
Chaffinch	FM		
Hawfinch	S	105 (120)	2014
Common Rosefinch	RM		
Bullfinch	S		2014
Greenfinch	RM		
Linnet	RM		
Twite	FM		
Lesser Redpoll	S		
Common Redpoll	FM		
Arctic Redpoll	R	89	2013
Two-barred Crossbill	R	30 (58)	2013
Common Crossbill	RM		
Parrot Crossbill	V	6 (68)	1990
Goldfinch	S		2014
Citrl Finch	V	1	2008
Serin	V	3	1964
Siskin	FM		

Species	Status	Records (individuals)	Last record
Snow Bunting	FM		
Lapland Bunting	FM		
Savannah Sparrow	V	2	2003
Song Sparrow	V	3	1989
White-crowned Sparrow	V	1	1977
White-throated Sparrow	V	5	2010
Black-faced Bunting	V	1	2001
Pine Bunting	V	9	2007
Yellowhammer	RM		
Otolan Bunting	S		2013
Cretzschmar's Bunting	V	3	2014
Yellow-browed Bunting	V	1	1980
Rustic Bunting	R	130	2013
Chestnut-eared Bunting	V	1	2004
Little Bunting	S		
Yellow-breasted Bunting	R	103	2006
Reed Bunting	FM		
Pallas's Reed Bunting	V	2	1981
Black-headed Bunting	V	27	2011
Corn Bunting	R		2012
Bobolink	V	1	1986
Brown-headed Cowbird	V	1	2009
Baltimore Oriole	V	1	1974
Tennessee Warbler	V	2	1975
Magnolia Warbler	V	1	2012
Blackburnian Warbler	V	1	1988
Blackpoll Warbler	V	2	2009
Yellow-rumped Warbler	V	2	1999

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's Rosefinch, Long-tailed Rosefinch, Chestnut Bunting, Red-headed Bunting, Yellow-billed Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak

Extinct: Great Auk

Unidentified to species: Albatross sp.

** Note, also one Bonelli's Warbler sp?*

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