



FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 2017



Plate 1. (Left to right) Ian and Lynne Cowgill, Shirley Newbold, Steve Arlow, British Birdfair, Egleton, Rutland, 19th August 2017.
© Tim Loseby



Plate 2. Georgia Locock and Killer Whales, North Haven, 28th June 2017. © Sarah Harris



Plate 3. (Left to right) Jodie Crane, Chris Dodd, David Parnaby & Hannah Bell, 8th August 2017. © Richard Cope



FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY REPORT NO. 69 (2017)

Editor - Ian Andrews assisted by Barry Nightingale

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Front cover. Collared Pratincole, Wirvie Burn, 15th May 2017. © Steve Arlow

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Plate 4. Obs, 12th June 2017. © Ian Andrews

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Ian Andrews, Louise Batchelor (*to June 2017*),

Alexander Bennett, Mark Bolton, Ian Cowgill,

Pete Ellis, Peter Evans, Karen Hall (*from June*

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Douglas Barr

My tenure as Chair started off in the worst possible circumstances with the sudden and unexpected death of my predecessor, Eric Meek in February. Eric had kindly agreed to continue as a director but his passing away deprived not only me of his guidance and support but the Trust as a whole. He is fondly remembered and sadly missed by us all.

Tim Cleaves, a long-standing visitor, passing away at the end of 2017 was similarly a shock to us all. He was, in the true sense of the words, a unique character.

On a more positive note, the Obs continued to go from strength to strength. We would have had a record year for visitor numbers had it not been for unsurpassed weather problems with transport. Visitor experiences continue to be extremely favourable and we have all our staff to thank profusely for that.

As ever the birdscape of Fair Isle was varied. We had new additions to the bird list in Green Warbler and Glaucous-winged Gull. On the rarity front, a good selection of birds presented themselves throughout the season. Additionally, the first record of breeding Red-necked Phalaropes was undoubtedly a highlight. However, the picture for seabird breeding was again mixed with still serious concerns for a number of species. Any reading of previous FIBO reports starkly illustrates this.

Our bird report continues to garner favourable reviews and our thanks go to all involved in the preparation and publication of it. Similarly, our FIBO website continues to develop and it really is a fount of information regarding not only the Obs but the isle as well.

A number of publications emanated from our Migration Project using the unique data set Fair Isle has accumulated in bird recording over the last 70 years. We will continue to mine this for

what is a world-class set of records built up through the contribution of countless visitors over the years to the Obs. This enables the Obs to be present on the world stage of bird science.

We are indebted to Steve Arlow for initiating a new WhatsApp group for the dissemination of bird news to visitors at the Obs. Changed days indeed from the red flag waving prominently from an Obs vehicle!

Attending once more at the annual Birdfair at Rutland in August allowed us to engage with potential visitors to the Obs and answer any queries they may have regarding the practicalities of arranging a visit to us. If you are at Birdfair in the future then please do visit our stand and say hello!

In David and Susannah, the directors recognise we are extremely fortunate in having persons of their calibre working so successfully for us and we are fully appreciative of that. We also welcomed the return of the majority of the core members of our seasonal staff which led to us having a stable year on that front. To them and all those who volunteered during the season, we thank them for all their endeavours.

On the island, we are as always indebted to everyone who has assisted us in whatever way throughout the year, without which it would have proved impossible for us to operate so successfully. A new electricity scheme for Fair Isle that FIBOT is part of and towards which we are contributing £100,000 and, hopefully, an improved broadband service should bring the isle into the 21st century. All we need now is a long-overdue replacement for the Good Shepherd IV!

A successful launch meeting for the Fair Isle Marine Protected Area project was held at the Obs in August. We look forward to continuing to participate in the research for the MPA to ensure the long-term protection and sustainable



Plate 5. The FIBOT Board of Directors, June 2017. Standing (left to right): Dave Okill (Vice-Chairman), Pete Ellis, Mike Wood (Director of Finance), Karen Hall, Fiona Mitchell, Peter Evans, Ian Andrews, Louise Batchelor (retired), Mark Bolton; sitting: Kerri Whiteside, Douglas Barr (Chairman), Ian Cowgill. [Roy Dennis (Honorary President), Jane Reid and Alexander Bennett were not present]. © *FIBO*

management of the seas around the isle. This is in conjunction with external researchers such as the RSPB and BTO whose past and present work on seabirds shows the world class facilities FIBO affords for undertaking such work.

Fortunately, there was no repetition of problems with Bonxies, the rarest of our breeding seabirds in world terms, at the airstrip in 2017. However, the potential still exists for that. Hopefully, the continuing work of the NTS with this issue will find solutions which will ensure no further difficulties.

Through the John Harrison Memorial Fund and the Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund, financial assistance can be provided to young people under the age of 25 visiting the Obs. We would encourage anyone interested in accessing these funds to contact us as every previous young visitor would testify how enjoyable and rewarding an experience it was.

Can I take this opportunity of thanking all my fellow directors for all their work undertaken for the Obs throughout the year and to them and David and Susannah for all the support they have given me in my first year as Chair. We are extremely fortunate to have such a varied and talented group of individuals working as directors on behalf of the Obs. In particular, I have to thank Mike Wood for all his invaluable work and for assisting me greatly throughout the year.

In June, Louise Batchelor, after many years of service, stood down as a director. We thank her for all the work she did over the years for us. We welcomed as new directors Karen Hall and Kerri Whiteside and look forward to their contributions in the years to come.

Hopefully, we shall see many of you as guests in 2018 and in future years and we look forward to welcoming you all, whether it is your first visit or you are simply re-acquainting yourself with the delights of the Obs and the isle.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Susannah Parnaby

Writing for the annual report, often with a mind half full of the plans and bookings made for the coming season and sometimes the one after that, is an interesting way to reflect on which events become, with a little time and distance, the standout moments of the year past. It is perhaps natural, given my role at the Observatory, that it is the people that you have shared experiences with that leap to mind first. Perhaps because for the first time in our tenure at FIBO we had an entire staff team returning and also because we value the relationships that build year on year with returning visitors, the 2017 season stands out as one that created and strengthened links to the isle for lots of folk that passed through the Observatory. The Malakoff team, working hard on the Good Shepherd slipway, and Shona Williamson who stood in as regular relief crew, were welcome fixtures throughout the summer, alongside the BTO researchers studying the isle's Arctic Skua population. The celebration of significant birthdays, weddings and academic successes with guests and researchers past and present formed part and parcel of life at the Obs through the year, with remembrance too of those sadly no longer with us. We would like to offer our particular sympathies to the family and friends of Eric Meek and Tim Cleeves.

Milestone birthdays were not only celebrated at the Observatory, but on the isle too, with a summer evening beach barbeque with the family and friends of Deryk Shaw and the crew of the Norwegian tall ship *Loyal* (who have strong links to the isle), a major high point of the summer.

It was good to welcome all the volunteers who helped at the Observatory in various ways, with Christine Clephan and Cloé Faità helping out on the domestic front and Karen Gardiner, Georgia Locock, Fiona Ritchie Walker, Jodie Crane and Andy Denton all putting in stints behind the bar. Kris Wilson, Carice Allen, Belinda Lloyd, Eleanor

Grover, Elizabeth Holmes, Sarah Fenn, Sarah Binnie, Max Hellicar, Tom Gale, Eleanor Stroud and Caitlin Tarvert all contributed to the ornithological work; many of our volunteers are at the start of their careers in conservation, whether that's in research or reserves and Observatory work and it's great to see how time at FIBO can contribute to that, with a number of our volunteers coming back in subsequent years to further build their skills or complete fieldwork for research of their own.

Although the Observatory has always looked to work with others to achieve its ornithological aims, there has in recent years been a step change in the importance of working with partners to establish and deliver on a range of projects. One welcome development from the completion of the first full year of operation for the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Area has been the appointment of Kerri Whiteside (Fauna and Flora International) and Karen Hall (Scottish Natural Heritage), both of whom have been heavily involved in supporting the development of the MPA project, as new Observatory directors. It was very satisfying to welcome members of the MPA Steering Committee and MSP Tavish Scott to Fair Isle in August for the official isle launch of the Marine Protected Area, with work on new areas of research and other projects starting in 2018.

Substantial progress has also been made on the project to deliver a new power system for the isle. As many of those who have been involved with the Observatory over a number of years will know, Fair Isle was at the forefront of community wind-power schemes, with Europe's first commercially operated aerogenerator installed in the early 1980s. The installation of new wind turbines, solar panels and a new battery storage system will provide a more robust and extensive power supply for the isle, with construction work beginning in spring 2018.

Unfortunately, not all the much-needed isle development projects made such good progress through the year, with renovation of housing stock to create new accommodation and plans to replace the current Good Shepherd moving slower than had been hoped for. Here again partnerships will be important, with National Trust for Scotland, Shetland Islands Council, Fair Isle Development Company and the Observatory all committed to building and supporting a sustainable future for the isle.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who have supported the Observatory throughout the year, either by staying with us, donating directly or joining the Friends of Fair Isle membership group or volunteering. We are also greatly indebted to all those on the isle that help in so many different ways, with particular thanks as ever to Deryk and Hollie Shaw, Kenny Stout, Fair Isle Building Services and Robert and Fiona Mitchell. We would also like to thank the whole isle community for their welcome of visitors staying at the Observatory. The number of comments we received this season from new guests on how different birding on Fair Isle feels, where people are made to feel welcome, compared to experiences at home, was notable and much appreciated.



Plate 6. The 2017 wardening team mid-season (left to right): Ciaran Hatsell (Assistant Warden), David Parnaby (Warden), Richard Cope (Assistant Warden) and Chris Dodd (Ranger), July 2017. © Andy Denton

WARDEN'S REPORT

David Parnaby

The 2017 season had a familiar feel to the staff team, with Ciaran Hatsell and Chris Dodd returning for their fourth consecutive years as Senior Assistant Warden and Ranger respectively (with Chris having also done a couple of months as Ranger during autumn 2013), whilst Richard Cope returned as Assistant Warden, having previously had the same role in 2013 and 2014. The entire domestic team were also made up of returnees and having such an experienced team certainly helped in the running of the Obs. It even allowed Susannah, Grace, Freyja and I to take a summer holiday for the first time as a family. We had a wonderful time in Norway, visiting Alice Best of Kenaby, and we only missed White-winged Black Tern, Two-barred Crossbill, Rose-coloured Starling and Killer Whales back on Fair Isle (there's never a good time to go away)!

Both Ciaran and 'Doddy' moved on at the end of the season and I'd like to thank them for their hard work and friendship during their time on Fair Isle—they both made a big impression on the island and I'm sure we'll see them again here at some point.

We also had a great volunteer team, with Carice Allen, Sarah Binnie, Sarah Fenn, Tom Gale, Eleanor Grover, Max Hellicar, Elizabeth Holmes, Belinda Lloyd, Eleanor Stroud, Caitlin Tarvet and Kristofer Wilson all helping out the wardening team at various times during the course of the year, and I'm sure we will also see some of them returning to the Obs in various capacities in the future. Bar volunteers Karen Gardiner, Georgia Locock, Fiona Walker, Jodie Crane and Andy Denton also proved to be a great help during the season, with the latter two also using their considerable experience to help out the wardening team.

The FIBOT directors held their AGM and summer meeting on the isle in June and several also came to the Obs during the year as visitors. Douglas

Barr became Chairman of FIBOT at the February meeting in Aberdeen, taking over from Eric Meek. Sadly, just a few days after the meeting, Eric collapsed and did not recover. Eric had worked as an Assistant Warden at FIBO in 1972, became a director in 2009 and Chairman in 2014. He was probably even better known in ornithological terms for his birding and ringing in his native Northumberland and his long-term association with Orkney where he worked for the RSPB. I would direct readers to the Northumbrian Ringing Group's website where his close friend, regular Fair Isle visitor and former FIBO Assistant Warden John Ginnever has written a moving tribute that reflects on the way in which Eric influenced many people's lives. He will be a loss to ornithology, and we pass on our condolences to his wife Aileen, his family and friends.

We welcomed Karen Hall and Kerri Whiteside as new FIBOT directors, whilst Louise Batchelor stepped down after a long association with FIBOT. Susannah and I benefitted greatly from Louise's help, particularly in our early years when she appreciated the potential difficulties of raising a young family whilst working at the Obs and was always a friendly face. The rest of the directors also put in their usual shifts of (entirely voluntary) contributions to the running of the Obs, with Douglas, Mike and Dave in particular being regular recipients of emails and phone calls from us, so thanks are due especially to them. Thanks also to Ian Cowgill for his help with building maintenance issues, whilst Ian Andrews has taken over the editing of the Annual Report, with thanks also due to Barry Nightingale for his continued help with his proof-reading skills.

We were particularly pleased that the FIBOT directors agreed to donate £100,000 to the island's new power project. One of the main objectives of FIBO when it was established by George Waterston was to support the island and,

whilst improved transport and technology have changed conditions on the isle a lot in the 70 years since then, there are other challenges to face and I believe it is important that FIBO continues to play its part in helping to face them as part of the community.

Moving on to the birds, it was always going to be tough to follow the remarkable autumn of 2016, with its seemingly endless easterly winds and Siberian rarities, and long spells of westerly winds during the peak migration seasons this year didn't help. There were still some outstanding highlights during the year though, including the island's:

1st	Glaucous-winged Gull
1st	Green Warbler
Returning	Swinhoe's Petrel, which was a first for the island in 2013
2nd	Collared Pratincole
3rd	Mandarin Duck
4th	White-winged Black Tern
4th	Western Bonelli's Warbler
6th	Little Ringed Plover
9th	Firecrest
10th	'Northern Treecreeper'

Other notable records included Great Snipe, two Woodchat Shrikes, Red-rumped Swallow, two Dusky Warblers (including the first spring record), Arctic Warbler, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, White's Thrush, Black-throated Thrush, Thrush Nightingale, Red-flanked Bluetail, two Siberian Stonechats, Citrine Wagtail, three Red-throated Pipits, a 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll' (along with another Arctic Redpoll unidentified to subspecies), Two-barred Crossbill, three Rustic Buntings and Black-headed Bunting.

As ever, there were also good numbers of scarcities, including three Taiga Bean Geese (satellite-tracked from their Scottish wintering grounds and never actually seen on Fair Isle, a first record of this sort for the island), Osprey, two Honey-buzzards, four Marsh Harriers (the best-ever year for this species), White-tailed Eagle, three Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpiper, Little Gull, Pomarine Skua, Nightjar, 11 Wrynecks, two Hobbies, six Red-backed Shrikes,

two Great Grey Shrikes, three Waxwings, four Shore Larks, 44 Yellow-browed Warblers, two Blyth's Reed Warblers, eight Marsh Warblers, Melodious Warbler, nine Icterine Warblers, 11 Barred Warblers, 'Western Subalpine Warbler', Rose-coloured Starling, 11 Bluethroats, Nightingale, six Red-breasted Flycatchers, five 'Grey-headed Wagtails', three Richard's Pipits, three Olive-backed Pipits, four Hawfinches, 'Northern Bullfinch', 13 Common Rosefinches and ten Little Buntings (not a bad list all in all!). For island listers, Little Grebe, two Mute Swans, nine Blue Tits and the first Great Tit since 2013 were all of interest.

There were also some good birding moments, with the following notable high day counts: 155 Whooper Swans (a record), 22 Glaucous Gulls, 30 Ruffs (the highest count since 1998), 158 Snipes (the third highest-ever count), 49 Ring Ouzels (the highest autumn count since 1993), 2,279 Blackbirds (the third highest-ever autumn count) and 1,714 Meadow Pipits (the second highest count on record).

A total of 215 species was recorded during the year, a rather high figure, especially considering that a number of commoner species didn't put in an appearance including (with the last blank year for the species in brackets): Shoveler (2003), Dotterel (2001), Jackdaw (1963), Short-toed Lark (1963) and Lanceolated Warbler (2009, but just the second blank year since 1995), whilst a few other species also had rather poor years, notably Shelduck, Moorhen, Long-eared Owl and Greenfinch.

There were some impressive nesting records, including the first breeding of Red-necked Phalarope for the isle, whilst Linnet, Golden Plover, Carrion Crow, Dunlin, Swallow and Quail also had interesting years. A number of summering Robins and Chiffchaffs also raised questions as to whether either of those species may be the next to try to colonise the island.

It's not just visiting birds that are recorded at FIBO, and one species that has become more regular in recent years around the island is Killer Whale. There were some fabulous sightings of this most

charismatic cetacean in the summer, which again involved several identifiable individuals that have been visiting the island for several years. The group included several youngsters and so hopefully (from everyone's point of view except the isle's Grey Seals) they will be a regular fixture of Fair Isle waters for years to come.

Seabirds sadly had a poor year, after three years of slightly better productivity, and the future still looks fairly bleak for several species, although perhaps the continued advance of the Fair Isle MPA will help. Seabirds were also the subject of two research projects; an Arctic Skua tagging project run by the BTO with the aim of discovering more about their feeding movements and wintering grounds, and an auk tagging project run by Bob Furness of the University of Glasgow investigating the wintering grounds of Common Guillemots and Razorbills.

It was an amazing year for Storm Petrel ringing, with 4,089 new birds caught (a record) along with a number of retraps from other locations and previous years on Fair Isle, including one bird that had been ringed over 30 years previously on the isle. Another old bird was a Fulmar found dead in The Netherlands, which had been ringed on Fair Isle over 40 years previously. It's amazing to think that some of the vomiting balls of fluff, that provided so much entertainment to various

volunteers who got to ring them in the summer, could still be skimming over the North Sea waves when the Obs will be celebrating its 110th birthday.

By that point, if I'm still going, I'll be in my eighties and unlikely to be still wardening on Fair Isle. So, for now, I'll make the most of my forthcoming eighth season as Warden and look forward to whatever it brings.



Plate 7. David Parnaby, off Dronger, 5th July 2017.
© Richard Cope

David, Susannah and all those associated with FIBO wish to acknowledge the support of:

JNCC (for the grant to enable us to carry out seabird studies)
SNH (who partially fund the ranger service)
SOTEAG (who pay for some of the seabird rings used)
Jenny Wink of Total (for the generous donation of protective equipment)
The FOFI members for their subscriptions
Everyone who visited FIBO in 2017

Eric Richard Meek 1947–2017

John Ginnever



Plate 8. Eric Meek, Rousay, Orkney, 2004. © Marian Ginnever

Eric Meek was born in Newcastle, the only child of loving parents who constantly encouraged him but who also always seemed faintly surprised by his achievements. Success at his 11+ was followed by rising to become head boy of his grammar school and, as well as academic excellence, he was a great rugby player, representing his country at schoolboy level. To cap it all he won a scholarship to study at Cambridge, in those days a remarkable achievement for a lad of working class origins.

But this wasn't enough, and somewhere along the line he became passionate about wildlife, especially birds. In his mid-teens, he joined the newly formed Tyneside Bird Club, which was then an amazing hotbed of young and talented

ornithologists, many of whom went on to have glittering academic careers. He started ringing birds with the Northumbria Ringing Group and through this was introduced to the joy which is the Merlin, Eric's special bird. He also worked a couple of summers on the wonderful Farne Islands and showed huge interest in the research being carried out there.

Eric first visited Fair Isle in 1967 and, like me, he became smitten by the place. We teamed up together and found our own Little Bunting and Richard's Pipit - big birds in those days! Thus began 50 years of friendship which has taken us birding all over the world together, but often back to Fair Isle. Back in 1967, in the evening after the log, there was often folk singing and Eric's fine

tenor voice belting out songs from his native Tyneside was a real highlight. I also observed the careful and detailed way he kept his personal log, a way of working which he applied to everything throughout his life.

Following university, he became a geography teacher in Newcastle and also became very active in the local birding scene, developing the Merlin research to a high level and being co-author of the county bird report. In late 1971, he married Christine, but they were soon apart as Eric became the Assistant Warden on Fair Isle and Christine had to complete her work contract so couldn't join him until July. Their separation obviously made the heart fonder as nine months after their reunion their son Terry was born! He loved his year on the island and it strengthened his feeling that he wanted a career in birds.

Having returned to teaching and risen to head of department, in the early 1980s he made the amazingly brave decision to give it up and move away from Northumberland, where he was firmly established, to take his young family to Orkney and to work for the RSPB. It is difficult to overstate the scope of his achievements on Orkney. By 2012, the RSPB were the largest landowners on the islands and he managed this with aplomb. He carried out and promoted very effectively the protection of and research into particular species such as Merlin, Hen Harrier and Corncrake. To this he brought his own special understanding of the importance of the wider habitat of which he developed a deep and profound knowledge. He established a national reputation for his botanical expertise. At times things got very difficult, with huge controversy about increased land ownership by the RSPB, much of it directed very personally at Eric (they burned effigies of him on Hoy!). It says much that by the time he retired he was universally respected by those who had earlier opposed him. Unsurprisingly, he played a leading role in the local birding community including the production of Orkney Bird Reports, monthly bulletins and Orcadian newspaper articles. There can be no doubt that he was deeply passionate about the place.

Increasingly, he was pulled into roles of national importance and, such as his quiet charisma, charm, natural authority and deep conscientiousness, he nearly always ended up as chairman. For instance, as chairman of the BOU Rarities Committee he was the guardian of the fabled 'British List'. Until just before his death, he became chairman of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, the place that perhaps he loved more than anywhere. He was thrilled to be invited to join the trustees and felt deeply honoured to be invited to be chairman.

Eric was a devoted family man, and above all he loved walking with the family and his dogs in wild places. When his first wife, Christine, died in 2001 he was devastated but worked hard to support his children, Terry and Sally. Then in 2006 he found a soul mate in Aileen and it was good to see him happy and relaxed again. Eric collapsed suddenly and died four days later, on 16th February 2017. Our hearts go out to Aileen, Terry and Sally and to their families.

ORNITHOLOGICAL MONTHLY SUMMARY

David Parnaby

January

Species Recorded: **54**

Year List at end of month: **54**

Birds Ringed: **1**

Species Ringed: **1**

The year opened with 46 species recorded on the first day, including a juvenile Iceland Gull and two juvenile Glaucous Gulls and a variety of interesting species left over from 2016, with two Whooper Swans (with another two also moving through on 1st), and a Tundra Bean Goose, Merlin, Peregrine and Jack Snipe. There were also various species benefitting from the mild winter, with Meadow Pipit, Skylark and Oystercatcher all overwintering in larger numbers than usual, along with several Robins, a handful of Water Rails and a good scattering of thrushes. More blustery conditions around the middle of the month produced a count of ten Glaucous Gulls on 10th, whilst Iceland Gulls were present daily and peaked at three on 13th (although some turnover of individuals was noted for both species). Two more Whooper Swans arrived on 14th and took the overwintering adult with them when they left, leaving just the juvenile behind. The same day saw the first Lapwing of the year, and an unseasonal Slavonian Grebe in Furse on 17th. The 18th saw some heavy goose passage, with a total of 324 Greylags and a single 'European White-fronted Goose', with the latter species increasing to six by 20th. The same day saw a peak of 14 Glaucous Gulls, amongst a regular turnover of the species in a good winter for white-wingers. On 21st four Pink-footed Geese came in off the sea at North Light and a 'blue Fulmar' flew up Wirvie Burn whilst a second-winter Iceland Gull joined a lingering juvenile on 26th. The 28th saw 'European White-fronted Geese' increase to eight and a Goldfinch arrive at Schoolton.

Plate 9. 'European White-fronted Geese', Meadow Burn, 29th January 2017. © David Parnaby



Three Tundra Bean Geese were present on 2nd, with one remaining until the end of the month, but new arrivals were, typically, in short supply this month. There were up to four juvenile Glaucous Gulls still, along with four 'European White-fronted Geese' and a similar scatter of wintering wildfowl and passerines as in January. A curious record involved a flock of Taiga Bean Geese, containing three satellite-tagged birds, that was recorded off Fair Isle on 7th, although they were never seen on the island. The next new bird of note was a Waxwing on 13th, with a Great Northern Diver seen from the Good Shepherd on 15th. Ringed Plovers started arriving from 16th with the year's first Woodpigeon on 18th. Two more Whooper Swans were seen on 21st and a Great Northern Diver on 28th, with some early spring migrants starting to build up by the month's end, with Oystercatcher and Skylark numbers rising to 65 and 40 respectively.

February

Species Recorded: **52**
Year List at end of month: **60**
Birds Ringed: **5**
Species Ringed: **2**

A Jack Snipe on Da Water was the best bird of a quiet 1st, but a blustery 2nd saw something far more exciting—Fair Isle's first Glaucous-winged Gull. After spending the afternoon around Ditfield and Johnny's Peats, in the company of a few hundred Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls, along with five Glaucous and a single Iceland it was not seen again, despite the same five Glaucous Gulls being present on 3rd. The 4th was somewhat more spring like, with two Mistle Thrushes, 30 Blackbirds and around 100 Skylarks, along with 35 Razorbills. A new Whooper Swan and the year's first Woodcock were seen on 6th and then on 7th more migrants arrived including a few thrushes and the first Cormorant, Grey Heron and Chaffinches of the year. The 8th saw the regular scattering of immature Glaucous and Iceland Gulls joined by a splendid adult Iceland Gull, whilst two Pied Wagtails and a Goldeneye made their first appearances of the year. An early 'White Wagtail' was seen on 10th whilst 11th had a positively spring-like vibe, with Stock Dove, Stonechat and Reed Bunting all debuting for 2017 and the year's first frogspawn seen at the Obs and Haa. Stonechats increased to two the following day and five by 13th, when the first Chiffchaff of the year was at the Obs. White-winged gulls continued to be seen regularly, with three Iceland and two Glaucous on 15th, when there were also the year's first Lesser Black-backed Gulls. A Black Redstart at Schoolton on 17th was somewhat overshadowed by the isle's second spring record of Blue Tit at the same location on 20th, which went on to linger until 26th, during which time it toured many of the isle's gardens, including the Obs. Some light passage during this time saw thrushes on the move and a series of firsts for the year, with Grey Wagtail (22nd), Goldcrest and Siskin (both 25th) and Bar-tailed Godwit (26th). By 27th Goldcrests had built up to six and Redwings to 25, with a couple of Dunnocks and

March

Species Recorded: **79**
Year List at end of month: **86**
Birds Ringed: **57**
Species Ringed: **12**

Robins also on the move. The Assistant Wardens timed their arrival on 28th nicely, as the easterly breeze kept birds coming in, including two each of Wheatear and Lapland Bunting and a Greenfinch (all new for the year). The first full census of the year on 29th saw some notable counts, including 108 Snipes, 4 Jack Snipes, 31 Woodpigeons, 18 Goldcrests, 338 Skylarks, 103 Blackbirds, 69 Redwings and 15 Robins. Poor visibility caused the postponement of a Tystie census on 30th, although the day went on to produce four each of Jack Snipe, Woodcock and Lapland Bunting, along with 24 Goldcrests. A foggy start then heavy rain reduced birding opportunities on 31st, although Lapland Buntings had increased to five and the long-staying pair of Carrion Crows was seen carrying nesting material.

April

Species Recorded: **111**

Year List at end of month: **122**

Birds Ringed: **129**

Species Ringed: **23**

Although the month opened with moderate south-west winds and the entire team involved in rebuilding a large chunk of the Vaadal trap, there were still three additions to the year list made on 1st, with the isle's earliest-ever Green Sandpiper, third earliest-ever Blackcap and a Long-eared Owl. The rescheduled Tystie count on 2nd produced an encouragingly high 214 Black Guillemots in breeding plumage along the east coast, as well as the first Great Skua of the year, decent numbers of thrushes and a Black Redstart. Sadly, a Magpie that teased us by moving up through Orkney to North Ronaldsay failed to make the final hop to Fair Isle stardom. A Sand Martin arrived on 3rd, but westerly winds that reached gale force at times slowed things down for a few days, although Sanderling, Brambling (both 4th) and Red-throated Diver (6th) all made their first appearances of the year. The 7th saw a scatter of migrants including Stonechat and 'Scandinavian Rock Pipit', whilst there was also the first mass arrival of Puffins to land. A fairly light south-west wind encouraged more birds to arrive, with 'Mealy Redpoll' (8th), Collared Dove and Ring Ouzel (both 9th) being seen for the first time this year, whilst increased numbers of other birds included an impressive peak of 98 Purple Sandpipers. A strengthening north-westerly wind saw arrivals slow down somewhat, although a Whimbrel made it through on 10th whilst migrants on 13th had a distinctly north-westerly feel to them, with 12 Pink-footed Geese, two Merlins, 76 Redwings and three Lapland Buntings amongst the arrivals, along with the first Rook of the year. Sparrowhawk and Greenshank were new on 14th and the first guests made it on 17th (along with a Bar-tailed Godwit and two Whooper Swans) to be greeted by snow showers! A dry day on 18th, with a calm, almost windless, start saw a number of migrants on the move with counts including 13 Chiffchaffs, 60 Wheatears, 188 Rock Pipits and five Lapland Buntings, as well as Black Redstart and Common Scoter (the first of the year). The winds returned to a moderate south-westerly on 19th, but



brought with them a Waxwing, Green Sandpiper and the first Grey Plover, Arctic Skua and Yellow Wagtail of the year. A male Mandarin Duck lingered for a while on 20th and was just the third isle record. It allowed the Warden and his assistants to plug a gap in their Fair Isle lists left after the last one (in April 2014), which turned up the day after they'd seen the Cretzschmar's Bunting. Tufted Duck and Black-tailed Godwit were also added to the year list the same day. Some poor weather again slowed things down, as the spluttering start to spring continued, with 24th looking like it was going to be remembered for the first Barnacle Geese of the year, with a flock of 14, and an increase in Snow Buntings to 20 until a superb adult White-tailed Eagle put on a 20-minute display before slipping off during a blizzard. A Black Redstart on 26th was new but was overshadowed by six Killer Whales moving down the east coast. The 27th remained quiet, with Stonechat and six Lapland Buntings the highlights. The 28th was notable for being the first dry day since 18th and the first day of the month without a westerly component to the wind. The north-easterly winds became south-easterly as the day went on, with four Willow Warblers (with two singing individuals) the first of the year and a slight increase in migrants including a couple of Dunnocks and 124 Wheatears. Despite the strong south-easterlies raising hopes, the best that could be managed on 29th was a Tree Pipit. That was a bit of a disappointment and

Plate 10. Mandarin Duck, Mid Geo, 20th April 2017. © Susannah Parnaby



Plate 11. 'White Wagtail', Quoy, 15th May 2017. © Steve Arlow.

the Warden's football team being relegated and a Red-winged Blackbird on North Ronaldsay the same day didn't exactly improve the mood! Still, tomorrow is a new day and, as the south-easterlies continued, birds finally arrived. There were year ticks in the form of Shelduck, Knot, Kestrel, Whitethroat (three), Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler (two), Pied Flycatcher and Whinchat (two), with other notable species including a very smart Waxwing at the Obs, Green Sandpiper, Iceland Gull, two Black Redstarts, Stonechat and four 'Scandinavian Rock Pipits', whilst an increase in the counts of many migrants included 74 Willow Warblers, 24 Chiffchaffs, ten Blackcaps, 12 Ring Ouzels, 246 Wheatears, 19 'White Wagtails', five Tree Pipits, ten Bramblings and six Reed Buntings.

May

Species Recorded: **152**
 Year List at end of month: **170**
 Birds Ringed: **482**
 Species Ringed: **44**

May began where April had left off, with an impressive arrival of birds thanks to some brisk south-easterly winds. A Wryneck on Dronger was the pick of the bunch, with other additions to the year list coming in the form of Common Sandpiper, Short-eared Owl, Lesser Whitethroat (three) and Redstart (nine) and a pleasant number of migrants including two 'Siberian Chiffchaffs'. Lighter south-east winds on 2nd brought a host of birds, including two species more usually associated with October—Little Bunting and Dusky Warbler. Other highlights included Nightingale, Wryneck, two 'Siberian Chiffchaffs' and the sixth Fair Isle record of Little Ringed Plover. The back-up cast included the year's first Spotted Flycatcher, as well 95 Willow Warblers and 61 Chiffchaffs amongst a host of common birds. With the wind in the north-east on 3rd, there was a continued arrival of birds, including the first Great Tit since 2013, a Hawfinch, a new Wryneck, the first Cuckoo, Wood Warbler and

Lesser Redpoll of the year and a flock of five Canada Geese. Common migrants also increased in numbers, with 104 Willow Warblers and ten Ring Ouzels notable, whilst also of interest was a Wren that had been ringed two days previously on North Ronaldsay turning up in the Obs mist nets (with the same session seeing a Chiffchaff caught on Fair Isle moving to North Ronaldsay the following day!). A 'Blue-headed Wagtail' was the highlight of an otherwise quiet 4th, and things were generally slow for a few days, with two Wrynecks (5th) and four Killer Whales (6th) providing the highlights. A few gulls and waders moved through on 9th, along with three Pintails and a Swift (both first records of the year). After several days of westerly winds, a hint of easterlies on 10th delivered Bluethroat, 'Grey-headed Wagtail' and Wood Sandpiper. South-east winds became more established from the afternoon of 11th and a Shore Lark was found on Ward Hill, 'Grey-headed Wagtails' increased to three (and were joined by a 'Blue-headed Wagtail'), with 263 Wheatears, 18 Tree Pipits, five Ring Ouzels and two Pied Flycatchers amongst the common migrants recorded in decent numbers, with two Canada Geese adding to the mix. Continued south-easterlies on 12th brought a great selection of birds, the rarest being the two Mute Swans in South Harbour, with Hobby, Marsh Harrier and Quail (two) also being good additions to the year list, whilst two Bluethroats and two Wrynecks were also quality birds, Garden Warbler was new for the year and a good selection of common migrants included 68 Swallows and 12 Spotted Flycatchers. Bluethroats has increased to three on 13th and a good selection of other birds remained, although low cloud

Plate 12. Collared Pratincole, Wirvie Burn, 15th May 2017. © Steve Arlow



and regular rain made birding difficult. Conditions improved on 14th and a superb Collared Pratincole in the upper Wirvie was the outstanding highlight. It went on to linger until 18th and proved a deservedly popular bird, attracting a succession of islanders and twitchers from Shetland whilst also being immortalised in 'Maavie's Tongue' in the Fair Isle Times—a sure sign of a special bird! The day the pratincole arrived was obviously a good one for migration, with 101 Swallows, 19 House Martins, 37 Carrion Crows, 31 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and 257 Wheatears amongst the interesting counts, whilst Moorhen and Mistle Thrush were both new for the year. The remains of a freshly dead Nightjar were found on 15th, when Turtle Dove and Reed Warbler were also new for the year. It was confirmed that there were two Marsh Harriers present and four Buff-tailed Bumblebees indicated an arrival of that species. The run of good birds continued, with a Thrush Nightingale and Hawfinch on 16th, as well as Tree Sparrow, eight Sand Martins and 297 Wheatears. A gorgeous Red-throated Pipit on 17th–18th was joined by 15 Spotted Flycatchers and 27 House Martins on the first date and Yellow Wagtail and Yellowhammer on 18th. There were no flights on 19th or 20th as low cloud, then rain, disrupted visibility, with two Goosanders on the latter date the only real notable arrivals. Conditions improved considerably on 21st, with a light southerly breeze and sunshine and several arrivals included Red-backed Shrike, 'Northern Bullfinch', Crossbill, Woodcock, Cuckoo and Long-eared Owl. An increasing south-easterly wind on 22nd brought more birds including Red-breasted Flycatcher, Icterine Warbler, a new Turtle Dove, a scattering of common migrants and a Bar-headed Goose! Although the wind had gone westerly on 23rd a Red-rumped Swallow put on a show for a single observer at Hesswalls, whilst Hobby, Hen Harrier and 'Grey-headed Wagtail' all proved more cooperative. Fog disrupted proceedings on 24th, with Quail and Great Northern Diver the best birds seen. When fog cleared during the afternoon of 25th a new Red-throated Pipit was found, with the following day generally quiet for new arrivals other than a Rustic Bunting! Another Red-breasted Flycatcher was found in south-east winds on 27th, along with a Wood Sandpiper and four Barnacle Geese. There was little new in light northerlies on 28th, whilst the same conditions on 29th brought Marsh Harrier, Quail and 'Grey-headed Wagtail'. A return to south-easterly winds for a short while on 30th brought rain, but also a lovely male 'Western Subalpine Warbler' amongst a scatter of common migrants, with a Gadwall being the first of the year. A month that had seen scattered spells of decent migration, but not a large number of really rare birds, ended with north-westerly winds and a new Icterine Warbler.

June opened with light south-east winds and the hope of a last 'big' migrant. That may not have arrived, but there was Common Rosefinch, Red-backed Shrike, two Quails and a few common migrants, whilst the first fledged 'Fair Isle Wrens' were noted. Two Icterine Warblers arrived the following day and Quail numbers increased to three. A few more birds arrived on light east-south-easterlies on 3rd, with a 'Grey-headed Wagtail' and Quail on 4th. Migrants continued to trickle in, with a singing red Common Rosefinch on 6th–7th and three Marsh Warblers on 7th, which had increased to four the following day. A Blyth's Reed Warbler was briefly in Hesti Geo on 8th and light easterlies on 10th brought another Icterine Warbler and Turtle Dove with a Pomarine Skua off the Good Shepherd the same day. South-west winds became south-easterlies on 11th and a good selection of birds included Honey-buzzard, Common Rosefinch and Pintail whilst Icterine Warblers increased to three. More interestingly though were two pairs of Red-necked Phalaropes, which was to be the start of an exciting year for the species on the island... A Stock Dove on 12th was unusual, whilst one of a group of seven Barnacle Geese had been ringed as a gosling near Aviemore the

June

Species Recorded: **111**

Year List at end of month: **180**

Birds Ringed: **446**

Species Ringed: **30**

Plate 13. Common Rosefinch, School, 6th June 2017. © David Parnaby





Plate 14. Red-necked Phalarope,
Utra Scrape, 18th July 2017.
© Ciaran Hatsell

previous July and had already been to Norway earlier in the spring before coming back to Fair Isle! A Rustic Bunting and a Quail turned up in a light southerly on 14th. The next day was a memorable one for the fantastic display put on by at least ten Killer Whales, which cruised the coast apparently showing the youngsters from the pod how to hunt seals. The birds were not done yet though, with Woodchat Shrike, two Icterine Warblers and Turtle Dove present on 16th, along with the year's first Common Tern. Another Marsh Warbler turned up on 17th but much less expected was a Long-tailed Duck on 18th, which went on to linger into July. The biggest news from 19th was that Golden Plovers had nested on the isle for the first time since 1989, whilst a clutch of Linnet eggs discovered on 21st was the first confirmed Fair Isle breeding occurrence (the latter date also saw a Glaucous Gull present). A seawatch on 24th produced 13 Manx Shearwaters, and a Purple Sandpiper on 25th took up residence around the Obs for a few days. Common Rosefinch and Marsh Warbler on 26th were typical late spring migrants before attention switched to Killer Whales again on 28th, which put on another good show around the North Haven.

Storm Petrel ringing began in earnest, with a session in the Haven and another at Kirn o' Skroo producing 24 birds, with another seen off the Good Shepherd; it would go on to be a very good year for the species. Whilst most of early July is taken up monitoring and ringing seabirds, checking on the state of other species and the occasional cetacean highlight (ten Risso's Dolphins passed the Obs on 5th), can throw up the odd surprise. The Brown Flycatcher of 1st July 1992 is probably the most famous but ranking close behind it now must be the Green Warbler that turned up in the Obs mist nets on 4th and lingered until 7th. The first Leach's Petrel of the year was around the mist nets on 11th (11 would be ringed during a good summer for the species), but more of a surprise was the return of the first Swinhoe's Petrel from 2013 again (it was also caught in 2016) in the early hours of 13th and 14th. Another seabird was added to the year list with two Sooty Shearwaters from the Good Shepherd on 15th. For what is considered a quiet month for birds passing through, there was a remarkable spell of rare bird sightings. A new pair of Red-necked Phalaropes occurred on 18th, a stunning White-winged Black Tern touched down briefly on Bunness on 21st (a day that produced a count of 687 Common Gulls), a female Two-barred Crossbill on Hoini was even briefer on 22nd, an adult Rose-coloured Starling toured the New Zealand Flaxes of the island from 24th and a Little Gull on 28th was the first since 2014. The end of the month also saw a few Crossbills, Purple Sandpipers build up to 88 (31st), the earliest-ever autumn occurrence of Grasshopper Warbler (27th) and the first Garden Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher and Cuckoo of the autumn (all 31st). There were also six Killer Whales on 25th and another two on 30th, whilst four Storm Petrels came to check out proceedings in the North Haven on the night of 28th where Deryk Shaw's surprise 50th birthday party was taking place!

July

Species Recorded: **89**
 Year List at end of month: **188**
 Birds Ringed: **3,092**
 Species Ringed: **24**

Despite the end of July promising migrants, migration was slow to get going in August, although Storm Petrels continued to provide a pleasant distraction, with 332 trapped overnight on 2nd being a particularly good night. A Black Redstart from 2nd, the first juvenile Willow Warbler on 4th and a Ruff on 5th were the few thin pickings available from the first week of the month. The breeze went to the east-north-east on 7th and brought in a Garden Warbler, but swiftly returned to the north-west and other than a Black-tailed Godwit (9th), there was little else of note. A juvenile Red-necked Phalarope on 10th and three the following day were considered to be confirmation that the breeding attempt on the island had been successful, with juvenile Linnets on 12th confirming that species had also bred successfully on Fair Isle for the first time. Two Killer Whales on 13th and an increase in Black-tailed Godwits to 15 (with 18 from 15th)

August

Species Recorded: **113**
 Year List at end of month: **191**
 Birds Ringed: **2,054**
 Species Ringed: **34**

continued the theme of very little migration and south-south-easterlies on 14th brought nothing better than Short-eared Owl, Sand Martin and Crossbill. After a couple more days of westerlies, south-south-easterlies returned on 17th and brought in a few more Meadow Pipits, a couple of Garden Warblers and a 'Mealy Redpoll'. The continued hint of easterlies on 18th brought little more than Pintail, two Ruffs and the first Whitethroat of the autumn. A wet start to the west-south-west winds on 19th brought a surprise in the form of a juvenile Woodchat Shrike, along with the first Barred Warbler of the autumn and an increase in Willow Warblers to 15. The 20th brought an impressive 78 Redshanks, along with two Reed Warblers. There was little else of note until a little bit of easterly snuck into the wind on 23rd and an adult Common Rosefinch, Wood Warbler, Sedge Warbler, *flava* wagtail, Kestrel and 24 Willow Warblers arrived. Rain, heavy at times, and poor visibility made birding on 24th more difficult, but there was a Marsh Harrier, Grey Plover, a new Wood Warbler, two Grasshopper Warblers, two Redstarts, Pied Flycatcher, Whinchat and Tree Pipit, whilst Willow, Garden and Reed Warblers increased to 32, five and five respectively. Continued easterly winds on 25th brought more birds, with two Wrynecks, Icterine Warbler, Red-backed Shrike, two Barred Warblers and a Common Rosefinch the highlights, whilst Lesser Whitethroat, Merlin and 50 Willow Warblers all contributed to the best fall of the autumn so far, whilst the evening ended happily with a party in the North Haven to celebrate Fair Isle's recently granted MPA status. A few sore heads greeted the morning of 26th, but an Arctic Warbler was a suitable pick-me-up, Red-backed Shrike and Wood Warbler both doubled in number to two, a Quail was new, the first Grey Wagtail and Sparrowhawk of the autumn were noted and ten Risso's Dolphins performed well off South Harbour in the evening. The Arctic Warbler remained the following day, when light east-south-east winds brought two new Common Rosefinches, Turtle Dove and a Spotted Flycatcher. The brief spell of easterlies was replaced by quite strong south-west winds on 28th, but they brought a Pectoral Sandpiper to Hoini as compensation. A Fieldfare and Peregrine the next day were the only new arrivals, but as the south-westerlies continued on 30th some species moved in impressive numbers, including 1,714 Meadow Pipits, 184 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and 190 *alba* wagtails (most of which were 'White Wagtails'), whilst there was also the first Lapland Bunting and Blackcap of the autumn. An overall rather disappointing month ended with another display of 12 Risso's Dolphins, a couple of Tree Pipits, two Lapland Buntings and a Lesser Whitethroat, and the hope that September would be better...

Plates 15–18 (opposite).

Arctic Warbler, Chalet, 27th August 2017. © Max Hellicar

Rustic Bunting, Allaties, near Haa, 17th September 2017. © Richard Cope

Melodious Warbler, between Houll and Schoolton, 17th September 2017. © Tom Gale

Western Bonelli's Warbler, Upper Stoneybrek, 17th September 2017. © Tom Gale



September

Species Recorded: **135**
Year List at end of month: **204**
Birds Ringed: **328**
Species Ringed: **43**

More westerly winds greeted the opening of September, with a lingering Common Rosefinch on 1st then Barred Warbler and the autumn's first Goldcrest on 2nd. A strong southerly wind on 3rd brought a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, which lingered on Buness until 7th, as well as a second Barred Warbler. Strong south-south-east winds on 4th delivered a Slavonian Grebe, two Sparrowhawks and an unusually high count of 15 Common Terns. A second Buff-breasted Sandpiper was found in lighter winds on 5th, with the day also delivering a Honey-buzzard, Red-backed Shrike, 'Blue-headed Wagtail', a few more common migrants and a few bits from a seawatch including two Pintails. Lighter south-south-east winds on 7th encouraged a passage of 1,517 Meadow Pipits, along with a few more common migrants and an increase in waders, whilst variable winds the following day brought a Little Stint. Winds had switched to the north-west on 9th, so a Wryneck at the top of Ward Hill was a pleasant surprise. South-easterlies on 10th provided some promise, but other than a very showy Corncrake at the Obs and 12 Cormorants, there was not too much of note. The 11th proved a much better day, with the leading edge of an Atlantic low bringing some easterlies across the North Sea which was enough to deliver Great Snipe, the first Little Bunting and Yellow-browed Warbler of the autumn and year respectively as well as Barred Warbler, Common Rosefinch, 30 Willow Warblers and a Redstart. Things were quieter in north-westerlies on 12th, then the 13th saw another Yellow-browed Warbler and a small handful of common migrants, but was most notable for a large movement

Plate 19. Buff-breasted Sandpiper,
Buness, 3rd September 2017.
© Max Hellicar





of dolphins past South Light involving over 60 animals of three species. The Yellow-browed Warbler count had doubled on 14th and a Common Rosefinch and the first Pink-footed Goose of the autumn arrived on 15th as strong north-west winds continued. The wind became slightly more north-easterly on 16th and brought a smart male Red-backed Shrike. With relatively calm north-easterly winds coming off the top of Scandinavia on 17th there was hope of a few new birds, but the day's haul of Western Bonelli's Warbler, Rustic Bunting, Citrine Wagtail, Melodious Warbler, two Little Buntings, Bluethroat and nine Yellow-browed Warblers was somewhat better than expected, especially as it was accompanied by a relatively modest increase in common migrants, with 19 Willow Warblers, four Chiffchaffs, five Lesser Whitethroats, three Pied Flycatchers and a Redstart. It was an especially memorable day for Tom Gale, volunteering at FIBO with the aid of a grant from the Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund, who found for himself two BBRC lifers in the form of the Bonelli's and Rustic, along with a Little Bunting and Bluethroat, as well as getting to ring the other Little Bunting. With the wind still calm, but becoming more north-westerly on 18th there were fewer birds, with two Common Rosefinches and the first Jack Snipe of

Plate 20. Corncrake, Obs, 10th September 2017. © David Parnaby



Plate 21. Yellow-browed Warbler, Shirva, 22nd September 2017.
© Steve Arlow

the autumn amongst the best new arrivals. Marsh and Wood Warblers were the highlights of similar conditions on 19th, with light south-east winds on 20th seeing Common Rosefinches increase to three and Yellow-browed Warblers to seven. The winds were back in the north-west on 21st, when another Buff-breasted Sandpiper was found, along with a Slavonian Grebe. A calm start to 22nd brought an elusive Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler to Lower Stoneybrek, with two Barred and 15 Yellow-browed Warblers, but not too many common migrants. With the forecast set for strong south-easterly winds there was a lot of hope for the last week of September, which can be one of the rarest times on Fair Isle. An Osprey on 23rd was the first of the year, with the first Brambling of the autumn also logged. The south-easterlies continued to blow on 24th with more common migrants starting to arrive, including two Ring Ouzels, seven Redwings, two Dunnocks (all first records of the autumn), Spotted Flycatcher, two Pied Flycatchers as well as an increase in Yellow-browed Warblers to 15. Although the wind dropped slightly on 25th, low cloud meant there were no planes for the third day, but scarce migrants included Blyth's Reed Warbler, Great Grey Shrike, Wryneck, Bluethroat and 16 Yellow-browed Warblers, with thrush numbers also increasing. A Red-breasted Flycatcher was the highlight of 26th (when planes finally made it in), with four Woodcocks, two Grasshopper Warblers and 53 Redwings amongst the backup cast. The wind increased again on 27th bringing with it Red-throated Pipit (which remained well into October), Olive-backed Pipit, Little Bunting, two Red-breasted Flycatchers and Corncrake. The weather was potentially promising on 28th, but strong south-easterlies and heavy rain made birding difficult, although Little Bunting, two Red-breasted Flycatchers, 26 Goldcrests and 53 Robins were picked out, leaving a feeling of what else could be out there. The wind remained strong on 29th,

with heavy rain in the afternoon and the highlights were largely lingering birds, but good counts of common birds included 57 Goldcrests, 40 Chiffchaffs, 20 Willow Warblers, three Ring Ouzels, 277 Song Thrushes, nine Spotted Flycatchers, 92 Robins, 19 Redstarts, 11 Tree Pipits, 42 Bramblings and 35 Chaffinches, making for a good day's birding. The month ended with two Little Buntings and a selection of other lingering scarcities, along with a 'Pale-bellied Brent Goose', nine Kestrels, two Grasshopper Warblers, 98 Robins, 20 Redstarts and 30 Reed Buntings. After waiting so long for a decent spell of easterly winds, the end of the month had delivered some good birding, but it was a bit of a surprise that there were not a few more rarities amongst the commoner species. Still, there's always October...

The south-easterly wind continued on 1st, although it was still rather strong and was accompanied by heavy rain for most of the afternoon, with highlights of lingering Little Bunting and Marsh Warbler, two Yellow-browed Warblers, a Grey Plover and the first Stonechat of the autumn, as well as the first Grey Seal pup of the year. With strong south-west winds on 2nd highlights were few and far between, although the Red-throated Pipit was relocated at Stackhoull and went to linger until 19th. There was also a rather late Swift, Stonechats doubled to two and there was the first sizeable arrival of Pink-footed Geese of the autumn, with 165 recorded. The first three Whooper Swans of the autumn followed the next day, with 195 Pink-footed Geese, the first Mistle Thrush of the autumn, a Crossbill and a Sooty Shearwater off South Light.

October

Species Recorded: **143**

Year List at end of month: **215**

Birds Ringed: **951**

Species Ringed: **51**

Plate 22. Marsh Warbler, Obs, 24th September 2017. © Steve Arlow



Plate 23. White's Thrush, Bunness, 7th
October 2017. © Sarah Sankey



Strong, predominantly westerly, winds continued on 4th, with the first autumn records of Barnacle Goose (17) and Water Rail, along with 80 Greylag Geese and four Grasshopper Warblers. A Pintail on 5th was the best of another windy day, whilst a calmer, showery day on 6th brought little new, except the first planes of the month. Light westerly winds on 7th accompanied a quite pleasant day, although low cloud in Shetland again stopped the planes, but a White's Thrush on Bunness was ample compensation for those who were delayed on the island. There was also a Common Rosefinch, 255 Barnacle Geese, two Slavonian Grebes and the latest-ever Wood Warbler for the isle, amongst a small increase in common migrants. A light north-east wind and a sunny day on 8th brought the first Richard's Pipit of the year, Little Bunting and two Common Rosefinches all trapped at the Obs, along with three Yellow-browed Warblers, 'Siberian Chiffchaff', the first Goldeneye of the year and a few more common migrants, although all were somewhat overshadowed by Tom Gale finding an adult male Siberian Blue Robin - it was a slight shame for those of us on Fair Isle that he had moved on to North Ronaldsay by then! A light wind just west of south-west on 9th brought a Siberian Stonechat and a few other bits and pieces including Hen Harrier, Reed Warbler and a 'North-western Redpoll'. A large pale bunting seen briefly at Quoy in the evening of 10th was intriguing and there were also 19 Jack Snipes. The bunting was confirmed the following day as a Black-headed Bunting, with new arrivals including Richard's Pipit, Sparrowhawk, Water Rail, Spotted Flycatcher and three Goldfinches. The westerly winds continued on 12th, with a nice selection of birds around, but little new, although 94 Barnacle Geese were recorded. Friday 13th proved neither particularly unlucky or

otherwise, with a moderate south-west wind seeing an arrival of 951 Redwings, Ring Ouzel, 78 Bramblings and 13 Lapland Buntings. A moderate south-south-west wind on 14th saw 31 Whooper Swans, 192 Pink-footed Geese and six Goldfinches. A variable wind on 15th was generally from the south, and brought heavy rain at first, with a Barred Warbler probably the best of the new migrants, but the day was dominated by wildfowl sightings, with 78 Whooper Swans, eight White-fronted Geese, 215 Barnacle Geese, Long-tailed Duck and two Slavonian Grebes. Calm conditions greeted the start of 16th, although by the end of the day a strong north-east wind had picked up bringing heavy rain and even a flash of lightning. A Siberian Stonechat was the best bird found during the day, with Bluethroat, Glaucous Gull, 1,298 Redwings, 24 Goldcrests, four Garden Warblers and 16 Jack Snipes amongst the other birds on the island, although it was the passage of 155 Whooper Swans that made the biggest impression, a record count for the island, with 1,132 Greylags and 114 Barnacle Geese also logged. A very wet day with north-easterly gales on 17th made birding difficult, although Pied Flycatcher, Grasshopper Warbler, Yellowhammer (the first of the autumn), four Ring Ouzels and at least 3,400 Redwings suggested there would be more birds to be found when the weather eased. A calm start to 18th was perfect and, although there had been something of a clear out, there was still Red-flanked Bluetail (found whilst the observers were making use of the internet in the Hall), the eighth Little Bunting of the autumn and then a Blue Tit at Stackhoull, which was rarer on Fair Isle than the Bluetail! That statistic was quickly reversed though, when a flock of Blue Tits was found at Lower Stoneybrek, resulting in a total of eight being present, an unprecedented event on Fair Isle.

Plate 24. Black-headed Bunting, Quoy, 15th October 2017. © Chris Griffin







A strong south-east wind on 19th was very promising and brought Dusky Warbler (that lingered to the 22nd), Great Grey Shrike, Richard's Pipit, two Hawfinches, Little Grebe, two Yellow-browed Warblers, 'Siberian Chiffchaff' and two Glaucous Gulls as the highlights (along with lingering Black-headed Bunting, Red-flanked Bluetail, Red-throated Pipit, Little Bunting and eight Blue Tits), whilst Long-eared Owl, 32 Woodcocks, 17 Chiffchaffs, 36 Blackcaps, 44 Ring Ouzels, 2,279 Blackbirds, 331 Fieldfares, 284 Song Thrushes, 9,703 Redwings, two Mistle Thrushes, 151 Robins, 145 Bramblings, three Yellowhammers and 19 Reed Buntings added to a really impressive day's birding. A Firecrest trapped on 20th was the highlight of a day with a decreasing southerly wind, with other birds including Grasshopper Warbler, Black Redstart, 446 Song Thrushes and 49 Ring Ouzels, whilst a bat was an unusual sighting. A strong easterly wind increased throughout the day on 21st bringing heavy showers then persistent rain later, but highlights were restricted to 2,267 Blackbirds, 42 Woodcocks and two Glaucous Gulls. A lighter easterly on 22nd started with murky weather and showers, with heavier rain later, with a Shore Lark and 'Dark-bellied Brent Goose' being the best of the new birds, and some good counts including 88 Goldcrests, 24 Blackcaps, 43 Ring Ouzels, 464 Song Thrushes, 181 Robins and two Black Redstarts. Black-throated Thrush, two Arctic Redpolls (one 'Hornemann's' and the other seen too briefly to identify to subspecies) and Firecrest were a great start to 23rd, but the strong east-south-east wind brought stinging rain and a premature end to the day's birding, although other sightings included Little Grebe, Greenshank, Grasshopper Warbler and 48 Woodcocks. A light southerly wind increasing and becoming more south-westerly

Plate 29. Red-flanked Bluetail, School, 18th October 2017. © Rebecca Nason

Plates 25–28 (opposite).

Dusky Warbler, Meadow Burn, 20th October 2017. © Rebecca Nason

Black-throated Thrush, Pund, 23rd October 2017. © Kevin Kelly

Slavonian Grebe, Haven, 8th October 2017. © Steve Arlow

'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll', School Brae, 30th October 2017. © Ciaran Hatsell



Plate 30. 'Northern Treecreeper',
Troila Geo, 24th October 2017.
© David Parnaby

during the 24th brought a 'Northern Treecreeper' to the cliffs, whilst Shore Larks increased to three, Jack Snipes to 24 and Woodcocks to 63. A Yellow-browed Warbler was the highlight of 25th October, with the wind having become moderate south-westerly, although a *blythi* Lesser Whitethroat and a Redstart were new arrivals and a Blue Tit at the Obs became the second to be caught during the month but only the fourth ever to be ringed on Fair Isle. A gusty north-westerly wind on 26th was good enough weather for Sheep Hill to take place (resulting in a reasonable count of 36 Woodcocks), with new birds including Olive-backed Pipit, Little Bunting and Goosander. Winds remained strong and predominantly in the west on 27th, with Black Redstart about the only new bird, whilst gales on 28th–29th saw just a light wildfowl passage, but very little else. A calmer day on 30th confirmed that there was little moving, although the autumn's first Iceland Gull and the only Puffin of the month were seen from South Light, with the same location providing the location for the first two Little Auks of the year on an otherwise quiet 31st. October had proved to be another somewhat frustrating month, with long spells of westerly winds and, when there were easterlies, they were often very strong or accompanied by rain, and although they delivered some brilliant birding, there were fewer big rarities than might have been hoped for.

November

Species Recorded: **77**
Year List at end of month: **215**
Birds Ringed: **50**
Species Ringed: **8**

November began where October left off, with strong winds and gales from the west and north and quite a bit of rain coming through as well, meaning there was to be no late flurry of migrants. Four Blue Tits remained at the start of the month, with at least a couple finding the island's peanut feeders and lingering throughout November, Glaucous Gulls were a regular presence and there was a typical selection of wintering wildfowl. A Tufted Duck on 1st was new, a Little Auk was off South Light on 2nd, when there were also 15 'blue Fulmars' and the last Wheatear of the year. Two adult Whooper Swans arrived to join the lingering juvenile on 6th, with all three remaining until the end of the month, whilst the same day also saw a Hen Harrier, an increase in Fieldfares to 72 and seven Glaucous Gulls present. The last of the seasonal wardening team left on 7th, with the calm weather that day bringing an arrival of 34 Woodcocks, more thrushes, Common Scoter and a late Red-throated Diver that went on to linger. A Ring Ouzel arrived on 12th and was still present on 18th and a seawatch on 14th produced Sooty Shearwater and Little Auk, when there was also an Iceland Gull. A 'Greenland White-fronted Goose' arrived in strong north-westerlies on 18th, on which date the lingering 'White Wagtail' at Quoy became the latest-ever Fair Isle record. Light easterly winds on 21st saw a small fall, with Chiffchaff, three Blackcaps, nine redpolls (probably all 'Mealies' although most were only seen in flight), 120

Redwings and 59 Blackbirds, whilst the 15 birds trapped made it the best day for ringing in the month—showing just how slow migration had been in November. The wind increased to a severe north-easterly gale overnight that saw a lot of gulls seek shelter on the island on 22nd, including a minimum of 22 Glaucous Gulls, an impressive sight. Two new Blackcaps arrived on 23rd, with another on 24th, but with the weather stuck in a rut of strong northerly or north-westerly winds it was rather cold and wintry at the end of the month. Ten Glaucous Gulls on 26th contained a higher count of older birds than the previous arrival, and there were also three Iceland Gulls, plus seven Glaucous Gulls on 28th and three on 30th.

The weather was generally unpleasant at the start of the month, with Little Auk on 2nd and a Great Northern Diver, that appeared in North Haven on 6th and lingered until the end of the year, being the highlights. A storm that passed through on the night of 7th brought gusts of 93mph and the following day there was a Knot and five Glaucous Gulls, along with some passage of Kittiwakes off South Light, with Slavonian Grebe and Peregrine on 9th. Windy weather gave way to calmer conditions with icy spells, although there were few new birds other than a Little Auk from the Good Shepherd on 11th and a freshly dead bird in the North Haven on 15th. The latter date also saw the first plane for nine days, after gales then icy conditions at Tingwall saw all flights halted. Glaucous Gulls increased to seven on 17th, when the Slavonian Grebe was seen again. A surprise record involved a Blackcap at the Obs on 21st, the latest-ever record for the isle. Common Guillemots spent Christmas Day on the cliffs, with sightings from the end of the year involving a Peregrine on 28th, four Little Auks on 29th and one the next day, with all three Blue Tits still present at the end of the year.

December

Species Recorded: **58**

Year List at end of month: **215**

Birds Ringed: **3**

Species Ringed: **3**

Plate 31. Great Northern Diver,
North Haven, 9th December 2017.
© David Parnaby



SYSTEMATIC LIST 2017

David Parnaby

Notes

The species order and taxonomy are taken from the 'British List' published by the BOU in January 2018. 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

1cy	first-calendar-year bird (i.e. hatched in that year)
2cy	second-calendar-year bird (i.e. hatched in the previous year)
3cy	third-calendar-year bird (i.e. hatched two years earlier)
4cy	fourth-calendar-year bird (i.e. hatched three years earlier)
AON	Apparently Occupied Nest
AOS	Apparently Occupied Site
n/c	no count
Obs	Fair Isle Bird Observatory
*	indicates record(s) requiring assessment by the relevant records committee

Brent Goose

Branta bernicla

Rare visitor; 50 records of 99 individuals in the FIBO period, 27 records in autumn (September to November), 12 in spring (March to June) and 11 winter records (December to February). There are several pre-FIBO records, although there is some confusion with Barnacle Goose in earlier literature

'Dark-bellied Brent Goose' *B.b.bernicla*

The rarer of the two Brent Geese subspecies on Fair Isle, with only 11 confirmed records (of 19 individuals) in the FIBO period; six in autumn, three in winter and two in spring



Plate 32. 'Dark-bellied Brent Goose', Nether Taft, 29th October 2017. © David Parnaby

An adult seen flying up the west coast on 22nd October eventually settled around Lower Stoneybrek and then Nether Taft and remained until 10th November. The first record of this subspecies since December 2009.

'Pale-bellied Brent Goose' *B.b.hrota*

There have been 30 records (of 60 individuals) in the FIBO period; 15 in autumn, eight in spring and seven in winter (there are also nine records of 20 individuals that have not been assigned to subspecies)

One was in Muckle Uri Geo on 30th September, the third consecutive year of occurrence for this subspecies after no Brent Geese at all were recorded during 2011–2014.

Canada Goose

Branta canadensis

Rare visitor; 32 previous records of 79 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 one possibly of the subspecies B.c.parvipes in May 2001 and one arriving with Pink-footed Geese (October 1997) were possibly transatlantic vagrants

A flock of five on 3rd–8th May included one with aberrant white markings around the face. They represented the first record since 2015 and the largest flock since 2006 and had earlier been seen on North Ronaldsay. In a good spring for the species, another two were present from 11th–17th May.



Plate 33. Canada Geese, Utra, 15th May 2017. © Steve Arlow

Barnacle Goose

Branta leucopsis

Frequent autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter

A flock of 14 on 24th April (the highest spring count since 2014) was the first of the year, followed by seven on 29th April and four on 27th May. Two on 1st–2nd June included a darvic-ringed bird from a feral population that breeds near Kingussie in Highland. The same bird then returned amongst a flock of seven on 11th–12th June, with two of those remaining on 13th. Autumn passage was restricted to 4th–29th October, beginning with a flock of 17 and with sightings on most days, including peaks of 225 on 7th, 94 on 12th and 114 on 16th.

Greylag Goose

Anser anser

Common spring and autumn migrant

Table 1. Maximum monthly counts of Greylag Goose on Fair Isle 2017

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
324	138	120	249	20	23	2	3	9	1,132	172	190

Although there were generally less than 200 throughout January, movement on 18th saw a winter peak of 324, with generally small numbers throughout February and March. There were usually around 120 in April, although some days of passage produced larger counts including 181 on 9th and 249 on 24th. After a mass departure on 28th April, there were generally less than 20 on most days in May, with single figures lingering during June, although the occasional flock passed through. A couple of summering birds were probably injured individuals and no breeding behaviour was noted. Autumn passage began on 4th October, when 80 were seen, with smaller numbers present until heavier passage saw 215 on 15th, an impressive 1,132 on 16th and between 249 and 387 during the following three days. Counts in late October dropped away to less than 100 and fluctuating counts in November suggested a relatively low wintering population with some days of passage, with a similar situation through most of December. At the very end of the year there was a suggestion that birds were on the move, and it was possibly a migrant skein that collided with the South Light during the night of 30th December, killing three geese and shattering one of the 4 cm-thick glass panels.



Plate 34. Greylag Geese, Meadow Burn, 12th November 2017. © David Parnaby

*Taiga Bean Goose

Anser fabalis

Vagrant, eight previous records of 12 individuals; one in March, five in autumn (September to November) and two in December, although most previous Bean Goose records were not assigned to subspecies

An interesting record involved a flock that contained three birds fitted with satellite tags which, having turned back from an attempt to get to the European mainland from their wintering grounds on the Slamannan Plateau in Upper Forth on 7th February, made it to within 17 km of Fair Isle at 18:00 hrs. By the time of the next satellite reading at midnight they were on Stronsay in Orkney. Two of the birds returned to Slamannan before making the successful crossing to Denmark on 20th February, with the other remaining on Orkney until 2nd March before also heading to Denmark. This is thought to represent the first record from Fair Isle of birds that were not actually seen by anyone on the isle, but with advancements in tracking technology, it is not likely to be the last.

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus

Common autumn migrant, with smaller numbers in spring and winter

Three overwintering birds remained throughout January, with four seen coming in off the sea at North Light on 21st January. The highest count in February was seven, with four throughout March. Spring passage saw 12 arrive on 13th April, increasing to 18 on 20th, with two remaining until 19th May and three from 23rd May to 4th June. After individuals on 15th and 20th September there were none until 165 on 2nd October, with 195 the following day. There were daily counts of 2–40 before the peak autumn count of 192 on 14th October, with no more than 35 seen daily to the end of the month. Five lingered through November, increasing to eight by the end of the month, with those remaining until the end of the year.



Plate 35. Pink-footed Geese, Da Water, 23rd May 2017. © Steve Arlow

Tundra Bean Goose

Anser serrirostris

Rare migrant; nine confirmed records of this species involving at least 142 individuals. Three autumn records (October and November), including large influxes in 2011 and 2014, five winter (January and February) arrivals and one March record. In addition, there are 21 records of unidentified Bean Geese, involving 63 individuals, eight in winter, four in spring (mostly March, but one in June) and seven in autumn (September and October)

One overwintering bird remained from 2016 until 26th February and was joined by two others on 2nd February.

White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter

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

In the autumn, eight White-fronts that flew down the island on 15th October were unassigned to subspecies but occurred during a time of wildfowl passage from the north-west. The only confirmed record of this subspecies was an adult on Meoness on 18th November.

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

Six (an adult and five juveniles) arrived on 16th January, with a further juvenile arriving on 21st and numbers increasing to eight on 29th. Four birds present until 8th March were probably lingerers from this group, with two remaining until 26th April.

Mute Swan

Cygnus olor

Vagrant; ten previous records (of 13 individuals), three in December, two in July and October and singles in January, March and April

Two which arrived in South Harbour on 12th May were then seen on the sea off Hoini on 13th before making their way to Utra. On 14th, they had relocated to Da Water and were seen flying south at 18:15 hrs. One of the apparent pair was a 'Polish' bird (a genetically determined colour variant) with paler legs than a typical adult.



Plate 36. Mute Swans (including 'Polish' bird, right), Utra Scrape, 13th May 2017. © David Parnaby

Whooper Swan

Cygnus cygnus

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring and winter

The wintering adult and juvenile lingered until 14th January and were joined by two others on 1st and 14th January. Only the juvenile remained after that, and was present until 14th March, during which time other sightings involved two more on 21st February and another on 6th–7th March. Further spring passage involved two on 1st–2nd and two on 17th April, with a late record of seven off North Light on 15th May. An impressive autumn passage began with three on 3rd October, with seven the next day. There were two on 7th October with one the following day, eight on 10th then 14 on 11th and one on 12th. Strong south-westerly winds on 14th October brought 31 to the island, with 78 the following day and then calm conditions on 16th saw 155 (including 40 juveniles) pass south, a record count for the isle. There were another 22 the following day, seven on 18th and one then lingered to the end of the month, with six more on 25th and five more on 29th and 30th. The juvenile that lingered throughout November was joined by two adults from 6th, with all three remaining throughout the month, with the only other new bird in November being an adult on 10th. There were up to two adults and a juvenile seen occasionally in early December, with one juvenile remaining until the end of the year in a rare overwintering attempt, whilst there was a total of four present on 21st.



Plate 37. Whooper Swans, Easter Lother Water, 15th October 2017. © David Parnaby

Shelduck

Tadorna tadorna

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

The only record involved one in South Harbour on 30th April making it the quietest year for this species since 1994, when there was also just a sole occurrence.

*Mandarin Duck

Aix galericulata

Vagrant; two previous records (September to October 2010 and April 2014)

A male flushed from South Harbour on 20th April mirrored the previous occurrence although, unlike that bird, this one returned to Mid Geo and allowed the Obs staff and several islanders the chance to enjoy the slightly incongruous sight of this exotic-looking duck perched on a seaweed-covered rock just off the shoreline.

Gadwall

Mareca strepera

Rare spring and autumn migrant, three winter records; total of 53 records of 82 individuals

A male that lingered on the south coast from 30th May until 2nd June was the only record of the year. Although there was only one record during 2010–13, the species has been annual since then, with this year's bird bringing the number of individuals recorded in that time to 18.

Wigeon

Mareca penelope

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

There were 14 in January, but just single-figure counts in February and March and up to three on only five dates in April. Passage in May saw up to five until 20th and the last of the spring was a male on 14th–15th June. The first of the autumn was on 13th August, with regular single-figure counts until the end of the month. Counts in September were generally of 12–39, although there were 65 on 7th, when passage was detected off South Light. Numbers in October were disappointing, with no more than 28 and November's peak was 23, with small numbers lingering until the end of the year.

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

Regular spring and autumn migrant, a few remaining feral birds cloud true status

There were 28 present in January, a fairly typical wintering number for recent years. One predated by a Peregrine on 26th March had been ringed as a duckling in Gilsetter in 2016 and was the second of its brood to fall prey to the same species. There was no obvious spring passage, whilst it appeared to be a poor breeding season, with a brood of eight ducklings on Da Water on 26th June the only sign of nesting. Occasional records of birds at sea in autumn suggested light passage, with no more than 26 noted, although a few more arrived in the winter, building to a peak of 36 on 15th December.

Pintail

Anas acuta

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A good year for this species, with seven records involving ten individuals. Spring passage consisted of three on 9th May with two still present the following day, then a male on 11th June. For the second consecutive year there was a July record, with a female in South Harbour on 12th July. Autumn passage began with one on 18th–19th August, followed by two off South Light on 5th September and further singles on 5th–6th and 24th October.

Teal

Anas crecca

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

Counts in the early part of the year were relatively high, with up to seven in January, 19 in February and 18 in March. There were almost daily records in April, peaking at 19 on 30th, a maximum of 15 in May and up to six recorded in June. A female was present at Da Water

throughout July, with three on 31st the start of slightly higher numbers. Towards the end of August counts began to increase, with 27 on 24th and numbers continued to rise in early September to 35 on 5th, the autumn's peak. October numbers were relatively low, with a maximum of just 15, with up to ten remaining until the end of the year.

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

Regular migrant, commoner in spring than autumn

A male flew over South Harbour on 20th April and there were then three on 3rd May, with a pair lingering to 8th and the female until 18th, when it was joined by a male that remained until 27th May. Autumn records consisted of a male on 4th–8th July, then singles on 17th October and 1st November.

Eider

Somateria mollissima

Resident, breeds in small numbers, with additional birds thought to winter around the island

The highest count in the spring was 128 (67 males and 61 females) on 18th April, a slight improvement on recent years. There were 12 incubating females in the Steensi Geo colony, a slightly higher count than recent years, and the first ducklings were seen on 22nd June.



Plate 38. Eider on nest, Hjukni Geo, 10th June 2017. © Ian Andrews

Common Scoter

Melanitta nigra

Regular migrant, usually in spring and autumn with smaller numbers occasionally noted in winter

There were no overwintering birds, with spring passage restricted to single males on 18th April to 14th May and 19th–23rd June. Another quiet autumn saw one on 3rd–8th September, then one that arrived on 7th November being seen occasionally until the end of the year.

Long-tailed Duck

Clangula hyemalis

Regular autumn migrant, less common in spring

There were regular records of up to five in the first winter period, with six on 2nd April and one lingering to 28th April. An unusual record concerned a female from 18th June to 5th July, with autumn passage from 15th October to 3rd November peaking at 15 on 19th. Up to five were seen on scattered dates throughout November and there were occasional sightings of up to two until the end of the year.

Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

Regular migrant, most common in autumn with smaller numbers in winter and spring

A male on Golden Water on 8th March was the only record from the first half of the year. Autumn passage involved one on 8th–9th October then regular sightings from 21st October to 2nd November, peaking at four on 23rd. A male from 18th–20th November spent most of its time on Da Water, but landed on the tarmac drive at Quoy briefly at one point. The only winter record was one off South Light in gales on 8th December then probably the same bird in South Harbour on 10th December.

Goosander

Mergus merganser

Rare migrant in winter, spring and late autumn; 97 previous records of 133 individuals

A good spring passage saw two head north on 20th May, with another also going north on 22nd May and one in Hesti Geo on 1st June. The only autumn record involved one in South Harbour on 26th–28th October. A total of five birds is the best annual figure since 2005.

Red-breasted Merganser

Mergus serrator

Regular spring and autumn migrant, has bred once (1934)

There were single males on 26th February and 9th March then spring records on 1st and 14th May and 16th–18th June. Summer records comprised two on 8th and singles on 11th and 21st July. Autumn passage commenced on 5th September, with occasional records through the month, then more regular sightings of up to four throughout October and until 3rd November. The only later records involved a male on 1st and a female on 2nd and 24th December.

Quail

Coturnix coturnix

Scarce migrant with most in spring and summer and smaller numbers recorded in autumn; has bred (last confirmed attempt in 2003)

The first record occurred on 12th May when there were singles at Bunes and the Chapel Plantation. The next two individuals were, unusually, both relatively twitchable with singles at Springfield then the Walli Burn on 24th–26th May and North Park on 29th May until 2nd June. Further sightings followed on 1st June (South Light) and two on 2nd June (at Lower Leogh and Chalet). From 14th to 22nd June, a male was singing at Pund, with a female seen in the same area on 17th. There was no sign of a breeding attempt, but the species is notoriously difficult to prove nesting. The tenth of the year was at Lower Stoneybrek on 18th June, completing a very good spring. The first autumn record since 2014 involved one at Midway on 26th August.

Red-throated Diver

Gavia stellata

Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn

There were singles on 6th, 18th and 28th April then sightings on six dates in May, all singles apart from two on 29th. Records on 11 dates in June involved a peak of three on 11th and included two circling and calling on 30th, with one of those lingering into early July. There were singles on five dates from 24th July to 23rd August. Sightings on six dates in September peaked at seven on 5th, the highest count since 1998, and there was a total of seven birds recorded on six dates in October. One lingered around the island from 7th to 29th November, a very late record, with another on 12th November.

Great Northern Diver

Gavia immer

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter

February saw singles on 15th and 28th but there were no more until one on 2nd April. Later spring sightings involved two on 24th May, then one in Furse on 25th–26th May and one off Landberg on 15th June. Autumn passage kicked off with one on 6th September, then a total of 11 recorded on seven dates in October, with a peak of three on 16th. There were four in November, then an adult was in North Haven from 6th December until the end of the year, where it was often seen eating flatfish and crabs, with another seen from the Good Shepherd IV on 11th.

Storm Petrel

Hydrobates pelagicus

Common summer migrant, breeds in small numbers

The first of the year were noted on a visit to the breeding colony at Kirn o' Skroo on 1st June, with six nights ringing there in the early summer producing a total of 46 birds caught, including 21 that had been ringed in previous years. Ringing in the Haven took place on 30 dates from 1st July to 6th September, producing 3,619 new birds, with 445 new birds also caught at the Skadan on six of those nights. The total of 4,089 birds ringed during the year is a new record and reflected good numbers around, as well as a fine spell of weather allowing ringing to take place on more nights than usual. Numbers caught rose early on, with 143 ringed on 8th July, although the highest counts were in late



Plate 39. Storm Petrel, Haven, 1st July 2017. © David Parnaby

July and early August. The peak of 332 birds caught (including 265 ringed) on the night of 1st–2nd August is probably the largest-ever catch of Storm Petrels in a night on Fair Isle. During the course of the year there were also over 800 birds trapped that had been ringed elsewhere or in previous years on Fair Isle, and a summary of these is given in the table on page 114. There were sightings from the Good Shepherd IV on 13 dates between 13th June and 9th October, totalling 28 individuals, with most in August, including the peak of eight on 19th. Land-based sightings away from the breeding sites were limited to one grounded near the Double Dyke on 26th September, freshly predated remains in Gunnawark on 23d October and four visiting a former FIBO Warden's 50th birthday party in the Haven in the early hours of 28th July!

*Swinhoe's Petrel

Oceanodroma monorhis

Vagrant; two previous records (July and August 2013, with the second bird returning in July and August 2014 and the first in August 2016)

The birds caught on Fair Isle in the summer of 2013 must be at least five years old by now, so are now of breeding age. Evidence for them being lost vagrants, rather than from an unknown Atlantic breeding colony, was strengthened by the first bird caught in 2013 (which returned to Fair Isle in 2016) being attracted to Storm Petrel tapes in the early hours of the morning of 13th July and 14th July at the Skadan, when it is generally considered that breeding petrels will not be tempted by tape lures. It was heard on the first date and caught at 01:15 hrs on the 14th but, after release, was not seen or heard again.



Plate 40. Swinhoe's Petrel, Haven, 14th July 2017.
© Ciaran Hatsell

Leach's Petrel

Oceanodroma leucorhoa

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

The first of the year was seen and heard as it flew around the nets at a petrel trapping session in the Haven on 11th July. There were then two trapped on 18th July and records on seven dates between 25th July and 3rd August, with a peak of three caught on 26th July. Most were in the Haven, although one was caught at Skadan on 25th July, whilst a bird at the Haven was recorded on four nights between 26th July and 3rd August. The last of the year was trapped on 18th August, which was the 11th individual to be caught during the year.



Plate 41. 'Blue' Fulmar, Meoness, 5th May 2017. © Ciaran Hatsell

Fulmar

Fulmarus glacialis

Resident and common migrant; breeds in large numbers (last count 32,061 AOS in 2016)

Present throughout the year in impressive numbers, with a 6.7% rise in the counts in the population plots since 2016 seeing the highest total in the plots since 2000. The first eggs were seen on 21st May, with the first chick seen on 4th July at Hesti Geo and the first bird fledging on 22nd August in Homisdale. Productivity was slightly higher than last year, with 0.52 chicks fledged per AOS. An unusual bird with white patches on the wings and mantle was seen in Ditfield on 8th October. 'Blue' Fulmars were seen on 21st January, 30th March, 5th and 18th May, 23rd August, 19th–22nd September, six dates in October, totalling 13 birds with a peak of four on 9th, eight dates in November, with 28 birds including an impressive 15 on 2nd, and 11th December.

Sooty Shearwater

Ardenna griseus

Regular autumn migrant

The first two were seen from the Good Shepherd IV on the relatively early date of 15th July, but there were no more until August, when singles were seen on 19th and 28th. A decent spell of passage in early September saw a total of 28 birds recorded over seven dates from 3rd to 11th peaking at 11 on 7th, the highest count since 2007. The only other records were on 24th September and 3rd October before a bird off South Light on 14th November—the latest-ever Fair Isle record.

Manx Shearwater

Puffinus puffinus

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

The first record of the year involved 13 moving east off South Light on 24th June, the third-highest count for Fair Isle. There were just two records in July, singles on 15th and 16th, and August fared no better, with singles on 11th and 17th. The last records of a quiet autumn involved singles off South Light on 5th and 6th September.

Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Rare visitor; 41 previous records, most in autumn (September to November), rarer in spring and winter

One in South Harbour on 19th October was the first record since 2015 and, given its rarity on Fair Isle, it seems likely that an elusive bird on Da Water on 23rd October was the same individual.

Slavonian Grebe

Podiceps auritus

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and very rare in winter

One in Furse on 17th January was a rare winter record and was assumed to be the bird seen in North Haven on 8th December 2016. For the first time since 2014 there were no spring records, but a decent autumn began with an early bird in North Haven on 4th–5th September. Another was in the same location on 21st–29th September then two on 7th October included one that flew up the island before landing on Sprittery Hol, with the other in the Haven, where it remained until 8th, but was later found dead. There were two in Furse on 15th–16th October, with one still on 17th, and the last of the autumn was in Ditfield 30th October. Sightings in North Haven on 9th and 17th December were presumed to relate to the same individual, only the fourth December record for the island, although the third consecutive year to produce one.

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

None were seen until up to three from 7th–9th March, with further spring records on 2nd April, 9th (two) and 13th–14th May and singles on five June dates from 3rd–23rd. Sightings became more regular in July, increasing to four by the end of the month, whilst almost daily records in August peaked at nine on 24th–26th. Similar numbers were recorded throughout September, with a peak of nine on 26th, and there were up to seven regularly throughout October. Occasional sightings through November and until 2nd December may well have related to a single lingering individual.



Plate 42. Grey Heron, off Klinger's Geo, 11th October 2017. © Richard Cope

Gannet

Morus bassanus

Common migrant and breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year

There were birds present offshore all year in variable numbers, although generally fewer in the winter. An all-island count resulted in 3,882 AON, an increase of almost 14% from 2016 and the highest number since 2013. The first eggs were seen at Yellow Head on 26th April and chicks were first seen on Dronger on 1st June and, although productivity fell slightly from 2016, it was still a reasonable 0.68 chicks fledged per AON. Although the first chick was seen to fledge from Dronger on 25th August, there was still a chick on the cliffs of Lerness on 13th November which was probably a week or two from fledging, a remarkably late bird.

Shag

Phalacrocorax aristotelis

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

Although the numbers of pairs nesting in the monitoring plots increased to 30, a slight improvement on 2016, it proved to be a disappointing year for productivity, with just 0.22 chicks fledged per monitored nest, the lowest figure since 2011. The first eggs were seen on 18th April, 12 days earlier than in 2016, with chicks noted from 25th May and the first seen to fledge on 5th July at Lericum. Reasonable numbers of Shags can still be seen around Fair Isle all year, but as a breeding species they continue to struggle.

Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

Regular migrant, commonest in autumn, with small numbers in winter and spring

Spring passage was restricted to records on 7th March, 28th April (two), 11th May (three) and 19th June in a quiet start to the year. Autumn passage was also fairly unremarkable, with records on 14 dates from 10th August to 27th September, mostly of up to seven, but including peaks of 12 on 10th September and 11 on 21st August.

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Scarce migrant; 131 individuals, with 111 in spring (mostly May and June, with four in April) and 20 in autumn (mostly September, but two in October and singles in July, August and November)

For the first time since 1997 (when none were seen during the year), there were no spring records, with the only sighting involving a juvenile on 23rd September that was first seen over South Green before moving north up the island, the second consecutive year with an autumn occurrence.



Plate 43. Osprey, Malcolm's Head, 23rd September 2017.
© Steve Arlow

*Honey-buzzard

Pernis apivorus

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 56 previous records (59 individuals)

One went north up the west coast of the island on 11th June. Another lingered over the south of the island before probably heading out to sea on 5th September—a reasonable year for this species which has now been recorded in five consecutive years.

Sparrowhawk

Accipiter nisus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage saw regular sightings from 14th April to 26th May, with a peak count of three on 1st May. After one on 26th–27th August there were almost daily sightings during 4th–16th September, peaking at three on 6th, then counts of up to two regularly during 11th–29th October.

Marsh Harrier

Circus aeruginosus

Rare migrant; 50 previous records, with 39 in spring (mostly April–May but three in both March and June) and 11 in autumn (mostly in August and September, with two October and one in July)

One was found over Mire o' Vatnagard on 12th May and it roamed the island until 16th May. It was joined by a second bird on 15th May, representing the first multiple occurrence since 1988. A third 'cream-crown' was seen over Malcolm's Head before heading south on 29th May, making it the best spring since 1994. A juvenile on 24th August completed the best-ever year for this increasingly recorded species.

Hen Harrier

Circus cyaneus

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

In spring there were single ringtails on 16th and 23rd May, but the only autumn records were ringtails on 9th–11th October and 6th–7th November.

White-tailed Eagle

Haliaeetus albicilla

One pair formerly bred until sometime between 1825–40 and an unsuccessful reintroduction attempted (1968), but now vagrant; 14 records (11 in spring, three in autumn); in 1935, 1949 then 12 since 1981, at least four of which have known to have been birds released as part of Scottish reintroduction projects

A magnificent adult was seen at the back of Ward Hill at around 16:15 hrs on 24th April by an observer on Buness who had seen virtually every bird on the island take off in panic! It drifted back and forth over Vaasetter for around 20 minutes before landing on Swey, but slipped away unseen during a passing snowstorm. A typical record with regards to timing, but the first since 2012 and the first adult to be recorded on the island since 1949. It was presumably the same bird seen regularly throughout the spring and summer in Shetland.



Plate 44. White-tailed Eagle, over Gilsetter, 24th April 2017. © Ciaran Hatsell

Water Rail

Rallus aquaticus

Regular spring and autumn migrant, occasionally overwinters

There were regular sightings of four or five throughout the first three months of the year, with occasional sightings continuing through to 18th May, most of which were probably lingering birds, whilst one on 2nd June above Klinger's Geo was presumably a late migrant and the first June record since 2010. Autumn passage began on 4th October, with another on 11th then daily sightings from 15th until the end of the month that peaked at four on 25th–27th. Although the highest daily count in November was three, there were thought to be at least seven birds settled on winter territories.

Corncrake

Crex crex

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

Another very quiet year for this species, with no spring records and just two in the autumn: a very showy juvenile that fed just outside the Obs library on 10th September and one at Da Water on 27th September.

Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The only spring record was a rather late migrant trapped in the Vaadal on 14th May, whilst autumn was even worse, with no records in this season for the first time since 1971.

Oystercatcher

Haematopus ostralegus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The three birds that remained from 2016 were present into January, with numbers rising to eight by the end of the month. There were 65 by the end of February, with similar numbers throughout March. Passage in April saw fluctuating numbers rising up to 118 on 9th, with counts in May generally over 100 and peaking at 149 on 15th. The highest count of the spring was 164 on 8th June, by which time there were 23–30 pairs breeding on the island. Chicks were first seen on 14th June, with the first fledgling seen on 27th July, although productivity appeared to be poor. August counts peaked at 55 on 12th, with only 20 remaining by the end of the month. There were just single figures from 9th September onwards, with at least two remaining into December and attempting to overwinter on the island.



Plate 45. Oystercatcher, Bull's Park, 22nd May 2017. © Steve Arlow

Lapwing

Vanellus vanellus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

There were up to two in January and three in February, before spring passage in March brought a peak of 51 on 8th, whilst counts in April and May largely involved breeding birds. Displaying was first noted from 10th March, with five pairs holding territory. Chicks were first seen on 16th May, with a total of six young fledged from two pairs that bred around Kirki Mire. Birds had largely left the island after 3rd July, with up to two on just four dates in August. There were more regular sightings of up to four in the second half of September, with almost daily sightings in October peaking at 13 on 25th but the only sighting in November was a single on 23rd. Hard weather movement in December may have been responsible for the arrival of one on 9th, increasing to three on 13th, with one seen until the end of the year.

Golden Plover

Pluvialis apricaria

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; scarce in winter and has bred (last recorded in 1989)

There were up to two occasionally throughout January and February, with numbers starting to build up from late March. The main spring passage took place in late April, peaking at 48 on 26th with small numbers throughout May, including a displaying pair over Suka Mire, and occasional migrants still seen in June. The territorial pair was found to be incubating four eggs by 19th June, with chicks seen from 1st July, at least some of which were thought to have fledged. The only previous breeding records involved up to two pairs during 1924–26, a pair that hatched chicks in 1970 and a suspected breeding attempt in 1989. Light passage during August brought a peak of 13 and daily counts in September were generally less than 20 other than 67 on 7th and 46 on 30th. The largest numbers were present throughout October, peaking at 80 on 18th, although by the end of the month there were just single figures around. There were up to three in November and a maximum of five in December.



Plate 46. Golden Plover on nest, Homisdale, 22nd June 2017. © Ciaran Hatsell

Grey Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

Rare migrant, mostly in autumn, with fewer in spring and winter

One at Meoness on 19th April was only the 16th spring record for the isle and the first since 2005. The unseasonal theme to the year continued with the next record, at Hesti Geo on 28th July, which was only the fourth record for that month in Fair Isle's history. More typical records were an adult on Meoness on 24th August and a 1cy bird that lingered on Bunes from 1st–16th October.

Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first were not seen until 16th February, the latest arrival date since 2012. There were then sightings throughout the spring, with a peak of 44 on 29th March. The first eggs were seen on 29th April and at least 13 territories were located, a typical amount for recent years. Although counts during May mainly consisted of breeding birds, a flock of 15 on Meoness on 19th showed that migrants were still moving north. The first fledged chicks were seen on 13th June, with small chicks still present on 14th August. The peak count in August was 83 on 17th, with most counts around the mid-50s. Although there were 74 on 7th September, numbers were generally less than 20 from mid-month, other than a small arrival of 28 on 30th September and 1st October. Counts had decreased to single figures from 8th, with the last of the year on 25th October.

*Little Ringed Plover

Charadrius dubius

Vagrant; five previous records (three in May and singles in July and September)

Given that there had been a 37-year gap between the third record in 1979 and then the fourth and fifth in 2016, to get the sixth island record this year was something of a surprise. One on 2nd–3rd May on Da Water appeared to be a female and was the earliest-ever record for the isle.



Plate 47. Little Ringed Plover, Da Water, 3rd May 2017.
© David Parnaby

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

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

One over the Plantation on 10th April was just a day later than the previous earliest arrival (in 2013), then after two on the more typical date of 17th April, eight arrived on 22nd April and preceded regular sightings throughout the spring. Most counts were in single figures, although there were 12 on 2nd and 4th May and a spring peak of 17 on 11th May. In June, one or two were present until 19th then sightings of what were probably returning autumn migrants began on 26th. Sporadic sightings throughout July were mostly of five or less, although a flock of 13 passed through on 26th. There were up to two on just four dates in August and singles on six September dates until 11th.

Curlew

Numenius arquata

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

The highest count in the first winter period was 22 and spring passage was generally unremarkable, other than 81 moving north-east on 19th April, the highest count since 2010. Displaying was noted from 10th March and, although six pairs were present early in the spring, there were no chicks confirmed as fledging. Six heading south off South Light on 9th July were a clear sign of autumn passage, but the peak count for the season was just 15 on 19th August. Only small numbers were present in the latter winter period, with counts of no more than 12.

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

An early record involved one on 26th March, whilst a strong spring showing was completed by birds on 17th–21st and 28th–30th April and 15th May. An early autumn record involved an adult on 24th July, with later sightings on 7th–8th September and 3rd–7th October in a decent year for this elegant wader.

Black-tailed Godwit

Limosa limosa

Scarce spring and autumn migrant, very rare in winter

Four arrived on 20th April, with the group increasing to eight on 27th–29th April, the largest spring count for Fair Isle, with two remaining to 2nd May. Another three were seen on 9th May with some of this flock lingering to 17th, with then four on 3rd–4th June and two remaining the following day to conclude a very good spring passage. An adult on 20th July was an early arrival, with the first juvenile seen on 9th August, and counts increasing rapidly to a peak of 18 on 15th, with smaller numbers seen daily until 19th September and the last of the year on 22nd September.



Plate 48. Black-tailed Godwits, Field, 20th August 2017. © Max Hellicar

Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Common winter, spring and autumn migrant

Table 2. Maximum monthly counts of Turnstone on Fair Isle 2017 compared with previous ten-year average

2017 count

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
223	65	241	288	132	32	100	181	184	290	178	198

2007–16 average

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
144	127	125	116	57	13	41	79	113	187	155	147

High counts in the first part of the year reflected a large number recorded wintering at the end of December 2016, whilst the low February count was probably because of reduced coverage at the time. The spring peak was on 30th April, when 288 were recorded, with numbers dropping rapidly throughout the following month. Sightings were virtually daily throughout the summer, building up towards the end of July and rising to 181 by 1st August, with lower numbers throughout the rest of the month. Numbers fluctuated during September and were high throughout October, peaking on 15th, with the 290 recorded on that date being the highest count since February 1995. There were few counts towards the end of the year, although it appeared that the recent trend for higher wintering numbers continued.

Knot

Calidris canutus

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring, rare in winter

Spring passage was restricted to individuals on 30th April to 13th May and 21st May. Autumn passage commenced from 20th July, with numbers increasing to 12 on 28th and there were then sightings of up to six on 12 dates in August, up to three on ten September dates and one remaining to 9th October. One that arrived following storm-force winds on 8th December was only the second record for that month (following one in 1978).

Ruff

Calidris pugnax

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

The first spring record since 2012 was a male (sadly not sporting its breeding finery) on 21st–23rd May. The first of the autumn was not seen until 5th August, the latest arrival date since 2010. There were then regular sightings from 18th August, with numbers increasing to ten by 28th, then after a slight lull another arrival saw a build-up to 30 on 12th September, the highest count of the year and the largest number on the island since 1998. Another wave of birds later in the month saw a peak of 24 on 26th, with numbers dropping to 22 by the beginning of October and just single figures after 9th, with one lingering from 12th–24th October.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

An early migrant was on Landberg on 4th April but there were no more until 1st May, followed by regular sightings of up to three during 10th–28th May. The spring peak occurred on 8th June when there were six, with the only other sighting of the month involving a single on 12th. Autumn passage began with a colour-ringed bird at Mid Geo on 13th July and there were sporadic sightings of up to five during the rest of the month. Sightings became more frequent later in August, peaking at 11 on 24th, and up to three were seen regularly in September until the last of the month on 24th.

Dunlin

Calidris alpina

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred (last suspected in 2015)

On at Quoy on 6th January was an unusual winter record. Spring passage started on 29th April and there were then regular sightings with a notable arrival in the second week of May peaking at 37 on 12th. Another smaller wave of passage towards the end of the month saw 25 on 26th and single-figure counts were recorded throughout June, including occasional sightings in Mire o' Vatnagard, where breeding was confirmed on 12th July when a pair was seen alarm calling. Autumn passage was noted from 1st July with counts increasing to 12 on 25th July. Although there were only occasional sightings in early August, 53 arrived on 10th, with



Plate 49. Dunlin, Easter Lother Water, 13th August 2017.
© Max Hellicar

similar counts to 17th then smaller numbers throughout the rest of the month and into September. A small arrival at the end of September saw an increase to 28 on 30th, with regular counts of decreasing numbers until 22nd October, then a small flurry of up to five during 7th–12th November.

Purple Sandpiper

Calidris maritima

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, also overwinters in small numbers

Single-figure counts in the first two months of the year were surpassed by 25 on 7th then 47 on 29th March. Counts in April were generally less than 30, although there were impressive peaks of 98 on 9th and 80 on 27th. A similar pattern in May saw generally low counts, other than 84 on 13th. One was in the Gully on 1st–3rd June (with one also at South Light on 2nd), with one on Hoini on 4th then one lingered around the Obs scrape area from 25th June to 7th July. After a couple more passage birds, 34 arrived on 17th July, increasing to 83 on 27th, the peak for the autumn and the highest-ever July count on Fair Isle. August peaks of 62 occurred on 1st and 23rd but September counts were all in single figures other than a flock of around 60 on 27th. Counts of 16 or less were recorded almost every day throughout October other than 53 on 20th, with wintering counts again generally in single figures.



Plate 50. Purple Sandpipers, South Light, 20th October 2017. © David Parnaby

Little Stint

Calidris minuta

Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring

A juvenile in North Haven on 8th September and a juvenile at Skadan on 29th–20th September were the only records in a quiet year for the species.

*Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Calidris subruficollis

Vagrant; 15 previous records (of 16 birds), most arriving in September, one in October

After two blank years, it proved to be a good autumn for this North American vagrant, with a popular bird lingering on Buness on 3rd–7th September, with another on Chatham's Land then Hoini on 5th. The third of the autumn, making it the best year for this species on Fair Isle, flew in off the sea at Buness on 21st September before heading north.

*Pectoral Sandpiper

Calidris melanotos

Rare visitor; 34 previous records, most from August to October, but four in spring

A juvenile that appeared on Hoini during westerly winds on 28th August was later seen heading south over Stackhoull. Although there were none in 2016, the species had been recorded in six consecutive years prior to that.

Woodcock

Scolopax rusticola

Frequent late-autumn migrant, smaller numbers in spring and winter

One in Gilsetter on 6th March was the first of the year, with spring passage restricted to up to four on 29th–31st March and singles on 3rd, 21st and 22nd May. The only records in September were four on 26th and a single on 30th. There were sightings of up to three on nine dates in the first half of October before a more sustained arrival from 18th saw numbers rise to 42 on 21st then 63 on 24th, the peak autumn count. Numbers dropped to single figures from 27th October until 34 on 7th November, with singles seen regularly until 26th November.

Jack Snipe

Lymnocyptes minimus

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

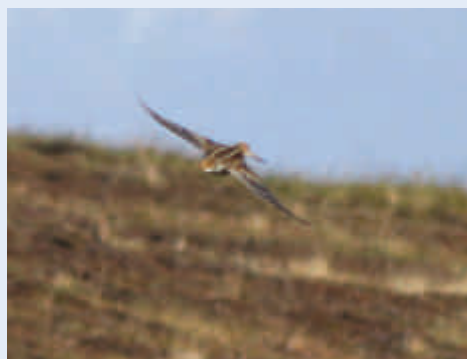
One in Bioni Mire on 1st January was presumably an overwintering bird. Scattered records from 1st March suggested light spring passage and there were four on 29th–30th, the peak spring count, with occasional records of up to two until 2nd May. The first autumn bird was in Vaasetter on 18th September and there were almost daily records until the end of October. Counts rose gradually to nine on 29th September and reached double figures almost daily during 9th–24th October, with peaks of 31 on 11th and 24 on 23rd. Three on 21st November were probably late migrants and were the last of the year.

*Great Snipe

Gallinago media

Vagrant; 45 previous records, mostly autumn (three previous spring records in FBO period)

One flushed from the School Brae on 11th September was seen again as it flew from Da Water towards the coast, but was not relocated. This was the second consecutive year to produce an occurrence, with only one year in the 14 prior to that seeing the species recorded.



Plates 51–52. Great Snipe, Da Water, 20th October 2017. © David Parnaby

Snipe

Gallinago gallinago

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

Present throughout the winter, the first census count on 29th March produced an impressive 108, with counts in April generally just under 100 until the latter third of the month when numbers fell to around 50. Most days in May saw around 30–40 present, with the peak of 52 on 10th, with generally similar numbers in June, which presumably related to mostly breeding birds. A minimum of ten territories was recorded, although actual breeding numbers were likely to be higher, with the first chick noted on 26th June on Ward Hill. Autumn numbers were generally 20–40 until late September when an increase peaked at 92 on 29th. Numbers dropped in early October, but rose again from mid-month, peaking at 158 on 24th October, the highest count since 2005 and third highest count for Fair Isle. There were smaller numbers present for the rest of the year, with an arrival on 21st November involving a minimum of 50.

Red-necked Phalarope

Phalaropus lobatus

Vagrant; 23 previous records of 25 individuals, nine in spring (May to June), 14 in autumn (July to September)

An outstanding year for this species began with a pair on Da Water on the morning of 11th June that was joined by a second pair there in the afternoon, the highest-ever count for Fair Isle. Although one pair moved on, the remaining pair lingered on the isle and were seen copulating on 16th–17th June. The female was last seen on 20th June, with the male staying into July. Another pair was on Utra Scrape on 18th July, although those were only brief visitors. Confirmation of successful breeding by the original pair came on 20th July when the male was observed chasing Arctic Skuas and mobbing people on the road - a sure sign that chicks had hatched. A juvenile at Utra Scrape on 10th August was joined by two more the following day, with at



Plate 53. Red-necked Phalarope, Utra Scrape, 11th August 2017.
© Max Hellicar

least two remaining until 21st August. It was considered that those were likely to have been raised on the isle. Although there were no sightings of the chicks at the nest site, this is not unusual for this species that can be notoriously elusive during the breeding season. A pair was involved in courtship behaviour on 14th–15th June 1968, but the events of 2017 were the first breeding attempt for Fair Isle and occurred during a year when Red-necked Phalaropes turned up at widespread locations across the Northern Isles.

Common Sandpiper

Actitis hypoleucos

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage was restricted to 17 dates between 1st and 28th May, peaking at four on 22nd. After an early bird was heard in the Haven during a petrel ringing session on 4th July, there were further sightings of up to three during 27th–29th July and on 15 dates between 19th August and 13th September, peaking at three on 5th September.

Green Sandpiper

Tringa ochropus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

One on Da Water on 1st April broke the previous earliest arrival of 5th April that had been set in 2016. It was followed by one on 19th April, then records on eight dates from 30th April to 18th May, all singles apart from two on 2nd May. A reasonable autumn saw regular records of up to two between 21st July and 31st August, then again from 10th–19th September.

Redshank

Tringa totanus

Common migrant in winter, spring and autumn migrant; has bred (1993, 1994 and 2015)

There were up to 20 regularly in the winter, increasing to 46 by 2nd April. The peak spring count was 51 on 24th April and two pairs were displaying, at Horstibrekkes and in the south, although successful breeding was not thought to have taken place. Although small numbers were seen throughout May and June, nine on 27th June were probably the first signs of autumn passage. More were on the move in July, including a peak of 37 on 15th and numbers built up in August to 78 on 20th. Although counts in early September were generally around 40, there was an increase to peaks of 89 on 15th and 21st. Counts in October were also high, with 101 on 4th the year's peak and decent numbers remained into the winter, with counts of up to 50.

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

A quiet year saw just two records; singles on 10th May at Easter Lothar Water and 27th May at Da Water.

Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

One over the Haven on 14th April was the earliest arrival since 2006, although the only other spring sighting was on 11th May, making it the second consecutive quiet spring passage. Autumn passage was also unimpressive, with records on 13 dates in August, all singles apart from two on 10th, with a late bird on 23rd October.

*Collared Pratincole

Glareola pratincola

Vagrant; one previous record (June 1971)

One of the highlights of the spring was the discovery of one of these magnificent, unlikely waders in the upper Wirvie Burn near Easter Lothar Water on 14th May. Although it's feeding flights would take it along the north coast, it lingered in the same general area until the morning of 18th, when it was hawking for insects with hirundines over Utra before being seen flying south over Leogh at 13:45 hrs and then presumably leaving the island. Its arrival coincided with a day of diurnal passage of several species and, although it could spend extended spells during cold weather hunched up and looking somewhat forlorn, sunnier spells saw it undertaking magnificent feeding flights, often low over the heads of impressed observers. See Parnaby (2017d) for a full write-up of this occurrence.



Plate 54. Collared Pratincole, Wirvie Burn, 15th May 2017. © Roger Riddington

Kittiwake

Rissa tridactyla

Common passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers

There were, typically, small numbers seen in the early part of the year, although 300 from the Good Shepherd IV on 17th January was an unusually high count for the winter. The first eggs were seen on 22nd May in Dog Geo, with chicks there and the Holms on 22nd June and the first fledged youngster was seen on 29th July. It was a poor breeding season though, with numbers in the population plots falling by 7.5% to just 49 occupied nests and productivity in the plots dropping to just 0.2 chicks fledged per occupied nest. Virtually all the birds had left the colonies by 19th August, after which date there were just small numbers occasionally offshore until the end of the year, although 54 were recorded passing South Light in half an hour during strong winds on 8th December.

Black-headed Gull

Chroicocephalus ridibundus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were up to two regularly in the early winter, with the first sign of spring passage being 13 on 7th March with 14 the following day. Although there were regular single-figure records throughout the spring, there were few higher counts, with 16 on 19th April the peak. Occasional sightings continued throughout June and July, with 18 on 21st July the first sign of larger numbers on the move and the first juvenile of the year visiting on 8th July. There were no more than 16 in August and September's peak was just five. The peak autumn passage occurred in mid-October, with 58 on 15th after which numbers declined rapidly and there were occasional singles until 21st November and up to six occasionally in December.

Little Gull

Hydrocoloeus minutus

Vagrant; 32 previous individuals, most in autumn (July to November), with three in winter and four in spring

The first record since January 2014 involved a juvenile over Meoness on 28th July, which was later seen hawking for insects over Da Water. It was just the second record for July and the earliest juvenile to have occurred on the island.

Common Gull

Larus canus

Common spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers

Counts in single figures were the norm throughout the first couple of months of the year, with numbers starting to increase from late March, although there were no more than 36 in April. The peak in May was 52 and 13 pairs settled to nest (ten on Goorn and singles at Buness, Pund and Da Water). The first chicks were seen on 26th June during a monitoring visit to Goorn, with fledging noted from 14th July, although productivity was not thought to be high. Early autumn passage saw a peak of 687 on 21st July, with 266 on 29th July whilst further waves of passage included 148 on 4th and 120 on 18th August. The peak in September was 44 until 113 arrived on 29th (including a striking leucistic 1cy bird that remained until 4th October) increasing to 179 the following day. Counts were mostly fairly low in October, although a late flurry brought 82 on 23rd and there were then just single-figure counts until the end of the year.

Great Black-backed Gull

Larus marinus

Common migrant, breeds in small numbers

Several hundred were regularly ashore in both winter periods, particularly in stormy weather. Only five breeding pairs were recorded, at North Feltsigeo, Greenholm, Da Burrian, Busta Brecks and Goom, with the first chicks noted on 29th May on Greenholm.

*Glaucous-winged Gull

Larus glaucescens

Vagrant; no previous records

A 4cy individual on the cliff top at Ditfield, just behind the Double Dyke trap, on 2nd March was a huge surprise, especially given Fair Isle's relative lack of pedigree for rare gulls. It was found amongst a small flock of Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls and remained from around 13:15 hrs until dusk at about 17:45 hrs, although for most of this period it was present more distantly on Johnny's Peats. A detailed write-up appears on pages 134–136 and in Parnaby (2017a, b & c).

Glaucous Gull

Larus hyperboreus

Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter

After scattered sightings at the start of the year, numbers built up to ten on 12th and 14 on 20th January, the highest counts since November 1985. At least 18 individuals, four adults and 14 2cy birds, were involved in sightings during that time, with some present until the end of the month and up to five seen throughout February and March. There were just two sightings of individual 2cy birds seen in April, the last of which was on 19th. A 2cy bird on 21st June was only the second record since 2003 for that month. Autumn birds began arriving from 16th October, with regular sightings of up to two until the end of the month. November began well, with numbers rising to seven (all 1cy) on 6th and then a north-easterly gale brought a remarkable 22 on 22nd, involving 17 1cy and five 2cy birds, the highest count since 35 were seen in December 1975. As many of the large flocks of gulls present that day were densely packed and in locations that could not be easily viewed, it is likely that the actual number of Glaucous Gulls tucked in amongst them would have been somewhat higher. Sightings were virtually daily until the end of the year, including ten on 26th November and a peak of six in December.



Plate 55. Glaucous Gull, Furse, 22nd November 2017. © David Parnaby

Iceland Gull

Larus glaucoides

Scarce migrant in winter, late autumn and spring

There were regular sightings in January, mostly involving up to two 2cy birds that lingered in South Harbour, although there were three 2cy birds on 13th–14th, an adult on 14th and 3cy birds on 20th and 26th. The next sightings were not until March, with a 2cy on 2nd–4th, an adult on 8th, 2cy on

9th, 3cy on 13th then three 2cy on 15th, with two remaining the next day. The only later sightings in a good start to the year (there were none before October in 2016) were single 2cy birds on 6th and 30th April. Autumn was less productive, with a 1cy off South Light on 30th October followed by 1cy birds on 14th and 21st November, before three (1cy and two 2cy) were sheltering in Homisdale on 26th November, which were the last of the year.

Herring Gull

Larus argentatus

Common migrant, breeds in small numbers

As usual, the species was present all year round, with some large gatherings noted on the island in the winter, particularly in stormy weather, although thousands were often loafing in the north of the island in calmer conditions in the first part of November. Only 41 pairs were recorded nesting (three less than in 2016), with 37 on Goorn, two on Greenholm and two in North Feltsigeo and productivity appeared to be lower than 2016 with 33 pulli ringed, compared to 53 (from a total of 44 nests) in 2016.

Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull

Larus argentatus x *L.hyperboreus*

A 2cy bird on 4th March was thought to possibly be this hybrid combination, whilst an immature gull in Homisdale on 8th November was apparently a hybrid, with Glaucous Gull likely to be one of its parents, and the other being either Herring Gull or possibly American Herring Gull *L.smithsonianus*.



Plate 56. Hybrid gull (with Herring Gull), Homisdale, 7th November 2017. © David Parnaby

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Larus fuscus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first two returned on 15th March, with numbers building to eight by the end of the month. April numbers were unremarkable, peaking at just 18 on 25th with larger numbers in May reaching 42 on 27th. The highest count in June was 27 and four pairs settled to breed on Goorn, a typical number for recent years. There was little evidence of autumn passage until birds started arriving late in the evening of 29th August, with 184 present the next day, although only eight remained by 31st. There were just single-figure counts throughout September and sporadic singles were seen until 21st October.

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

Regular summer visitor, formerly bred in small numbers (until 2005, with one pair in 2012 and 2014–2015)

This species has become a less regular sight on the island in recent years since it stopped breeding here, and the first this year was not seen until 16th June. Autumn passage was somewhat better than usual though, with one on 20th and two on 23rd July, then five on 23rd August with one remaining the following day. Strong south-south-easterly winds on 4th September saw a small flock take shelter in North Haven, which built up to 15 during the day, the highest count since 1997, with three remaining on 5th and two still on 6th.

Arctic Tern

Sterna paradisaea

Frequent summer visitor, breeds in small numbers

The first was seen on the typical date of 8th May with numbers rising slowly to 144 by 24th, when copulation was first noted. The breeding population of 322 occupied nests counted on 14th June was the highest since 2010. Most were on Buness, including 251 nests in the main colony on the Rocks of Skervallie, with 18 elsewhere on Buness, 51 at Rippack and two at Busta, whilst the Shalstane colony was abandoned after several years of zero productivity there. The first eggs were seen on Buness on 3rd June with the first chicks there on 26th June. Visits to the colonies soon revealed it was to be a disastrous breeding season though, with many dead chicks being found, having apparently starved at just a few days old. The apparent lack of suitable prey was highlighted by a number of fish that were unsuitable for feeding tern chicks being found in the colony, including Fifteen-spined Stickleback *Spinachia spinachia* and juvenile Lumpsuckers *Cyclopterus lumpus*. The first of the few chicks that did fledge were noted on 21st July, but only 18 took to the wing, resulting in a productivity of 0.06 chicks per nest. With so few chicks around, it was no surprise that the colonies quickly emptied and there were none seen in the breeding areas after 13th August, with the only later sightings on 16th and 31st August, with three on the latter date from the Good Shepherd IV, and a single on 9th September.

*White-winged Black Tern

Chlidonias leucopterus

Vagrant, three previous records (May–July)

A smart adult was briefly with Arctic Terns on Buness on 21st July. It was discovered during a monitoring visit to the tern colony there and was seen flying north around the tip of Buness. It is the latest record for Fair Isle by five days, with previous occurrences in 1973, 1982 and 2012.



Plate 57. White-winged Black Tern, Buness, 21st July 2017.
© Ciaran Hatsell

Great Skua

Stercorarius skua

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers

The first was on 2nd April and numbers increased to 40 a week later, with at least 200 present on 24th April. The population has increased substantially since the turn of the century, but with recent years showing dramatic fluctuations, and the count of 297 occupied territories represented a decrease of over 42% since 2016. It was still the fourth highest number recorded breeding on the island. The first eggs were noted on 18th May, with chicks seen from 15th June and the first fledgling on 25th July. Productivity was also lower than 2016, with 0.49 chicks fledged per occupied territory. Autumn numbers were lower than in 2016, although there were still daily records until 17th October, with up to five during stormy weather on 24th–27th October the last of the year.



Plate 58. Great Skua in snow storm, Svey, 24th April 2017. © David Parnaby

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 101 previous records (of 131 individuals), 44 individuals in spring (May–June), 82 in autumn (mostly September–October, with fewer in July–August and November), one in January and four undated

For the second consecutive year, there were no land-based sightings, with a pale-phase adult seen from the Good Shepherd IV on 10th June the only record.

Arctic Skua

Stercorarius parasiticus

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in small numbers

The first on 19th April was the earliest arrival date since 2012, although it was the last day of the month before numbers built to double figures. The number of pairs holding territory dropped to 30, the lowest total since 2014, and it proved to be a very poor breeding season. The first egg was seen on 22nd May in the Parks, with the first chick seen on 20th June in Gilsetter, but only one chick (at the airstrip) went on to fledge, taking to the wing on 28th July. Over two-thirds of the territories failed at egg stage, a much higher percentage than recent years, which was thought to reflect birds having to spend more time away from their nests to find food. Small numbers lingered around the island until 5th September and a late bird was seen over Shirva on 14th October.

Little Auk

Alle alle

Regular late autumn migrant and winter visitor in smaller numbers

For the second year in a row there were no records in the first half of the year. The rest of the year was also quiet, producing two on 31st October and singles on 2nd and 14th November. In December, records on 2nd, 11th, 16th (a dead bird in North Haven that provided the first recorded Fair Isle specimen of the feather louse *Degeeriella obliqua*), 29th (four seen from the Good Shepherd IV in Fair Isle waters on a day when several were also seen towards Sumburgh) and 30th.

Common Guillemot

Uria aalge

Common passage migrant, breeds in large numbers (20,924 individuals in 2015)

The year started with large numbers on the cliffs on 1st January, with birds being seen on land irregularly throughout the rest of the month, a pattern that was repeated until April, when visits to the colonies became more regular and birds were settled on their breeding ledges by the second week of the month. Population plots showed a decline of over a quarter since 2016, with an average of just 940 individuals. The first egg was seen on 16th May in Dog Geo and chicks were noted from 20th June in the monitoring plots at Da Swadin and Pietron, whilst the first fledged youngster was seen on 5th July at Lericum. Breeding success was poor, with an average of 0.17 chicks fledged per egg laid, a decrease of over 60% from 2016. Birds had gone entirely from the cliffs by the end of July, with sightings offshore on just three dates in August. There were more regular records of small number offshore throughout the rest of the autumn into winter, with numbers increasing from mid-December and birds noted returning to the cliffs from 25th December.

Razorbill

Alca torda

Common summer visitor, breeds in large numbers (1,930 individuals in 2015)

The first of the year were 35 on the sea at Lericum on 4th March. There were large numbers offshore on 22nd March, with regular sightings from April, after which birds started to settle into the colonies. The first egg was seen on 18th May at Easter Lothar with the first chick there on 7th June and the first fledgling on 5th July at South Naaversgill. It was not a good breeding season though, with numbers in the population plot falling and productivity the lowest since 2013, at 0.5 chicks fledged per egg laid. Of the chicks that did fledge, many were small and rather underweight, which will presumably have hampered their chances of surviving their first winter. After one on 2nd August there were no more until early September, when birds were regularly seen passing South Light, peaking at 424 on 7th. There were generally only single-figure counts after mid-month, and small numbers were seen occasionally until mid-November.



Plate 59. Razorbill, North Haven, 7th October 2017. © Steve Arlow

Black Guillemot

Cepphus grylle

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

The highest count on the surveys of breeding-plumaged birds on the east coast monitoring plot (North Light to South Light) was 214 individuals on 2nd April, a 13.2% increase from the 2016 count and the highest total since 1997, suggesting a continued recovery in the population. The first fledged chick was seen in Furse on 20th August, slightly later than recent years and, whilst the breeding productivity is not monitored due to a lack of accessible sites, it appeared from the areas that were visited that it was probably not a good breeding season.

Puffin

Fratercula arctica

Common summer visitor, breeds in large numbers, rare in winter

The first of the year was seen from the Good Shepherd IV on 21st March, with the first from land on the typical date of 31st March. Hundreds were offshore by 6th April, with the first seen on land the following day, although they didn't settle in the colonies until the second half of the month. Chicks had hatched from 6th June, when the first fish were seen being brought into the colonies, but it was a poor season, with 0.48 chicks fledged per egg laid representing the lowest productivity since 2011. The majority of failures occurred during incubation and heavy rain in the spring, that caused flooding of burrows, may have been responsible. Numbers started to thin out during August, with 27th August the first day with no sightings, although small numbers were seen occasionally at sea until 8th September and a late bird passed South Light on 30th October.

Rock Dove

Columba livia

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Although largely resident, the species does move to some extent and, with over a third of all Rock Doves ringed on Fair Isle having been done so in the last four years, hopefully there will be more to learn about this often-ignored species. One seen sitting on the Cletts before launching itself out to sea on 13th March was obviously heading somewhere and the first Fair Isle-ringed bird to be found elsewhere was caught on North Ronaldsay later in the spring. There was no count of the breeding population, although a flock of 30 was present at Brecks on 1st May. The first fledged juvenile was seen on the early date of 22nd May. The highest count in the autumn was a minimum of 85 present on 24th September. Another interesting record involved a flock of 12 seen heading out to sea off South Light on 30th November.

Stock Dove

Columba oenas

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Sightings between 11th and 26th March probably related to a single individual, the earliest arrival since 2005. The only other record involved one on 12th June, the second June record since 1998, with the other in June 2015 being the last Stock Dove to be seen on Fair Isle prior to this year.

Woodpigeon

Columba palumbus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There was one on 18th February then, after one on 4th March, numbers increased gradually to nine on 13th, with fewer after that. Another wave of arrivals at the end of the month saw 31 on 29th rise to 39 on 31st, the highest spring count since 2006. Numbers remained high throughout April, including 38 on 9th, whilst May saw almost daily records, usually in single figures other than a larger arrival mid-month that peaked at 18 on 15th–16th. Up to four were seen throughout June, with one remaining to 8th July. Autumn passage began with one on 25th August, with occasional singles until three on 24th September then regular sightings until 17th November, all of single figures other than 12 on 19th October.

Turtle Dove

Streptopelia turtur

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One first seen on Shalstane on 15th May lingered until 28th May with another individual also seen on 22nd. There were three records in June, with singles on 4th, 10th and 16th–19th, making it the best spring since 2005. The sole autumn record concerned a single on Meoness on 27th August.

Collared Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

The first was relatively late, not arriving until 9th April. There were then two on 18th April, including a singing bird, with one of these lingering until 20th April, with another from 29th April to 4th May. There were regular sightings of one to five from 14th May to 7th July, including two that hitched a lift on the MV Orphelius from somewhere in the North Sea between The Netherlands and Aberdeen on 23rd May before jumping ship at Fair Isle! Later records were restricted to singles on 22nd July and 21st August.

Cuckoo

Cuculus canorus

Scarce migrant, mostly in spring, rarer in autumn, has bred (most recently in 2002)

Spring records involved singles on 13 dates between 3rd May and 12th June, probably involving six individuals, including a singing male. The first autumn records since 2015 involved a juvenile on 26th–27th July and an adult on 31st July.



Plate 60. Cuckoo, Chalet, 21st May 2017. © Steve Arlow

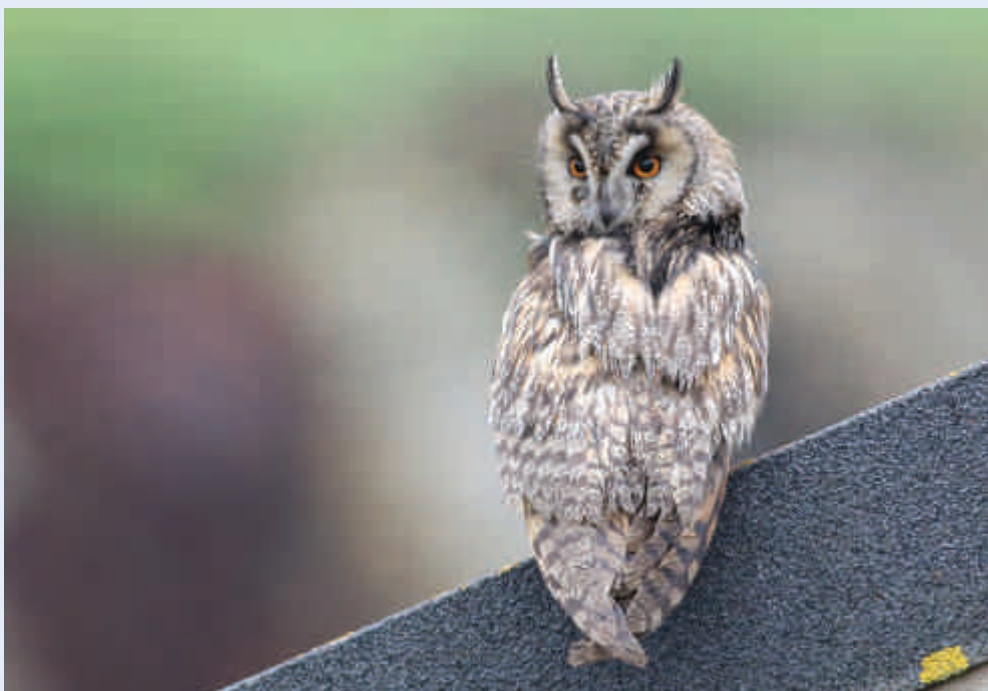


Plate 61. Long-eared Owl, Obs, 8th June 2017. © Ian Andrews

Long-eared Owl

Asio otus

Regular autumn migrant, less common in spring, with occasional records in summer and winter

Spring passage was very quiet, with a single at the Plantation on 1st April, then a lingering bird from 21st May to 13th June, which probably died after having become oiled by Fulmars. The only autumn record was of one on 19th October, making it the worst showing in that season since 1961.

Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

An unremarkable spring passage saw one or two on eight scattered dates in May, with also one on 22nd June. An early returning bird was present from 29th July, which was joined by another on 31st July. There were records of up to two on 16 dates throughout August and September, then in October there were singles on 1st and 13th–14th, before the main autumn passage saw daily records from 19th–26th October, rising to a peak of nine on 23rd.

*Nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus

Vagrant; 29 previous records, 20 in spring (mostly May), three in July, five in autumn (August–October) and one undated

The wing of a female was found above Hjukni Geo on 15th May, the first record since 2014. It had been freshly predated, probably by a cat.



Plate 62. Swift, Hesswalls, 23rd May 2017. © Steve Arlow

Swift

Apus apus

Frequent migrant, most in summer and early autumn

There was one on 9th May, then regular records between 14th and 24th May, peaking at 12 on 22nd, the highest count in this month since 2008. There were records of one or two on seven dates throughout June, then up to four on 11 dates in July, up to two on 12 August dates and singles on 1st and 5th September. A very late bird was seen landing on the cliffs at Wirvie on 2nd October.

Wryneck

Jynx torquilla

Regular spring and autumn migrant

May started well, with singles on Dronger (1st), Plantation (2nd), Lower Leogh (3rd–5th) and Double Dyke (5th). There were then two on 12th–13th May, bringing the spring total to six individuals, the best showing in this season since 2014. Autumn passage was limited to two on 25th August, with one remaining the following day, then singles on 8th, 25th and 29th–30th September.

Kestrel

Falco tinnunculus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage took place from 30th April to 3rd June, although after five on 2nd May counts were of three or less. There were daily records from 23rd August to 11th September, peaking at five on 5th, then regular sightings from 19th September to 4th October that peaked at a very respectable nine on 30th.

Merlin

Falco columbarius

Regular spring and autumn migrant, small numbers overwinter

Occasional sightings in the early part of the year suggested at least one overwintering bird and up to two seen regularly from 3rd–30th April may have indicated spring passage. The first autumn record was on the typical date of 25th August, with sightings becoming more regular throughout September, including a peak of three on 7th. There were almost daily sightings of up to four in October, and until 7th November, with sightings of at least two until the end of the year.

*Hobby

Falco subbuteo

Rare visitor; 60 previous records, 48 in May–June, six in July and six in autumn (August–September)

One lingered around the Houll on 12th May and another was seen over the Haven on 23rd May, the first records since 2015.

Peregrine

Falco peregrinus

Regular spring and autumn migrant; bred regularly until 1973 then again in 2008–2009 and 2013–2014 and suspected to have attempted in 2015

There was a juvenile present at the start of the year, with occasional sightings in February and at least two individuals seen in March, with a female seen killing a Mallard. At least two females were seen in April and a male on 4th–8th May, but there was no breeding behaviour noted, although there were two sightings of individuals in June. Autumn passage saw one on 29th August, then three singles in September, singles on 6th and 8th October, then up to two regularly from 17th–30th October. There was an unusual lack of sightings later in the year, with the only records involving singles on 9th and 28th December.

Red-backed Shrike

Lanius collurio

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A female at Chalet on 21st–23rd May, then a male wandering the south on 1st June, were the only records in the quietest spring since 1994. Pellet analysis from the female found fragments of one sexton beetle *Nicrophorus humator*, one carabid *Nebria salina* and at least six Vine Weevils *Otiorhynchus sulcatus*. A reasonable autumn produced four records, with juveniles at Chalet on 25th–26th August, Wester Lothar on 26th August and Chalet on 5th–9th September followed by a male at Burkle on 16th September.



Plate 63. Red-backed Shrike, Chalet, 21st May 2017. © Steve Arlow

Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

One at Schoolton on 25th September was the earliest autumn arrival since 2011 and it went on to roam the island until 29th September. The second of the autumn was at the base of Malcolm's Head on 19th October, where it was devouring a Redwing, and it remained in the Meadow Burn area the following day.

*Woodchat Shrike

Lanius senator

Vagrant; 30 previous records (15 spring, one mid-summer, 14 autumn)

Recorded for the second consecutive year when a first-summer male was at Mire o' Vatnagard on 16th June before roaming the area around the Naaversgills. The first autumn record since 2006 involved a juvenile at Pund on 19th August. Three birds in 2016–2017 is the same number as occurred from 1993–2015.

Rook

Corvus frugilegus

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

Spring passage occurred from 13th April to 2nd May, with a peak of three on 18th–19th April, but there were no autumn records in a generally disappointing year for this species.

Carrion Crow

Corvus corone

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

Two birds that arrived in spring 2016 remained throughout the year and were observed carrying nesting material towards Malcolm's Head in late March, making them potentially the first breeding pair of Carrion Crows in Fair Isle or Shetland (although individuals have hybridised with Hooded Crows in the past). Although nesting material was also seen being carried in early May, it seems possible that these birds were immatures that were not undertaking a serious breeding attempt as Carrion Crows do not normally breed until they are at least two years old (Cramp & Simmons 1994). Light spring passage was observed from early April, with numbers building to 16 by the end of the month. The main arrival occurred in mid-May, with a peak of 37 on 14th, whilst another arrival saw 15 on 29th–30th May and smaller numbers moved through in the first half of June. The pair lingered around the South Light throughout the summer and a third bird was present on the west cliffs from 12th August. The highest autumn count was five on 29th September, with just occasional suspected migrants after that. The resident pair and a lingering bird around Hill Dyke remained until the end of the year.

Hooded Crow

Corvus cornix

Regular spring and autumn migrant and also resident, breeds in small numbers

Small numbers were present all year, with presumed migrants including nine on 19th and 11 on 28th April, with up to five on 11th–16th and six on 30th May, although it is possible that some roaming flocks may have related to non-breeding resident birds. At least three pairs were thought to have bred, with eggs noted from 8th May and chicks first seen on 29th May.



Plate 64. Hooded Crow, Busta Geo, 4th June 2017. © Ciaran Hatsell

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

Corvid passage in the spring produced occasional hybrids amongst the groups of migrant crows, with singles seen on several dates from 19th April to 5th May and 14th–16th May, with two on 29th May.

Raven

Corvus corax

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

There were just two territories apparently occupied this year, at Gunnawark and Milens Houllan, with the former fledging two chicks by 10th June. There were no obvious migrants recorded, although it is possible some may slip through undetected, especially with the breeding population currently rather low.

Waxwing

Bombycilla garrulus

Scarce but irruptive autumn migrant, scarce in spring and rare in winter

Following the best autumn since 2012 in 2016, the spring was the best since 2013, with singles on 19th and 30th April and 23rd May. Conversely, with no other records, it was the first time since 1997 that none were recorded in the latter half of the year.

Blue Tit

Cyanistes caeruleus

Vagrant: 11 previous records of 14 individuals (one April, 13 from October to December)

Just the second spring record for the island occurred on 20th–26th March. A record-breaking flock arrived on 18th–19th October when eight appeared at Lower Stoneybrek, before quickly dispersing. At least four remained during October, with three staying on the island to the end of the year. Two took up residence at feeders at Haa and Burkle and the other lingered at the Obs. The first eight records (of 11 individuals) all occurred prior to 1989, but there have now been five records (of 12 individuals) since 2012 as this species' status on Fair Isle has changed somewhat in recent years. The reasons for this surge in records aren't entirely clear; our neighbours to the east, Utsira Bird Observatory in Norway, report no significant change in numbers occurring there.

Great Tit

Parus major

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 40 previous records involving around 54 individuals

A female trapped at the Obs on 3rd May was the first to arrive in that month (two other April arrivals have remained to 1st May) and went on to linger until 10th May, first relocating to Meoness then Upper Leogh. It was the first record since April 2013.

Skylark

Alauda arvensis

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

A group of 14 at Nether Taft in January represented a fairly high overwintering count. Numbers started to rise by the end of February, with the first bird heard singing on the last day of the month. There were over 100 by the start of the March, with 338 recorded by 29th, the highest count of the spring. The peak in April was 245 on 19th, with counts settling around 120 by the end of the month and dropping to generally less than 100 throughout May as birds settled down to breed. The first fledged youngster was noted on 18th June, the same date as 2016. Numbers started to increase from mid-September, rising to 204 on 19th and 233 on the last day of the month. Counts decreased steadily throughout October with less than 50 by the end of the month. Small numbers lingered on the island until the end of the year.

*Shore Lark

Eremophila alpestris

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

After a large arrival of the species into Britain in autumn 2016, it was no surprise to get a spring record, with one on the north slopes of Ward Hill on 11th–13th May. In the autumn, a single lingered around Gunnawark on 22nd–25th October and another two were on Vaasetter on 24th October.

Sand Martin

Riparia riparia

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

One on 3rd April was just a day later than the earliest arrival date and one on 7th April was also early, although there were no more until regular sightings from 1st–26th May that peaked at eight on 16th. There were late records on 7th (two) and 15th June, but autumn passage was very quiet, being restricted to singles on 18th July and 14th and 25th–26th August.



Plate 65. Sand Martin, Easter Lother, 16th May 2017.
© Steve Arlow

Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds (last recorded 2015)

The first on 9th April was a typical arrival date but there were just a couple more sightings until 29th April, after which sightings were daily until the autumn. Spring passage peaked in two distinct waves, at the beginning of May, when a maximum of 56 was recorded on 2nd, and again in mid-month, when the highest count was 101 on 14th. A pair bred successfully at Barkland, raising a single youngster that fledged on 24th July, whilst other pairs were noted around Skerryholm and the Water Tanks, the latter of which started to build a nest. Autumn passage was unspectacular, with no more than 13 recorded in August and a maximum of seven in September, then up to nine until the last of the year on 23rd October.

House Martin

Delichon urbicum

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

This species has shown a tendency for early arrival dates in recent years, with new records set in 2011 and 2016, and the first three this year were recorded on 9th April, the second earliest-ever arrival date. There was another single on 18th April, then almost daily sightings from 1st May to 22nd June, peaking at 27 on 17th May, the highest count since 2011. Autumn passage was protracted, with singles on 25th July and 19th–20th August, up to three from 11th–13th September, eight on 30th September, with two remaining to 3rd October, then two on 8th–9th October with one remaining to 12th.

*Red-rumped Swallow

Cecropis daurica

Vagrant; ten previous records, nine in spring, one in autumn

Unlike most of the previous records, which often lingered long enough to be well appreciated by multiple observers, one at Hesswalls on 23rd May was seen only by the finder as it fed amongst a small flock of hirundines.

Willow Warbler

Phylloscopus trochilus

Common spring and autumn migrant

Four arrived on 28th April, the latest arrival date since 1986 and, although there were only three on 29th, numbers increased to 74 on 30th and had risen to 104 by 3rd May, the highest spring count since 2009. Numbers tailed off until a smaller arrival in mid-month produced another peak of 38 on 13th May. During this time, there were several pale individuals that may have been *P.t. acredula*, although the field identification of this Scandinavian-breeding subspecies is not yet fully understood. Smaller numbers were seen regularly until the end of the month and up to four were recorded until 18th June, with the last of the spring on 24th June. An adult on 22nd–28th July was the first of the autumn, with the first juvenile on 4th August, after which there were scattered sightings during the first half of the month. There were then daily sightings from 16th August to 3rd October, with 50 on 25th August an early peak. Counts in September were generally between seven and 17, with peaks of 30 on 11th and 20 on 29th. Scattered ones or twos remained until 12th October.

Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One at the Obs on 13th March, then at the Plantation on 15th was the first of the year and arrived just a day later than the earliest-ever record. Sightings were regular from 26th March, with single-figure counts until 17 on 9th April, with counts for the rest of the month of less than ten, other than 13 on 18th and 24 on 30th. Numbers continued to rise in early May, to a spring peak of 78 on 4th, dropping to between 17 and 38 for the next fortnight and then less than 20 from 18th onwards. Prior to a spring record count of 87 in May 2016, the previous best count in this season had been 50 in April 1970, so this is a species that is clearly going through a good spell. Numbers dropped to single figures by 9th June and there were probably over half a dozen summering birds recorded across the island, including two around Burkle where singing had been heard in the spring. The first autumn migrant was noted from 26th August, but counts remained in single figures until 26th September, when there were 12, increasing to 40 on 29th, the peak autumn count. Numbers dwindled through early October and further peaks were limited to 17 on 7th and 19th October, with two on 30th October the last until a late bird on 21st November. As with recent years, any feathers shed during ringing were collected for DNA analysis, allowing an unbiased sample of birds to be identified to subspecies. In the spring a total of eight samples were analysed, with six birds trapped between 18th April and 12th June being nominate *collybita* and two (23rd May and 4th June) belonging to the Scandinavian breeding subspecies *abietinus*. The exact status of the latter subspecies on Fair Isle is not clear, as they are variable in plumage and apparently not always identifiable in the field, particularly in the spring.

‘Siberian Chiffchaff’ *P.c. tristis*

Although the totals above include all subspecies, an attempt is made to accurately log the numbers of this distinctive eastern race. Unusually, there were several recorded during heavy Chiffchaff passage in the spring, with records of one or two on six dates from 1st–12th May. Sightings in the autumn occurred on 11 dates between 8th and 26th October, although the maximum day count was just two.

***Western Bonelli's Warbler**

Phylloscopus bonelli

Vagrant; three previous records (September) plus one 'Bonelli's Warbler' unidentified to species (September 1992)

A showy and, at times, vocal bird was found at Lower Stoneybrek on 17th September and made occasional forays to Upper Stoneybrek. Previous records (in 1961, 2005 and 2008) have occurred between 10th and 22nd September, so this bird fitted neatly into the established pattern.

Wood Warbler

Phylloscopus sibilatrix

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A quiet spring saw just a single record, on 3rd May on Ward Hill. A good autumn showing began in bizarre circumstances when one was found in a car parked at North Haven on 23rd August, with further singles on 24th–28th August, with a second bird present on 26th August. A bird at Pund on 19th September was relatively late and was followed by the latest-ever Fair Isle record when one was trapped in the Plantation on 7th October before moving to Steensi Geo later in the day.



Plate 66. Wood Warbler, Chalet, 25th August 2017. © Max Hellicar

***Dusky Warbler**

Phylloscopus fuscatus

Vagrant; 17 previous records, all in autumn (September to November)

The first spring record for Fair Isle was on Dronger on 2nd May. A more typical occurrence involved an individual that showed well at times along the Meadow Burn on 19th–22nd October; the third consecutive autumn with a record of this chacking Sibe.

Yellow-browed Warbler

Phylloscopus inornatus

Regular autumn migrant

One at Furse on 11th September, an early arrival date, was the first of the year. There was then one on 15th September with two the following day, before nine on 17th September heralded daily records until 5th October, peaking at 16 on 25th. Another arrival from 8th–14th October peaked at six on 10th and there were then two on 19th–20th and the last of the year on 25th October. Both the peak count and the estimated minimum total of 44 individuals were the lowest since 2014.

*Arctic Warbler

Phylloscopus borealis

Rare migrant; 91 previous records, most in August and September, also recorded in June (two), July (four) and October (seven)

After occurrences in a run of eight years came to an end in 2016, there was one record this year, with a showy adult at Chalet on 26th–27th August.

*Green Warbler

Phylloscopus nitidus

Vagrant; no previous records

An unexpected addition to the island list was made when one of these colourful *Phylloscopus* warblers was caught on 4th July at the Obs, where it remained until 7th. An adult female, it had presumably overshot its breeding grounds in the Caucasus region, although perhaps may have been reorientating after overshooting earlier in the spring, given the late date. A write-up of the occurrence can be found on pages 137–141 and in Parnaby (2017e).

Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

Frequent migrant, commonest in spring; has bred (2010)

Sightings were regular from the first arrivals on 30th April until late May, with counts in single figures, other than an arrival in mid-May that peaked on 12 on 14th. There were further scattered records until 14th June. A quiet autumn passage saw one at Pund on 23rd–26th August then singles on six September dates until the last on 30th.

*Blyth's Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus dumetorum

Rare migrant; 45 previous records, 32 in autumn (August–October) and 13 in spring (May–June)

One briefly in Hesti Geo on 9th June was a typical date for a spring bird, the eighth record in this season in the last eight years. Autumn records have been annual since 2009 and this year there was one in Steensi Geo then Linni Geo on 25th September.

Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Regular migrant, more common in autumn

Spring passage was quiet, with singles on 15th, 21st and 23rd–24th May. In autumn there were virtually daily records from 20th August to 11th September with a maximum of five on 27th. There were no more until daily sightings from 26th September to 1st October, which peaked at five on 30th, and the last was one in the Walli Burn on 9th October.

Marsh Warbler

Acrocephalus palustris

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

Three arrived on 7th June, the latest arrival date since 2006, increasing to four the following day with two remaining until 9th. The next was a singing bird at Haa then Schoolton on 17th–18th June before the sixth of a quiet spring was at Chalet on 26th June. One at Chalet then the Obs lingered from 19th–27th September and another was at Schoolton on 30th September and 1st October.



Plate 67. Marsh Warbler, Obs, 24th September 2017. © Steve Arlow

*Melodious Warbler

Hippolais polyglotta

Vagrant; 18 previous records, six in spring (one in May, five in June) and 12 in autumn (August and September)

The first record since 2013 and the first in autumn since 2011 occurred on 17th September when an elusive bird frequented Schoolton and Houll.

Icterine Warbler

Hippolais icterina

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A typical arrival date saw the first of the year recorded at Easter Lothar on 22nd May, with another on 31st May then two on 2nd June. Daily sightings from 7th–13th June peaked at three on 11th, with one of these still present on 16th. The eighth of the spring was a bird at the Obs on 16th–18th June (which was singing on the latter date) making it the best spring since 2012. Autumn was much quieter, with just a single at North Gunnawark on 25th August.

Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella naevia

Regular spring and autumn migrant

There were regular records between 30th April and 21st May, which peaked at five on 3rd May, the highest spring count since 2006. One at Quoy on 27th July was the earliest-ever autumn record and only the second July occurrence, with more typical records consisting of one to two (involving three individuals) on 24th–26th August. There were then records on 15th and 26th (two) September, daily sightings from 30th September to 4th October that peaked at four on the latter date and then later singles on 17th, 20th and 23rd October in a stronger autumn showing than usual.

*Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella certhiola

Vagrant; 24 previous records all between mid-September and mid-October

An elusive bird was flushed from low vegetation at the edge of the Lower Stoneybrek garden and called before disappearing into the dense *Rosa* on 22nd September. It was flushed again to confirm the identification, and perched briefly on a wall before diving back into cover, where it remained elusively for the rest of the day.



Plate 68. Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Lower Stoneybrek, 22nd September 2017. © Mark Breaks

Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Common spring and autumn migrant

A male at the Plantation on 1st April was the third earliest-ever arrival (after records on 27th March 2012 and 28th March 2010), but there were then no more until 28th April, which began a series of almost daily sightings until 19th June. The main spring passage saw ten on 30th April which increased to 11 on 2nd May, the highest spring count. Autumn passage began on 30th August with single-figure counts throughout September until a notable influx towards the end of the month that brought a maximum of 29 on 25th September. Daily counts in October were mostly under ten, although an arrival in the third week brought the autumn's peak count of 36 on 19th. Small numbers lingered until 7th November, then a late arrival brought up to three from 19th–24th November which were the last until the latest-ever record for Fair Isle involved a female at the Obs on 21st December.



Plate 69. Blackcap, Schoolton, 8th June 2017. © Ian Andrews

Garden Warbler

Sylvia borin

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were sightings on 11 dates from 12th–25th May, peaking at three on 17th and 22nd, and one to two from 5th–12th June in a poor spring passage. There were early autumn birds on 31st July and 7th August then sightings were regular from 17th August. The autumn peak was just seven on 25th August and there were five on 11th September but otherwise regular sightings to 2nd October were of just one to three. There were further sightings on four dates during 10th–19th October, including four on 16th, bringing to an end a poor autumn passage.

Barred Warbler

Sylvia nisoria

Regular autumn migrant, vagrant in spring (four records)

The first arrived on the rather late date of 19th August at North Shirva and lingered until 27th August, during which time a second individual was at the Plantation on 25th. The next was at Chalet on 2nd–3rd September, with a second at the Plantation on the latter date. There were further birds in September on 5th–6th, 11th–22nd, 22nd, 23rd and 27th then singles on 15th and 18th October, bringing the total for the year to a rather unimpressive 11.

Lesser Whitethroat

Sylvia curruca

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Three on 1st May were on a typical arrival date, with eight the following day, then smaller numbers daily until a wave of passage mid-month brought a peak of 16 on 14th, the highest spring count since 2013. Smaller numbers remained until 25th May, with a late spring migrant on 29th June. A random selection of six birds from the spring (occurring between 11th and 15th May) had feathers sent for DNA analysis, with all of them proving to be nominate *curruca*. After the first autumn bird on 25th August, there were scattered singles until five arrived on 17th September, increasing to the autumn's peak of 13 the following day. Up to eight remained until the end of the month and one to three were seen regularly until 20th October, with the last of the year on 25th October. Only three were caught in the autumn, with two of these (on 19th and 25th October) shedding feathers that could be sent for DNA analysis, with both shown to be 'Siberian Lesser Whitethroats' *S.c.blythi*.

Whitethroat

Sylvia communis

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

There were daily records from 30th April to 24th May but, other than 11 on 3rd May, all counts were in single figures. Further scattered sightings of up to two until 8th June completed an uninspiring spring passage. Sightings from 24th–26th August peaked at three on 20th and there were then regular sightings from 5th September to 4th October, but no more than two on any date, in a very quiet autumn.

*Subalpine Warbler

Sylvia cantillans

Rare migrant; 96 previous records (92 in spring and four in autumn). Most currently unraced, although at least 17 thought to be 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' S.c.cantillans/albistriata

'Western Subalpine Warbler' *S.c.iberiae/inornata*

A superb male at Chalet on 30th May was trapped and confirmed as a 'Western Subalpine Warbler' by DNA analysis, with the same bird moving to Lower Leogh the following day. Subalpine Warbler has now occurred in 18 consecutive years on Fair Isle.

*Firecrest

Regulus ignicapilla

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

The third October record in the last four years involved a 1cy female trapped at the Obs on 20th, where it went on to show well. A bird seen briefly at the base of Hjukni Geo in poor weather on 23rd October may well have been a second bird, especially given the large arrival into Britain at the time, but it was not seen well enough to ascertain whether it was ringed, so it could have been the same individual.

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Two arrived on 25th March, with numbers increasing to 24 on 30th. Birds were then present regularly in dwindling numbers until 10th April, with sightings on three other dates in the month to 19th. There were records of up to three on ten dates up to 21st May in a somewhat insipid spring passage. Occasional sightings from 2nd September became more regular in the second half of the month, building to a peak of 57 on 29th September. Numbers tailed off to single figures for most of early October, with a concentrated arrival in the final third of the month bringing a peak of 165 on 19th, although numbers tailed off rapidly, with one remaining until 2nd November.

Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes

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

The first singing bird was heard on 26th February in South Harbour and dedicated surveys and recording of singing birds during daily census in spring resulted in a total of 45 territories, a high

count in keeping with recent years. There were also signs of spring passage, with occasional birds in early May suspected to be nominate *T.t. troglodytes*, whilst a bird trapped at the Obs on 3rd May had been ringed two days previously on North Ronaldsay and was presumably a northbound migrant. The first fledged youngsters were noted on 1st June in Furse, the joint-earliest fledging date on record, with fledging confirmed in a minimum of 12 territories, including several presumed second broods noted in mid-late August.

***Treecreeper**

Certhia familiaris

Vagrant: nine previous records; six in October and singles April, September and December, all thought to have been the nominate race 'Northern Treecreeper' C.f.familiaris

One found feeding on the cliffs of Troila Geo on 24th October was the first since 2014 and showed well as it probed amongst the patches of vegetation on the cliff face for invertebrates.

***Rose-coloured Starling**

Pastor roseus

Rare migrant; 45 previous individuals, with 11 in spring (May–June), ten in summer and 24 in autumn (August–November).

A smart adult was found feeding on the flowers of New Zealand Flax *Phormium tenax* at Quoy on 24th July, providing the fourth consecutive year of appearance for the species on Fair Isle. It commuted between here and Shirva until 28th July, with what was considered to be the same bird seen at Haa on 5th August.



Plate 70. Rose-coloured Starling, Quoy, 24th July 2017. © Ciaran Hatsell

Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers, also common spring and autumn migrant

Table 3. Results of the monitoring of Starling nests, 2016–17.

	Mean laying date	Mean clutch size	Mean brood size	Mean No. fledged	Breeding success (%)
2016 (59 nests)	7th May	4.61	4.00	3.51	76.1
2017 (51 nests)	16th May	4.24	3.72	3.62	85.4

As shown in the table above, although mean clutch size decreased, breeding success increased significantly, with the highest productivity recorded in the monitored nests since 2012. Although the mean laying date was later than 2016, the first fledging was seen on 1st June, five days earlier than in 2016. Migration is not always easy to detect due to the large number of breeding birds, but a flock of 28 heading out to sea from North Light on 5th July showed some typical dispersal at the end of the breeding season.

***White's Thrush**

Zoothera aurea

Vagrant; 14 previous records, 13 in autumn (September–October), one in February

One of the highlights of the autumn was provided by one of these mighty thrushes which was found on Buness on 7th October. After showing very well as it circled around the natural amphitheatre of Slogar it then crossed Buness and North Haven to the top of the cliffs of Hoilee, where it remained and showed well (albeit distantly) until it was chased off towards Roskillie by a Hooded Crow and could not be relocated.

Ring Ouzel

Turdus torquatus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were singles on six dates from 9th–22nd April then 12 arrived on the last day of the month. After ten on 3rd May, there were regular counts of up to five until 23rd May, and one on 3rd June. There were up to four on 24th–30th September then, after a couple of singles earlier in the month, an arrival from 17th–26th October rose to an impressive 49 on 20th, the highest autumn count since 1993. One around Gilsetter and Byerwalls from 12th–18th November was the latest record since 1997.

Blackbird

Turdus merula

Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers overwinter; has bred (last recorded 2014)

Small numbers were scattered across the island in the first winter period, with spring migration noted from 4th March, although the first larger fall was 103 on 29th March. After 64 on 2nd April, all spring counts were of ten or less, with up to three in early June, including a singing male, whilst a female summered at the Obs. The first autumn migrant was on 15th September, and small numbers were on the move regularly from 25th September, although the first double-figure count was not until 19 on 9th October, which increased to 82 by 11th. After a lull in numbers, there was a huge arrival of 2,279 on 19th October, the highest count on the island since March 2001 and the third highest autumn day count (after 3,000 on 2nd October 1969 and 2,500 on 18th–19th October 1988). There were 2,267 on 21st, with numbers remaining over 900 until a large clear-out saw just 180 present on 27th October. There were no more large arrivals with the highest count in November being 59 in the south of the island only on 21st, with just small numbers present until the end of the year.

***Black-throated Thrush**

Turdus atrogularis

Vagrant; 13 previous records, two in April, ten in October and one in December to January

A vocal first-winter female was found just west of Pund on 23rd October, the first record since 2012. It moved up onto the lower slopes of Hoini, but vanished amongst the large numbers of thrushes that were present on the island and couldn't be relocated.

Fieldfare

Turdus pilaris

Common spring and autumn migrant, often overwinters

Just a handful was recorded throughout the first winter period, with 21 on 11th March the peak spring count and small numbers recorded until 20th May. For the fourth consecutive year, the first of the autumn was in August, with one on Dronger from 29th–31st but there were no more until up to three were present from 18th–29th September. Although sightings were daily from 8th October, there were no more than 31 until an arrival of 331 on 19th, the highest count of the year. There were 206 in another smaller arrival on 24th, but numbers dropped away rapidly after that. November saw an arrival of 72 on 6th and 20 on 21st, with single figures remaining through to the end of the year.

Redwing

Turdus iliacus

Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers often overwinter; has bred (1935)

The maximum count in the first part of the year was 22, with an arrival in late March seeing numbers rise to 83 on 30th. Although there were daily sightings in April, numbers fluctuated, with high counts including 94 on 2nd, 78 on 15th and 59 on 27th, whilst one was singing at the Obs for a few days mid-month. By May numbers had dropped to single figures with none after 21st until singles on 1st, 6th, 8th and 29th June. Seven on 24th September were on a typical arrival date, with sightings then daily, although it was 9th October before counts reached three figures. Numbers rose sharply to 951 on 13th, around 3,400 on 17th and an impressive 9,703 on 19th, when birds were moving over throughout the day and into the night, the largest tally since 2005. Counts remained over 2,000 until 25th but had dropped to 260 by the end of the month. There were generally around 60 or less throughout November, other than a small fall of 120 on 21st November, and just a handful remained throughout December.



Plate 71. 'Icelandic Redwing' *T.i.coburni*, Obs, 8th June 2017. © Ian Andrews

Song Thrush

Turdus philomelos

Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers often overwinter; has bred (last recorded 1926)

One or two were noted in the early part of the year, with an arrival at the end of March bringing up to 12. Small numbers were seen in April and the spring peak was just 15 on 4th May. Occasional sightings throughout the summer probably related to an elusive lingering bird. Two on 20th September began autumn passage, with numbers increasing to 277 on 29th. Counts dropped to generally less than 50 in the first week of October, with the next major arrival taking place from 19th, which peaked at 464 on 22nd October. Numbers dropped to less than 100 by 27th and there were no more large arrivals noted, although around 20 stayed through November, a higher number than usual, with up to three remaining until the end of the year.

Mistle Thrush

Turdus viscivorus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Often one of the earliest spring migrants, the first two were present on 4th–11th March, with further singles in the month on 17th and 29th–31st and there was a late migrant on 14th May. After a single on 3rd October, there were daily sightings during 19th–27th October, peaking at five on 20th and 22nd, and one on 4th and 7th November.

Spotted Flycatcher

Muscicapa striata

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One in the Gully from 2nd–3rd May was the earliest record for the isle since an exceptionally early bird on 20th April 1949. The main spring passage was during 10th–18th May, peaking at 15 on 17th, followed by a arrival of seven on 21st May with smaller numbers recorded regularly until 22nd June and later individuals on 29th June and 5th July. Autumn passage began slowly with singles on 1st and 27th–30th August and 7th–9th September. There was then a late arrival from 24th September to 2nd October, peaking at nine on 29th that was followed by a late individual on 11th–12th October.

Robin

Erithacus rubecula

Common spring and autumn migrant, often summers and overwinters in small numbers

At least eight were present in January, a good winter count, with light spring passage noted in late March, peaking at 15 on 29th–30th. There were no more than seven in April and, although sightings were daily in May, the peak was just 21 on 3rd, with counts decreasing steadily after that. There were probably half a dozen summering on the isle, including three that were ringed in the first three days of May and went on to linger well into October. There were occasional new birds throughout August and September, with an increase noted from 26th September, with 98 on 30th the highest. Numbers dwindled in early October, with a slight rise on 8th when there were 63, then the largest arrival took place from 18th, increasing to a peak of 181 on 22nd October. Numbers dwindled rapidly after that with a few birds scattered around the island throughout November but probably just single figures in December.

Bluethroat

Luscinia svecica

Regular migrant, commonest in spring and scarce in autumn

All the eight spring individuals occurred in May, with a male in Meadow Burn on 10th followed by daily records during 12th–16th, which peaked at three on 13th–15th and involved five new birds (three males and two females) and then a male on 18th and a female on 19th. Autumn records involved a showy bird at Pund on 17th–22nd September, one at Haa then Upper Leogh on 25th–30th September and one at Chalet on 16th–17th October.

*Thrush Nightingale

Luscinia luscinia

Rare migrant; 62 previous records, 50 in spring (May–June) and 12 in autumn (August–September, with one in October)

The first record since 2015, and the first in spring since 2013, involved one at Utra on 16th May.



Plate 72. Thrush Nightingale, Utra, 16th May 2017. © Steve Arlow

*Nightingale

Luscinia megarhynchos

Rare migrant; 55 previous records, 46 in spring (April–July) and nine in autumn (August–October)

An individual seen briefly as it foraged on the beach of Furse on 2nd May was the earliest occurrence since 1983 and the third consecutive year to produce a single spring record.

*Red-flanked Bluetail

Tarsiger cyanurus

Vagrant; 16 previous records, most in September and October with one in March–April

Although no longer a BBRC rarity, this species will surely always have a special place in the hearts of birders and one at the School on 18th–19th October was as well received as the previous records. This was the fourth consecutive year to produce a record of ‘the Tarsiger’, which for the time being at least seems to have become a regular fixture of the autumn, and this bird represented the latest occurrence for Fair Isle.

Pied Flycatcher

Ficedula hypoleuca

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were regular sightings between 30th April and 24th May, but of no more than two other than five on 14th May in a disappointing spring. Autumn passage commenced with one on 24th August, increasing to three on 25th–26th. September produced records on just nine dates from 5th–30th, peaking at three on 17th, with a late bird trapped on 17th October that rounded off a poor year all round for this species.



Plate 73. Pied Flycatcher, Stackhoull, 25th August 2017. © Max Hellicar

Red-breasted Flycatcher

Ficedula parva

Rare in spring (36 previous records), scarce autumn migrant

After six spring occurrences in the previous five years, it was another good start to the year with one trapped in the Gully on 22nd May and another trapped in the Plantation that was present from 27th–29th May. One in South Harbour on 17th September was the first of the autumn, with another at Steensi Geo then Lower Leogh from 26th–30th September. The third and fourth of the autumn was found in Wester Lothar on 27th September, with presumably one of those in the Gully the following day.

Black Redstart

Phoenicurus ochruros

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

One at Schoolton on 17th March was the earliest arrival since 2012 but there were then none until singles on 2nd, 18th–19th and 26th April. There were almost daily records from 30th April to 26th May, peaking at six on 2nd–5th May, that included an adult male that lingered around Houll from 16th–26th. Sightings from 29th May to 10th June involved two or three individuals that lingered in the north of the island around Wester Lothar and the Mast, with an adult male singing at Bullock Holes on the latter date, although there were no further sightings during the summer to indicate any breeding attempt. A juvenile at the Obs on 2nd–6th August was presumably an early migrant (early August records are not that unusual), but it turned out to be a very quiet autumn, with one on 20th, two on 22nd and one on 27th October the only other records.

Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Nine on 1st May were both the first record of the year and the highest count of the spring, with almost daily sightings to 23rd May, with another slight peak in mid-month seeing eight recorded on 14th. There were up to two on 24th–26th August then singles on 11th and 17th September in a slow start to autumn passage. After one on 23rd September, numbers rose rapidly to 20 by 30th, the highest autumn count since 2010. There were daily sightings of dwindling numbers throughout October until 20th, then singles on 21st and 25th October. The latter, a male at the Obs, was the latest record since 2003.



Plate 74. Redstart, 18th October 2017. © Rebecca Nason

Whinchat

Saxicola rubetra

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were regular sightings in the spring from 30th April to 23rd May, peaking at nine on 3rd (the highest spring count since 2012) and six on 14th, with a later bird at Da Water from 30th May to 1st June. Autumn passage stretched from 24th August to 27th October, during which time sightings were virtually daily, although the peak count was just eight, on 6th September.

Stonechat

Saxicola rubicola

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

There were daily sightings from 11th–17th March, peaking at five on 13th, then up to two from 21st–26th March. April saw a male on 7th–9th and a female from 27th that lingered to 4th May, bringing the spring total to an estimated 12 individuals, a good showing. Autumn passage was also reasonable, with almost daily sightings from 1st–26th October, peaking at four on 5th–9th.

*Siberian Stonechat

Saxicola maurus

Vagrant; since this species and Stejneger's Stonechat S.stejnegeri have been split, only a 'Caspian Stonechat' S.m.hemprichii (April 2014) and one identified from DNA in October 2016 are currently accepted as this species. Of the other 42 records that are accepted as S.maurus/stejnegeri, most have occurred in the autumn (13 in September, 24 in October and three in November) with two in spring (May)

There were single 1cy females at Pund on 9th and 16th October, the second year in succession to produce two autumn records as the species seems to be undergoing a slight resurgence, although both may only be acceptable as Siberian/Stejneger's Stonechat.

Wheatear

Oenanthe oenanthe

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

Two males on 28th March represented a typical first arrival, with counts remaining in singles figures until 15 on 7th April, with 54 on 9th as numbers built up. The first 'Greenland Wheatears' *O.o.oenanthe* were noted in an arrival of 89 on 20th April, whilst the first large influx saw 247 on 30th rising to 284 on 2nd May. After counts dropped for a while there was an impressive 297 on 16th May. Passage tailed off rapidly after that with counts of around 60–80 by early June probably involving largely breeding birds. There was no survey of breeding numbers, with the first fledged juveniles noted on 19th June, the same as 2016. Variable counts in August presumably involved a mixture of local breeders and migrants, with peaks of 235 on 19th and 236 on 26th. Numbers had dropped to around 40 in early September, although there were then 216 on 8th September, which involved many Greenland birds. Counts then dropped away rapidly, with around 20 for the rest of the month. The peak in October saw 35 on 7th, although there were only single-figure counts from 19th onwards, with one lingering to 2nd November.



Plate 75. Wheatear, Mast, 16th October 2017.
© Richard Cope

House Sparrow

Passer domesticus

Resident, breeds in small numbers

Following on from the good numbers present at the end of 2016, a spring count in mid-April suggested a breeding population of around 40–50 pairs, somewhat higher than recent years. The first fledged youngster was noticed on the typical date of 10th June. The highest total in the autumn was 154 on 8th September, the largest number since 2000 (although autumn counts have not been made annually since then). Of interest was an Orkney ringed bird that was first caught on Fair Isle in October 2016 (two months after it was ringed on Sanday) that was trapped again in the Plantation on 8th October.

Tree Sparrow

Passer montanus

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

The only record of the year was one on 16th–17th May, making it the quietest year for this species since 2008, when there were none.

Dunnock

Prunella modularis

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

One on 21st March preceded regular sightings from 27th March to 15th April that peaked at four and included one singing at the Obs. There was a second small wave of arrivals of up to five during 28th April to 2nd May, with three lingering into early June and one of those (which had been ringed on 1st May) going on to stay until at least 8th October, the first summering record since 2012. The first autumn migrants were two in Wester Lothar on 24th September, with small numbers seen from then throughout October. It was an unimpressive autumn passage, with the only double-figure count coming on 24th when there were 11, and the last of the year was seen on 13th November.

Yellow Wagtail

Motacilla flava

Regular spring and autumn migrant; has bred twice (M.f.flavissima in 1981 and M.f.thunbergi in 1996)

'Yellow Wagtail' *M.f.flavissima*

A male on Meoness on 19th April was the earliest *flava* wagtail since 1999, with probably the same bird still present on 22nd April. The next was a female on 2nd May, with further records on 18th and 22nd–25th May.

'Blue-headed Wagtail' *M.f.flava*

A male at Upper Leogh on 4th May was followed by a female on 7th May and further males on 11th–13th and 21st May. The sole autumn record of a *flava* wagtail identified to subspecies was a male on 5th–8th September.



Plate 76. 'Blue-headed Wagtail', Skerryholm, 6th September 2017. © Ciaran Hatsell

'Grey-headed Wagtail' *M.f.thunbergi*

A male on 10th May increased to three on 11th–12th, with two remaining until 17th when they were joined by another (the 11th and 17th were also the peak days for *flava* wagtails, with four in total). Further males were seen on 23rd–25th May and 4th June in a reasonable spring showing for this Scandinavian-breeding subspecies.



Plate 77. 'Grey-headed Wagtail' (right) with Red-throated Pipit, Meadow Burn, 17th May 2017. © Steve Arlow

Unidentified *flava* wagtail

There were two from 30th April and occasional records throughout the spring, usually of birds only seen in flight, although a male at Da Water on 1st–2nd June was thought to possibly be a 'Blue-headed' x 'Grey-headed' hybrid. Autumn records consisted of one on 23rd–26th August, a single on 25th and two on 26th–27th September.

***Citrine Wagtail**

Motacilla citreola

Scarce migrant; 76 previous records, 73 in autumn (August–October) and three in spring

One found in the South Harbour area on 17th September roamed the south coast and nearby crofts.

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

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

There were records on eight dates between 22nd March and 8th April, all singles apart from two on 29th. There were up to two on 8th–10th May and a singing male in the Gully on 25th–28th May, before a male was singing again on the late dates of 26th–28th June. For the third consecutive year there was a late August record, with the first autumn bird occurring on 26th before almost daily sightings from 7th September until 30th October. Peaks during that time included five on 9th September and eight on 20th October, just one short of the record count from October 2009. Sightings on four dates in November until 15th may have referred to a lingering bird, and one at Haa on 30th November was the latest ever for the isle.

Pied Wagtail

Motacilla alba

'Pied Wagtail' *M.a.yarrellii*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers

Two on 8th March was a typical arrival date and sightings became regular from 21st, increasing to eight by the end of the month. By 9th April there were 17, the peak count for the month, with the same number on 2nd May and by mid-month most sightings probably involved largely breeding birds. Four pairs bred successfully, a lower total than recent years, with chicks raised at Easter Lother, North Light, the Haven and Hesti Geo with the first fledged birds seen on 27th June. By mid-August there were large numbers of *alba* wagtails on the move, but confirmed Pied Wagtails were limited to single figures after 16th August, with birds present throughout the autumn and the last confirmed Pied Wagtail occurring on 27th October.

'White Wagtail' *M.a.alba*

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

One on 10th March was very early, with the next not occurring until 8th April, with small numbers recorded throughout the month and building to 19 on 30th April and 1st May. The peak *alba* wagtail count of the spring occurred on 2nd May when there were 39, including 15 'White' and 7 unidentified *alba* wagtails. 'White Wagtails' had largely stopped moving by the end of May, although there was one on 14th–18th June with a second on 17th. After one on 6th August, *alba* wagtails started moving from 12th August, rising to peaks of 113 (including 45 'Whites' and 60 unidentified *albas*) on 19th and 190 (with 60 'Whites' and 125 unidentified *albas*) on 30th. Numbers dwindled throughout early September with overall *alba* wagtail counts dropping to less than 20 from 18th. Counts of 'White Wagtails' throughout October were of six or less, including a small arrival in the third week, and a juvenile lingered around Quoy and Houll until 30th November, becoming comfortably the latest-ever *alba* wagtail for Fair Isle.



Plate 78. 'White Wagtail', Quoy, 12th November 2017. © David Parnaby

Richard's Pipit

Anthus richardi

Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring (six spring records, May–June)

One was at Pund on 8th–9th October, another settled in the area around North Shirva on 11th–17th October and the third was at Quoy on 19th–21st October in the quietest autumn for this species since 2011.

Meadow Pipit

Anthus pratensis

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

There were small numbers present on the island in the first winter period, with marked passage commencing in the final third of March, with numbers increasing to 164 by 29th. Some strong passage in April included peaks of 498 on 9th and 335 on 19th. Numbers remained high at the start of May, but started to tail off to generally less than 200, although 247 were noted on 11th, and by the end of the month counts were generally between 50 and 75. Food carrying was noted from 25th May and the first fledged youngsters were recorded on 10th June (the same date as 2016). Passage in the second half of August saw numbers rise to 504 on 20th, then a very impressive 1,714 on 30th August (although with overhead passage occurring throughout the day the actual number involved was

probably much higher), the second largest count on record. Counts remained in four figures until 11th September, with numbers falling gradually to under 400 by 23rd September. October opened with 452 on 1st, but otherwise counts were generally around 200 or less and had dropped to double figures by the last week of the month, with just 36 recorded on 30th. Single-figure counts were recorded throughout November, whilst one in December may have been an overwintering bird.

Tree Pipit

Anthus trivialis

Regular spring and autumn migrant

One on 29th April had increased to 12 by 2nd May and almost daily sightings continued until 30th May, with a peak of 26 on 14th, followed by a late bird on 15th June. Autumn passage began slowly with one on 24th August, then two the following day, two on 31st August then up to three from 6th–15th September. There was a stronger passage from 25th September to 12th October, with numbers peaking at 11 on 29th.

*Olive-backed Pipit

Anthus hodgsoni

Scarce migrant; 108 previous records, 106 in autumn and two in spring

An elusive individual was at the back of Ward Hill and the Peat Cuttings on 27th–29th September. The only other record was one trapped in the Vaadal on 26th October which was present the next day at the Obs. Two in a year is the lowest annual total since 2010 when there was just one.

*Red-throated Pipit

Anthus cervinus

Rare migrant, 88 previous records; 50 in spring (most in May, but ten in June) and 38 in autumn (most in September, but 14 in October and one in August)

A fine presumed male was at Shirva and then Meadow Burn on 17th–18th May, whilst one in the same area of Meadow Burn on 25th–26th May would have gone down as possibly being the same individual were it not for obvious plumage differences. One around Easter Locher Water on 27th–30th September was relocated at Stackhoull on 2nd October and lingered around there and North Shirva until 19th October.



Plate 79. Red-throated Pipit, Meadow Burn, 18th May 2017. © Steve Arlow



Plate 80. Red-throated Pipit, Shirva, 7th October 2017. © Steve Arlow

Rock Pipit

Anthus petrosus

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

The first birds were in song on 11th March and the peak spring count was 188 on 18th April (on a day when a Black Guillemot survey would have meant the coast was followed more closely than usual). Spring counts were usually around 130 birds, although there were 173 on 28th April at a time when the presence of Scandinavian birds clearly indicated passage. Counts in May generally settled around 120 and the first fledged youngster was noted in Furse on the typical date of 9th June. One on a yacht 3 km south of Fair Isle on 1st July indicated some local movement. Counts in August were typically around 150–200, with a peak of 231 on 21st August, whilst September counts averaged around 145, although 220 on 25th suggested some passage towards the end of the month. In October numbers were typically lower, with around 120 the norm, although in the latter third of the month census failed to produce any three-figure counts.

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

Scarce spring passage migrant, occasionally recorded holding territory in the summer. Records at other times of year likely to be overlooked due to identification difficulties

The first was on 7th April and there were then regular sightings of singles throughout the month, with four on 30th April and 1st May, and the only later records occurring on 2nd, 10th and 14th May.

Chaffinch

Fringilla coelebs

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were two on 7th March, with one remaining to 12th before the main spring passage from 25th March to 18th April, which peaked at 11 on 2nd and there were then up to two from 1st–18th May. Autumn passage involved daily records from 22nd September to 31st October, with fluctuating counts including peaks of 35 on 29th September and 36 on 24th October. There were occasional sightings of up to three in November and a single was at the Obs on 5th and 11th December.

Brambling

Fringilla montifringilla

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage saw almost daily records between 4th April and 17th May, with the largest numbers in early May including a peak of 16 on 3rd. One on 23rd September was a typical autumn arrival date, with daily sightings occurring until 30th October. There was a peak of 42 on 29th September, with the next decent arrival involving 78 on 13th October, with a dip in numbers occurring before 145 arrived on 19th October, with 177 the following day, but after 105 on 24th October numbers dropped dramatically. Occasional singles were seen in November until the last of the year on 15th.

Hawfinch

Coccothraustes coccothraustes

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; 123 records of 138 individuals

It was the quietest spring since 2010, with a female at Schoolton and other crofts in the south of the island on 3rd–9th May and another at Quoy on 16th May. Two arrived on 19th October, with singles at Schoolton and flying south over Tineside, with one of these moving to the Plantation and then the Obs and lingering to 21st.

Bullfinch

Pyrrhula pyrrhula

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

A 2cy female that was first seen at Shirva on 21st May then moved to the Obs, where it was trapped. It went on to linger on the island until 29th May. It was only the second spring record since 2006 and biometrics proved it belonged to the nominate subspecies.

Common Rosefinch

Carpodacus erythrinus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

For the third year in a row there were no records in May, with the first record concerning a female or immature male on 1st–2nd June. A fine adult male singing at the Plantation then the School on 6th–7th June was the first 'red' bird on the isle since 2013 and was followed by first-summer males singing on 11th–12th and 26th–29th June. An adult on 23rd–25th August was followed by a different adult and a 1cy on 27th–29th August. A new 1cy was present from 30th August and may have been responsible for sightings until 6th September. The next was present from 11th September, with numbers increasing to three on 19th–21st and one remaining to 22nd. The eighth and ninth of the autumn were present during 7th–15th October which, like the previous group, were often seen in the Obs' oat crop in Bull's Park.



Plate 81. Common Rosefinches (juvenile on left and adult on right), Obs, 29th August 2017. © Tom Gale

Greenfinch

Chloris chloris

Regular spring and autumn migrant

The worst year in FIBO's history for this species saw just one record, a male at the Obs on 28th–31st March.

Twite

Linaria flavirostris

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, small numbers breed and overwinter

Table 4. Maximum monthly counts of Twite on Fair Isle 2017

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
61	33	78	95	84	45	n/c	351	410	318	33	16

For the second consecutive year there was an unusual arrival early in the winter, with a flock in the third week of January reaching 61 on 21st. Spring passage peaked in early April, although there also appeared to be an arrival around mid-May. Counts in late May and June were consistently around 30–40, presumably mostly of breeding birds, with the first fledged birds seen at the Obs on the late date of 3rd July. Numbers increased from the second half of August, with a monthly high of 351 on 25th, with counts rising to the year's maximum of 410 on 7th September and generally remaining high throughout the month. There was a notable decrease from the second half of October, with just small numbers present in November and scattered records throughout December suggesting a small number may have been attempting to overwinter.

Linnet

Linaria cannabina

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

One on the Hill Dyke on 31st March was the first of a typical spring passage, with up to three recorded on 11 dates in April and almost daily sightings in May peaking at four on 10th. At least three lingered into June, with one pair regularly observed together and nest material being carried on 13th. Confirmation of a breeding attempt was made on 21st June, when a female was found incubating in the small plantation at the bottom of the Gully, with six eggs noted on 22nd. Sadly, the nest failed on 26th, following gales and heavy rain. What was assumed to be the same pair (although it was thought possible that there were two pairs lingering on the island in June) was seen on several occasions around the Restengeos and Wirvie during the following weeks and on 12th August two juveniles were noted begging food from a male at Wirvie, confirming successful breeding had taken place. Although breeding was strongly suspected in 2012, this was the long-awaited first proved breeding record for the isle, with other attempts likely to follow given the species recent spread in the Northern Isles. There were regular records throughout September, but passage was difficult to detect given the presence of the breeding birds, with a peak count of six. Sightings started to thin out in October, with the last seen on 25th.



Plate 82. First confirmed Linnet nest on Fair Isle, Gully, 22nd June 2017. © David Parnaby

Common Redpoll

Acanthis flammea

'Mealy Redpoll' *A.f.flammea*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage started slowly with singles on 9th and 18th April but sightings became regular in May, peaking at eight on 9th, with sightings of up to two continuing throughout June, and one seen occasionally until 23rd July. There were up to two during 17th–19th August, then sightings became regular from 17th September, although there were only up to four seen until 18th October, when there were 14. The following day saw the autumn's peak, with 19 'Mealy Redpolls', along with four unidentified redpolls, with counts dwindling to one on 29th October. There was one on 6th November and nine redpolls on 21st November were probably all 'Mealies', with one or two recorded until the end of the month and occasional sightings in December suggesting at least one was overwintering.

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

Rare autumn migrant, occasional spring sightings

The only confirmed record was one with 'Mealy Redpolls' on 9th–10th October.

Lesser Redpoll

Acanthis cabaret

Scarce migrant in spring, summer and autumn

A decent spring passage from 3rd to 31st May saw regular sightings of up to three birds. In autumn, one was trapped on 13th September, with then regular sightings of up to two, probably lingering birds, from 24th September to 6th October. A small arrival of redpolls in mid-October brought up to three Lessers regularly from 13th to 27th.



Plate 83. Lesser Redpoll, 18th October 2017. © Rebecca Nason

*Arctic Redpoll

Acanthis hornemanni

Rare migrant; 92 previous records, most in autumn (September–November) but ten in spring and has also occurred in July (two) and winter (four). Although historically C.h.exilipes is the commoner of the two Arctic Redpoll subspecies recorded on Fair Isle, many of them have occurred in major influx years; in the last 14 years, 11 of the 16 records have been of C.h.hornemanni

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

Around 27 of the accepted records of Arctic Redpoll have been assigned to this subspecies, including three in spring (two in April and a single in June)

A confiding individual was at Pund on 23rd October and went on to linger on the Isle until 30th October, during which time it wandered as far as School Brae. Another Arctic Redpoll seen briefly at Quoy on 23rd October was probably also *hornemanni* but the views were too brief to confirm the subspecific identification. This is the first autumn record of this subspecies since 2013, although there was a spring record in 2016.

Crossbill

Loxia curvirostra

Irregular irruptive summer and autumn migrant

Another relatively quiet year saw a male trapped in the Plantation on 21st May, singles on Bunes on 15th June and South Green on 22nd July, with three the following day over Bunes and a juvenile at Schoolton on 14th August. A female seen briefly near Haa on 3rd October was thought to probably be this species, although it occurred during an influx of Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus* into Shetland, during which there were no records of Crossbills.

*Two-barred Crossbill

Loxia leucoptera

Irruptive vagrant; 27 previous records of 58 individuals (most July and August, although six in September and singles in June and October)

This species shows a well-established pattern of occurrence, with most records occurring in the summer when large numbers are moving in Scandinavia, so a female that was briefly on Hoini before flying south on 22nd July fitted neatly with this pattern and was the first record since 2013.

Goldfinch

Carduelis carduelis

Regular spring and autumn migrant, has overwintered

Although birds overwintered in 2015/16, one at Schoolton on 28th January was the first arrival for that month. After one that lingered around the Obs and Plantation on 8th–14th April (which had been ringed in North-east Scotland in May 2016), there was virtually daily passage from 29th April to 17th May, peaking at three on 1st (when another was found dead). Autumn passage was restricted to 11th–29th October, including a peak of seven on 16th, other than two on 14th November.



Plate 84. Goldfinch, Midway, 17th May 2017. © Steve Arlow



Plate 85. Siskins, Haa, 17th May 2017. © Steve Arlow

Siskin

Spinus spinus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage saw scattered records from 25th March to 18th April that peaked at eight on 9th, then regular records of up to four from 28th April to 25th May, with occasional sightings of up to three until 13th June. Up to two at the Obs on 29th–30th June probably constituted the beginning of autumn passage, with two also seen on 14th–16th July. Passage was then very light, with one from 13th to 16th September the only record until an arrival from 29th September that peaked at 21 the following day, with dwindling numbers throughout October until the last on 24th.

Yellowhammer

Emberiza citrinella

Scarce spring and regular autumn migrant

As in 2016, there was just one seen in spring, a male around Setter on 18th–21st May. Autumn passage was restricted to 17th–30th October, with a peak of five on 22nd.

Little Bunting

Emberiza pusilla

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring (29 previous spring records)

The first spring record since 2014 was at Ditfield on 2nd May and lingered until 14th May, roosting at the Obs, although usually being rather elusive. One at Pund on 11th September was an early autumn arrival, with further September records involving singles at North Shirva on 17th–18th, trapped at the Obs on 17th, Dronger on 27th that was assumed to be the bird seen the following day at North Shirva, then two at Wirvie on 30th. One of those thought to be responsible for sightings around Gilsetter on 1st–2nd October. New arrivals in October involved one trapped at the Obs on 8th, with probably the same bird then elusively at North Shirva from 9th to 12th, a mobile bird on 18th–22nd and the ninth of the autumn, at Pund, on 26th–28th.

***Rustic Bunting**

Emberiza rustica

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 133 previous records (69 in spring, mostly in May and June with three in April and 64 in autumn, mostly September and October with one in November)

Recorded for the third consecutive year when a male was discovered at Kroga Geo on 26th May and roamed the island until 27th, whilst a male was at North Light on the rather late date of 14th June. The first in the autumn since 2009 was at Hesti Geo on 17th September.



Plate 86. Rustic Bunting, Kenaby, 26th May 2017. © Steve Arlow

***Black-headed Bunting**

Emberiza melanocephala

Vagrant; 25 previous records, 15 in spring (three in May, nine in June and three in July) and ten in autumn (four in August, five in September and a single in October). There are also at least five records during 1968–1973 that were considered to be escapes from captivity and are not included in the statistics

One seen briefly at Quoy on the evening of 10th October was relocated at the crop strip there the following day and lingered until 19th October. The first record since 2011, the first autumn record since 2001 and the latest-ever Fair Isle occurrence.

Reed Bunting

Emberiza schoeniclus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

An early bird was at Leogh on 11th–13th March, with another there on 1st April. There were then almost daily records from 29th April to 22nd May with 16 on 3rd and 17 on 14th the peaks. Autumn passage saw three on 25th September rising to 30 on 30th September (the highest count since 2002) with counts dwindling to single figures before another wave of arrivals saw 19 on 19th October and smaller numbers lingering to 30th October.

Lapland Bunting

Calcarius lapponicus

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

This species typically shows a positive correlation between the strength of autumn passage and the number of birds seen the following spring and so, with counts in autumn 2016 the highest since 2010, there was a pleasing symmetry in this spring's passage containing the highest count in that season since 2011. The first were two at North Shirva on 28th March, with five present by the end of the month. There were regular sightings of up to three in the first half of April, rising to five on 18th and then, after a slight lull, a spring peak of six on 27th April, with two remaining the following day and a late bird on 8th–10th May. The first autumn migrant on 30th August was the earliest arrival since 2010 and preceded virtually daily sightings throughout September that reached just 11 on 19th. Sightings were also regular in October, peaking at just seven on 16th, until the last two of the year on 24th. Presumably spring passage in 2018 will be unremarkable...

Snow Bunting

Plectrophenax nivalis

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, often overwinters

There were very few records in the early part of the year, suggesting that none overwintered. Occasional sightings of one or two in early and mid-March were probably the start of spring passage, with numbers building to 18 on 30th. Records on 20 dates in April peaked at 20 on 24th, and daily sightings of up to 12 in May tailed off until the last of the spring was present on 20th. Autumn passage began on the typical date of 14th September and, although sightings were regular throughout the rest of the month and into October, numbers were low, rising to 16 on 14th and 22 on 23rd–25th October. There were scattered records throughout early November, with numbers starting to build in the latter half of the month and continuing to rise to a peak of 65 on 9th December, with smaller numbers noted to the end of the year.



Plate 87. Snow Bunting, North Naaversgill, 28th April 2017. © Richard Cope

ESCAPES

Bar-headed Goose

Anser indicus

Three previous records; 12th May 2000 (four), 20th May 2007 (two, increasing to three on 21st–23rd) and 14th June 2011

Despite being a relatively long-distance migrant that breeds in Mongolia and winters throughout the Indian subcontinent, Bar-headed Goose seems an unlikely natural addition to the British List and it is thought that all occurrences in the United Kingdom refer to escapes from the relatively large captive population. One at South Green on 22nd May was seen heading north with a migrating flock of Greylag Geese later in the day, but decided not to follow them to their breeding grounds and instead lingered on the island until 25th May. Interestingly, it fitted the established pattern on Fair Isle of late spring occurrences.



Plate 88. Bar-headed Goose, Utra, 22nd May 2017. © Steve Arlow

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RINGING SUMMARY

Ciaran Hatsell

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Birds ringed	1	5	57	129	482	446	3,092	2,054	328	951	50	3	7,598
Species ringed	1	2	12	23	44	30	24	34	43	51	8	3	96

A total of 7,598 new birds ringed this year made for the 14th best overall total in the history of FIBO and the best year since 1998. This was due in large part to the concerted effort in ringing Storm Petrels. The Storm Petrel record was shattered, with 4,089 new birds ringed over the season beating the previous record of 2,716 set in 1999. A period of calm weather in July, coinciding with no moon and a very enthusiastic team, resulted in a good run of trapping nights. The number of people attending sessions also

reached a record level, with many visitors getting hooked on the high of releasing a Storm Petrel. Many guests at the Obs rated it their best experience from a visit to Fair Isle; the opportunity to get up close to one of the world's smallest seabirds really is one to relish. Although many of the seabirds experienced poor or indifferent breeding seasons, it was heartening to see Arctic Tern featuring in the top ten species ringed, along with Great Skua and Fulmar.



Plate 89. Brood of Lapwings, Kirki Mire, 29th May 2017. © Richard Cope

The Helgoland traps accounted for the majority of the passerines ringed during the year, with the continuation of standardised trap rounds. The traps were run at least once a day (weather permitting) from late March until early November and the six daily trap rounds were run in the peak migration periods (mid-April until mid-June and mid-August until the end of October).

Trap	Number of birds in 2017 (Number of species)	Number of birds in 2016 (Number of species)
Plantation	669 (48)	861 (52)
Gully	483 (36)	445 (45)
Vaadal	267 (35)	306 (35)
Hjon Dyke	155 (15)	118 (19)
Double Dyke	146 (23)	142 (27)
North Grind	37 (11)	7 (3)
Single Dyke	26 (11)	31 (8)
Roadside	23 (8)	15 (7)

The ringing sub-site at Burkle (single mist net) provided 23 birds of nine species, with Chalet (single mist net) yielding just nine birds of eight species (including singles of Grasshopper, Sedge, Subalpine, Marsh, Yellow-browed and Wood Warblers).

As ever, many unusual species were caught in 2017, but just one bird was added to the Fair Isle ringing list: a Green Warbler trapped in early July. This represented the first record for the island and the fourth British record. The record was backed up by DNA analysis from Professor Martin Collinson at Aberdeen University and as ever the Observatory is grateful for this voluntary branch of 'CSI birding' who have assisted us on many occasions.

Several record annual ringing totals were achieved or equalled in 2017. The Storm Petrel record was shattered, with 4,089 new birds ringed over the season beating the previous record of 2,716 set in

1999. Following a record invasion in October, the third, fourth and fifth Blue Tits were ringed, making it the best ever year for this species and only the second year any have been ringed (following two in 1962). A single Firecrest in October was just the third to be ringed on Fair Isle. Both Carrion Crow (one) and Rook (two) equalled their best years and it was also the joint best year for Grey Wagtail (six) and Little Bunting (three).

Other species that recorded totals amongst the ten best in the history of the Obs were Leach's Petrel (11; fourth highest total), Golden Plover (three; joint third highest total with three chicks ringed from the first breeding attempt since 1989), Rock Dove (27; joint third best year), Sedge Warbler (22; joint third highest total), Chiffchaff (120; third highest total), Red-breasted Flycatcher (three; joint third best total), House Sparrow (76; ninth highest total) and Linnet (eight; joint ninth highest total). Seven Goldfinches made it the second-best year, with six of those caught in one morning at the Obs (including five in one net round!). Other ringing highlights included the 12th Olive-backed Pipit, 21st Long-tailed Duck, 25th Grey Heron, 44th Subalpine Warbler and 47th to 49th Little Buntings.

Some species had particularly poor years for ringing totals, with an unproductive breeding season affecting Shags (which recorded only the 64th highest annual total), whilst it was presumably other factors that also saw low totals for: Wheatear (68th), Rock Pipit (68th), Oystercatcher (joint 66th), Lesser Black-backed Gull (joint 66th) and Garden Warbler (65th). Easterly winds were fairly thin on the ground during the autumn, resulting in lower than average totals for most common migrants; for example, whilst ten Yellow-browed Warbler represented the joint seventh best year for the species, it was the lowest number ringed since 2012.



Plate 90. Tagged Arctic Skua, Airstrip, 18th June 2017. © Richard Cope

A new colour-ringing project began for Great Skua this year, with the main aims of the study to look at breeding site fidelity, changes in distribution of breeding areas for adult birds, juvenile dispersal and recruitment to colonies, recruitment to and from other colonies and dispersal of birds both locally and during the winter months. The year saw 188 chicks marked with white colour rings with black lettering. We hope to catch some adult birds next year in addition to the ringing of chicks. In addition, a number of Arctic Skuas were fitted with orange darvic rings with black codes, as part of the BTO tagging project on this species.

There were also two colour-ringing projects that continued on Fair Isle in 2017: the long-term Starling research project that started in 1980 and the Shag colour-ringing project. The latter is run by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and looks

at the dispersal, survival, distribution and movement patterns of juvenile and adult Shags. Just a single adult Shag was colour ringed in 2017 in an extremely poor year for this species.

Occasionally, the capture of a healthy bird and examination of it in the hand is crucial for identification or where trapping it is for the benefit of the bird's welfare. During 2017, just one bird was trapped for identification purposes: a Grasshopper Warbler caught near Skerryholm.

Storm Petrel retained its title in the ringing league table for the seventh consecutive year, also representing the most number of birds of a single species ever ringed in a year on Fair Isle. Second spot went to Starling, with Blackbird claiming the bronze.

Table 1. Ten most commonly ringed species on Fair Isle in 2017, with species totals (2016 totals in brackets for comparison)

Species	2017	(2016)
Storm Petrel	4,089	(2,122)
Starling	475	(528)
Blackbird	407	(271)
Arctic Tern	364	(46)
Redwing	256	(106)
Great Skua	225	(566)
Fulmar	154	(152)
Robin	140	(202)
Meadow Pipit	124	(158)
Brambling	121	(206)

Table 2. Ten most commonly ringed species on Fair Isle in 2016, with species totals

Species	2016
Storm Petrel	2,122
Great Skua	566
Starling	528
Blackbird	271
Blackcap	247
Brambling	206
Robin	202
Puffin	163
Meadow Pipit	158
Fulmar	152

RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total	Average/year										Ringed 2017		Highest/ Lowest	Since	Year ranking (out of 70)
		1948-2016	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010-2016	adult	pullus	Total			
Long-tailed Duck	20	0	0	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.1	1	0	1	=	2016	Joint 4th
Storm Petrel	39823	1	3.7	160.5	575.4	446.6	1640	301.5	1220.6		4089	0	4089	Highest	ever	1st
Leach's Petrel	135	0	0	0.3	1.2	0.5	5.2	2.7	5.1	5.1	11	0	11	Highest	2013	4th
Fulmar	18298	13.5	50.7	346.3	363.5	641.3	244.2	99	117.3	117.3	2	152	154	Highest	2014	38th
Grey Heron	24	0	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	1	0	1	=	2016	Joint 4th
Shag	23921	9.5	87.5	579	383.5	674.5	375.9	2672	32.3	32.3	2	2	4	Lowest	2011	64th
Sparrowhawk	470	1	3.3	2.9	6	8.7	12.5	6.6	9.7	9.7	7	0	7	Highest	2015	Joint 26th
Water Rail	355	5	6.6	5.4	7.4	4.6	4.4	4	3.0	3.0	4	0	4	Lowest	2015	Joint 33rd
Moorhen	109	1	1.5	2.5	2.3	1.9	1.3	0.7	0.7	0.7	1	0	1	Highest	2015	Joint 30th
Oystercatcher	1613	18	24.7	27.6	33.1	32	25.8	8.9	8.0	8.0	1	2	3	=	2016	Joint 66th
Lapwing	386	0	8.5	12.7	1	4.5	5.5	4.1	3.3	3.3	0	4	4	Highest	2014	Joint 25th
Golden Plover	27	0	0	1.2	0.5	0	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.0	0	3	3	Highest	2009	Joint 3rd
Ringed Plover	864	0	7.5	14.3	11.7	15.4	16.9	11.9	12.4	12.4	7	7	14	Lowest	2014	Joint 24th
Sanderling	131	0.5	2.7	3.6	1.4	1	0.4	2.9	1.4	1.4	1	0	1	Highest	2015	Joint 28th
Dunlin	677	0.5	5	16.7	17.3	4.3	10.2	7.1	10.0	10.0	4	0	4	Lowest	2012	Joint 42nd
Woodcock	662	2	4.7	6.9	9.2	9.6	8.4	11.1	22.7	22.7	9	0	9	Lowest	2010	Joint 27th
Jack Snipe	163	0	0.8	1.4	8.7	0.7	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1	0	1	Lowest	2015	Joint 23rd
Snipe	623	0	2.8	8.1	14.3	7.8	10.9	10.7	11.0	11.0	4	0	4	Lowest	1996	Joint 51st
Common Sandpiper	76	0.5	0.7	1.7	1.2	1.9	1.2	0.1	1.0	1.0	1	0	1	Highest	2015	Joint 19th
Green Sandpiper	63	0	0.2	1.4	0.8	1.5	1.7	0.3	0.6	0.6	1	0	1	Highest	2011	Joint 15th
Redshank	28	0	1.3	8.7	10.1	2.7	4.8	1.2	2.1	2.1	1	0	1	Lowest	2014	Joint 42nd
Common Gull	338	0	0.5	1.3	4.6	8.8	3.9	10.6	5.9	5.9	0	2	2	Lowest	2014	Joint 42nd
Herring Gull	4767	8	12.1	64.9	163.6	140.8	34.8	34.6	34.7	34.7	0	33	33	Lowest	2014	Joint 42nd
Lesser Black-b Gull	1484	5	10	25.7	49.7	40.4	13.8	5.7	3.0	3.0	0	1	1	Lowest	2014	Joint 66th

RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total 1948–2016	Average/year										Ringed 2017		Highest/ Lowest		Year ranking (out of 70)
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2016	adult	pullus	Total	Since			
Arctic Tern	11965	0	0.1	0.4	0	16.4	954.8	216.5	11.9	0	364	364	Highest	Highest	2006	11th
Great Skua	5229	4	16.9	13	19	51.5	110.8	134	252.7	0	225	225	Lowest	Lowest	2015	7th
Arctic Skua	4129	8	71.7	38.2	131.8	61	67.7	27.3	19.4	10	1	11	Lowest	Lowest	2013	56th
Common Guillemot	38329	0	7.9	82.6	468	1268	1314.8	588.8	146.9	13	1	14	Lowest	Lowest	2013	55th
Razorbill	12013	0	6.5	60.9	173.5	231.6	412.5	281.8	49.3	11	34	45	Highest	Highest	2014	Joint 49th
Puffin	14566	19.5	128.2	277.3	318.8	294.8	216.9	131.7	121.4	31	48	79	Lowest	Lowest	2004	57th
Rock Dove	275	0	0	0.2	0.9	1.1	4.8	7.9	18.0	27	0	27	=	=	2016	Joint 3rd
Turtle Dove	84	0	0.9	0.6	3.5	2.1	0.8	0.3	0.3	1	0	1	=	=	2016	Joint 21st
Collared Dove	431	0	0	1.1	10.5	7.2	10.6	10.8	4.1	1	0	1	Lowest	Lowest	1999	Joint 47th
Cuckoo	114	0	2.1	2.3	2.5	1.9	1.5	0.6	0.7	1	0	1	Highest	Highest	2014	Joint 32nd
Wryneck	273	0	2.3	4.4	7.1	4.8	2.2	4.2	3.3	4	0	4	=	=	2016	Joint 22nd
Merlin	202	1	7	4.2	2.7	2.4	1.4	1.8	0.7	1	0	1	=	=	2016	Joint 36th
Rook	11	0	0.2	0.2	0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	2	0	2	Highest	Highest	2010	Joint 1st
Carion Crow	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.4	1	0	1	Highest	Highest	2013	Joint 1st
Blue Tit	2	0	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0.0	3	0	3	Highest	Highest	ever	1st
Great Tit	15	0	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.1	1	0	1	Highest	Highest	2013	Joint 5th
Skyllark	1450	6.5	16.6	22.4	27.4	7.4	48.4	15.2	9.0	6	0	6	Highest	Highest	2015	Joint 47th
Swallow	338	1	3.6	9.9	9.9	2.1	1.7	2.1	6.1	0	1	1	Lowest	Lowest	2013	Joint 43rd
Willow Warbler	4608	3	44.2	80.9	94.6	66.6	56.3	65.8	74.0	81	0	81	Lowest	Lowest	2013	20th
Chiffchaff	2131	0.5	4.9	16.6	24.7	30.9	32.5	44.9	83.6	120	0	120	Lowest	Lowest	2014	3rd
Wood Warbler	122	0	0.5	2.3	3	2.3	2	1.2	1.3	3	0	3	Highest	Highest	1996	Joint 11th
Yellow-b Warbler	331	0	1.1	2.3	3.3	1.9	2.8	5.2	23.6	10	0	10	Lowest	Lowest	2012	Joint 7th
Green Warbler	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	Highest	Highest	ever	1st
Sedge Warbler	662	5	7	9.5	7.8	11.2	5.5	14.1	14.4	22	0	22	Highest	Highest	2011	Joint 3rd
Reed Warbler	395	0.5	1	4.9	4.8	4.4	7.5	10.9	8.4	4	0	4	Lowest	Lowest	2007	Joint 38th

RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total 1948-2016	Average/year										Ringed 2017		Highest/ Lowest		Year ranking (out of 70)
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010-2016	adult	pullus	Total	Since			
Marsh Warbler	176	0	0.8	1.7	2.1	3.2	2.9	4.3	3.7	4	0	4	2015	Highest		Joint 15th
Grasshopper Warbler	173	0	0.8	2.4	3.6	2.1	2.2	3.5	3.9	4	0	4	2015	Highest		Joint 10th
Blackcap	7137	0.5	15.2	59.8	158.7	149.4	105.1	115.5	157.0	114	0	114	2012	Lowest		22nd
Garden Warbler	4046	3.5	30.7	78.1	74.6	88.2	59.2	50.4	32.4	16	0	16	1991	Lowest		65th
Barred Warbler	499	0	5.3	9.6	12.9	4.8	5.8	6.4	7.3	2	0	2	2013	Lowest		57th
Lesser Whitethroat	970	3	7.4	11.9	19.7	12.1	13.4	20.3	16.6	16	0	16	2015	Lowest		Joint 19th
Whitethroat	1155	2.5	19.7	28.8	17.7	10	14.7	14.8	13.3	13	0	13	2015	Highest		Joint 39th
Subalpine Warbler	43	0	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.6	1.7	1	0	1	2015	Lowest		Joint 10th
Firecrest	2	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.0	1	0	1	2007	Highest		Joint 1st
Goldcrest	2165	16	17	28.7	47.9	28.7	33.9	31.4	36.7	24	0	24	2014	Lowest		34th
Wren	1146	17.5	20.8	15.7	15.6	8.1	15.6	19	23.3	19	0	19	2015	Lowest		Joint 21st
Starling	32810	140.5	269.2	337.4	662	746.9	445.8	424.3	524.7	275	200	475	2015	Lowest		32nd
Ring Ouzel	564	0	1.4	16.8	12.7	13.1	4.6	3.6	6.0	5	0	5	2014	Highest		Joint 37th
Blackbird	26734	76.5	414.7	591.2	464	384	277.3	306.1	315.4	407	0	407	2015	Highest		27th
Fieldfare	717	2.5	7.9	33.6	12	5.7	2.7	3.7	8.0	6	0	6	2014	Lowest		Joint 35th
Redwing	11030	34.5	139.1	184.1	231.3	143	144.4	121.8	189.1	256	0	256	2015	Highest		11th
Song Thrush	3492	7.5	19	76.6	72.1	52	53.1	40.1	49.7	43	0	43	2015	Highest		Joint 35th
Mistle Thrush	24	0	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.3	0.1	0	0.3	1	0	1	2013	Highest		Joint 6th
Spotted Flycatcher	916	2.5	7	16.6	15.6	13.2	19.9	10.4	12.0	7	0	7	2015	Highest		Joint 48th
Robin	10646	14	64.3	196.1	196.9	199.7	143.8	132.2	184.0	140	0	140	2015	Lowest		29th
Bluethroat	325	0.5	5.4	4.6	5.3	6.4	4.2	4.5	2.9	2	0	2	2015	Lowest		Joint 53rd
Pied Flycatcher	1060	5	16.2	23.1	24	14.3	12.6	9.1	8.1	2	0	2	1948	Lowest		69th
Red-b Flycatcher	66	1	1.6	1.3	0.5	1.1	0.8	0.7	0.6	3	0	3	1995	Highest		Joint 3rd
Redstart	1953	5	36.6	41.4	51.4	20.4	24.7	14	8.3	9	0	9	2015	Highest		Joint 55th
Wheatear	19262	108	505	407.8	284	229.8	142.8	212.8	174.9	52	3	55	1999	Lowest		68th

RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total 1948-2016	Average/year								Ringed 2017		Highest/ Lowest	Since	Year ranking (out of 70)
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010-2016	adult	pullus	Total		
House Sparrow	2313	83	46.7	31.4	11.8	22.2	18.3	35.3	70.0	76	0	76	Lowest	2013
Duncock	3057	1.5	11.2	50.2	67.8	65.7	41.1	35.3	48.7	15	0	15	Lowest	2009
Grey Wagtail	69	0	0.4	0.2	0.5	1.3	0.5	2.7	1.9	6	0	6	Highest	2009
Pied/White Wagtail	1088	14	13	15.5	10.7	10.7	14.6	18.8	32.4	19	0	19	Highest	2015
Meadow Pipit	12580	64.5	214	243.3	191.1	162	140.6	183.9	157.4	123	1	124	Lowest	2002
Tree Pipit	685	4.5	9.2	14.2	20.2	12.3	6	4.4	1.9	2	0	2	Highest	2013
Olive-backed Pipit	11	0	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0	0.3	1	0	1	Highest	2015
Rock Pipit	10198	69.5	208.6	187.8	221.4	171.6	108	82.6	37.0	24	0	24	Lowest	2011
Chaffinch	3544	10	26.4	30.4	69.5	103.6	59.1	40.1	33.3	37	0	37	Lowest	2015
Brambling	5041	2	15.1	29.6	139.1	79.5	72.1	63.6	149.6	121	0	121	Lowest	2013
Hawfinch	42	0	0	0	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.9	2.4	1	0	1	Lowest	2014
Bullfinch	311	0	0.3	1.2	1.1	1.5	7.2	19.4	0.6	1	0	1	Lowest	2015
Common Rosefinch	293	0	1	1.2	3.4	5.9	6	6.3	7.9	6	0	6	Highest	2015
Twite	7433	59.5	114.1	69.1	162	96.5	96.6	110.3	118.3	102	2	104	Lowest	2013
Linnet	239	0	0.2	2.7	7.2	2.9	1.9	4.5	6.4	8	0	8	Highest	2015
Common Redpoll	1026	1	7	6.4	34.2	8.2	6.5	17	33.0	11	0	11	Lowest	2011
Lesser Redpoll	69	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8.4	6	0	6	Lowest	2014
Common Crossbill	578	0	12.7	13.7	2.6	0.9	16	10.2	2.4	2	0	2	Highest	2015
Goldfinch	38	0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.6	1	2.4	7	0	7	Lowest	2015
Siskin	714	0	3.6	9.4	7.3	7.7	11.4	19.6	17.7	7	0	7	Lowest	2013
Yellowhammer	80	0.5	0.4	1.8	1.4	1.5	0.7	1.2	1.3	1	0	1	Lowest	2015
Little Bunting	46	0	0.4	0.8	0.4	1	0.8	0.4	1.1	3	0	3	Highest	1994
Reed Bunting	582	2	3.4	7.8	14.2	8.9	8.4	7.5	10.9	9	0	9	Highest	2015
Total (all species)	389618	883	2934	5095	6799	7493	8229	4733	5004	6512	1086	7598	Highest	1998
														14th

OTHER SPECIES ON THE FIBO RINGING LIST THAT WERE NOT RINGED DURING 2017

Species	Total 1948–2017	Species	Total 1948–2017
Brent Goose	1	Black-tailed Godwit	1
Barnacle Goose	5	Turnstone	119
Greylag Goose	104	Knot	116
Pink-footed Goose	21	Ruff	42
Tundra Bean Goose	1	Curlew Sandpiper	6
White-fronted Goose	3	Temminck's Stint	2
Whooper Swan	53	Purple Sandpiper	193
Shelduck	5	Baird's Sandpiper	1
Shoveler	1	Little Stint	124
Wigeon	58	White-rumped Sandpiper	1
Mallard	32	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	1
Pintail	2	Pectoral Sandpiper	5
Teal	90	Semipalmated Sandpiper	1
Pochard	3	Great Snipe	2
Ring-necked Duck	1	Red-necked Phalarope	5
Tufted Duck	26	Grey Phalarope	3
Scaup	8	Wood Sandpiper	19
Lesser Scaup	1	Spotted Redshank	3
Eider	174	Greenshank	16
Velvet Scoter	2	Kittiwake	7197
Common Scoter	1	Black-headed Gull	52
Goldeneye	23	Little Gull	1
Goosander	3	Great Black-backed Gull	2898
Red-breasted Merganser	3	Glaucous Gull	40
Quail	8	Iceland Gull	1
Red-throated Diver	1	Common Tern	488
Swinhoe's Petrel	2	Pomarine Skua	1
Little Grebe	10	Little Auk	15
Red-necked Grebe	1	Black Guillemot	1696
Great Crested Grebe	1	Woodpigeon	82
Slavonian Grebe	3	Scop's Owl	2
Gannet	650	Snowy Owl	1
Cormorant	7	Long-eared Owl	291
Goshawk	2	Short-eared Owl	19
Marsh Harrier	1	Nightjar	8
Hen Harrier	2	Swift	19
Great Bustard	1	Hoopoe	3
Corncrake	45	Great Spotted Woodpecker	34
Little Crake	1	Kestrel	57
Baillon's Crake	1	Red-footed Falcon	1
Spotted Crake	20	Peregrine	6
Coot	18	Brown Shrike	1
Grey Plover	1	Isabelline Shrike sp?	2
Little Ringed Plover	1	Red-backed Shrike	385
Dotterel	4	Lesser Grey Shrike	7
Whimbrel	18	Great Grey Shrike	128
Curlew	223	Woodchat Shrike	13
Bar-tailed Godwit	9	Golden Oriole	9

OTHER SPECIES ON THE FIBO RINGING LIST THAT WERE NOT RINGED DURING 2017

Species	Total 1948–2017	Species	Total 1948–2017
Jackdaw	16	Black Redstart	176
Hooded Crow	49	Rock Thrush	1
Raven	29	Whinchat	708
Waxwing	254	Stonechat	53
Coal Tit	1	Siberian Stonechat	13
Woodlark	3	Black-eared Wheatear	3
Shore Lark	5	Pied Wheatear	1
Short-toed Lark	8	Dipper	17
Sand Martin	8	Tree Sparrow	145
House Martin	150	Yellow Wagtail	11
Western Bonelli's Warbler	2	Citrine Wagtail	7
Dusky Warbler	7	Richard's Pipit	14
Radde's Warbler	1	Blyth's Pipit	2
Pallas's Warbler	4	Tawny Pipit	3
Hume's Warbler	1	Pechora Pipit	10
Arctic Warbler	39	Red-throated Pipit	9
Greenish Warbler	27	Greenfinch	557
Great Reed Warbler	8	Arctic Redpoll	27
Aquatic Warbler	25	Parrot Crossbill	37
Paddyfield Warbler	12	Two-barred Crossbill	7
Blyth's Reed Warbler	27	Citril Finch	1
Thick-billed Warbler	2	Tennessee Warbler	2
Booted Warbler	8	Blackpoll Warbler	1
Sykes's Warbler	2	Corn Bunting	4
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	2	Pine Bunting	3
Melodious Warbler	13	Ortolan Bunting	21
Icterine Warbler	154	Cretzschmar's Bunting	1
River Warbler	11	Chestnut-eared Bunting	1
Savi's Warbler	4	Yellow-browed Bunting	1
Lanceolated Warbler	44	Rustic Bunting	17
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	14	Yellow-breasted Bunting	6
Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler	2	Black-headed Bunting	4
Sardinian Warbler	1	Pallas's Reed Bunting	2
Treecreeper	1	Song Sparrow	3
Rose-coloured Starling	3	White-crowned Sparrow	1
White's Thrush	1	White-throated Sparrow	1
Grey-cheeked Thrush	2	Savannah Sparrow	2
Hermit Thrush	1	Lapland Bunting	106
Eyebrowed Thrush	1	Snow Bunting	681
Black-throated Thrush	2		
Dusky Thrush	1		
Asian Brown Flycatcher	1	In addition, the following birds have been ringed but later judged to probably be of captive origin:	
Rufous-tailed Robin	1		
Thrush Nightingale	38		
Nightingale	32	Daurian Starling	1
Siberian Rubythroat	2	Pallas's Rosefinch	1
Red-flanked Bluetail	3	Chestnut Bunting	2
Collared Flycatcher	2	Red-headed Bunting	5



Plate 91. The Haven looking south **a.** 22nd June 1968. © George Waterston, *FIBOT* **b.** 9th June 2014. © Ian Andrews

RINGING RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

David Parnaby

In addition to the 3,509 unringed birds caught on Fair Isle in 2017, there were 11 birds that were found to have been ringed elsewhere (meaning a 'control' was caught roughly every 319 new birds on average).

These involved nine UK-ringed birds and two Norwegian Blackbirds. The longest distance travelled by any ringed bird to get to Fair Isle was the 1,004 km flown by a Chiffchaff from Portland Bill Bird Observatory in Dorset (although of course, this just measures straight lines between sites and doesn't account for what the bird may have got up to in between catches).

There were 31 birds ringed on Fair Isle and found elsewhere during 2017 (that have been reported so far) and details were also received of a Fair Isle-

ringed Oystercatcher that was caught in Iceland in 2016 (and two Guillemot records from the 1990s that are not included in this report). Of the Fair Isle-ringed birds that were trapped or found dead elsewhere, the furthest moving was a Redwing found in Iceland, whilst the two longest lived were both Fulmars, which were found dead at just over 40 and 25 years old respectively. Other than the Redwing, it was seabirds that showed the widest dispersal with five found in The Netherlands and singles to Germany, Denmark and Norway, with the other species involved being found in a variety of locations around the British Isles.

Note that all the above figures exclude Storm Petrels, for which details on a wide variety of movements can be seen in the report below.

Order of data for each record:

Ring number - age (and sex if known) of bird - date of record - location, with duration (years, months and days) between ringing and recovery/control, distance (km) and direction (compass point and °). The co-ordinates of Fair Isle are 59°32'N, 01°38'W.

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 two 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
- VV alive and probably healthy, ring or colour marks read in the field
- R caught and released by ringer



Plate 92. Barnacle Geese, Meadow Burn, 12th June 2017. © Ian Andrews

Barnacle Goose

1192923	3M	11th Jul 2016	Pollowick Farm, Cromdale, Highland	
Blue '7C'	VW	11th May 2017	NORWAY: Helgeland	10m
	VW	1st Jun 2017	Fair Isle	10m 21d
	VW	2nd Jun 2017	Fair Isle	10m 22d
	VW	12th Jun 2017	Fair Isle	11m 1d

This bird is part of a small feral population based around the Wildlife Park at Kingussie, some of which join the Svalbard-breeding birds on their wintering grounds on the Solway. Remarkably it was seen on Fair Isle having turned back from a trip to Norway (the second bird from the same population to have made a spring visit to Helgeland before heading back to Scotland for the summer). Having been seen apparently paired to another bird on its first visit to Fair Isle, it went missing for nine days before reappearing in a flock of seven birds.

Whooper Swan

Yellow 'DS5'	6M	14th Aug 2006	ICELAND: Saenautavatn, Jokuldalsheidi	
	R	17th Aug 2007	ICELAND: Anavatn, Jokuldalsheidi	1y 3d
	VW	3rd Feb 2008	DENMARK: Vest Stadil Fjord, Ringkobing	1y 5m 3d
	R	13th Aug 2008	ICELAND: Saenautavatn, Jokuldalsheidi	1y11m 30d
	VW	14th Feb 2010	QEII Lake, Ashington, Northumberland	3y 6m
	VW	2nd Apr 2017	Fair Isle	10y 19d

An Icelandic-breeding bird obviously heading back north, although where it had been wintering is anyone's guess. It is one of the few Icelandic-ringed Whoopers to have been seen in Denmark.

Mallard

GR11204 became the second of its brood to be killed by a Peregrine, when it was found freshly predated on 26th March 2017 having been ringed on 25th August 2016 (7m 1d).

Table 1. Storm Petrel movements from birds trapped in the Haven in 2017.
 Key: ringed on Fair Isle and recovered elsewhere/ringed elsewhere then caught on Fair Isle.

Trapped in 2017 Site	Total movements	Year of ringing								
		2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Fair Isle	208		153	19	18	5	2	2		
Sumburgh, Shetland	63/42	48/21	9/16	1/3	1/2					
Quendale, Shetland	4/4	4/4								
Mousa, Shetland	9/3	8/2	1/0		0/1					
Noss, Shetland	1/0	1/0								
Marrister, Shetland	1/0	1/0								
North Roe, Shetland	0/1			0/1						
Foula, Shetland	0/2									
North Ronaldsay, Orkney	14/45	11/13	2/27	0/4	0/1		1/0			
South Ronaldsay, Orkney	0/1				0/1					
Sanday, Orkney	16/15	10/2	3/12	1/0	2/0			0/1		
Eday, Orkney	0/1									
Hirta, St Kilda, Outer Hebrides	0/1									
Eilean An Taighe, Outer Hebrides	0/3		0/2				0/1			
Na h-Eileanan Flannach, Outer Hebrides	1/0		1/0							
Eilean nan Ron, Highland	5/8	2/7	3/1							
Faraid Head, Highland	2/7		2/4	0/1	0/1					
Duncansby Head, Highland	0/1						0/1			
Priest Island, Highland	0/1			0/1						
Portknockie, Moray	0/3	0/1	0/2							
Tronach Head, nr Portgordon, Moray	0/1				0/1					
Collieston, North-east Scotland	0/1									
Isle of May	0/3	0/1	0/2							
Fife Ness, Crail, Fife	0/2		0/2							
Scurdie Ness, Angus	0/2	0/2								
Lunga, Treshnish Islands, Argyll and Bute	1/1		0/1		1/0					
Souter Lighthouse, Tyne and Wear	0/2			0/3						
The Headland, Hartlepool, Co. Durham	0/1		0/1							
Lowca, Cumbria	0/1									
Annagh Head, Ireland	0/2	0/1								0/1
Faeroes	27/4	18/2	7/1	1/0	1/1					
Norway	1/12	1/0	0/6	0/3	0/2					
Portugal	1/6	0/2	1/2	0/1						
In addition, other trapped birds (all singles unless stated) had been ringed on Fair Isle (in 2007, 2006 [two], 1999 & 1986), Foula (1999 & 1987), Eday (2002), Hirta (2006), Faraid Head (2008), Collieston (2004), Lowca (2006), Norway (2002) and Portugal (2004).										
Of all the controls, only 14 were trapped on Fair Isle more than once (all bar one of them five times or less) 177 individuals controlled										

Storm Petrel

In addition to the movements listed in Table 1, there were five birds trapped that had been ringed prior to 2011 on Fair Isle:

2551606 trapped in Kirn o' Skroo on 1st June 2017 (and 29th June 2013) had been ringed on 7th July 2006 (10y 10m 25d)

2551613 trapped in Kirn o' Skroo on 12th June had been ringed on 8th July 2006 (10y 11m 4d)

2551922 trapped in South Haven on 10th July and 14th July had been ringed on 13th July 2007 (10y 1d)

2535838 trapped in South Haven on 15th July had been ringed on 29th August 1999 (17y 10m 16d)

2304242 trapped in South Haven on 1st August had been ringed on 5th August 1986 (30y 11m 27d)

In 2017, the areas to produce the largest number of birds caught on Fair Isle were Orkney (62), Shetland (52), Highland (17) and Norway (12), which fits in with the expected pattern, as prior to 2017 there had been 603 birds ringed in Shetland caught on Fair Isle, 329 from Orkney, 128 from Norway and 111 from Highland. The bird from Cumbria was the first Storm Petrel movement between that county and Fair Isle. Six Portuguese-ringed birds represented a good total, with only 21 individuals from that country having previously been recorded, whilst the four Faeroese birds were the 24th to 27th records. A particularly large number of birds ringed on Fair Isle were caught in The Faeroes, with 27 making that movement this year, compared to 66 prior to 2017.

The bird ringed on Mousa in 2014 (2675663) had been done so as a chick, so was known to be a three-year-old when it was caught on 14th July (2y 10m 3d) and will presumably be looking to settle down and breed somewhere in 2018.

2303088 had been ringed on Foula on 19th July 1987 and was caught on Fair Isle on 4th and 31st July 2017 (30y 12d) just a few weeks after the ringer who had originally caught the bird visited the Obs! It represented a new longevity record for Fair Isle, but its record was short-lived, with 2304242 being caught the following day and extending the record by almost a year. The two birds from 2006 (2551606 and 2551613) were both ringed as adults in the Kirn o' Skroo and were retrapped there in 2017, suggesting they are established residents of that site's breeding colony.

Swinhoe's Petrel

NB84930 ringed on 27th July 2013 and recaptured on 14th and 15th August 2016 was recaptured on 14th July 2017 (3y 11m 17d).

Leach's Petrel

BT02755 ringed on 26th July 2017 was also recaptured on 30th and 31st July and 3rd August 2017 (8d).

Fulmar

FV06414	1	10th Aug 1977	Fair Isle
	XF	5th Dec 2017	THE NETHERLANDS: Den Hoorn Texel, Texel 40y 3m 25d, 823 km, SE (145°)
FR78546	8	9th Jul 1992	Fair Isle
	X	20th Aug 2017	THE NETHERLANDS: Den Hoorn Texel, Texel 25y 1m 11d, 824 km, SSE (152°)

In addition, there were three birds ringed on Fair Isle which were seen on the isle again in 2017:

FC71624 was ringed as an adult in Homisdale on 23rd July 1995 and retrapped breeding there in 2011 and 2013, before being caught there on 29th August 2017 (22y 1m 6d).

FP17008 was ringed as an adult on Greenholm on 16th July 1998 and had its ring read there on 10th July 2017 (18y 11m 24d) as did FP18257 which had been ringed there as an adult on 17th July 2008 (8y 11m 23d).

Although the location of the two dead birds was entirely typical (the 32nd and 33rd birds to make it to The Netherlands), FV06414 was the oldest-ever Fair Isle-ringed Fulmar to be recovered (and just a few months short of the BTO longevity record).

Gannet

1487347	1	14th Jul 2015	Sule Skerry, Orkney	
	XF	25th Aug 2017	Fair Isle	2y 1m 11d, 165 km, ENE (73°)
1339186	1	17th Jul 1996	Fair Isle	
	X	5th Jun 2017	NORWAY: Borestranda, Kleppe, Rogaland	
			20y 10m 19d, 417 km, ESE (102°)	

Just the second Gannet control on Fair Isle, and the first from Orkney, this would have been a non-breeding immature. The bird in Norway is the first Fair Isle bird to be found in that country and could conceivably have been on a feeding trip from Fair Isle.

Shag

1161954	1	21st Jun 1982	Fair Isle	
	X	9th Sep 2017	Gulberwick, Shetland	35y 2m 19d, 69 km, NNE (20°). RING ONLY
1374148	1	10th Jul 2003	Fair Isle	
	X	25th Jun 2017	Banna Minn, West Burra, Shetland	13y 11m 15d, 60 km, NNE (16°)
1427206	1	14th Jul 2015	Fair Isle	
Green 'FSW'	W	10th May 2017	Stromness Point, North Ronaldsay	1y 9m 26d, 50 km, WSW (244°)
	W	24th May 2017	Stromness Point, North Ronaldsay	1y 10m 10d, 50 km, WSW (244°)
	W	10th Jun 2017	Stromness Point, North Ronaldsay	1y 10m 27d, 50 km, WSW (244°)
1427143	1	28th Jul 2014	Fair Isle	
Green 'FRW'	W	5th May 2017	North Ronaldsay	2y 9m 7d, 49 km, WSW (248°)
	W	27th May 2017	North Ronaldsay	2y 9m 29d, 49 km, WSW (248°)
	W	29th Sep 2017	North Ronaldsay	3y 2m 1d, 49 km, WSW (248°)
	W	15th Oct 2017	North Ronaldsay	3y 2m 17d, 49 km, WSW (248°)
	W	2nd Nov 2017	North Ronaldsay	3y 3m 5d, 49 km, WSW (248°)
1427126	1	28th Jul 2014	Fair Isle	
Red 'HDW'	W	27th May 2017	North Ronaldsay	10m 4d, 49 km, WSW (248°)
1427211	6M	6th Jul 2016	Fair Isle	
Green 'HEE'	W	17th Feb 2017	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay	7m 11d, 7m 51 km, WSW (247°)
1427259	1	2nd Aug 2016	Fair Isle	
Green 'HIE'	W	30th Jun 2017	Stromness Point, North Ronaldsay	10m 28d, 50 km, WSW (244°)

The project that has seen 179 Shags marked with individually lettered darvic rings on Fair Isle has resulted in several resightings every year, and this year there were birds seen that had originally been ringed in 2012, 2013, 2014 (14), 2015 (four) and 2016 (four). The oldest was 1339319, which was ringed as a chick at Lericum on 24th June 1997 and had the darvic 'Green HFR' added in 2016 and was seen again on 7th June (19y 11m 14d) and 5th July 2017 (20y 11d).

1161954 would have been the oldest Fair Isle Shag, but as only the ring was found, there is no way of knowing how old the bird actually was when it died. 1339319 becomes one of the oldest Fair Isle Shags, with the oldest recorded so far being 22y 9m 15d (excluding records where only the ring was found).

There are some interesting records of darvic-ringed birds amongst this batch. Whereas previously it has appeared that young birds tend to winter further afield before returning to the isle, this year there were a number of adults seen elsewhere (mostly on North Ronaldsay), with one of these (Green 'HEE') later returning to Fair Isle. No doubt there will be more to learn about the movements of Fair Isle Shags in coming years.

Water Rail

DB16004 ringed on 17th October 2016 at Quoy was found long-dead there on 31st May, having been predated by a cat. It was probably killed the previous autumn, although it may have been attempting to overwinter. A ringed bird seen regularly in the Obs garden until the end of the year was probably the bird ringed there on 29th October 2017.

Oystercatcher

FC99569	3	21st Sep 2006	Fair Isle
	R	10th Jun 2016	ICELAND: Stokkseyri, Arnessysla9y 8m 20d, 1129 km, WNW (296°)

This record from the previous year involved a bird also caught at the same site on 15th June 2015.

Snipe

LB75783, which had been ringed as a juvenile on 16th August 2010 and recaptured in July 2012 and 2013, was retrapped in the Hjon Dyke on 17th August 2017 (7y 1d), becoming the second oldest Fair Isle-ringed Snipe (the oldest was a leg and ring found in 2008 that had been ringed ten years previously on the isle).

DB16126, trapped in the Vaadal on 3rd September 2016, was recaptured there on 22nd April 2017 (7m 19d) having presumably overwintered on the island.

Great Black-backed Gull

MA38047	3	8th Nov 2015	Fair Isle
	VV	31st May 2017	Fraserburgh Harbour, North-east Scotland 1y 6m 23d, 207 km, S (186°)

The 13th Great Black-backed Gull from Fair Isle to move to North-east Scotland, this non-breeding immature had been ringed during a dazzling session in stormy weather.

Herring Gull

There were three records of Fair Isle-ringed birds from the isle in 2017:

GA22355 found dead at South Raeva on 20th October 2017 had been ringed as a chick on Busta Brecks on 2nd July 2006 (11y 3m 18d).

GR11019, ringed as an adult on 20th July 2010 had its ring read on several occasions at the Obs between 11th April and 28th November (7y 4m 8d).

GR11064, a contaminated bird near Setter on 4th August 2017, had been ringed as a chick on Goorn on 29th June 2013 (4y 1m 6d).

Great Skua

HT90766	1	11th Jul 2001	Foula
	XF	11th Jun 2017	Fair Isle 15y 11m, 71 km, SSE (161°)

HT78374	1	13th Jul 2006	Fair Isle
	XF	9th Oct 2017	THE NETHERLANDS: Noordwijk, Zuid-Holland 11y 2m 16d, 894 km, SSE (156°)

MA22237	1	22nd Jul 2009	Fair Isle
	XF	17th Oct 2017	Hope Cove, Devon 8y 2m 25d, 1043 km, S (188°)

MA22454	1	5th Jul 2010	Fair Isle
	X	28th Sep 2017	DENMARK: Bredebro, Sønderjyllands7y 2m 23d, 790 km, SE (129°)

MA31244	1	19th Jul 2013	Fair Isle
	X	31st Oct 2017	THE NETHERLANDS: Ternaard, Friesland 4y 3m 12d, 827 km, SE (146°)
MA38234	1	9th Jul 2016	Fair Isle
	X	12th Jan 2017	GERMANY: Tonning-Eidersperrwerk, Schleswig-Holstein 6m 3d, 864 km, SE (133°)
MA40184	1	27th Jul 2017	Fair Isle
White '2C05'	X	28th Sep 2017	THE NETHERLANDS: Zouteland, Zeeland 2m 1d, 950 km, SSE (161°)

In addition, a number of dead birds had been ringed on the isle in previous years, including three from 2016, which were all likely to have died on Fair Isle as chicks before fledging the island and were not discovered until 2017. The others were:

*HT64683 ringed as an adult on 19th June 1997 was found dead on 14th May 2017 (19y 10m 25d)
 HT78987 ringed as a chick on 15th July 2008 was found dead on 16th August 2017 (9y 1m 1d)
 MA22081 ringed as a chick on 8th July 2009 was found dead on 2nd September 2017 (8y 1m 25d)
 MA22269 ringed as a chick on 3rd August 2009 was found dead on 16th August 2017 (8y 13d)
 MA27579 ringed as a chick on 30th July 2011 was found dead on 11th May 2017 (5y 9m 11d)
 MA31249 ringed as a chick on 19th July 2013 was found dead on 16th August 2017 (4y 28d)
 Along with:
 HT78187 ringed as a chick on 24th July 2001 had its ring found on 23rd May 2017 (15y 9m 29d)*

An interesting set of birds recorded away from the isle, although as is typical for this pelagic species, all referred to tideline corpses. They largely involved birds heading south on autumn passage that were caught in stormy weather (including MA22237, which was discovered in Devon in the aftermath of Storm Ophelia) although the German bird was obviously wintering in that area. HT90766 had presumably relocated its breeding grounds from the large colony on Foula. A larger number than usual were found dead during the summer, with a feeling that a tough breeding season (with productivity for most seabird species being poor, suggesting a lack of available food) perhaps proving too much for some of the adults.

These records include the 6th Fair Isle-ringed bird to be found in Germany, the 7th to Denmark, the 7th–9th to The Netherlands and the first for Devon.

Common Guillemot

A total of 14 adults was recaptured during the season at breeding colonies, including birds ringed on 26th June 1991 (ring number R59556, which was a replacement ring for T44097, recaptured on 20th June 2017, 25y 11m 25d) and in 2003, 2005, 2010, 2011, 2014 (six) and 2015 (three). The 1991, 2003 and one of the 2014 birds were ringed as chicks, the others were ringed as adults.

Razorbill

A total of 36 adults was recaptured at breeding colonies during the breeding season, including birds ringed in 1991, 1994, 1996, 1997 (three), 1998 (four), 1999, 2000, 2002 (two), 2003 (two), 2004, 2005 (three), 2006, 2009 (two), 2010, 2011 (three), 2013 (two), 2014 (five), 2015 (two).

Puffin

Five birds ringed in previous years on the isle were recorded in 2017, including birds ringed at the Tor o' da Ward Hill colony in 2016 (two) and 2015 that were recaptured there. The others were:

*ES18651, ringed as a chick on Greenholm on 24th June 1996 (and caught as an adult there on 30th June 2014 when it had its ring replaced) was recaptured on 27th June 2017 (20y 11m 19d).
 ET84566, ringed as an adult on Tor o' da Ward Hill on 18th July 2008 that was found dead on Ward Hill on 16th August 2017 (9y 29d).*

A typical set of retraps, there are several records from Fair Isle of birds over 25 years old, whilst the BTO record is over 37 years old, so ES18651 is not unusual in that respect (although it was older than some of the volunteers helping out with the monitoring on Greenholm!).

Rock Dove

EW46431	1	14th Jul 2015	Fair Isle	
	R	15th Jun 2017	Holland, North Ronaldsay	1y 11m 1d, 49 km, WSW (248°)

In addition, birds ringed on the isle in 2016 (three), 2015 (three) and 2014 (two) were recaptured, along with: EW19830, ringed on 9th May 2012, which was recaptured on 3rd and 23rd May 2017 (having also been caught on 12th April 2014).

EW47168, ringed on 29th July 2012, which was found moribund in Bull's Park on 11th August 2017

The two 2012 ringed birds were just shy of the Fair Isle longevity record of 5y 4m 15d, although as that record involved a leg and ring only, it seems likely that both of these actually outlived it. EW46431 is unusual in that it is the first Rock Dove ringing movement involving Fair Isle and it is also one of only two Rock Dove nestlings ringed on Fair Isle in the last eight years (the other was its sibling).

Merlin

EX79983	3F	26th Oct 2015	Fair Isle	
	X	11th Jan 2017	Holland, North Ronaldsay, Orkney	1y 2m 16d, 49 km, WSW (248°)

The third Fair Isle-ringed Merlin to move to Orkney, there is every chance this could have been a Shetland-bred bird wintering on North Ronaldsay.

Skylark

TP38665 was caught in the Obs garden on 27th March 2014 and recaptured there on 28th March 2017 (3y 1d).

Willow Warbler

JHL845	4	16th Jun 2017	Fair Isle	
	R	22nd Jun 2017	Holland, North Ronaldsay	2d, 49 km, WSW (248°)

Although a south-bound spring migrant, the late date suggests this may have been a failed or non-breeding individual that was wandering in the Northern Isles.

Chiffchaff

KDV752	4	8th May 2017	Portland Bill, Dorset	
	R	3rd Jun 2017	Fair Isle	26d, 1004 km, N (3°)

JHL548	5	3rd May 2017	Fair Isle	
	R	4th May 2017	Holland, North Ronaldsay	1d, 49 km, WSW (248°)

There were also several birds in the spring that remained for lengthy stays, with the three most notable being:

JHL549 ringed on 3rd May and last caught on 1st July (1m 28d)

JHL590 ringed on 17th May and last caught on 10th September (3m 24d)

JHL761 ringed on 23rd May and last caught on 5th August (2m 13d)

Summering Chiffchaffs have become a feature of Fair Isle in recent years, perhaps reflecting increasing numbers of spring migrants passing through the island, with Chiffchaff perhaps the species most likely to next breed on Fair Isle. These ringing records show that they are indeed lingering birds recorded throughout the summer, rather than sporadic late passage, or wandering individuals.

There were also movements between the closest and almost the most distant (Cape Clear is about 24 km further from Fair Isle than Portland) BOC Bird Observatories. This is the second Portland-ringed Chiffchaff to move north to Fair Isle in the same spring, with the previous record in 2010 taking just over a month. JHL548 was ringed on Fair Isle the same morning as a North Ronaldsay-ringed Wren was caught, but made the journey in the opposite direction, suggesting an overshooting spring migrant re-orientating itself.

Sedge Warbler

S016070	4	9th May 2016	Fair Isle	
	R	3rd Jun 2017	Seaside Dyke, Errol, Perth and Kinross	1y 25d, 362 km, SSW (195°)

An interesting record involving an individual that may have overshoot in 2016, it was certainly settled in Scotland in 2017, being trapped at the same site on a further three occasions up to 6th August 2017 (1y 2m 28d).

Wren

JED484	5	1st May 2017	Holland, North Ronaldsay	
	R	3rd May 2017	Fair Isle	2d, 49 km, ENE (68°)

There were also three records of birds trapped on the isle over extended periods of time:

HYJ484 ringed in the Obs garden on 28th August 2016 (as a 3J) that was recaptured in the Obs Garden on 10th June 2017 (9m 13d)

JHL812 ringed on 24th October 2016 and recaptured on 11th March (4m 15d) and 4th May 2017 (6m 10d)

JHL847 ringed in the Plantation on 31st July 2017 was recaptured three times in Obs Garden until 13th November 2017 (3m 13d)

JHL812 may have been a wintering bird following a strong autumn passage in 2016; its biometrics were in the overlap zone between the races but were at the smaller end of the range for fridarensis. The other two Fair Isle-ringed birds were presumably resident 'Fair Isle Wrens'. JED484 was the first ringing movement of Wren involving Fair Isle and was presumably a bird returning north to breed after having headed south during the previous autumn's passage.

Starling

LC44882	1	2nd Jun 2012	Fair Isle	
	W	3rd Jun 2017	Ham, Foula, Shetland	5y 1d, 69 km, NNW (341°)
LJ43785	3J	18th Jun 2016	Fair Isle	
	W	14th Jan 2017	East Mey, Highland	6m 27d, 113 km, SW (223°)
LJ79773	1	28th May 2017	Fair Isle	
	W	25th Oct 2017	Collafirth, Voe, Shetland	4m 27d, 98 km, NNE (14°)

There were also at least 50 birds either recaptured or found dead that had been ringed on the isle in previous years.

The movements above are all fairly typical, with two involving a Fair Isle chick making the short hop to Shetland for the winter and another ringed as a youngster on the isle heading to mainland Scotland. The bird on Foula had previously been recorded there in 2015 and is presumably assimilated into the breeding population there.

Blackbird

7581601	3F	26th Sep 2015	NORWAY: Starene, Stange, Hedmark	
	R	21st Oct 2017	Fair Isle	2y 25d, 724 km, W (260°)
7615546	3M	5th Oct 2017	NORWAY: Blastein, Vestfold	
	R	20th Oct 2017	Fair Isle	15d, 676 km, W (274°)
LK34881	3F	23rd Oct 2017	Fair Isle	
	XF	7th Dec 2017	Monifieth, Angus	1m 14d, 348 km, SSW (192°)
LJ79675	4M	21st Nov 2017	Fair Isle	
	R	22nd Nov 2017	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay	1d, 51 km, WSW (247°)

There were also two birds trapped in 2017 that had been ringed on the isle in 2016:
LJ43837, ringed on 9th November 2016, was recaptured on 3rd March 2017 (3m 22d)
LJ43845, ringed on 14th November 2016, was recaptured on 20th January 2017 (2m 6d)

The 15th and 16th Norwegian Blackbirds to be found on Fair Isle, demonstrating the obvious arrival route of our autumn migrants. Most of them then head south into the rest of the UK, as demonstrated by the other two movements listed above, including just the second to go to Angus. The two 2016-ringed birds were both examples of overwintering on the island.

Redwing

RL94068	5	9th Apr 2017	Fair Isle
	X	22nd Oct 2017	ICELAND: Akureyri, Nordur, Eyjafjarðarsýsla 6m 13d, 1083 km, NW (310°)

The eighth Fair Isle-ringed Redwing to be found in Iceland, this youngster had hopefully enjoyed one breeding season back home before being found dead, having failed to make its second-ever southward migration.

Robin

There were five wintering birds caught in the early part of 2017:
S016368 ringed on 17th September 2016 and last caught on 8th March 2017 (5m 19d)
S016459 ringed on 17th October 2016 and last caught on 15th March 2017 (4m 26d)
S016711 ringed on 19th October 2016 and last caught on 3rd March 2017 (4m 12d)
S016924 ringed on 4th November 2016 and last caught on 26th March 2017 (4m 22d)
S016816 ringed on 14th November 2016 and last caught on 8th March 2017 (3m 22d)

Three birds were recorded making extended stays throughout the summer:
S465026 ringed on 1st May and last caught on 25th October 2017 (5m 24d)
S465035 ringed on 2nd May and last caught on 9th October 2017 (5m 7d)
S016860 ringed on 3rd May and last caught on 22nd October 2017 (5m 19d)

One that was first caught early in the autumn, also remained for some time:
S465173 ringed on 6th August and last caught on 25th October 2017 (2m 19d)

These records show the value of ringed birds in ascertaining that individuals remain throughout the winter and that others remain throughout the summer. The extended stays of the summering birds in particular is interesting, with Robin surely a potential future breeding bird on Fair Isle.

Wheatear

The colour-ringed individual L274573 (light blue over yellow over pink on left leg, yellow over metal on the right) was originally ringed on 2nd May 2012 and seen throughout that year, but not reported again until 17th April 2015. It was then seen regularly from 11th April to 28th August 2016 and 18th April to 25th August 2017 (5y 3m 23d).

House Sparrow

TL80519	2	27th Aug 2016	Cott, Sanday, Orkney
	R (2M)	8th Oct 2017	Fair Isle
			1y 1m 11d, 61 km, ENE (59°)

There were also birds from 2014, 2015 (two) and 2016 (15) recaptured during the year. The oldest of these was TS52135, which was ringed as a 3J on 7th August 2014 and was captured in December 2015, October 2016 and 7th October 2017 (3y 2m).

TL80519 was first caught on Fair Isle on 26th October 2016 and was still present almost a year later. It seems likely that it has settled on the isle, despite not being caught in the interim.

Duncock

Although there were no movements recorded to or from the isle, an interesting record was TR34234, which was ringed on 1st May 2017 and present until 8th October 2017 (5m 7d), although it was not caught between 8th June and 28th August. Another bird, TR34241, was ringed on 15th May and was still present until at least 12th June (28d).

'White Wagtail'

S016964	3J	19th Aug 2017	Fair Isle	
	R	26th Aug 2017	Rerwick, Shetland	7d, 50 km, NNE (20°)

The first Fair Isle-ringed alba wagtail to move to Shetland, this bird was seemingly heading the 'wrong' way in the autumn.

Meadow Pipit

There were two birds ringed in April 2016 that were recaptured on the isle in 2017, whilst D975480, ringed on 29th April 2015 was caught in the Vaadal on 2nd July 2017 (2y 2m 3d), having also been caught on the isle on 18th September 2016.

Rock Pipit

2606396 was ringed in the Obs garden on 14th March 2016 and seen there on 20th November 2017 (1y 8m 6d). 2606398 was ringed in the Gully on 4th May 2016 and recaptured in the same trap on 28th April 2017 (11m 24d). 2711071 was ringed in South Haven on 12th December 2015, seen in the Obs garden on 5th March 2016, caught there on 10th December 2016 and seen there again on 1st January 2017 (1y 20d). 2606398 seems likely to be breeding somewhere near the Gully, whilst the other two obviously winter in the vicinity of the Obs. Whether these are birds that breed elsewhere on the isle, or perhaps have arrived on Fair Isle from further north is yet to be discovered.

Twite

S233308	5F	22nd Mar 2017	Clachtoll, Lochinver, Highland	
	R	8th Apr 2017	Fair Isle	17d, 261 km, NE (55°)

There was also a number of birds which had been ringed previously on Fair Isle, with birds from 2013, 2014 (five), 2015 (14) and 2016 (25) all caught during the year.

S233308, which was also trapped on 9th April, is just the fourth movement to or from mainland Scotland for this species, with most Fair Isle birds seemingly wintering in Orkney.

Linnet

Z330958	3F	10th Aug 2016	Scousburgh, Shetland	
	R	23rd May 2017	Fair Isle	9m 13d, 48 km, SSW (202°)

Another movement between Fair Isle and ex-FIBO Assistant Warden Nick Dymond's Shetland garden for this species.

Goldfinch

S036439	5F	22nd May 2016	Bogietang, Wardend, Durris, North-east Scotland	
	R	8th Apr 2017	Fair Isle	10m 7d, 284 km, N (10°)

Just the third ringing movement of Goldfinch involving Fair Isle so far, and the longest recorded to date. It is interesting to note that this bird, which was also trapped on 9th April 2017, was moving north at least six weeks earlier than it had in 2016.

S016067	5M	8th May 2016	Fair Isle	
	R	20th May 2017	Thetford, Norfolk	1y 12d, 806 km, S (170°)
S196006	5M	18th Mar 2017	Peebles, Borders	
	R	2nd Apr 2017	Fair Isle	15d, 442 km, NNE (13°)

Reed Bunting

D975161	4F	5th May 2015	Fair Isle	
	R	2nd May 2017	Shifnal sewage works, Shropshire	1y 9m 25d, 184 km, S (184°)

Fair Isle-ringed birds have previously been found wintering in France, so this record (the first Fair Isle-ringed bird of any species to be recorded in Shropshire, although a Siskin and Brambling from that county have been caught on Fair Isle), may have been on northwards migration when it was found.

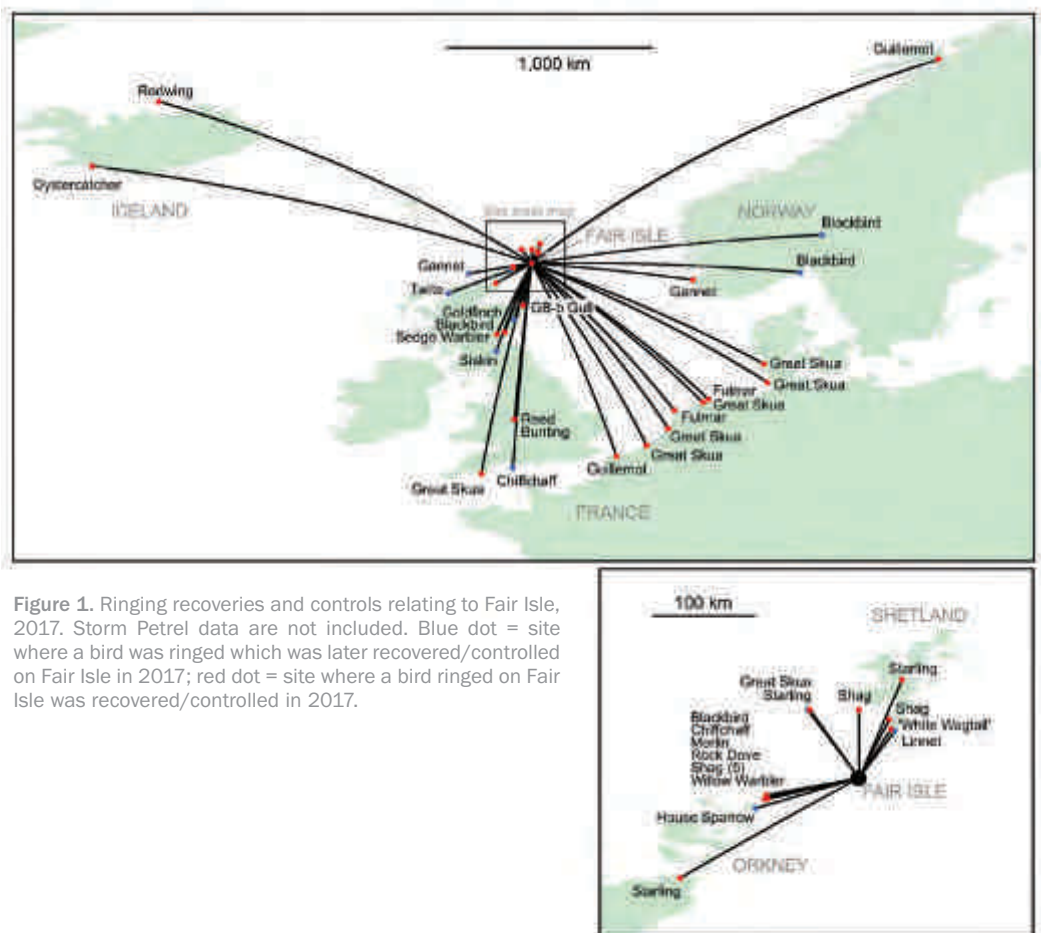




Plate 93. Puffin, Greenholm, 29th May 2017. © Richard Cope

FAIR ISLE'S SEABIRDS IN 2017

Ciaran Hatsell

It was a worrying year for the seabirds of Fair Isle, with many species experiencing poor productivity and many colonies once again experiencing complete failure. After three years of reasonable productivity, it was sad to return to the poor productivity levels experienced from 2011 to 2013.

Unfortunately, one resounding memory of the season will be of the repeat visits to the Razorbill colony at Easter Lothar. Although overall breeding success wasn't too low comparatively, the repeat biometrics saw many birds losing weight on each visit. The piercing calls of chicks left unattended and starving in nest crevices is something that will live with the wardening team for a long time. It is thought that many birds fledged much earlier than usual, deciding to take a chance on the open sea rather than risk starvation in the nest. Shags also had an exceptionally poor year, with breeding success decreasing by 50% on 2016.

Once again, eight out of ten Kittiwake monitoring plots failed to register a single breeding attempt. The most successful plot in recent seasons (the Holms/Dog Geo plot) also saw a big drop in productivity to 0.2 chicks fledged compared to 0.75 per nest in 2016. The lack of sea-worthy weather in the early part of the season once again curtailed a full-island count. The status of this charismatic gull is at a massive risk on Fair Isle, with its inexorable downward spiral a sobering effect of the damage beyond repair we have inflicted on our oceans, leaving the seabirds of Fair Isle in peril.

It was an interesting season for skuas, with the number of breeding Great Skuas falling by 42.4% to 297 AOTs and productivity falling slightly to 0.49 chicks fledged per AOT compared to 0.66 in 2016.

Arctic Skuas had a poor year, with the number of AOTs falling from 37 to just 30 and just a single chick fledging from the entire colony. Hatching success was low, with just two chicks observed during the season, with most birds failing at egg stage due to predation or abandonment.

Auks also had a poor year, with Common Guillemot registering 0.17 chicks fledged per AIA, Razorbill 0.5 chicks fledged per egg laid and Puffins 0.48 chicks fledged per egg laid. Guillemots in the monitoring plots were hit heavily by predation which compounded their low numbers. Razorbill chicks were not getting the nutrition they needed to grow and Puffins suffered from some heavy rainfall during the early nesting period.

The number of breeding Arctic Terns sky-rocketed in 2017, with 322 pairs settling between Bunes and the Rippack. Many chicks hatched, with 364 pulli ringed this year, the highest total since 2006 and the 11th highest total in the history of

the Obs. However, despite this positive start, only 18 chicks managed to fledge in total, leaving a sorry-looking productivity of 0.06 chicks fledged per AON. A combination of inclement weather and apparent lack of food is thought to have caused their demise, with many birds noted bringing in Goose Barnacles and Lumpsumsuckers - not the most nutritious of foods for growing chicks.

Fulmar: An increase of 6.7% was recorded at the population monitoring plots in 2017 (396 AOS) in comparison with 2016 (371 AOS), the highest count in the population plots since 2000. There has been a gradual fluctuating increase noted in the monitoring plots since the early 2000s, which reversed a previous gradual decline.

Mean Fulmar breeding success on the monitoring plots increased by 4.0% to 0.52 chicks fledged per AOS in 2017, in comparison to 0.50 chicks fledged per AOS in 2015. The long-term trend in breeding success is neither one of consistent increase or decrease, but rather is of relatively short-term fluctuations.

Gannet: An increase of 13.9% was noted in the island Gannet population in 2017 (3,882 AON) in comparison to 2016 (3,409 AON). Gannets colonised Fair Isle in 1975, after which a gradual increase followed, with rapid expansion in the population noted from 2008 to 2010. Since then, there has been a slow fluctuating decrease in numbers, although the 2017 count represented the second consecutive year of increase.

Shag: An increase of 15.4% was recorded at the population monitoring plots in 2017 (30 AON) in comparison to 2016 (26 AON). A considerable long-term decline in Shag numbers has occurred on Fair Isle since 1969, although since 2011 counts appear to have stabilised slightly.

Shag productivity was 50% lower in 2017 (0.22 fledged per AON) than in 2016 (0.44 chicks per fledged AON) (Figure 1). The long-term trend since 1986 has been a gradual decline in productivity, with particularly poor breeding successes recorded recently in 2008, 2009 and 2011. The breeding Shag population on Fair Isle has declined severely and the total number of occupied nests in the productivity monitoring plots is now very low: eight in 2017 compared with 68 in 1986.

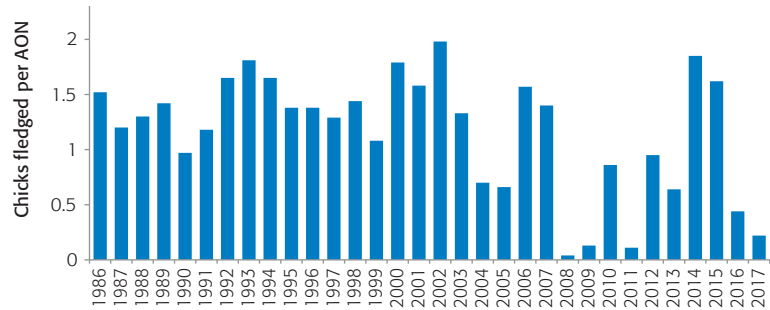


Figure 1. Breeding success of Shags on Fair Isle, 1986–2017 (sample size of monitored nests has ranged between 8 and 95).



Plate 94. Ciaran Hatsell monitoring Gannets from Lerness, 14th June 2017. © David Parnaby

Arctic Skua: A decrease of 18.9% was recorded in the island population of Arctic Skuas in 2017 (30 AOT) compared to 2016 (37 AOT). The long-term trend in the population has been a gradual decline with occasional fluctuations, although since reaching a low of just 19 AOT in 2013, a very slight increase in fortunes has been noted.

Arctic Skua productivity in 2017 decreased by 90.6% to 0.03 chicks fledged per AOT in comparison to 2016 (0.32 chicks fledged per AOT). Productivity from 2011 to 2013 was very poor (with just one chick fledged in total during the three years), but had been better from 2014 to 2016, so just a single chick fledging in 2017 was a disappointment.

Great Skua: The count of 297 AOT in 2017 represented a 42.4% decline from the record-high population of 516 AOT recorded in 2016. The overall trend for Great Skua has been a long-term increase, which was slow and steady until 2004, when numbers increased rapidly until 2008, before apparently stabilising until 2013, after which numbers have fluctuated markedly, although still with an overall upward trend.

Breeding success was 25.8% lower in 2017 (0.49 chicks fledged per AOT) than in 2016 (0.66 chicks fledged per AOT). Prior to 2000, productivity was generally high (usually 0.7 chicks or higher fledged per AOT), but since then it has been more mixed. As the population of Great Skua grows gradually larger, accurate counting of fledged birds get more difficult, particularly given the protracted breeding season.

Kittiwake: Plot counts in 2017 produced 49 AON, a decrease of 7.5% in comparison to 2016 (53 AON). For the second consecutive year, there was no whole-island count due to unsuitable weather and sea-state conditions during the monitoring period. The whole-island Kittiwake count was previously carried out on a five-year rotation, but it was done annually from 2011 to 2015, as the massively reduced population enabled the count to be carried out in a shorter space of time. Kittiwake has seen one of the most dramatic population crashes of any of Fair Isle's seabirds, with a steep decline noted since 1988, when there were 19,340 AON, although since 2013 this has perhaps started to stabilise (at 771–963 AON).

Kittiwake productivity decreased by 73.3% in 2017 to 0.2 chicks fledged per AON in comparison to the 0.75 chicks fledged per AON in 2016. Despite the higher productivity in 2016, the recent trend has been for poor productivity for this species. No nesting attempts were made in 2017 at eight of the ten monitoring plots (South Gunnawark, Lericum, Bergaroo, Stroms Heelor, Johnny's Peats, Shaldi Cliff, Da Swadin and Trottie Kame). No Kittiwakes have returned to the productivity plot at Lericum since a substantial landslide occurred there in the winter of 2010/11 and it seems that the cliff there no longer contains suitable nest ledges for this species. The bulk of the nesting attempts (48 of the 49 monitored nests) and all of the fledged chicks came from just one plot (Holms and Dog Geo).

Arctic Tern: The whole-island count showed an increase of 172.9% in 2017 (322 AON) in comparison with 2016 (118 AON), the highest whole-island count of this species since 2010. Breeding numbers have fluctuated greatly since 1987, although the general upward trend until 2001 has now clearly been reversed (Figure 2). 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 decreased in 2017 by 73.9% to 0.06 chicks fledged per AON, compared to the 0.23 chicks per AON recorded in 2016. Many recent years have seen productivity of 0.1 or less, and zero in many years.



Plate 95. Arctic Tern, Buness, 10th June 2017. © Ian Andrews

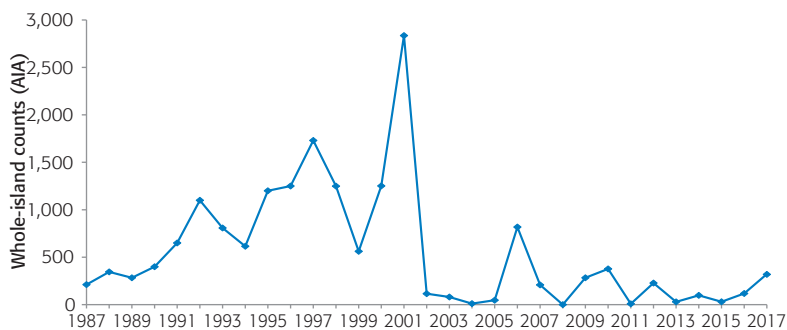


Figure 2. Population change of Arctic Terns on Fair Isle, 1987–2017 (whole-island counts of apparently incubating adults - AIA, or apparently occupied nests - AON).

Lack of food was apparently a major issue, with many dead chicks found in the colony, apparently having starved (although some days of heavy rain coinciding with chicks having recently hatched may also have contributed to the poor productivity). Items of unsuitable food were also found being brought into the colony, including juvenile Lumpsuckers, Goose Barnacles and sticklebacks, suggesting a lack of sandeels or other suitable prey.

Common Tern: For the second consecutive year, there were no breeding records of Common Tern and the species is best considered to no longer be a regular breeder on the island.

Productivity was zero for Common Tern in 2017 for the fifth consecutive year (and 11th in the last 12 years), with no breeding attempts noted.

Common Guillemot: Plot counts decreased by 25.6% in 2017 to 940 individuals compared to 1,263 individuals in 2016. Since 1999, the overall pattern has been of a decline in numbers and, although this appears to have stabilised somewhat since 2008, the 2017 count represents the second lowest total recorded since monitoring began in 1986.

Common Guillemot productivity decreased by 62.2% in 2017 to 0.17 chicks fledged per AIA in comparison to 2016 (0.45 chicks fledged per AIA). From 1988 to 2002, productivity remained relatively high, fluctuating between 0.67

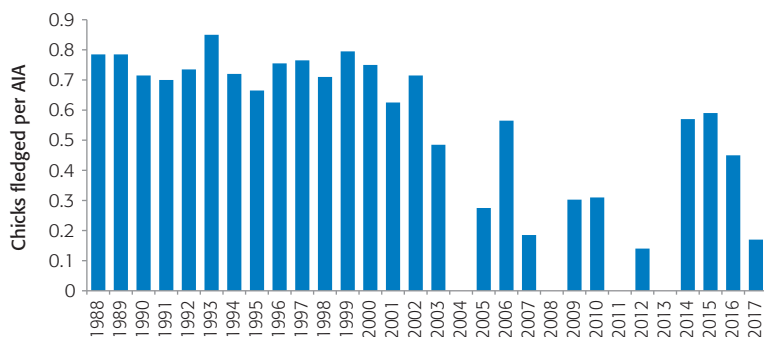


Figure 3. Breeding success of Common Guillemots on Fair Isle, 1988–2017. Data presented are means from two plots (Peitron and Da Swadin).

and 0.85. However, since 2002 the general trend has been for productivity to be relatively low (less than 0.5 chicks fledged per AIA) or to be zero (Figure 3). There was higher productivity in 2014 and 2015 (over 0.55 chicks fledged per AIA), but productivity has since fallen again.

Razorbill: Razorbill numbers at the Lericum monitoring plot decreased by 24.8% in 2017 (23 individuals) compared with 2016 (30 individuals). The Razorbill population on Fair Isle has been steadily declining since the late 1980s, with a particularly sharp crash in numbers noted after 2006. Counts then appeared to stabilise somewhat, with a slight hesitating increase noted since 2013.

Razorbill productivity in 2017 was 0.50 chicks fledged per egg laid, a 32.4% decrease from the 0.74 chicks fledged per egg laid recorded in 2016. 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, has been zero, so the productivity figures from 2014 to 2016 were a welcome return to form. The 2017 productivity figure was reasonable, but it is worth noting that repeat biometrics showed the chicks that fledged were of very low weight and generally in poor condition.

Black Guillemot: The number of Black Guillemots in breeding plumage counted along the east coast of Fair Isle (North Lighthouse to South Lighthouse) in 2017 was 214 individuals, representing a 13.2% increase compared to 2016 (189 individuals). There were two counts carried out (2nd and 18th April), with the higher figure occurring on the first date. After a steep crash in numbers in 1998, a steady, fluctuating increase has occurred since, with the 2017 count representing the highest number recorded since 1997.

Puffin: Productivity was 25% lower in 2017 (0.48 chicks fledged per egg laid) than in 2016 (0.64 chicks fledged per egg laid) (Table 1). Puffin productivity was above 0.5 chicks fledged per egg laid every year from 1987 to 2000 and, although it has fluctuated more since then, it has remained relatively high (especially compared to the other auks), with no years of zero productivity. Productivity appeared to be affected in 2017 by a spell of heavy rain whilst birds were incubating, which possibly flooded burrows. Most of the failures occurred during incubation, with the majority of chicks that hatched going on to fledge.

Table 1. Puffin breeding success at monitored burrows, 2007–17. Puffin productivity is expressed as the number of chicks fledged per burrows with eggs. Data are pooled from the two monitoring plots: Easter Lothar and Greenholm until 2016, then Greenholm only from 2017.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Sites with eggs	92	82	94	133	70	73	62	65	82	89	85
Chicks fledged	16	33	61	43	27	44	45	51	53	57	41
Productivity	0.17	0.40	0.65	0.32	0.38	0.60	0.73	0.78	0.65	0.64	0.48



FIRST AND LAST MIGRANT DATES

David Parnaby

Species	Earliest-ever	Earliest 2017	Latest-ever	Latest 2017
Quail	30.04.61	12th May	13.10.89	26th Aug
Osprey	25.04.66	23rd Sep	04.11.35	23rd Sep
Corncrake	10.04.66	10th Sep	03.11.77	27th Sep
Dotterel	25.04.73	n/a	03.12.86	n/a
Whimbrel	09.04.13	10th April	12.12.1907	11th Sep
Common Sandpiper	05.04.83	1st May	02.11.1908	13th Sep
Green Sandpiper	05.04.16	1st April*	12.11.70	19th Sep
Arctic Skua	04.04.88	19th April	25.10.	14th Oct
Great Skua	14.03.16	2nd April	25.11.14 ^	27th Oct
Sandwich Tern	23.04.07	n/a	18.09.77	n/a
Common Tern	25.04.83	16th June	18.10.75	6th Sep
Arctic Tern	No data	8th May	30.10	9th Sep
Lesser Black-backed Gull	02.02.11	15th March	12.12.57	21st Oct
Turtle Dove	23.04.71	15th May	01.11.82	27th Aug
Cuckoo	17.04.87	3rd May	08.10.77	31st Jul
Swift	16.04.13	9th May	26.10.75#	2nd Oct
Wryneck	18.04.81	1st May	17.10.74	30th Sep
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.84	21st May	08.11.93	16th Sep
Goldcrest	27.02.	25th March	19.12.03	2nd Nov
Sand Martin	02.04.89 and 16	3rd April	19.10.78	26th Aug
Swallow	31.03.02	9th April	02.11.84	23rd Oct
House Martin	04.04.16	9th April	02.11.11	12th Oct
Wood Warbler	14.04.81	3rd May	06.10.73	8th Oct*
Chiffchaff	12.03.73 and 08	13th March	no data	21st Nov
Willow Warbler	25.03.10	28th April	23.11.27	12th Oct
Blackcap	27.03.12	1st April	20.12.76	21st Dec*
Garden Warbler	21.04.68	12th May	20.11.76	19th Oct
Lesser Whitethroat	20.04.09	1st May	08.11.	25th Oct
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.00	30th May	29.10.07	31st May
Whitethroat	10.04.16	30th April	21.10.78	4th Oct
Grasshopper Warbler	07.04.02	30th April	25.10.14	23rd Oct
Icterine Warbler	08.05.13	22nd May	20.10.16	25th Aug
Sedge Warbler	19.04.87	30th April	11.11.75	30th Sep
Marsh Warbler	18.05.13	7th June	06.10. Pre 63	1st Oct
Reed Warbler	28.04.01	15th May	31.10.80	9th Oct
Ring Ouzel	16.03.88	9th April	18.12.1909	18th Nov
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.49	2nd May	26.10.85	12th Oct
Bluethroat	22.03.1908	10th May	13.11.83	17th Oct
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.83	30th April	29.10.85	17th Oct
Black Redstart	09.02.1989	17th March	22.12.86x	27th Oct
Redstart	10.04.16	1st May	11.11.81	25th Oct

FIRST AND LAST MIGRANT DATES

Species	Earliest-ever	Earliest 2017	Latest-ever	Latest 2017
Whinchat	14.04.81	30th April	26.11.90	27th Oct
Wheatear	13.03. Pre 59	28th March	19.11.59	2nd Nov
Yellow (<i>flava</i>) Wagtail	25.03.54	19th April	20.11.57	27th Sep
Pied (<i>alba</i>) Wagtail	25.01.16	8th March	17.11	30th Nov*
Tree Pipit	10.04.16	29th April	09.11.1908	12th Oct
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.36	17th May	01.11.1908	19th Oct
Common Rosefinch	08.05.77	1st June	30.11.91	15th Oct
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.64	n/a	07.11.15	n/a
Little Bunting	04.04.58	2nd May	19.11.75	28th Oct
Rustic Bunting	25.04.80	25th May	08.11.75	17th Sep
* new record ** equal to record x arrival date (went on to winter) # note: a swift sp. was seen on 07.11.11 ^ an injured, flightless bird survived on the island until 19th December 2016				



Plate 97. Wryneck, Chalet, 13th May 2017. © David Parnaby

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL, 2ND MARCH 2017; THE FIRST FOR FAIR ISLE

David Parnaby

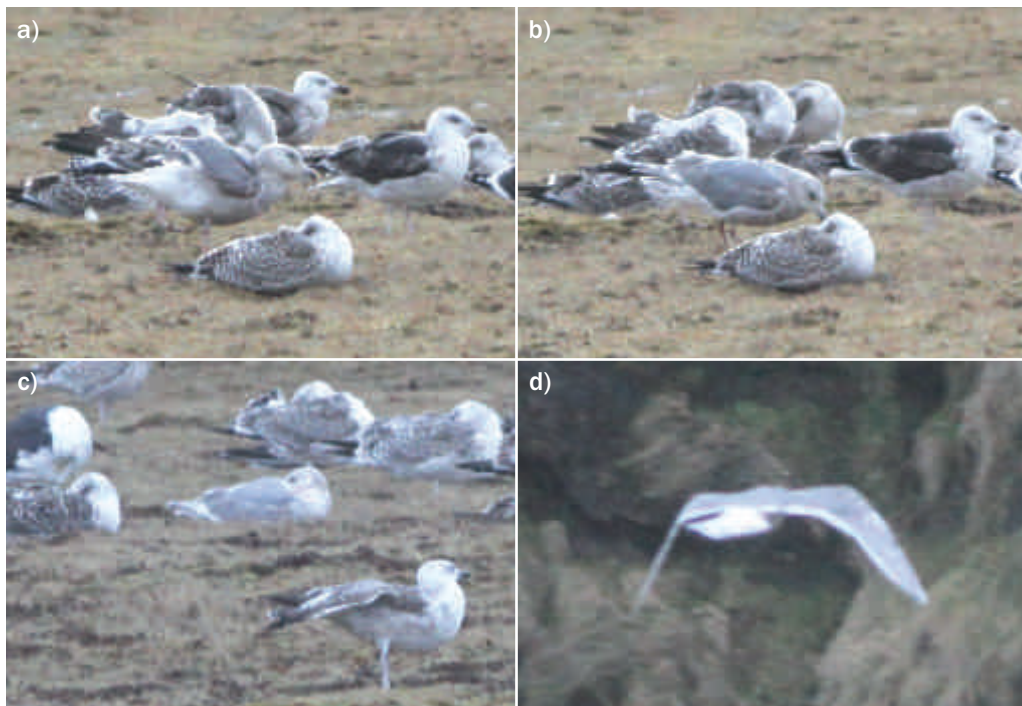


Plate 98 a-d. Glaucous-winged Gull, Ditfield, 2nd March 2017. © David Parnaby

A good winter for white-winged gulls had made regular checks of gull flocks worthwhile and there were still Glaucous Gulls and the occasional Iceland Gull around as we got into early March.

On 2nd, there was a cold south-westerly wind blowing, with occasionally driving showers. I was driving back up the isle, having dropped Freyja at nursery, and stopped to scan a flock of around 100 large gulls that had gathered on Ditfield. A 2cy Glaucous Gull was present, but nothing more, although my attention was then taken by an Oystercatcher near the road wearing a BTO ring. I went to get a 'scope to check the Oystercatcher ring and spent about 15 minutes fruitlessly attempting to read it, before the bird wandered into longer vegetation. Having turned the vehicle around to head back to the Obs, I had a quick scan of the gulls again and almost immediately my eyes settled upon a near-adult looking, grey-mantled gull with grey wing tips. Having seen various hybrid, leucistic and weird gulls over the years, I was aware that such things were possible, but I'd never

seen anything like this. My immediate thoughts were that it was a candidate for 4cy Glaucous-winged Gull, but that I'd have to rule out the alternatives. My next thought was that I didn't know that much about Glaucous-winged Gull, having never seen the species, although I decided to phone the news out around the island that there was a gull that was probably worth seeing. I decided that photos would be necessary, and might help me to get extra details, so I went back to the Obs, picked up my camera, Olsen & Larsson's 'Gulls' book and Susannah. The bird hadn't moved (it was largely sleeping, but every so often it would stretch or wander), but the features that I was seeing weren't swaying me from my thoughts that this really could be a Glaucous-winged Gull.

Deryk Shaw arrived and we both watched the bird from our vehicles so as not to spook the gulls. Every so often, it would wander a short while and then, after around 35 minutes, it took off and flew south round Goorn. I returned to the Obs to put the news and pictures out before Deryk relocated the bird on Johnny's Peats. I returned to the site and got further, albeit now more distant, views. Again, the bird spent a lot of time asleep and remained in the same flock of around 180 birds, mostly Great Black-backed, although some Herring and five Glaucous Gulls. Other than a short diversion for picking Grace and Freya up from the school, most of the next three hours was spent watching the bird, although it failed to do much until just before dusk when it flew off with the rest of the flock.

The following day was much calmer and, although there were still a few gulls around, including apparently the same five Glaucous Gulls, there was no further sign of the Glaucous-winged Gull.

Behaviour

It spent most of its time loafing in the flock, asleep a lot of the time, often lying with its head tucked under its wing. It would occasionally get up for a wander and a stretch, shake its feathers and then settle back down. It didn't especially associate with any other particular species. It was not seen or heard to call.

Structure

One of the notable features of the bird was the unusual structure, which was most evident when the bird was standing up. Overall it had a front heavy look, with a bulky chest and 'full' undercarriage. The rear end was somewhat curtailed in comparison, with a short primary projection (the primary tips only just extending beyond the tail). The rear body was still fairly hefty, with a 'full' tertial area giving an overall look of being front-heavy but not attenuated. The large head was flat-topped (peaking slightly at the back of the head), with a steep forehead and the eye was set high in the head. The bill was fairly long, relatively thin with a slightly swollen tip. There was a somewhat 'pinched' expression to the way the bill joined the face, giving a slightly 'snouty' look. The legs looked thinner than those of Great Black-backed Gull and seemed quite long. It was slightly smaller than most of the Great Black-backed Gulls and larger than Herring Gull.

Plumage

Upperparts: the mantle and scapulars were grey. Generally, the Glaucous-winged Gull was just a shade paler than the nearby Herring Gulls (although there was a great deal of variation amongst the Herrings). Nick Riddiford commented that even at the longer range of viewing the birds on Johnny's Peats, the Glaucous-winged Gull could be picked out by the mantle shade being 'perhaps not paler, but of a different intensity of purer grey' to the Herrings. At closer range, through the telescope views, it was obvious that the wing was not entirely grey, and that a variety of browner feathers were present.

The tertials (particularly the inner ones) were a smudgy brown/grey. Above the tertials on the lower edge of the saddle, the grey feathers were tipped white, creating a noticeable bar.

The greater coverts appeared more adult-like, being grey (although a slightly darker shade than the saddle), with a thick white trailing edge to the secondaries. The thick white edge broadened towards the inner edge of the wing, producing a notable tertial step. Between the saddle and greater coverts was a slightly pale, smudgy brown area. What appeared to be the lesser coverts were noted through the telescope as being brownish grey but very worn.

The primaries were grey, a similar shade to the mantle. The longest primary showed a whitish blob near the tip, with another three off-white tipped primaries. The tail was pale, with some darker markings, forming an irregular smudgy band.

Underparts: although the undertail coverts and lower belly around the vent were white, most of the underparts were a mottled brown. It wasn't an even wash, with some areas showing slightly darker mottling. It was most noticeable on the lower nape and mid-chest areas, with the area around the eye also being slightly darker. The nature of the mottling was interesting; the whole surface showed a vermiculated appearance unlike the more streaky appearance of the dark smudging of most other young gulls. The underside of the wing looked pale from underneath, although flight views were generally poor in the field.

Bare parts: the eye was dark, the bill was mostly dark, with a pale, yellowish tip and paler base. The legs were pale pink, sometimes showing a slight purple hue.

This represents the first record of this species for Fair Isle and perhaps a surprising one, given that Fair Isle is not renowned for its rare gulls (having yet to record Yellow-legged, Caspian, Ross's, Bonaparte's, Franklin's or American Herring Gull for example). It is also a first record for Scotland and just the third for the United Kingdom.

GREEN WARBLER, 4TH–7TH JULY 2017; THE FIRST FOR FAIR ISLE

David Parnaby



Plate 99. Green Warbler, Obs, 7th July 2017. © David Parnaby

Good weather on 4th July saw light westerly winds and just light patchy cloud, which meant the all-day Guillemot feed watch at Pietron was able to go ahead, along with Storm Petrel ringing that night followed by Puffin food sample collecting and visits to various seabird colonies by boat the following day. The weather can be unpredictable on Fair Isle, and had been especially so in early summer 2017, so it was important to make the most of any good breaks. In that spirit, the mist nets were opened at around 20:00 hrs on 4th, despite migrants not really being on anyone's radar. A couple of juvenile Twites and a young House Sparrow were actually more than had been expected, but then, on a net round at about 20:50 hrs, a *Phylloscopus* warbler jumped up near the net—it looked a bit 'superciliumery', but without my bins on me (they can get tangled in the nets), I couldn't get any details. Luckily, I pushed, it jumped into the net and I found a Greenish-type Warbler, but no ordinary Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides viridanus*. It had a large supercilium and a prominent wing bar, with faint pale tips to some of the median coverts. There was also a lot of yellow about the underparts and face.

I knew Ciaran was heading up to Pietron to begin the 21:00 hrs to midnight shift for the Guillemot feed watch and I was able to flag him down as he drove behind the Obs. 'What have you got?', he asked. I showed him the bird, 'Greenish?' he asked 'Hmmm' I replied, and we briefly discussed the amount of yellow and the wing bars. We agreed it looked interesting, but Ciaran needed to relieve Richard at Pietron (which was rather good timing as it meant they could both see the bird) and so he headed up. I took the bird to the ringing room to process, whilst the rest of the staff and visitors from the Obs gathered to see the bird.

Whilst we all agreed that the yellow in particular was rather more striking than we'd seen on Greenish Warbler, none of us had experience of Green Warbler, and we were aware that 'yellowy' Greenish Warblers exist. The biometrics were inconclusive between the two species, falling into the overlap zone, whilst the bird was missing many of its feathers at the base of the bill, which meant we were unable to see the extent of the supercilium and whether or not it met over the base of the bill.

A quick check of the internet suggested there were no definitive plumage features or biometrics mentioned, whilst the description of the Unst bird of 2015 talked about the 'Wood Warbler-like' brightness of the bird. At that point, for the first time, I thought Greenish was the most likely as our bird was nowhere near that bright.

At that stage we were unable to definitively identify the bird, but, as it had been processed and everyone at the Obs had seen it, it was released. Sarah Harris and I then spent around an hour in the office looking at various texts, photos etc. We were still unable to say with 100% conviction what the identification was, and it was clear that many features and biometrics overlapped, although several features did seem to hint strongly towards the identification as Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus*.

The bird was not seen at all in the field after release on 4th, but was observed in the Obs garden on 5th. It was generally elusive and, although the movements of the bird could be followed through the vegetation, it was rarely seen out in the open for more than a second or two. On 6th, we had more free time that could be spent looking for the warbler and were able to observe it for longer periods, sometimes more in the open. It seemed perhaps to be feeding more actively. It was seen again on 7th and, despite speculation that it was in no rush and might linger for a while, it was not seen after that date.

During this time, advice was offered from many sources, including several people familiar with Green Warbler, from the UK and their breeding grounds, with most being of the opinion that Green Warbler was probably the most likely identification. When Professor Martin Collinson confirmed the bird's DNA was Green Warbler ("PV05 ...has come back as *nitidus* [Green Warbler] - 1021/1022 base pairs identical to database *nitidus* and 32 bp different from *viridanus* [Greenish Warbler], and 51 bp from *plumbeitarsus* [Two-barred Greenish Warbler]"), it backed up our views and confirmed the identification.

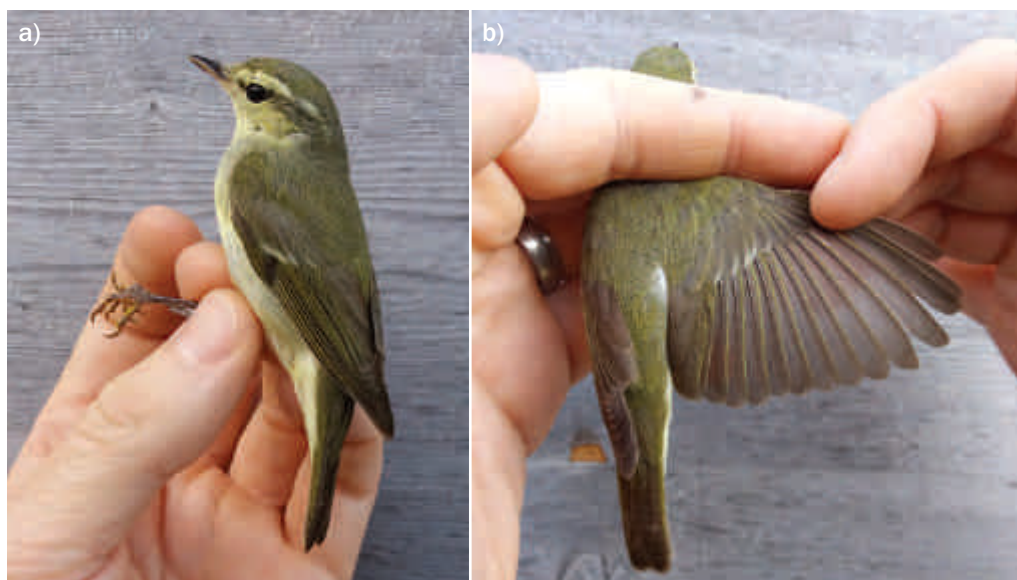


Plate 100 a-b. Green Warbler, Obs, 4th July 2017. © Sarah Harris

Description

Structure: a mid-sized to smallish *Phylloscopus* warbler, with a large head and quite long wings. The bill looked relatively strong compared to Greenish Warbler, although this was hard to judge as the missing feathers at the base of the bill will have emphasised the size. It is clear from the measurements that the bill was probably actually rather large. Although it was within the range of Greenish, it was generally right at the top end of that range, whereas this bird was a female (confirmed on DNA, but suspected due to the presence of a brood patch), which would have been expected to have a smaller bill. The primary projection was slightly longer than in a typical Greenish Warbler.

Upperparts: quite a bright green, although thought to be in the range of Greenish, which is in itself a fairly bright bird (especially as our only immediate comparison were some very scruffy moulting adult Chiffchaffs).

The wing pattern was obvious, showing six greater coverts with off-white, square tips, the tips extending onto the inner web on the inner two feathers. This was more prominent than in typical Greenish Warbler and gave the wing bar a subtly different look. There were some indistinct pale tips to the median coverts, which were more notable on the left wing, although it was clear that the feathers were fairly worn and so this feature may have been more prominent earlier in the season.

Although the wing feathers were slightly darker and browner than the rest of the upperparts, the edges to the feathers showed a brighter green edge, adding to the bird's generally overall bright appearance.

The tail was an off-brown with green tints.

The face pattern was distinctive, showing a long, prominent supercilium. This was yellowish, being more so in front of the eye. It maintained a relatively even width until towards the end, when it tapered slightly. The lower part of the eye ring was yellow. The ear coverts were yellow, although not brightly so.

Underparts: in-hand examination showed that the bird had a prominent brood patch, suggesting it was a female.



Plate 101. Green Warbler, Obs, 7th July 2017. © Thomas Kirchen

The underparts were yellow, although the extent at which this appeared to vary, depending upon the views and light, was rather notable. In the hand, the bird was obviously yellow across its entire underparts, although the wash across the belly and chest was weaker. In the field, the underparts appeared surprisingly pale at times, looking off-white, although a yellow wash was always apparent on the undertail coverts and around the face and throat. Certainly, in some of the brief views in the field, it would have been very easy to overlook the bird as a Greenish.

Bare parts: dark eye. The legs were pale/mid-brown, with the feet slightly paler. The bill was largely dark, with a paler, slightly orange area at the base of the lower mandible that extended thinly along the cutting edge of the mandibles.

Call: not heard to call.

Behaviour

Generally, the bird was remarkably elusive (although a combination of little time to observe the garden during a busy period of seabird passage and then some blustery conditions later in its stay didn't help), although could show better at times. It appeared less mobile than Willow Warblers or Greenish Warblers tend to be, although it was seen flycatching on a couple of occasions.

Ringling details

Measurements from Svensson's "Identification Guide to European Passerines" are given in blue.

Ringling date and time: 4th July 2017, 21:00 hrs

Ring number: JHL846

Age: 4 (hatched before the current calendar year). The worn flight feathers and presence of brood patch being amongst the features used to age the bird.

Wing: 61 mm (*viridanus* [Greenish Warbler] generally 55–65, *nitidus* [Green Warbler] 60–67)

Fat score (out of 8): 2

Pectoral score (out of 3): 2

Weight: 8.3 g

Bill (to skull): 12.7 mm (*viridanus* 11.7–12.7 *nitidus* 11.8–13.6)

Bill width (at proximal end of nostrils): 3.9 mm (*viridanus* 2.8–3.9 *nitidus* [not given])

Bill depth (at proximal end of nostrils): 2.9 mm (*viridanus* 2.1–2.9 *nitidus* 2.4–3.3)

Emarginated to the 6th primary

Wing point: P4

P2 = P7

This represents the first record of this species for Fair Isle, the third for Shetland (and Scotland) and just the fourth for the United Kingdom.

COMMITTEE DECISIONS ON RARITIES FROM 2016

The following records have been accepted:

Species	Date, Location, Observers	Committee
Ring-necked Duck	23 Aug, South Harbour, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Black-browed Albatross	28 May, Bunes and Sheep Rock, K. Pellow <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Swinhoe's Petrel	14, 15 & 23 Aug, Haven, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Little Egret	20 May, Da Water and roaming, L.V. Gregory, L. Johnson <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Little Egret	1 Nov, South Harbour, D.N. Shaw <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Honey-buzzard	16 Sep, North Light, D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Spotted Crake	21–26 Sep, Da Water and Kirki Mire, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Spotted Crake	13 Oct, Gilsetter, D. Parkin	SBCRC
Spotted Crake	13 Oct, School, S. Arlow	SBCRC
Little Ringed Plover	10 May, Utra, C.R. Hatsell, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Little Ringed Plover	23 May, Da Water, K. Pellow <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Great Snipe	13–27 Sep, Da Water, Kirki Mire and Busta, C.R. Hatsell, L.V. Gregory, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Long-tailed Skua	26 Sep, Hill Dyke, M. Breaks	SBCRC
Mediterranean Gull	2 Jul, Haa, C.R. Hatsell, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Hoopoe	27 May, Houll area, S. Arlow, K. Pellow, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Woodchat Shrike	11–24 May, Lower Leogh and roaming south, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Shore Lark	29 May, Setter, D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Shore Lark (14 in total)	12 Oct–8 Nov, various, C.R. Hatsell, L. Johnson, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Short-toed Lark	2–8 May, Setter then roaming south, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Short-toed Lark	14 Sep–7 Oct, Tarryfield, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Calandra Lark	10–13 May, Utra, C.R. Hatsell, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-rumped Swallow	5–6 May, Utra, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Greenish Warbler	19 Aug, Obs, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Greenish Warbler	23 Aug, Midway, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Greenish Warbler	28 Aug, Hunds Heelor, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Greenish Warbler	4 Sep, South Naaversgill and Tineside, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Greenish Warbler	5 Sep, Haa then Leogh, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Radde's Warbler	2 Oct, Chapel Plantation then roaming, K. Kelly <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Dusky Warbler	12 Oct, Barkland, D. Pointon <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'	8 May, Mast, C.R. Hatsell, L.V. Gregory	BBRC
'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'	10 May, South Naaversgill, L.V. Gregory	BBRC
'Western Subalpine Warbler'	9 May, Plantation, G. Tyler <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Western Subalpine Warbler'*	9 May, Gully, C.R. Hatsell, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Western Subalpine Warbler'*	10 May, Utra, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Western Subalpine Warbler'*	10 May, Easter Lother, L.V. Gregory	BBRC
Lanceolated Warbler	13 Sep, Field Ditch, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Lanceolated Warbler	21 Sep, Dumlin's Sink, A. Harrop <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Lanceolated Warbler	26 Sep, Kirki Mire, C. Dodd, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Lanceolated Warbler	2–4 Oct, Shirva then Midway, S. Arlow <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Booted Warbler	28 Aug–6 Sep, Brecks then Meadow Burn, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Paddyfield Warbler	28 Sep, Walli Burn, P. Cook <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	28 Aug, Mid Geo, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	2 Oct, Havens and Obs, C. Dodd <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	6 Oct, Obs, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBRC

Nightingale	11 May, North Gunnawark and Hill Dyke, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Siberian Rubythroat	18 Nov, Lower Stoneybrek, N.J. Riddiford	BBRC
Red-flanked Bluetail	2 Oct, Dog Geo, A. Denton, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-flanked Bluetail	6–7 Oct, Gunnawark, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-flanked Bluetail	12 Oct, Ward Hill, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-flanked Bluetail	13 Oct, Hjukni Geo and Raevas, S. Arlow, L. Johnson, T. Tyler <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Collared Flycatcher	23 May, Field, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Siberian Stonechat	14–16 Oct, Shirva, S. Arlow, C. Griffin, H.J. Fearn, P. Woollen <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Siberian Stonechat	16–31 Oct, South Harbour, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Siberian Accentor	20 Oct, Troila Geo, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Siberian Accentor	22 Oct, Kirn o' Skroo, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Citrine Wagtail	13 Oct, Meadow Burn and Da Water, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Olive-backed Pipit	23 Sep, Obs, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Olive-backed Pipit	4–18 Oct, Field Ditch then Shirva, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Olive-backed Pipit	7–12 Oct, Dronger then Lerness, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Olive-backed Pipit	14–20 Oct, Chalet area, C. Griffin, H.J. Fearn, P. Woollen <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Pechora Pipit	2–20 Oct, Shirva then Lower Stoneybrek, A. Denton, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-throated Pipit	14 May, Meoness, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-throated Pipit	22 May, Charlie's Trees, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-throated Pipit	18 Sep, Walli Burn, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-throated Pipit	2 Oct, Shirva, J. Garside <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-throated Pipit	10–11 Oct, Wirvie Burn then Boini Mire, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-throated Pipit	14 Oct, Busta, P. Jones & N. Jones	BBRC
'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll'	7–16 Apr, Quoy then North Shirva, C.R. Hatsell, S. Thompson <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Coues's Arctic Redpoll' (2)	9–11 Nov, School Brae, D. Parnaby, D.N. Shaw <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Ortolan Bunting	11 May, Barkland, C. Cox	SBCRC
Ortolan Bunting	21–22 May, North Naaversgill, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Ortolan Bunting	8–18 Sep, Gilsetter, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Pine Bunting	11–17 Oct, Barkland and Quoy, C.R. Hatsell, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Pine Bunting	16–19 Oct, Quoy and Burkle, P. Harris, M. Maher, R. Nason, D.N. Shaw <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Pine Bunting	16–18 Oct, Quoy, P. Harris, M. Maher, R. Nason, D.N. Shaw <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Pine Bunting	22–26 Oct, Bull's Park and Obs, C.R. Hatsell, S. Robson <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Rustic Bunting	13 May, Lower Leogh, D.N. Shaw <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Rustic Bunting	27 May, Utra, L.V. Gregory <i>et al.</i>	BBRC

*accepted as 'Western Subalpine'/Moltoni's Subalpine group

No description was received for the following record, which therefore does not currently feature in the statistics:

Buzzard 15–20 Nov 2016, Obs and Vaasetter SBCRC

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

Great Snipe	3 Oct 2016, Bull's Park	BBRC
Arctic Warbler	2 Oct 2016, Shirva	BBRC
Red-throated Pipit	6 Oct 2016, Lower Leogh	BBRC

Key to abbreviations:

BBRC - British Birds Rarities Committee

SBRC - Scottish Birds Records Committee

SBCRC - Shetland Bird Club Records Committee



Plate 102. Killer Whales, South Harbour, 28th June 2017. © *Richard Cope*



Plate 103. Killer Whales, Buness, 15th June 2017. © *Richard Cope*

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 IV) as well as those from land. For the sake of completeness all sightings made from the Good Shepherd IV in 'Shetland waters' are also included here.

Humpback Whale

Megaptera novaeangliae

Vagrant; three previous records from Fair Isle waters (August 2001, October 2014, September 2016) plus one seen approximately 25km south-east of the isle in July 1994

A large cetacean seen briefly by SNH staff from the Good Shepherd IV in Fair Isle waters on 24th August may have been a Humpback, but views were too brief to confirm the species involved.

Minke Whale

Balaenoptera acutorostrata

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

In a very quiet year for sightings of this majestic species, the only land-based sighting involved one seen from the east coast on 21st August, with sightings in Fair Isle waters in the same month on 7th and 21st from the NorthLink Ferry and Good Shepherd IV respectively.

There were also four sightings from the Good Shepherd IV in Shetland waters between 10th August and 8th October, all singles other than three on 8th September.

Risso's Dolphin

Grampus griseus

Annual visitor, most records in August and September, usually in groups of up to a dozen

The most regularly sighted dolphin around Fair Isle in recent years enjoyed another good season. After ten on 5th July, there were sightings on six dates between 21st August and 19th September, usually involving small groups, with a peak of 18 on 13th September. A group of 12 off Meoness on 31st August contained at least four calves. There was a final sighting of three off Da Burrian on 16th October.

In addition, four were seen in Shetland waters from the Good Shepherd IV on 2nd September.

White-sided Dolphin

Lagenorhynchus acutus

Scarce visitor, most records from July to October, usually in small groups

The first sighting in Fair Isle waters since 2014 involved around 25 moving west past South Light on 13th September. This was a remarkable day for cetacean sightings, with calm weather coinciding with a visit to the top of South Light by an Assistant Warden resulting in a large movement of dolphins being noted, with around 70 individuals of three species.

White-beaked Dolphin

Lagenorhynchus albirostris

Regular visitor, most records from July to September, usually in small groups

Recent years have been quiet for this species and there were only two sightings in 2017, a group of eight off North Light on 11th June and approximately 25 passing South Light on 13th September.

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

Another remarkable year for sightings of this most charismatic of cetaceans began with six (including two calves) moving south-west off the Rippack then South Light on 26th April. May saw four (including a bull and a calf) moving north up the west coast on 6th and two (including a bull) on 17th that spent some time apparently feeding off the north of the island. June provided the remarkable spectacle of prolonged hunting on two days, with a group of over 12 on 15th and at least eight on 28th, involving at least some of the same animals on both dates. They came into the Haven and around Bunness, and on both occasions trapped a Grey Seal, although they seemed

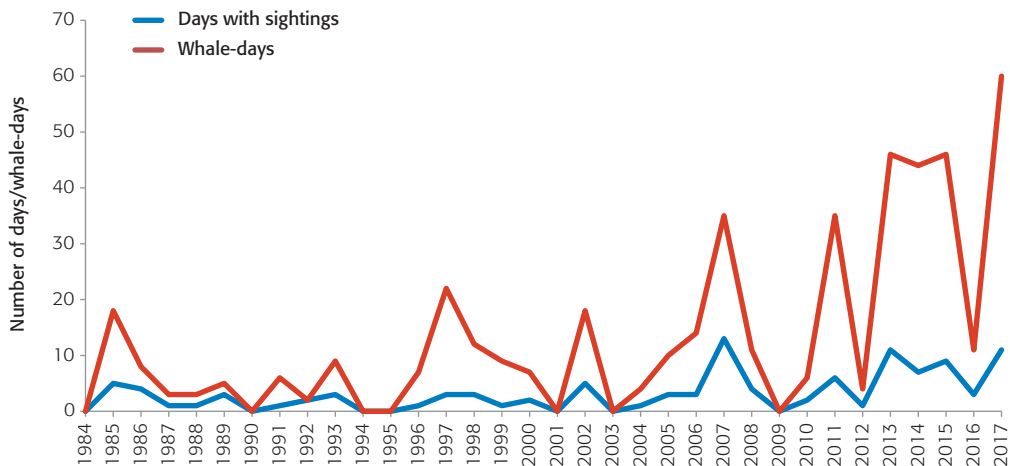


Figure 1. Days with sightings and 'whale-days' (i.e. the sum of all the sightings during the year) in Fair Isle waters, 1984–2017.

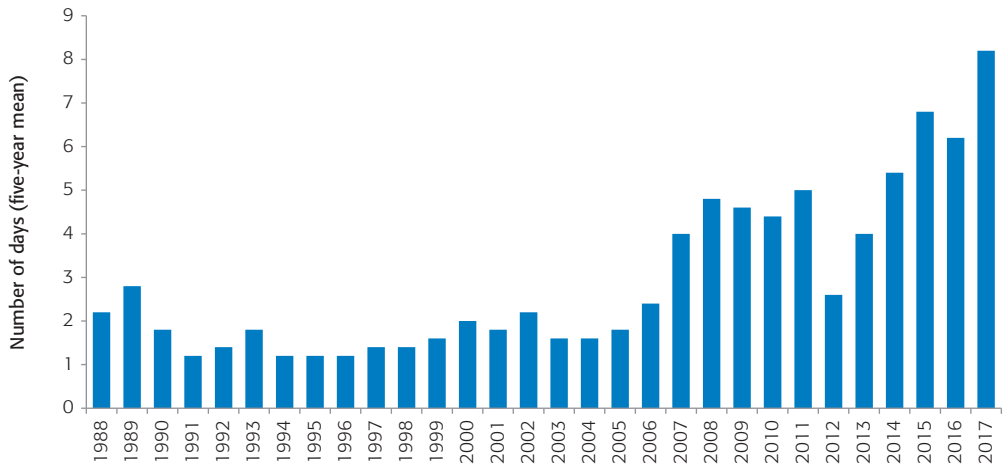


Figure 2. Rolling five-year mean of the numbers of days Killer Whales were seen from Fair Isle or in Fair Isle waters (hence the value of 8.2 for 2017 is the mean for the five-year period 2013–17 inclusive).

to refrain from killing it (although one struck the seal such a mighty blow with its tail on 15th that it may well have died from its injuries), whilst the group on 28th also moved to South Harbour where they appeared to make a kill. The spectacle of being standing on Buness just north of the breakwater on 15th, whilst a number of Killer Whales spent half an hour coming up to the base of the cliffs to seemingly check the activity of the watchers above (and could even be heard squeaking to one another) is one that will stay with those present for a long time indeed. There were then ten on 8th July, and at least seven the following day, which were seen off the east coast, although that group appeared to be fishing and stayed more distant than the June animals. Six moved north off Buness on 25th and two were off North Light on 30th July, whilst two bulls cruised past Meoness on 13th August and the final sighting was of a fin off North Light on 27th October, which from the description, could only have been of a bull Killer Whale.

There was also a record of two seen in Shetland waters from the Good Shepherd IV on 21st March.

Harbour Porpoise

Phocoena phocoena

Recorded in small numbers from May to October

After one on 12th June, there were sightings on nine further dates between 10th July and 13th September, with a peak of eight on 6th August. Most sightings were off Buness with the only sightings from Good Shepherd IV involving singles in Shetland waters on 25th May and 1st and 29th July.

Other Marine Wildlife

Grey Seal

Halichoerus grypus

The first pup was recorded on 1st October in Gunnawark (two days earlier than in 2016, but in the same location), with most births then recorded between mid-October and mid-November. A total of 11 beaches was used for pupping, from South Raeva clockwise round the coast to Wirvie Geo, with the most productive sites being Gorson's and Hjukni Geos, with nine pups in each, and Gunnawark with eight. The total of 46 pups was the lowest number recorded since 2014 and a 16% decrease from the 2016 figure. As usual, there were large numbers of adults regularly recorded hauled out at various beaches around the island, although there were no formal counts. Several islanders did comment that the regular presence of around 20 animals in the North Haven in the autumn and winter was a higher number than usual.

Common Seal

Phoca vitulina

In a very quiet year for this species, the only sightings were on 13th January and 21st February.

Basking Shark

Cetorhinus maximus

There were no sightings in Fair Isle waters (the last was seen in 2015), but one was seen from the Good Shepherd IV in Shetland waters on 26th August.

Spotted Ray

Raja montagui

Single egg cases of this species were found in South Haven on 22nd January and South Harbour on 27th August.

Cuckoo Ray

Leucoraja naevus

A barely alive adult was washed up in South Haven on 26th January after south-easterly storms.

Small-spotted Catshark

Scyliorhinus canicula

Three egg cases of this species were recorded during the year; South Harbour on 24th February, Hesti Geo on 31st March and Muckle Uri Geo on 28th August.

Eel

Anguilla anguilla

There were records at Quoy on 11th May and Utra on 23rd August and 20th October, although the latter individual (estimated at 30–40 cm in length) was being carried off by a Grey Heron.

BUTTERFLIES, MOTHS, OTHER INSECTS, BATS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

David Parnaby

Although it was generally a very quiet year for butterflies, with no records of Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell for example, Red Admirals had a good showing, resulting in breeding on the isle.

Painted Lady

Vanessa cardui

After singles on 21st and 26th May, there were records on 11 dates in June, mostly the first half of the month, with a maximum of four on 11th. Autumn was quiet with records on 3rd and 13th July, 25th, 26th and 29th August (two on the latter date being the only multiple record in this period), 13th, 26th and 30th September and 8th October.

Red Admiral

Vanessa atalanta

One on Dronger on 16th May preceded sightings on six more dates during the month, with a maximum of four on 31st. A total of 88 was recorded on 16 dates in June, with sightings peaking in the second week, when there was a maximum of 14 on 11th, although there were also 11 on 22nd. After up to two on three dates in July, there were records on 12 August dates from 14th, all of five or less other than 15 on 30th. The strong presence in the spring resulted in caterpillars being found at Quoy on 27th August, a very rare recorded breeding attempt for this species on the island (previous attempts have been noted only in 1990, 1992, 2003 and 2006). There was a total of 81 recorded during 14 dates in September, with an arrival at the end of the month peaking at 19 on 26th, with the only later records involving three on both 8th and 20th October.

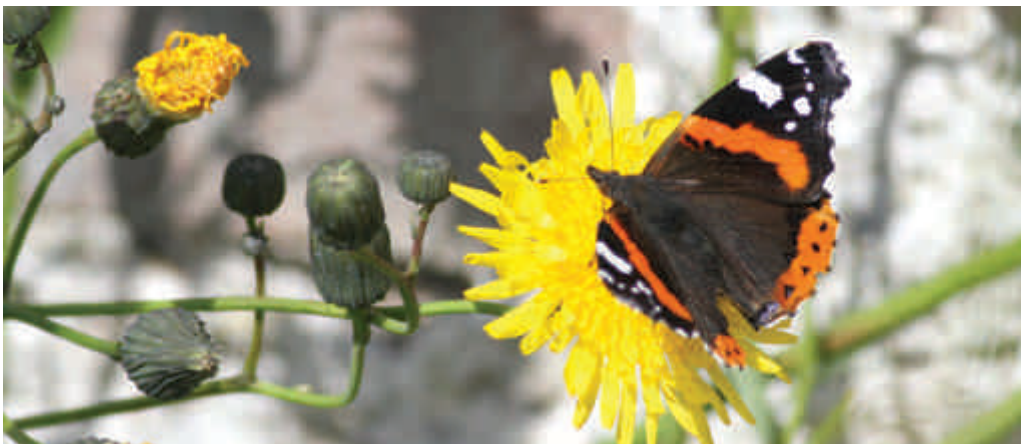


Plate 104. Red Admiral, School, 30th August 2017. © Richard Cope

MOTHS

Table 1. Summary of moths trapped at FIBO in 2017.

Scientific name	Name	First date	Last date	No. of nights trapped	Max catch	Max catch date	Total individuals
<i>Hepialus fusconebulosa</i>	Map-winged Swift	10th Jun	25th Jul	9	16	10th Jun	54
<i>Plutella xylostella</i>	Diamond-back Moth	14th Jun	14th Jun	1	1	14th Jun	1
<i>Eana osseana</i>		11th Jun	31st Aug	8	9	30th Jul	31
<i>Eana penziana</i>		7th Aug	23rd Aug	2	2	23rd Aug	3
<i>Acleris aspersana</i>		2nd Sep	2nd Sep	1	1	2nd Sep	1
<i>Lobesia littoralis</i>		14th Jul	31st Jul	4	2	25th & 30th Jul	6
<i>Bactra lancealana</i>		10th Jun	30th Jul	2	1	10th Jun & 30th Jul	2
<i>Agriphila stramineella</i>		7th Aug	7th Aug	1	4	7th Aug	4
<i>Scoparia ambigualis</i>		27th Jun	27th Jun	1	1	27th Jun	1
<i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i>	Silver-ground Carpet	8th Jul	7th Aug	4	2	14th Jul & 7th Aug	6
<i>Xanthorhoe fluctuata</i>	Garden Carpet	7th Aug	2nd Sep	2	2	7th Aug	3
<i>Abraxas grossulariata</i>	Magpie	4th Jul	14th Jul	3	7	14th Jul	9
<i>Standfussiana lucerneae</i>	Northern Rustic	4th Jul	2nd Sep	11	6	25th Jul	22
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	25th Jul	3rd Sep	11	7	31st Aug	27
<i>Eugnorisma glareosa</i>	Autumnal Rustic	20th Aug	2nd Sep	5	7	31st Aug & 2nd Sep	24
<i>Lycophotia porphyrea</i>	True Lover's Knot	8th Jul	7th Aug	10	45	25th Jul	137
<i>Diarsia mendica</i>	Ingrailed Clay	8th Jul	3rd Sep	16	5	25th Jul & 7th Aug	31
<i>Diarsia rubi</i>	Small Square Spot	4th Jul	14th Jul	7	5	Four dates	24
<i>Xestia xanthographa</i>	Square Spot Rustic	11th Jul	3rd Sep	14	12	31st Aug	58
<i>Hada plebeja</i>	Shears	10th Jun	14th Jun	3	2	11th Jun	4
<i>Hadena confusa</i>	Marbled Coronet	10th Jun	14th Jun	3	2	10th Jun	4
<i>Cerapteryx graminis</i>	Antler Moth	12th Jul	2nd Sep	13	17	17th Aug	67
<i>Aporophylla nigra</i>	Black Rustic	2nd Sep	2nd Sep	1	1	2nd Sep	1
<i>Phlogophora meticulosa</i>	Angle Shades	2nd Sep	2nd Sep	1	1	2nd Sep	1
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	Dark Arches	11th Jul	2nd Sep	10	66	7th Aug	131
<i>Apamea furva</i>	Confused	7th Aug	7th Aug	1	1	7th Aug	1
<i>Oligia fasciuncula</i>	Middle-barred Minor	1st Aug	1st Aug	1	1	1st Aug	1
<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	Rosy Rustic	7th Aug	2nd Sep	6	6	2nd Aug & 2nd Sep	22
<i>Autographa gamma</i>	Silver Y	10th Jun	14th Jun	2	1	10th Jun & 14th Jun	2

A summary of the moth trapping carried out at the Obs in 2017 is shown above, the most notable record being the Black Rustic, only the third for the isle, following previous records in 1991 and 1996, which were both also from the early autumn period.

In addition, there were a number of field records made of moths during the season, with some of the more notable being:

Diamond-back Moth

Plutella xylostella

After the huge invasion of 2016, it was a much quieter year for this migrant species, with singles noted on 22nd June, 2nd August and 30th September.

Rush Veneer

Nomophila noctuella

One was on Bunes on 14th June.



Plate 105. Antler Moth, Obs, 20th August 2017. © Max Hellicar

Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum*

One of these scarce migrants was seen on 26th September.

Netted Pug

Eupithecia venosata

One was in the Gilly Burn on 31st May.

The Magpie

Abraxas grossulariata

In addition to the records from the trap, three were seen on 13th July, a typical record of this often-diurnal migrant species.

Silver Y

Autographa gamma

This distinctive, day-flying, migrant species is typically recorded far more commonly during census than it is in moth traps and this year was no exception, with migrants on 12 dates between 22nd May and 22nd June, with a peak of seven on 8th June. There were singles on 21st and 28th July, then records on seven dates in August and five dates from 24th–30th September, peaking at five on the latter date.

Angle Shades

Phlogophora meticulosa

One on 1st October was a typical record.

The Brick

Agrochola circumcellaris

This just about annually recorded species was seen on 25th September, a typical date.

Other Insects

'Shetland Bee'

Bombus muscorum agricolae

The first record was rather early on 3rd May and there were then regular sightings until 27th September.

Buff-tailed Bumblebee

Bombus terrestris

The species was first recorded on the isle in 2012, when a number of individuals were seen, but there were no more records until this year. In 2017, the species was observed on 18 dates between 6th May and 2nd June, with a peak count of five on 22nd May. The reason behind these occasional influxes is not entirely clear, although it seems likely that they are the results of natural migratory or dispersive patterns, rather than human-influenced movements.



Plate 106. Buff-tailed Bumblebee, North Shirva, 22nd May 2017. © David Parnaby



Plate 107. Northern White-tailed Bumblebee, North Shirva, 22nd May 2017. © David Parnaby

Northern White-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus magnus*

Single bumblebees on 22nd May at North Shirva, 9th June at Lower Stoneybrek and 14th June at Upper Leogh were all 'white-tailed' and likely to be this species although, as with the only other record that occurred in 2015, a captured individual would be needed to rule out a number of more southerly species that are very similar in appearance.

Green Lacewing *Chrysoperla carnea* agg.

An annual visitor in small numbers; singles were noted on 23rd August and 25th September.

Highland Midge *Culicoides impunctatus*

Although not a species that is monitored, the general paucity of Midges on Fair Isle is a favourable feature of most summers. In most years, any flocks of biting Midges can usually be easily avoided by walking around a corner into a breeze, but this year there were substantial clouds of Midges on 21st and 24th August that many of the isle's longest-standing residents reckoned were the worst they had known.

Bats

Bat sp.

An unidentified bat was observed flying into the Kirm 'o Skroo on 20th October, continuing the recent regular run of records.

Other wildlife

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

The first observation was an individual that had become a road casualty on 19th February, with the first spawn noted at the Obs and Haa on 11th March, two days earlier than 2016.

AN OUTLINE LIST OF THE MOTHS AND BUTTERFLIES OF FAIR ISLE

Nick Riddiford

The following is a summary of Lepidoptera recorded on Fair Isle up to the end of 2017. It incorporates records from field observations, light trapping and attractions to sugar at various sites round the isle, including long-term monitoring activities at the Bird Observatory, Lower Stoneybrek and Schoolton.

For further information, and detailed assessment and analysis, please refer to the paper published in the *Entomologist's Gazette* (Riddiford & Young 2017).

Advice to visiting field observers: additional records are welcome, via the FIBO warden or to Nick Riddiford at Schoolton. For additions to the list and for those classified as rare, verification in the form of a *captured specimen* or *indisputable photograph* will be required for the record to be accepted.

Micropterix aruncella

Previously rare, increasingly common resident. First & last dates: 13th June; 8th July.

Korscheltellus fusconebulosa **Map-winged Swift**

Very common resident; shows characteristics of the Shetland form *H. f. shetlandicus*. First & last dates: 21st May; 12th August.

Tinea pellionella **Case-bearing Clothes-moth**

Overlooked resident or adventive; one record, 17th July 2012.

Tinea pallescentella **Large Pale Clothes-moth**

Fairly common resident around outhouses. First & last dates: May to September; 'outlier' - 13th March.

Monopis laevigella **Skin Moth**

Common resident. First & last dates: 25th May; 30th July.

Aspilapteryx tringipennella

Under-recorded resident; one adult, coastal grassland with abundant Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, 20th June 2012; several vacated leaf-mines, Ribwort Plantain, Hoini, 1st August 2017.

Phyllonorycter apparella

Extralimital vagrant; one record, ♂, 20th August 2015 (Riddiford & Young 2016), coinciding with southern Scandinavia population explosion. New to the British Isles.

Yponomeuta evonymella

Bird-cherry Ermine

Very rare migrant; one record, 9th August 2006.

Plutella xylostella

Diamond-back Moth

Annual migrant, frequently in enormous numbers; has bred. First & last dates: 14th May; 30th September. Highest total: "thousands and thousands", 26th July 2000 (field records).

Rhigognostis senilella

Resident; recorded most years in small numbers. First & last dates: 15th July to 24th September; 'outliers'—22nd March, 14th & 20th April, 7th May. Nationally Scarce B.

Rhigognostis annulatella

Resident, recorded irregularly in small numbers; probably commoner than records suggest. First & last dates: 25th July to 4th October; 'outliers'—2nd February, 21st March. Nationally Scarce B.

Glyphipteryx thrasonella

Abundant resident. First & last dates: 20th June to 18th July; 'outlier'—14th May.

Acrolepiopsis assectella

Leek Moth

Adventive or stray migrant (most likely the former); one record, 15th June 2003. Second Scottish record.

Argyresthia conjugella

Migrant or adventive (no food plants on Isle); one record, 29th June 2003.

Endrosis sarcitrella **White-shouldered House-moth**

Abundant resident, including houses, out-buildings; commonest summer but active all year.

Hofmannophila pseudospretella **Brown House-moth**

Very common resident; regular in buildings, widely distributed outdoors where probably associated with bird nests. Recorded all months March–October plus one on 25th December.

Agonopterix arenella

Unclear, possibly migrant; two records, 29th September 1999, 14th August 2001.

Agonopterix heracliiana

Unclear, possibly adventive with produce; one record, in house, 24th August 2004.

Agonopterix nervosa

Unclear, possibly migrant; one record, 25th August 2009.

Depressaria radiella

Parsnip Moth

Unclear, possibly migrant; one record, 23rd April 2009.

Depressaria badiella

Resident, probably commoner than records suggest. First & last dates: 9th August; 3rd September.

Bryotropha terrella

Common resident; dry eroded patches of heath and coastal grassland. First & last dates: 21st June; 13th August.

Monochroa tenebrella

Overlooked resident; only record, five in pitfall trap, coastal grassland, May 2010, one there the following month.

Scrobipalpa instabilella

Unclear, probable adventive; one record, amongst stored wool, 8th August 1994. Nationally Scarce B.

Scrobipalpa samadensis

Abundant in coastal turf with plantain swards, late June to July. First & last dates: 28th June; 27th July. Nationally Scarce B.

Caryocolum vicinella

Probably overlooked resident; one record, 8th August 2009. Nationally Scarce A.

Coleophora discordella

Fairly common resident; case-bearing larvae apparently restricted to more robust plants of Birdsfoot Trefoil on cliffs. Active larval cases, June; earliest emergence 12th July, fresh adults 19th July when some larvae still active.

Coleophora mayrella

Unclear, possibly overlooked resident; one record, 17th July 1994.

Coleophora taeniipennella

Super-abundant resident; strongly synchronised emergence. First & last dates: 29th June; 8th July.

Coleophora saxicolella

Probably overlooked resident; one record, 13th July 2012.

Elachista argentella

Largely overlooked resident; three records, 25th July 1997, 4th July 2008, 4th July 2011.

Elachista albidella

Possibly overlooked resident; one record, 15th July 2009.

Blastobasis lacticolella

Unclear, 'natural' immigration as part of ongoing range expansion cannot be ruled out; one record, 27th June 2011.

Alucita hexadactyla

Twenty-plume Moth

Unclear, potentially an overlooked resident but immigration cannot be ruled out as one taken at a coastal site; three records, 8th & 17th September 2006, 12th August 2014.

Platyptilia isodactylus

Hoary Plume

Common resident; first noted in 2004 but probably overlooked before. First & last dates: 11th July; 17th July. Nationally Scarce B.

Stenoptilia bipunctidactyla

Twin-spot Plume

Recent colonist; one in 2009, exponential increase to hundreds by 2013, moderate numbers in 2014–15 thereafter; currently restricted to a few pockets of rough grassland south of the school. First & last dates: 23rd June; 26th July.

Phaulernis fulviguttella

Abundant resident; occasionally in emergence swarms of 50+. First & last dates: 19th July; 30th July.

Anthophila fabriciana

Nettle-tap

Abundant resident but, following destruction of other nettle beds, currently restricted to one large patch maintained by sympathetic crofter. First & last dates: 5th July; 28th July.

Aphelia viburnana

Bilberry Tortrix

Super-abundant resident; tightly synchronised emergence of many thousands over just a few days in heath and moorland; the Fair Isle taxon is distinctive, merits further investigation. First & last dates: 11th June; 21st July.

Eana osseana

Very common resident; attracted to light. Apart from one on 7th June, all records between 1st July and 29th August. Highest total: 57, FIBO trap, 12th August 2005.

Eana penziana colquhounana

Relatively common, July–August; attracted to light. First & last dates: 5th July; 5th September. Highest total: 15, FIBO trap, 21st July 2006. Nationally Scarce B.

Acleris caledoniana

Unclear, possibly overlooked resident; one record, 20th September 1987.

Acleris effractana

Unclear; overlooked resident or infrequent migrant; four records, 3rd September 2003, 11th & 16th September 2006, 'summer' 2008, 1st August 2014.

Acleris aspersana

Common resident across the hill. First & last dates: 24th July; 7th September.
Highest total: 34, FIBO trap, 18th August 1988.

Acleris hyemana

Common resident; adult winter-active, moorland heath. Dated records are few, comprising records in October (from 7th), February and March (to 22nd).

Eupoecilia angustana

Under-recorded resident of cliffs; two records, 50 flying by day 11th June 2004, one 29th June 2012—both at cliff sites; characteristics of the Shetland form *E. a. thuleana*.

Aethes cnicana

Unclear, probably overlooked resident; one record, 5th July 2006.

Lobesia littoralis

Abundant resident; cliffs, coastal grassland. First & last dates: 16th June; 6th August.

Bactra lancealana

Abundant resident of wet flushes, mire and marshy grassland; the Fair Isle form is very small. First & last dates: 10th June; 6th September.

Ancylis unguicella

Unclear, probably overlooked resident; one record, moorland, 4th June 2012.

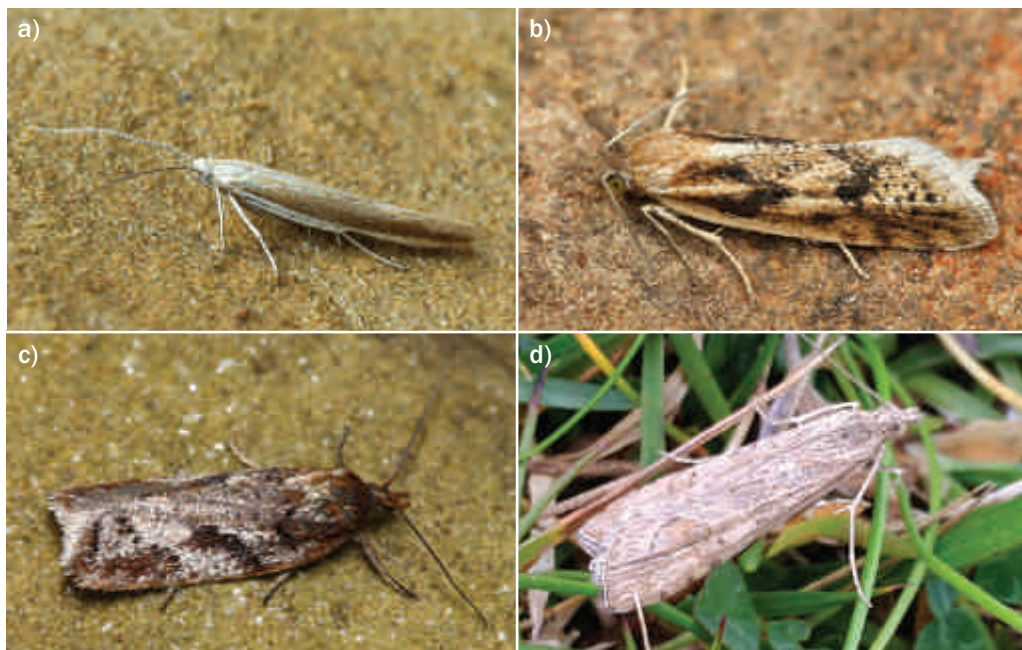


Plate 108 a. *Coleophora* sp., Obs, 14th August 2015. b. *Eana osseana*, 15th July 2016. c. *Acleris hyemana*, Obs, 17th October 2015. d. Rush Veneer, 17th September 2015. © All Lee Gregory

Rhopobota naevana

Infrequently encountered resident; six records, 4th August 1999, 20th May 2011, 4th June 2012, 11th July 2013, 19th & 30th June 2015.

Epinotia mercuriana

Common resident of *Calluna* heath, July to early August; particularly active late afternoon. First & last dates: 2nd July; 7th August. Nationally Scarce B.

Epinotia nisella

Unclear but likely migrant; one record, 28th July 2008, coincided with small influx of *Timandra comae* to Fair Isle and Shetland.

Eucosma cana

Resident, occasional in traps; probably much commoner than records suggest. First & last dates: 13th June; 16th August.

Dichrorampha montanana

Probably common but overlooked resident; four field records, 23rd June 2009, 11th July 2013, 4th July 2016, 20th June 2017.

Papilio machaon

Swallowtail

Very rare extralimital migrant; one record, 9th September 1995.

Pieris brassicae

Large White

Formerly abundant resident, now a rare migrant with no records at all in 1992–2002 & 2004–10. First & last dates (migrants): 14th May; 1st September.

Pieris rapae

Small White

Rare migrant; six or seven records, singles on 17th June 1978, 7th August 1989, 9th July 1992, 26th & 27th May, 11th & 19th June 2004.

Colias croceus

Clouded Yellow

Very rare migrant; three records, late July to early August 1980, 25th May & 16th August 1992.

Coenonympha pamphilus

Small Heath

Very rare migrant or dispersive vagrant; one record, June 1980.

Maniola jurtina

Meadow Brown

Very rare migrant or dispersive vagrant; two records, 10th & 20th June 1980; another seen briefly in flight on 29th July 1990 by experienced observers is best treated as possible but unverified.

Vanessa atalanta

Red Admiral

Annual migrant in variable numbers; has bred. First & last dates: 6th May; 30th October. Highest total: “big invasion”, major arrival streaming through from south-east all morning of 25th August 2002.

Vanessa cardui**Painted Lady**

Annual migrant; has bred. First & last dates: 19th May; 10th October. Highest total: generally lower numbers than Red Admiral but outstripping the latter nearly 3 to 1 during major movement north-westwards of 25th August 2002.

Aglais io**Peacock**

Scarce, previously irregular now near annual migrant; first notified record 1983 followed by gap to 1995, thereafter almost annual; one record of hibernation, adult disturbed in byre 4th April 2005. First & last dates (migrants): 9th June; 26th September (excludes the April record). Largest influx: 13 butterfly-days in 2013.

Aglais urticae**Small Tortoiseshell**

Common migrant; bred 1996, 2009; one overwintered as pupa, emerging on or shortly before 21st April 2010. First & last dates: 18th May; 14th October. Highest total: 35, 1st August 1980 (field records).

Lampides boeticus**Long-tailed Blue**

Adventive; two larval records—one with stock early September 2006, pupated immediately, emerged 15th October. Another, probably this species, mange-tout pea packet “fresh from Kenya”, 16th April 2008, died 21st April.

Polyommatus icarus**Common Blue**

Very rare migrant or dispersive vagrant; one verified record, 11th June 1990; a “blue sp.” August 1980 was probably this species.

Dioryctria abietella**Dark Pine Knot-horn**

Very rare migrant; two records, 1st August 1991, 17th September 2006. Both on easterly winds.

Myelois circumvoluta**Thistle Ermine**

Very rare extra-limital migrant; three records, 12th June 1992, 16th June 2002, 3rd July 2015. Northernmost UK records.

Ephestia elutella**Cacao Moth**

Unknown provenance, possible introduction with goods; one record, 22nd July 1992. Nationally Scarce B.

Loxostege sticticalis**Beet Webworm**

Very rare migrant; one record, 11th August 1996—part of a small invasion to Shetland.

Sitochroa palealis**Sulphur Pearl**

Very rare migrant or dispersive vagrant; one field record, 24th July 2014 (Parnaby *et al.* 2014). New to Scotland.

Udea ferrugalis**Rusty Dot Pearl**

Very rare migrant; two records, 4th September 2002, 23rd October 2004.

Udea lutealis**Pale Straw Pearl**

Extremely abundant resident, grassland habitats; common in gardens. First & last dates: 11th July; 30th August.

Nomophila noctuella**Rush Veneer**

Scarce migrant becoming more frequent; recorded in 12 years, 1988–2017. First & last dates: 13th August, 22nd October; ‘outliers’—27th April, 14th & 25th June, 18th July. Highest total: “major influx”, 25th to 30th September 2006 (field records).

Scoparia subfusca**Large Grey**

Resident; frequent, herb-rich rough grassland. First & last dates: 26th June; 29th July.

Scoparia ambigualis**Common Grey**

Common resident; rough grassland, coastal grassland, moorland, coastal heath. First & last dates: 3rd June; 26th July.

Eudonia angustea**Narrow-winged Grey**

Rare migrant; two records, 12th & 19th July 1995 (separate individuals).

Eudonia lineola**White-line Grey**

Unclear, probably under-recorded resident; one definite record 11th August 2010; two other individuals, 29th & 31st July 2010, may have been this species. Nationally Scarce B.

Chrysoteuchia culmella**Garden Grass-veneer**

Very rare migrant; two records of three individuals, two on 11th July 2005, one on 6th July 2006.

Crambus lathoniellus**Hook-streak Grass-veneer**

Very common day-active resident, relatively short emergence period late May–mid June. First & last dates: 26th May to 23rd June; ‘outliers’—26th July, 14th October.

Agriphila tristella**Common Grass-veneer**

Rare migrant; four records, first half of August 1990, 16th August 1996, 16th August 2006, 6th August 2009.

Agriphila straminella**Straw Grass-veneer**

Abundant resident, mainly grassland; long flight period, occasional synchronised mass emergences. First & last dates: 28th May–18th August. Highest totals: “huge numbers”, 26th June 1992, 24th July 2015 (field records).

Saturnia pavonia**Emperor Moth**

Ship-assisted adventive; one record, 30th May 1992; boarded cruise ship between Leith and Fair Isle, released on Isle.

Laothoe populi**Poplar Hawk-moth**

Ship-assisted adventive; one record, 17th June 1999; boarded a cruise ship between Leith and Fair Isle, released on Isle.

Agrius convolvuli**Convolvulus Hawk-moth**

Rare irregular migrant; records 1988, 1992, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2015. First & last dates: 6th August; 22nd September. Best year: up to 10 individuals in exceptional influx, 6th August–12th September 2003.

Macroglossum stellatarum**Hummingbird Hawk-moth**

Rare irregular migrant; recorded in 11 years from 1992, including three or four in 2003, five in 2006 and three in 2015. First & last dates: 27th May; 10th October.

Hyles gallii**Bedstraw Hawk-moth**

Rare irregular migrant; recorded 1974, 1990, 1991, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2003 (two), 2007 (two). First & last dates: 5th July; 9th August.

Timandra comae**Blood-vein**

Very rare extralimital migrant; one record, 28th July 2008, part of a small influx to Shetland.

Xanthorhoe decoloraria**Red Carpet**

Common resident; characteristics of Shetland form *X. d. hethlandica*. First & last dates: 5th July; 30th September. Highest total: 17, Lower Stoneybrek trap, 20th August 2006.

Xanthorhoe fluctuata**Garden Carpet**

Relatively common two-generation resident; characteristics of northern form *X. f. thules*. First & last dates: 7th May–3rd July (1st generation); 28th July–11th September (2nd generation). Highest total: eight, FIBO trap, 29th May 2003.

Xanthorhoe montanata**Silver-ground Carpet**

Very common resident, often active by day; characteristics of Shetland form *X. m. shetlandica*. First & last dates: 10th June; 17th September.

Camptogramma bilineata**Yellow Shell**

Resident, scarce inland, frequent on cliffs; characteristics of northern form *C. b. atlantica*. First & last dates: 25th June; 7th August.

Hydriomena furcata**July Highflyer**

Unclear, under-recorded resident or infrequent migrant; recorded 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012; singles except five in 2006 and two in 2008. First & last dates: 30th July; 23rd September.

Eulithis testata**Chevron**

Very rare migrant; two records, 30th August 1955 & 22nd August 1999.

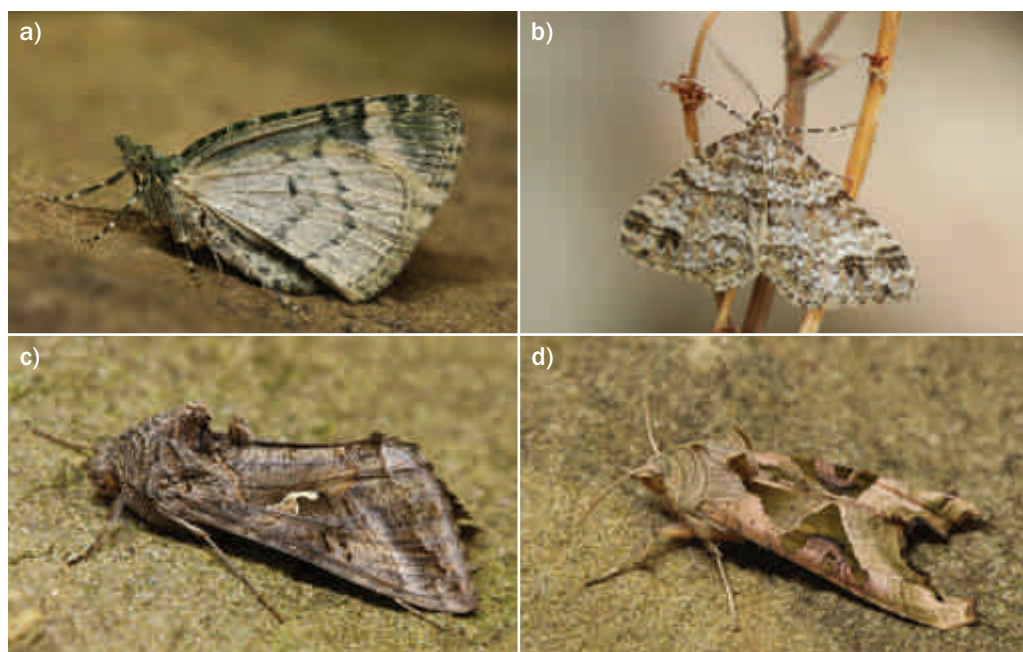


Plate 109 a. Autumn Green Carpet, 18th October 2015. b. Twin-spot Carpet, Kenaby, 22nd August 2016. c. Silver Y, 18th October 2015. d. Angle Shades, 18th October 2015. © All Lee Gregory

Chloroclysta miata

Autumn Green Carpet

Unclear; overlooked resident or infrequent migrant; recorded 1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2015 (two). First & last dates: 24th September; 21st October.

Epirrita filigrammaria

Small Autumnal

Unclear; overlooked resident, very rare migrant or dispersive vagrant; one record, 3rd September 2006.

Mesotype didymata

Twin-spot Carpet

Resident, abundant by day; those with characteristics of *M. d. didymata* and Shetland form *M. d. hethlandica* commonly fly together. First & last dates: 17th July; 4th September.

Gymnoscelis rufifasciata

Double-striped Pug

Rare migrant; three records, 10th September 2003, 9th June 2007, 30th May 2008.

Eupithecia venosata

Netted Pug

Common resident; characteristics closest to Orkney form *E. v. ochracea*. First & last dates: 14th May; 18th August.

Eupithecia pusillata

Juniper Pug

Frequent under-recorded resident of Prostrate Juniper *Juniperus communis nana*-rich heath and moorland. First & last dates: 17th June (one), then 28th July to 21st September.

Eupithecia nanata**Narrow-winged Pug**

Scarce under-recorded resident, moorland. First & last dates: 30th May; 19th July.

Eupithecia centaureata**Lime-speck Pug**

Very rare migrant; one record, 2nd August 2008.

Eupithecia satyrata**Satyr Pug**

Abundant, moorland, active by day; characteristics of northern form *E. s. curzoni*. First & last dates: 9th June; 11th July.

Abraxas grossulariata**Magpie Moth**

Annual migrant in recent years; first record in 1998, annual in increasing numbers from 2001; major influxes 2004–06; records in very tight time-frame of no more than a week, usually mid-July. First & last dates: 4th July; 7th August. Highest total: “as many as 100”, 14th July 2006 (field records).

Scoliopteryx libatrix**Herald**

Rare migrant, attracted to sugar; recorded 1999, 2002, 2006, 2013; small influxes in three of the years suggest irruptive tendency. First & last dates: 5th August; 8th October.

Hypena proboscidalis**Snout**

Very rare migrant; one record, 11th July 2002.

Spilosoma urticae**Water Ermine**

Very rare extralimital migrant or dispersive vagrant; one record, 7th June 2002 (Riddiford & Shaw 2011). Nationally Scarce B; first verified Scottish record.

Arctia caja**Garden Tiger**

Very rare migrant; two records, 18th July 2005, 25th July 2013.

Utetheisa pulchella**Crimson Speckled**

Very rare extralimital migrant; one record, 2nd October 1961.

Pandesma robusta**Robust Tabby**

Alien; one record, freshly dead amongst South African grapes, 31st January 2004.

Diachrysia chrysitis**Burnished Brass**

Very rare migrant; two records, 27th July 1997 (first for Shetland) & 12th August 2001.

Autographa gamma**Silver Y**

Irregular breeder and abundant migrant subject to immense influxes; unprecedented arrival and continuous through passage north-westward on moderate south-east winds on 6th August 1996 was estimated from transect counts at a very conservative half a million; similar standard counts put the

total for the whole of Shetland at “tens of millions”. First & last dates: 18th May; 5th November. Highest total: c. 500,000, 6th August 1996 (field record).

Autographa pulchrina

Beautiful Golden Y

Unclear, probably under-recorded scarce resident; recorded 1996, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017. First & last dates: 26th July; 21st August

Plusia festucae

Gold Spot

Very rare migrant; two records, 7th August 2006, 5th August 2010.

Acronicta rumicis

Knotgrass

Very rare migrant; one record, 2nd August 2008.

Amphipyra tragopoginis

Mouse Moth

Rare irregular migrant; recorded in eight years 1991–2006 including six in 1991 and three in 1996; no records after 2006. First & last dates: 10th August; 27th September.

Heliopsis peltigera

Bordered Straw

Very rare migrant; one record, 9th September 2002.

Helicoverpa armigera

Scarce Bordered Straw

Very rare migrant; one record, 29th August 1997.

Caradrina clavipalpis

Pale Mottled Willow

Very rare migrant; one record, 8th August 1998.

Phlogophora meticulosa

Angle Shades

Common resident and likely migrant; recorded all months, May to November, but only one in August. First & last dates: 1st May–15th November; ‘outlier’, 18th December was during abnormally mild weather. Highest total: 17, Schoolton, to sugar, 18th September 2002.

Celaena haworthii

Haworth’s Minor

Unclear, possibly overlooked resident; one record, 30th September 2011.

Helotropha leucostigma

Crescent

Scarce migrant; recorded in seven years from the first in 1992, maximum three or four in 2006, three in 2015. The 1992 individual showed characteristics of nominate form *H. l. leucostigma*. First & last dates: 22nd July; 22nd August

Hydraecia micacea

Rosy Rustic

Very common, especially in-bye. First & last dates: 29th July; 24th October. Highest total: 39, Schoolton trap, 3rd September 2010.

Amphipoea fucosa

Saltern Ear

Rare migrant; three records, 14th August 1997, 4th August 1999, August 2003; showed characteristics of the European nominate form *Amphipoea fucosa* f. *fucosa*.

Amphipoea lucens**Large Ear**

Rare migrant; recorded in four years, 4th August 1991, 4th & 7th August 2003, 18th August 2005, three on 2nd & one on 8th August 2008.

Amphipoea oculea**Ear Moth**

Very rare migrant; one record, 3rd September 1991.

Amphipoea crinanensis**Crinan Ear**

Very rare migrant; one record, 29th July 2000.

Luperina testacea**Flounced Rustic**

Very rare migrant or dispersive vagrant; one record, 16th August 2003.

Rhizedra lutosa**Large Wainscot**

Rare migrant, perhaps irruptive; recorded in three years, three in 1992, five or six in 2006, one in 2013. First & last dates: 18th September; 8th October.

Denticucullus pygmina**Small Wainscot**

Scarce migrant; one, 30th August 1955; thereafter 1–4 recorded in nine years, 1991–2011. First & last dates: 20th July; 28th September.

Apamea remissa**Dusky Brocade**

Common resident; dark form *A. r. obscura* commoner than type. First & last dates: 14th June; 25th August. Highest total: 16, Lower Stonebrek trap, 5th July 2007.

Apamea crenata**Clouded-bordered Brindle**

Rare migrant, possibly established as scarce resident; recorded in eight of nine years since first record in 2005; single records to 2009, three to seven per annum thereafter. First & last dates: 4th June; 30th July.

Apamea monoglypha**Dark Arches**

Resident; most abundant larger moth on Fair Isle, particularly grassland habitats. First & last dates: 24th June; 17th September. Highest total: 377, Barkland trap, 27th August 2006.

Apamea furva**Confused**

Relatively common resident; Fair Isle form is *A. f. britannica*. First & last dates: 1st July; 23rd September. Highest total: five, FIBO trap, 23rd August 2012.

Apamea lateritia**Scarce Brindle**

Very rare migrant; two July records, 23rd July 2009, 18th July 2011. Probably fewer than 20 UK records.

Mesapamea secalis**Common Rustic**

Unclear, probably migrant; small numbers of *Mesapamea secalis sensu stricto* recorded annually since 1999. First & last dates: 18th July; 27th August

Mesapamea didyma**Lesser Common Rustic**

Probable migrant, has bred; individuals determined on genitalia characters recorded 1993, 2003, 2006, 2009. First & last dates: 21st July; 11th August. Best year: three records in 2006.

***Mesapamea agg.* Common/Lesser Common Rustic**

Non-determined individuals recorded in eight years, 1993–2015; dissected individuals gave ratio of more than two to one in favour of *M. secalis* (20 to 8, n=28).

Oligia fasciuncula**Middle-barred Minor**

Very common resident; frequently encountered day and night on Marsh Ragwort *Senecio aquaticus* and Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris* inflorescences; shy visitor to traps. First & last dates: 29th June; 14th August.

Agrochola macilenta**Yellow-line Quaker**

Very rare migrant; four records, 29th September, 6th & 8th October 2006, 17th October 2015.

Agrochola circellaris**Brick**

Generally scarce near-annual migrant, small influxes classically arriving on south-east winds; one big influx in September 2000 when “many” in the north. First & last dates: 8th September; 24th October. Highest total: “many in north”, 26th September 2000.

Xylena exsoleta**Sword-grass**

Probable rare migrant with single autumn occurrences 1999, 2005, 2011; spring adult 23rd April 1992 and full-grown larva July 2004 raise the possibility of intermittent colonist or very rare overlooked resident. First & last dates: 30th September; 14th October (excludes April record). UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species. Nationally Scarce B. Riddiford (2005).

Xylena vetusta**Red Sword-grass**

Scarce migrant, attracted to sugar; one spring record, 25th March 2009; irregular autumn visitor recorded in eight years from first in 1999, including 6 or 7 in 2003. First & last dates, autumn: 6th September; 6th November. Highest total: three, Schoolton, to sugar, 1st November 2004.

Eupsilia transversa**Satellite**

Unclear, occasional scarce migrant or rare overlooked, possibly temporary resident; recorded 1991 and five years between 2002 and 2009, including two December records. First & last dates: 12th September; 27th November. Highest total: 11, Schoolton, to sugar, 22nd November 2004.

Parastichtis suspecta**Suspected**

Very rare migrant; two records of three individuals, one on 3rd & two on 28th August 2000.

Aporophyla nigra**Black Rustic**

Very rare migrant; three records, two together on 10th September 1991, one on 4th September 1996, one on 2nd September 2017.

Dasypolia templi**Brindled Ochre**

Resident; probably common but under-recorded as autumn emergence coincides with inclement weather unsuitable for trapping; four in spring, 11th & 30th March, 5th & 27th April; all others between 9th September and 4th November. Highest total: four, Schoolton trap, 7th October 2017.

Orthosia gothica**Hebrew Character**

Only five records, 21st March 2004, 17th April 2011, 19th April 2014, 4th & 13th April 2017; early spring weather largely uncondusive to trapping so best treated as an overlooked resident or occasional migrant.

Cerapteryx graminis**Antler**

Very common resident, most numerous in the moorland and heath. First & last dates: 5th July; 25th September. Highest total: 50, FIBO trap, 14th August 1980.

Anarta trifolii**Nutmeg**

Very rare migrant; one record, 23rd July 2006.

Lacanobia thalassina**Pale-shouldered Brocade**

Very rare migrant; one record, 30th May 2014.



Plate 110 a. Dark Arches, Obs, 13th July 2016. b. Marbled Coronet, Obs, 24th May 2016. c. Northern Rustic, Obs, 13th July 2016. d. Large Yellow Underwing, Obs, 17th October 2015. © All Lee Gregory

Lacanobia oleracea**Bright-line Brown-eye**

Rare migrant; two in 2002, five in 2003, one in 2004, 2010 & 2015. First & last dates: 18th June; 4th September.

Ceramica pisi**Broom Moth**

Very rare migrant; one record, 27th July 2006.

Hada plebeja**Shears**

Common resident; one of few 'early' species, May–June; exceptional second brood suggested by individuals on 30th August 1955, 6th September 2003, 3rd October 1997. First & last dates: 14th May; 14th July (excludes the late August–October records).

Hadena bicruris**Lychnis**

Colonising resident; first recorded 2005, annual in increasing numbers since. First & last dates: 27th May; 17th August. Highest total: 12, Schoolton trap, 7th July 2017.

Hadena confusa**Marbled Coronet**

Common resident; one of few 'early' species, May–early June, full-grown caterpillars in early August and a number of records from mid-June to early September suggest occasional second brood; a proportion but not all show characteristics of the Shetland form *H. c. oblitterae*. First & last dates: 11th May; 3rd September. Highest total: 12, FIBO trap, 23rd May 2012.

Mythimna pallens**Common Wainscot**

Rare migrant; three records, 14th August 1996, 8th June 2002, 6th September 2007.

Mythimna impura**Smoky Wainscot**

Increasingly common resident; potentially a recent colonist as first record in 1990, the second in 1998, third in 2000 (all singles) then annual from 2002, initially 1–2 increasing to multiple occurrences from 2006 onwards. First & last dates: 5th July; 24th August. Highest total: 13, Schoolton trap, 2nd August 2010.

Mythimna vitellina**Delicate**

Very rare extralimital migrant; one record, 22nd September 2006. Northernmost UK record.

Peridroma saucia**Pearly Underwing**

Rare migrant; recorded in four years, singles 1997, 1999, 2015 and an unprecedented influx of 11 month-nights in 2006 involving several individuals. First & last dates: 22nd September; 24th October.

Agrotis exclamationis**Heart and Dart**

Very rare migrant; one record, 11th June 1992.

Agrotis segetum**Turnip Moth**

Rare migrant; seven records, 28th August 2000, 16th September 2002, 1st September 2005, 22nd, 25th, 29th & 30th September 2006. First & last dates: 28th August; 30th September.

Agrotis ipsilon**Dark Sword-grass**

Relatively common near-annual migrant; mainly attracted to sugar. First & last dates: 9th June; 8th November. Highest total: 38, Schoolton, to sugar, 12th September 2003.

Diarsia mendica**Ingrailed Clay**

Abundant resident; endless variety defies allocation to specific forms. First & last dates: 2nd July; 23rd October. Highest total: 89, Schoolton trap, 28th August 2002.

Diarsia rubi**Small Square-spot**

Common resident; much commoner in-bye with apparently earlier main emergence than in moorland north. First & last dates: 22nd June; 6th September. Highest total: Nine, Schoolton trap, 24th August 2013.

Lycophotia porphyrea**True Lover's Knot**

Abundant resident of moorland north, far less frequent in south. First & last dates: 4th July; 27th August. Highest total: 239, FIBO trap, 10th August 2007.

Rhyacia simulans**Dotted Rustic**

Very rare migrant; two records, 5th September 2004 (first Shetland record for 50 years), 24th August 2015.

Standfussiana lucerneae**Northern Rustic**

Very common resident; most are the dark northern form. First & last dates: 27th June; 15th September. Highest total: 75, Schoolton trap, 2nd August 2007.

Noctua pronuba**Large Yellow Underwing**

Abundant resident, masking any migrant activity, though the only spring record, 17th May 1992, may have been a migrant. First & last dates: 17th June; 23rd October (excludes May record). Highest total: 164, Lower Stoneybrek trap, 3rd July 2007.

Noctua comes**Lesser Yellow Underwing**

Rare migrant; recorded in three years, one September 1996, six moth-nights 2001, one August 2011. First & last dates: 23rd August; 25th September.

***Noctua janthe* Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing**

Very rare migrant; three records, 11th & 22nd August 2006, 20th August 2012.

Eurois occulta**Great Brocade**

Rare migrant; three records of five individuals, three on 14th August 1997, one on 4th August 2004, one on 22nd August 2007. Nationally Scarce B.

Xestia baja**Dotted Clay**

Very rare migrant; one record, 13th August 2015.

Xestia agathina**Heath Rustic**

Very rare migrant; one record, 3rd September 2002.

Xestia xanthographa**Square-spot Rustic**

Abundant resident; Fair Isle's commonest macromoth in late summer and early autumn. First & last dates: 11th July; 22nd October. Highest total: 171, Schoolton trap, 28th August 2002.

Xestia sexstrigata**Six-striped Rustic**

Rare migrant; four records, 3rd August 2004, 2nd September 2005, 30th July & 3rd August 2006.

Xestia c-nigrum**Setaceous Hebrew Character**

Unclear, near annual migrant or under-recorded resident; normally one to two but six in 1993 and three on one night in September 2015. First & last dates: 16th July; 17th September.

Eugnorisma glareosa**Autumnal Rustic**

Abundant resident largely restricted to moorland north; two forms, *f. glareosa* outnumbering *f. edda* approximately 3 to 1. Very occasionally individuals are trapped with a forewing coloration intermediate between the two forms. First & last dates: 3rd August (*glareosa*); 18th September (*edda*). Highest total: 117, FIBO trap, 14th August 2004.

Acknowledgements

A big thank you is extended to all the trap operators past and present, islanders, visitors and other supporters and contributors of records. The publishers of the *Entomologist's Gazette* are warmly acknowledged for permission to use this cut-down version of the paper Riddiford & Young (2017) originally appearing in their journal.

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SOME NON-AVIAN HIGHLIGHTS

Nick Riddiford

Flora & Vegetation

Oysterplant

The 2017 count of the Oysterplants *Mertensia maritima* was conducted on 22nd July. It produced an aggregate count of 548. The 2016 count was 346.

The counts were as follows (*with 2016 counts in parentheses*):

	Small	Medium	Large
Inside MUG enclosure	210 (97)	81 (43)	90 (68)
Outside, north	66 (105)	0 (1)	
Outside, east	20 (0)	0 (0)	
Outside, south	15 (0)	0 (0)	
Outside, west	50 (24)	4 (6)	
Peerie Uri Geo	7 (0)	0 (0)	
Sma Geo	5 (0)	0 (0)	
TOTALS	373 (226)	85 (52)	90 (68)

Key: MUG = Muckle Uri Geo

Recruitment (=small) is still relatively slow - viz 2,220 small in 2007 from a flowering population of less than 150 (large & medium) the year before. In recent years, Twites have discovered the patch as a food source and last autumn other seed eaters such as Brambling, Common Rosefinch and Snow Bunting joined in. Though no threat to the population, these birds may be reducing productivity and slowing population growth.

Oysterplant’s conservation status in the UK is *Near-Threatened (NT)*.

Other notable plants

It was generally a year of population increases for notable plants. The newly established Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* population in Dumlin’s Sink rocketed from 15 plants in its debut year, 2016, to an astonishing 565 in 2017. The Azores Adderstongue *Ophioglossum azoricum* was even more numerous and widespread than the year before, including in habitats not normally associated with the species, such as semi-improved grassland, amongst heather and even growing through a road surface—a feature first noted in 2016. Chickweed Wintergreen *Trientalis europaeus*, normally restricted to a 50-m² patch of prostrate heather in Wirvie suddenly appeared wherever there was heather on the entire north-facing Wirvie slope. Only once before in nearly 40 years of monitoring has such an extension occurred. Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica* is also spreading, probably in response to recent wetter conditions in its marshy grassland habitat.

There was one addition to the Fair Isle flora list, Orpine *Sedum telephium*, with two plants in Boini Mire. It is not clear whether this was an unaided colonisation or incidental arrival with horticultural goods. Two other unexpected plants almost certainly arrived by the latter means. Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis* is a common plant throughout Britain but a plant in full flower at Lower Stonybrek was the first Fair Isle record in more than 70 years. The same comment can be applied to Hogweed *Heracleum spondylium*, which appeared at Upper Stonybrek—last recorded in the 1960s. They presumably arrived accidentally with horticultural goods. The discovery of two Oysterplants, one in flower, at Busta Geo in late August was an exciting development. This is a new site and one which could succeed as the site is not subjected to sheep grazing and the shingle substrate is ideal. In this case colonisation will have been by natural means, as the seeds of the plant are distributed by sea, and the entire beach was washed several times during the winter gales of 2016/17. Seed dispersal by sea also helps Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima* to colonise new sites and indeed one was found alongside the Oysterplants. It occurs from time to time but is also vulnerable to being eaten by sheep.

On the debit side, there has been a marked decrease in the Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* population. This is most notable in Homisdale where formerly the landscape was awash with the yellow and red of their flowers in mid- to late summer. The valley mire habitat has not changed in any great way so other factors, such as changes in climatic conditions, may be impacting on the plant.

Lesser-known plants and animals

Effort continues to fill some of the biodiversity gaps for lesser known biota. Species discovered for the first time included five flies, three aphids, a beetle, a true bug, a booklouse, a nematode and a tick. Several were northernmost UK records. The additions will be mainly previously overlooked species rather than new arrivals to the isle. However, the same cannot be said of the tick. It was the rabbit tick *Ixodes ventralloi*. Fair Isle rabbits are free from this species, a vector for myxomatosis. This particular individual was taken from a cat in August. Its means of reaching the isle is unknown. The cat had never been off the isle to pick it up elsewhere.

Invasives and Pioneers

Last year, it was noted that the Vine Weevil *Otiorhynchus sulcatus*, first detected in 2009, was becoming more frequent. In 2017, it was present in many places and in considerable numbers. Dramatic increases of this type are well known for species introduced to or colonising new areas with few of the diseases, parasites and predators which otherwise keep populations in check.

It has already been noted that certain long-term flora residents have recently begun increasing on the isle or in the case of Bog Asphodel retreating. Subtle gradual shifts in climatic conditions may be a factor. A generally benign summer may have benefited the local midges *Culicoides*. There was generally agreement amongst islanders that the densities of midges in late August far exceeded previous experience. The newly colonising mosquito

Culiseta annulata was less successful. Careful monitoring revealed larvae present in only one site.

The changes detected for some time in the marine environment continue to bring unexpected visitors. Highlights were invasions of the Umbrella Jelly *Eutonia indicans* and Cross Jelly *Staurospora mertensii*. Both hydromedusae are second records for the isle and included substantial numbers of the *Eutonia* in the sea and stranded on North Haven in July. Even more unexpected was the arrival of the Many-ribbed Jellyfish *Aequorea forskalea*. This is a tropical and warm temperate species with few UK sightings. The first, in early August was followed by a succession of arrivals involving small to moderate strandings as late as early November.

Local conditions rather than wider climate change account for Fair Isle's second record of Eel-grass *Zostera marina*. There were a number of detached specimens washed up on beaches in Sompal in the south and South Haven in August. The source is likely to be Orkney where this marine vascular plant grows and the abundance of material washed ashore suggests they were dislodged by gales rather than other factors such as boat anchor disturbance. There is only one previous record, on North Haven beach in September 1982. There is very little suitable habitat for the species to get established around the isle.

A dandelion is a dandelion is a dandelion: not so! Dandelions *Leontodon* are a group with high levels of speciation. In June, Claudia Ferguson-Smyth, an expert in the field, visited. In addition to collecting a series of specimens from different habitats, she accepted an invitation from the school to work with the children on the subject. The Fair Isle dandelion species currently stands at six. We can expect that to increase significantly once Claudia's results come in.

During the winter of 2016/17 all Fair Isle moth data, from various sources and including a full run of FIBO data from 1988, were submitted to Butterfly Conservation's National Moth Monitoring Scheme. In 2018, BC published a 'density' map of records submitted per 10-km square. Fair Isle's HZ27 square was one of only seven UK sites submitting more than 100,000 records. A summary publication of those records (Riddiford & Young 2017 and pages 154–171 in this report) further demonstrated the value of long-term monitoring and the potential of Fair Isle data generally for studies of climate change. Fair Isle records of Dolichopodid flies were also collated and uploaded to the National Biodiversity Network during the year.

Reference

Riddiford, N.J. & Young, M.R. 2017. The moths and butterflies (Lepidoptera) of Fair Isle. *Entomologist's Gazette* 68: 275–308.



ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION AT FIBO

David Parnaby

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.

John Harrison Memorial Fund (JHMF) & Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund (SABF)

Are you a keen birdwatcher aged between 15 and 24, or do you know a keen, young birdwatcher aged between 15 and 24 - if so, please read on as the JHMF and SABF funds provide brilliant opportunities for young birdwatchers to stay at the world-famous Fair Isle Bird Observatory at minimal cost. Indeed, in cases of genuine financial hardship, the JHMF will not only pay for your travel to and from Fair Isle but also pay the special low JHMF accommodation charge (see below). Please make the Administrator aware if your circumstances entitle you to this assistance.

The John Harrison Memorial Fund provides financial assistance in the form of grants to young birdwatchers to enable them to visit Fair Isle and take part in the daily work schedule of the Observatory. It was established in 1968 by Richard Richardson in memory of John Harrison who visited Fair Isle three times before he died at the early age of 19. The Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund honours the memory of Simon Aspinall who visited FIBO several times from 1987 onwards before his early death in 2011. Grants from the JHMF and SABF normally cover the cost of travel by the most economical means possible to the Observatory and back home. Full travel costs will normally only be given for visits of two full weeks or longer.

Whilst at the Observatory awardees are required to pay £10 per day* (with exceptions as above) to cover the cost of three substantial meals a day, bed linen and towels, laundry costs and to offset fuel costs. Awardees are expected to take part in the regular work routine conducted by Observatory staff. Work hours are normally 0900-1800 but may be longer in the seabird breeding season. Work varies depending on the time of year so you are advised to discuss with the warden any particular interest you may have in ringing, migration or seabird work so you can arrange your visit at the appropriate time. Duties may involve some data entry on the Observatory computers, migration census work, ringing, trap repairs, maintenance work, assistance with visitors and the general daily operation of the Observatory. Please ring Susannah or David on 01595 760258 to

find out more about this fantastic opportunity which will give you experiences you will treasure for the rest of your life.

It is possible there may not be room for JHMF/SABF awardees between early September and early October because of pressure on accommodation during this period, but awardees are welcome throughout the rest of the season.

Application forms can be obtained from the Administrator at Fair Isle Bird Observatory (01595 760258 or fiboadministrator@btconnect.com). Completed application forms should then be posted or emailed to The Warden, Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU along with your detailed CV, your phone number, email and the names, addresses and phone numbers of two suitable referees.

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

Other volunteering opportunities

The Obs 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 17 to 24, there is a special rate of £40 per night* (full board) for staying at the Obs as a visitor throughout the year (possibly sharing a single-sex room).

**note, all prices are correct at the time of going to press, but please check the FIBO website for updates*

MY FAIR ISLE EXPERIENCE

26TH AUGUST TO 19TH SEPTEMBER 2017

Tom Gale - recipient of SABF grant

After enjoying my visit to Fair Isle in 2015 so much, I was over the moon to receive the news that my application to return to the Bird Observatory as a volunteer had been accepted. And so, after spending the summer scooping ice cream in Devon, I began the 800-mile journey up to the most remote inhabited island in the UK. Nearly two days later, I was waiting at Grutness for the infamous Good Shepherd to arrive. Despite its reputation, the crossing was relatively calm and provided wonderful views of Sumburgh Head in the sunshine. As the spectacular north cliffs of Fair Isle grew larger as we neared the island, we received a message that an Arctic Warbler had just been found at Chalet, near the Barkland Croft. Several hours later, I was looking at it, as it basked in the sun in front of me, shortly after watching a pod of Risso's Dolphins drift slowly past the South Harbour. What a way to start my visit to the island!

The following day, I got up at 07:00 for the morning trap round. This is a fantastic opportunity to see the Helgoland traps in action, which are not commonly used by ringers or bird observatories on the mainland. I always



Plate 112. Tom Gale, South Light, 13th September 2017. © David Parnaby

felt a great sense of anticipation during the trap round, as it was often an indicator of whether there had been a fall of migrant birds on the island. One of the most memorable moments for me was having the chance to ring a huge female Sparrowhawk that was caught in the Vaadal trap. Another major part of the ringing work during August was Storm Petrel ringing. This involved setting mist nets in the Haven and provided a rare opportunity to see these near-mythical birds up close. I also got the chance to be involved in 'dazzling'—catching birds (mainly waders, like Dunlin and Turnstone) using a torch and hand net.

Most mornings before lunch, I would take part in the daily bird census that the Observatory carries out during the autumn. The island is divided into three sections with the aim of counting the numbers of every species seen, with the exception of certain resident species. As I have found out, Fair Isle is a superb location to witness bird migration and being involved in the censuses is perhaps the best way to do so. It was wonderful seeing birds actually migrating, such as a Honey-buzzard flying south over the lighthouse and a flock of 12 Grey Herons soaring over the South Harbour. One of the major differences I noticed between Fair Isle and mainland Britain was the sheer unpredictability of birding on Fair Isle. Along with this, knowing that I was contributing to a 60-year-old data set that is helping to detect changes in bird migration, made participating in the census work a fantastic experience.

There was also plenty of practical work to get stuck into during my visit. This ranged from repairing fences and Helgoland traps to digging ditches and maintaining the Obs garden. Along with two of the other volunteers, Max and Caitlin, I also made a spiral trap, which was put to use in the garden catching Rock Doves, Starlings and House Sparrows. As well as that, I also got the chance to be involved in some of the breeding bird surveys. At the end of August, a whole-island count of the Eider population was made, which consisted of peering down the various geos and inlets checking for numbers of males, females and immatures. I also enjoyed carrying out the autumn Fair Isle House Sparrow count, which totalled at 154 individuals. This turned out to be harder than you would expect, with large groups of birds often suddenly deciding to bomb off to another part of the island before I'd finished counting them.

I had been lucky enough to receive a grant from the Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund. Volunteering at the Observatory was a wonderful experience and I feel it is an invaluable opportunity for any young birder or naturalist. The Obs staff do an excellent job at involving volunteers in the team, as well as sharing their knowledge about, and enthusiasm for, the birds and wildlife on Fair Isle. This makes it a great way to improve your bird identification skills, as well as general knowledge about birds and conservation. It also provides a chance to meet other like-minded people interested in wildlife and also to get an insight into what life is like on the island. To anyone considering applying to volunteer at the Bird Observatory, I cannot recommend it highly enough—I am already itching to go back!

MY FAIR ISLE EXPERIENCE

10TH TO 26TH AUGUST 2017

Eleanor Stroud - recipient of JHMF grant

When I began my journey to Fair Isle, I had very little idea of what to expect from my trip. I had read about the island, but nothing could have prepared me for the variety of the birdlife or the friendliness of the people that I found there. I feel as though, despite my short stay, I have really become familiar with the island. I have met several of the islanders and I feel as though I have been welcomed.

Fair Isle has a beautiful and dramatic landscape. I was amazed at how fast the weather could change, as demonstrated by the brief storm in my first week. Overnight, what had been a small stream became a raging torrent, but the water drained away equally as fast. There was also some pleasant weather while I was there, allowing me to go swimming in the sea twice!

Assisting with the ringing was one of the activities that I enjoyed the most. I had never handled either Bonxie chicks or Fulmars before I came to Fair Isle, and I never ever suspected that a seabird like Fulmar would ever nest inland! One of the most vivid memories of the trip is of helping to capture the nearly fledged Bonxies while running through particularly boggy areas. I even enjoyed ringing the Fulmar chicks, once I was properly kitted out in old clothes.



Plate 113. Juvenile Great Skua, 22nd August 2017. © Max Hellicar

I have never taken part in censusing before, and although it took me a few days to become accustomed to the local birds and the rough terrain, I soon got into the swing of going out with the wardens. Although I was only on Fair Isle for the start of the migration season, I saw an incredible number of new birds during my short stay. Some, such as the Wood Warbler, were

unexpectedly visible, even snatching flies from the air as we tried to photograph them. I enjoyed seeing the shrikes and the Wryneck, which had even more beautifully cryptic patterning than I had imagined. Operating the Helgoland traps was a new experience as well - I was amazed at how effective they are even in poor weather.



Plate 114. Eleanor Stroud (centre) with Caitlan Tarvet digging Utra scrape, 23rd August 2017. © David Parnaby

Habitat restoration was also a big part of my trip. Although the digging was challenging work, it was very satisfying to see the results of our efforts, and even more satisfying to see the greater numbers of birds which landed on the scrape the next day.

One of the best parts of my experience was getting to work with the wonderful warden team. Everybody at the Obs has a vast knowledge about birds and their identification, and I felt grateful that I have had the chance to come and learn from them. I feel as though my identification of waders has increased ten-fold since I arrived. As well as the warden team, the other volunteers were all very friendly and welcoming, and a joy to work with. The housekeeping team was also excellent, and the food provided by the cooks was incredible!

The barbeque and party on my last night was the cherry on the cake, as I got to meet some more of the residents and listen to some of the local folk singing. Overall, it has been one of the best experiences that I have ever had, and I would love to come and visit Fair Isle again. Thank you for a wonderful stay!

MY FAIR ISLE EXPERIENCE

1ST TO 15TH JULY 2017

Eleanor Grover - recipient of JHMF grant

My first view of Fair Isle was from the swaying deck of the Good Shepherd and when we set foot upon the island our arrival was made official by the singing of a 'Fair Isle Wren'. Many of the islanders had gathered to help us unload and with a warm welcome from Susannah we were immediately made to feel right at home. We met the rest of the FIBO team at the log that night and, with a quick briefing about what tasks we might get up to during the week, our first day was up, filling us with excitement for the days to come.

Our first activity of the week was the 07:00 trap round - not only an enjoyable activity but also an excellent way to wake yourself up in the morning! Another activity that we did throughout the week was monitoring the breeding success of the 'Fair Isle Wren', involving going to every territory on the island searching for fledglings. The two all-day tasks that the Obs team shared out between us were the similar feed watches for Guillemots and Puffins. Other activities that we did with auks included ringing Razorbill chicks at colonies (we went under Sheep Rock with the Zodiac), analysing Puffin samples (which involved measuring dead fish, often after having to re-attach their heads first) and measuring the development of Puffin chicks. Though all enjoyable (maybe the fish less so) working with the Puffin chicks was particularly fun, not least because it involved seeing the cute bundles of feathers and fluff that were the 'pufflings'. We also visited the colonies of the Arctic Terns and gulls and took it in turns to watch Da Water for positive signs of a breeding attempt by the Red-necked Phalaropes.

The events of the trip to the gull colony was unfortunately eclipsed by the event that occurred on route to the colony. Richard spotted a fin and it turned out to be none other than a Killer Whale! They were the first Killer Whales I'd ever seen and words just cannot fully do justice to how much of an amazing experience it was. When Susannah walked into the common room later that evening and calmly announced that the Killer Whales had been re-sighted there was another mad rush as everybody leapt up for the door! This second sighting of the day was even better than the first, with the Killer Whales swimming by much closer - one even came in close to the cliff! It was such a spectacular moment that I doubt I'll ever forget. Best quote of the day goes to Chloé in describing the location of a surfacing whale: "There! Between David and Norway!"

My favourite activity of the fortnight was Storm Petrel ringing, even if sessions did not start until midnight and ended at 03:00 - missing the sleep was definitely worth it! These nights were best because we were always busy -

whether it was ferrying Stormies from the nets, helping with the ringing or releasing the birds. We were catching over 100 new birds a night and one night the Swinhoe's Petrel was caught. Whilst a familiar face for the FIBO team this gorgeous all-black petrel was a lifer for me, so I was very pleased to be able to see it.

Another highlight was when David walked into the common room and announced that a 'greenish warbler' had been caught in the Obs garden mist net. As if this wasn't exciting enough, subsequent DNA analysis proved the bird to be an even-rarer Green Warbler! Seeing such a warbler was an unexpected bonus for me - I hadn't expected to see exciting migrants in early July.

The activity that I didn't really expect to be doing when I volunteered at a bird observatory was Sheep Hill. Most of the island sheep had to be rounded up from the north half of the island to be sheared. This was surprisingly good fun because it involved charging after sheep to try and convince them to run the other way. Once most of the sheep were penned we were even allowed to help with shearing them. At first, I thought it was dangerous for me to handle a pair of over-sized scissors but I soon got the hang of it. I felt rather proud when I finished shearing my first ever sheep - and she seemed none the worse for the experience either.

During Sheep Hill was one of the few times that I got mobbed by skuas - for while I went out of my way to try to avoid disturbing them but the sheep were not quite so considerate! Strangely enough, this was actually an experience that I really enjoyed! I'd only ever seen skuas from a distance before coming to Fair Isle, so to suddenly have several Bonxies swooping round my head was something of a novelty, even if they were furious. Perhaps if it had been later in the year - when the parents were more protective and actually make contact with intruders - it would have been less enjoyable but as it was, seeing Great Skuas dive-bomb merely a few feet above my head was just awesome. Being mobbed by the Arctic Skuas (or 'skooties', as they are known on Fair Isle) was not quite as enjoyable because they attack from behind, which is rather unnerving.

Due to the wide range of activities being undertaken, I was so caught up in enjoying myself that I never noticed how quickly time was passing. My last night on the island was spent Stormie netting - the best way to end such a brilliant stay. Overall, I had a really excellent time, it was such a great experience and I was sad to leave the island and see it steadily shrink into the distance. Fabulous company (and weather) only added to the enjoyment of my stay.

Thanks to all the FIBO staff for having me - I hope I am able to go back again soon!

MY FAIR ISLE EXPERIENCE

10TH AUGUST TO 5TH SEPTEMBER 2017

Max Hellicar - recipient of SABF grant

Fair Isle is a unique and iconic place that had been at the top of my wish list to visit from a very young age. In early March 2017, I received the fantastic news that my application to volunteer on the wardening team at FIBO for 3½ weeks had been approved, and I was ecstatic! After a few more weeks of ploughing through college, I packed my bags, brushed up on the identification of the more challenging far eastern vagrants (I live in hope!), and made the journey north from Essex. Following a slightly rock 'n' roll crossing on the Good Shepherd, I was greeted with a Storm Petrel frolicking in the open water and arriving on Fair Isle on the evening of the 10th August. Wow. I was actually there. The prospect of what was ahead filled me with excitement. I was instantly amazed with the extraordinary scenery, and I would have the privilege of calling this magical island my home for the next 3½ weeks!

My first full day produced my best-ever views of any phalarope - a stunning juvenile Red-necked spinning on Utra - followed by a few hours of data entry learning about Storm Petrel movements. I accompanied Richard Cope, one of two Assistant Wardens, on North Census the next morning as well as proving the first confirmed successful breeding of Linnet on the island. After an afternoon ringing juvenile Great Skuas, a brilliant night of Storm Petrel ringing produced 136 new birds and 26 recaptures. It was fantastic to gain experience ringing Stormies and learn about their incredible large-scale movements as shown by controls from Portugal and Norway that night! The 16th was again spent ringing juvenile Great Skuas and Fulmars and learning to dodge the inevitable oiling by young Fulmars which I became quite used to over the next few days! Another Storm Petrel ringing session overnight produced a beastly Leach's Petrel in the early hours.

The 19th saw a juvenile Woodchat Shrike at Pund which interrupted an afternoon of digging the Obs scrape. I was very pleased to be tasked with a Bonxie monitoring survey on 21st and 22nd August across successful breeding areas to resight darvic-ringed juveniles and establish how many were unringed. The 25th proved to be an excellent day and one of the best days of my stay with a small fall of passerines, truly experiencing a taste of Fair Isle migration. Starting with a cliff-hopping Icterine Warbler at North Gunnawark, a lovely juvenile Red-backed Shrike and a Wood Warbler at Chalet, presumably the lingering Barred Warbler and a fall of commoner drift migrants including two Pied Flycatchers, Redstart, Reed Warbler and, across the island, 50 Willow Warblers and seven Garden Warblers. This magnificent afternoon ended on a high point with a Wryneck trapped in the Plantation

demonstrating its fantastic wry-necking display, something I have long dreamt of seeing. This day was one of the real highlights of my trip.

The afternoon of the 26th hosted a great cetacean twitch which produced around ten Risso's Dolphins lingering, frolicking and tail slapping off the south end of the island, a breath-taking animal which was a new species for me. On the way back to the Obs, Fair Isle's 91st Arctic Warbler was showing very well at Chalet, a great end to a great day. Only the third island record of Rusty-dot Pearl was caught the previous night by Nick Riddiford sparking a mini moth twitch. Two Common Rosefinches together in the Vaadal on the 29th were caught and ringed, providing a unique and fantastic opportunity to see the differences between an adult and juvenile up close in the hand (page 94).

The 30th was an awesome day for visible migration, producing one of the highest-ever Fair Isle counts of Meadow Pipits. Many of these birds ploughed straight out to sea, miraculously not being instantly engulfed by the ominous waves, with many others stopping off for a rest before continuing their journey. It was nice to find the UK's first Lapland Bunting of the autumn on 30th. A Barred Warbler at Chalet on 2nd September was the showiest of the three seen during my stay, with a Black Rustic caught at the Obs moth trap being a nice surprise as it was only the third island record (fourth individual) and a new moth for me.

North Census with fellow-volunteer Tom Gale was rather memorable on the 3rd, starting with four Lapland Buntings and finishing on Buness when Tom raised his binoculars to find Fair Isle's 17th Buff-breasted Sandpiper, a mobile and fresh-in bird. That was not the end of our good luck for the day though, as the evening trap round had one final goodie in store, a superb juvenile Barred Warbler in the Vaadal. Wader dazzling was another new ringing experience for me with two each of Ringed Plover and Dunlin ringed over a couple of nights.

A range of other essential Obs work tasks were undertaken during my stay, including trap repairs and scrape digging on both Utra and by the Obs with other volunteers, as well as creating a small spiral trap for ringing, ringing data entry, ditch digging, library cataloguing, creating leaflets and setting tables. It was great to undertake practical work and contribute to directly improving the habitat for birds.

Fair Isle is a place which completely captivated me and a location like no other. It is a place which I continue to miss dearly and have done ever since leaving, and one which I will definitely be returning to in the near future.

This account is a shortened version of Max's full and illustrated write-up which can be found on the FIBO website.

FIBOT FINANCIAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2017

Mike Wood

FIBO's income in 2017 at just over £218,000 was similar to 2016, which is unsurprising as the guest bed-nights total was very similar and our prices remained the same. However, we made a small loss in 2017 because our staff and food costs keep rising as a result of Living Wage increases and the lower value of the pound.

	2006	2007	2008	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Bed-nights	2,610	3,047	2,977	2,972	2,905	3,147	3,277	3,247	3,188	3,165
Income (£)	99,328	119,400	111,897	146,977	164,011	181,262	191,467	192,102	218,763	218,280

Our target is to maintain the number of revenue-earning guest-nights at around 3,100 per year and we have now achieved that for five consecutive years. Key to achieving this target is the enjoyment, value, comfort and hospitality enjoyed by our guests. Many guests have commented favourably on the quiet, warm and comfortable accommodation, excellent food including (whenever possible) special dietary requirements, brilliant scenic views, well-stocked bar and the unique, friendly ambience of the Observatory. More than that, they have enjoyed a range of different experiences within a few days that is arguably unique.

With scheduled 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. As a further option, there will be flights to and from Orkney on Mondays and Fridays from May to October in 2018.

We have 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 FIBO and we are working hard to ensure we continue to fulfil their requirements.

Please be aware of the grants available from FIBO through the John Harrison Memorial Fund and the Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund and encourage any young (under 25 years old) birdwatchers you know to apply for one or other of these grants.

My personal thanks go to David, Susannah and our seasonal 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 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 contribute massively to the high levels of visitor satisfaction.

Whilst our finances continue to be in a healthy 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 FIBO's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2017 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 2017

Sales Income	2017 (£)	2016(£)	Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2017	
Accommodation & Meals	182,085	180,090	Fixed Assets	31/10/17 (£) 31/10/16 (£)
Shop Sales	11,824	13,854	Tangible Assets (excluding buildings)	68,154 74,490
Bar Sales	24,371	24,819	Investments	0 0
	218,280	218,763		68,154 74,490
Cost of Sales			Current Assets	
Purchases	76,421	76,418	Stocks	25,115 21,562
Wages & Salaries	79,287	75,049	Debtors	69,440 73,712
	155,708	151,467	Cash at bank and in hand	44,123 42,747
Trading Profit	62,572	67,296		138,678 138,021
Other Income			Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(30,998) (34,588)
Interest Received	6,346	5,461	Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)	107,680 103,433
FOFI Subscriptions	6,958	6,303	Total Assets less	
Donations	3,463	3,080	Current Liabilities	175,834 177,923
Grants Received	19,662	21,311	Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(0) (0)
Other Income	0	0		175,834 177,923
	36,429	36,155	Representing:	
Gross Profit	99,001	103,451	Accumulated Surplus	175,834 177,923
Other Expenses			Appeal Reserve	0 0
Administration	10,191	10,852		175,834 177,923
Energy	12,417	12,450		
Establishment	35,405	31,030		
Insurance	19,406	20,818		
Sales & Marketing	3,042	4,330		
Financial & Legal	7,629	8,188		
Depreciation	13,000	13,791		
	101,090	101,459		
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	(2,089)	1,992		

WATER FEATURES

BM Boini Mire
DW Da Water
ELW Easter Lother Water
FD Field Ditch
G Gilsetter
GB Gilly Burn
GW Golden Water
H Hornisdale
HB Hegri Burn
KM Kirki Mire
MB Meadow Burn
MV Mire o' Vatnagard
OS Obs Scrape
SM Suka Mire
US Utra Scrape
V Vaadal
WB Wirvie Burn
W Walli Burn

MAIN OBS TRAPS

DD Double Dyke
G Gully
HD Hjon Dyke
SD Single Dyke
RS Roadside
P Plantation
V Vaadal
NG North Grind

TOILETS

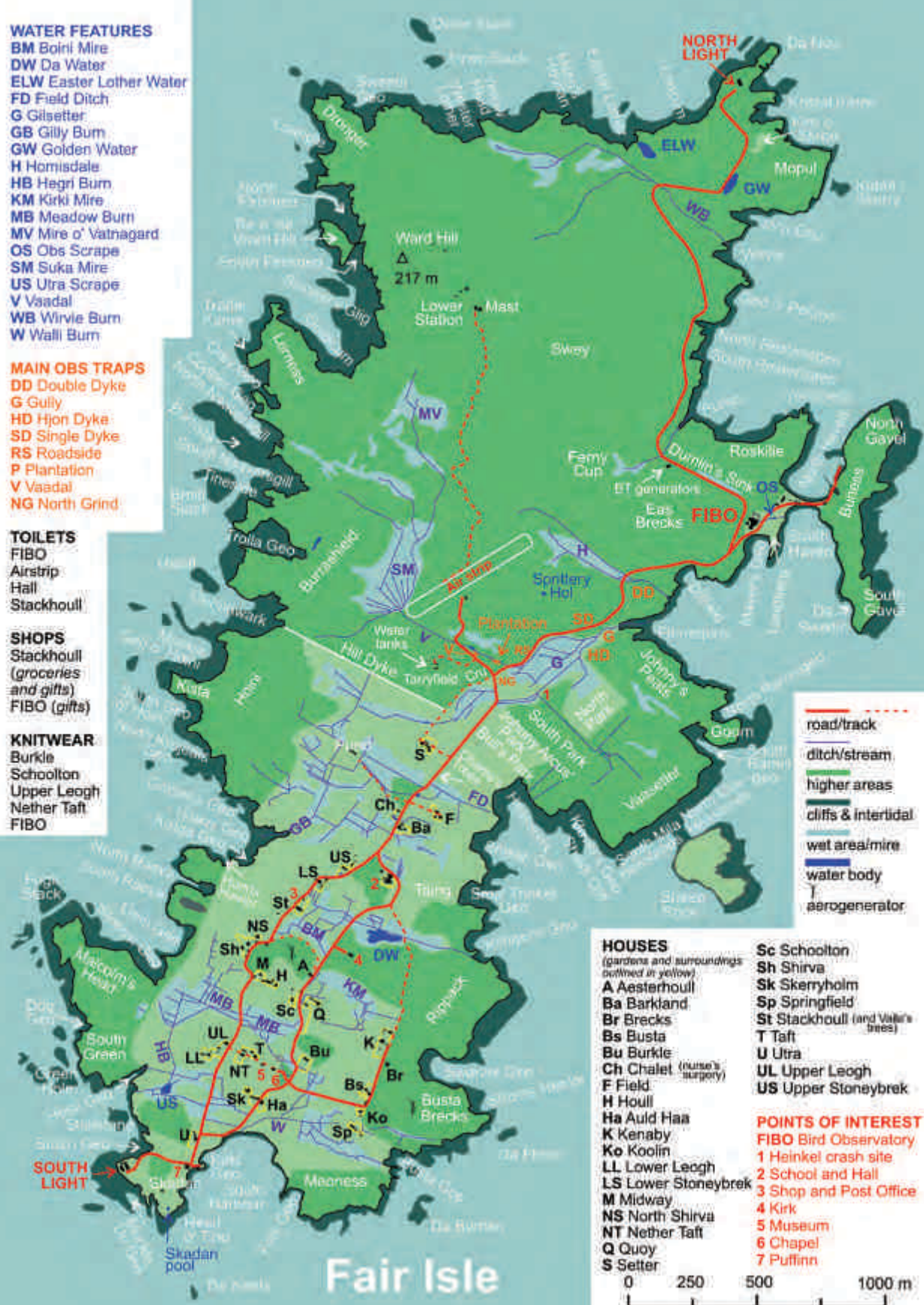
FIBO
Airstrip
Hall
Stackhoull

SHOPS

Stackhoull
(groceries
and gifts)
FIBO (gifts)

KNITWEAR

Burkle
Schoolton
Upper Leogh
Nether Taft
FIBO



HOUSES

(gardens and surroundings
outlined in yellow)
A Aesterhoull
Ba Barkland
Br Brecks
Bs Busta
Bu Burkle
Ch Chalet (nurse's
surgery)
F Field
H Houll
Ha Auld Haa
K Kenaby
Ko Koolin
LL Lower Leogh
LS Lower Stoneybrek
M Midway
NS North Shirva
NT Nether Taft
Q Quoy
S Setter

Sc Schoolton
Sh Shirva
Sk Skerryholm
Sp Springfield
St Stackhoull (and Valler's
trees)
T Taft
U Utra
UL Upper Leogh
US Upper Stoneybrek

POINTS OF INTEREST

FIBO Bird Observatory
1 Heinkel crash site
2 School and Hall
3 Shop and Post Office
4 Kirk
5 Museum
6 Chapel
7 Puffinn

Fair Isle

0 250 500 1000 m

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 2017. All decisions follow those of the BBRC and BOURC (although note that the totals include all 2017 records, which may remain subject to ratification by the relevant committee), with the main list comprising all species on Categories A–C, with those species on Category D (uncertain origin) and E (presumed escapes), along with one extinct species included at the end of the list for completeness.

With the addition of Glaucous-winged Gull and Green Warbler, the Fair Isle list stands at 390 at the end of 2017. This includes updates from the adoption of IOC taxonomy, notably the inclusion of Taiga Bean Goose and Eastern Yellow Wagtail (Fair Isle boasts the first British record of the latter species), the lumping of ‘Hudsonian Whimbrel’ with Whimbrel and the loss of ‘Isabelline Shrike’ with none of the four Fair Isle records being currently acceptable as either Red-tailed or Daurian Shrike.

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

No.	Species	Status	Records (individuals)				
1	Brent Goose	R	52 (101) a	28	Lesser Scaup	V	1
2	Canada Goose	R	34 (86)	29	Steller's Eider	V	1
3	Barnacle Goose	FM		30	King Eider	V	14
4	Greylag Goose	CM		31	Eider	FM	
5	Taiga Bean Goose	V	9 (15) b	32	Harlequin Duck	V	2 (3)
6	Pink-footed Goose	CM		33	Surf Scoter	V	2
7	Tundra Bean Goose	R	10 (144) b	34	Velvet Scoter	R	128 (180)
8	White-fronted Goose	S		35	Common Scoter	RM	
9	Mute Swan	V	11 (15)	36	Long-tailed Duck	RM	
10	Bewick's Swan	V	6 (17)	37	Goldeneye	RM	
11	Whooper Swan	FM		38	Smew	V	7
12	Shelduck	S		39	Goosander	R	101 (138)
13	Mandarin Duck	V	3	40	Red-breasted Merganser	RM	
14	Garganey	V	13 (23)	41	Quail	S	
15	Shoveler	S		42	Red-throated Diver	RM	
16	Gadwall	R	54 (83)	43	Black-throated Diver	V	5
17	Wigeon	FM		44	Great Northern Diver	S	
18	American Wigeon	V	1	45	White-billed Diver	V	4
19	Mallard	RM		46	Black-browed Albatross	V	1 c
20	Black Duck	V	1	47	Storm Petrel	CM	
21	Pintail	S		48	Swinhoe's Petrel	V	2
22	Teal	FM		49	Leach's Petrel	SM	
23	Green-winged Teal	V	3	50	Fulmar	CM	
24	Pochard	R	58 (74)	51	Cory's Shearwater	V	3 (90)
25	Ring-necked Duck	V	2	52	Sooty Shearwater	RM	
26	Tufted Duck	RM		53	Great Shearwater	V	16 (140)
27	Scaup	S	104 (138)	54	Manx Shearwater	S	
				55	Little Grebe	R	42

56	Red-necked Grebe	V	22 (25)	121	Purple Sandpiper	FM	
57	Great Crested Grebe	V	14 (15)	122	Baird's Sandpiper	V	4
58	Slavonian Grebe	S		123	Little Stint	S	
59	White Stork	V	4	124	White-rumped Sandpiper	V	5
60	Glossy Ibis	V	2 (6)	125	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	V	18 (19)
61	Little Bittern	V	1	126	Pectoral Sandpiper	R	35
62	Night-heron	V	2	127	Semipalmated Sandpiper	V	3
63	Grey Heron	FM		128	Long-billed Dowitcher	V	2
64	Purple Heron	V	3	129	Woodcock	FM	
65	Great White Egret	V	1	130	Jack Snipe	FM	
66	Little Egret	V	2	131	Great Snipe	R	46
67	Gannet	CM		132	Snipe	CM	
68	Shag	CM		133	Terek Sandpiper	V	1
69	Cormorant	RM		134	Red-necked Phalarope	V	26 (34) e
70	Osprey	S	132	135	Grey Phalarope	R	48
71	Honey-buzzard	R	58 (61)	136	Common Sandpiper	FM	
72	Golden Eagle	V	1	137	Spotted Sandpiper	V	1
73	Sparrowhawk	RM		138	Green Sandpiper	RM	
74	Goshawk	V	6	139	Solitary Sandpiper	V	1
75	Marsh Harrier	R	54	140	Lesser Yellowlegs	V	3
76	Hen Harrier	S		141	Redshank	CM	
77	Pallid Harrier	V	5	142	Wood Sandpiper	S	
78	Montagu's Harrier	V	4 d	143	Spotted Redshank	R	106 (120)
79	Red Kite	V	8	144	Greenshank	RM	
80	Black Kite	V	1	145	Collared Pratincole	V	2
81	White-tailed Eagle	V	11	146	Black-winged Pratincole	V	1
82	Rough-legged Buzzard	V	46 (49)	147	Kittiwake	CM	
83	Buzzard	R		148	Ivory Gull	V	2
84	Great Bustard	V	1	149	Sabine's Gull	V	5
85	Little Bustard	V	1	150	Black-headed Gull	FM	
86	Water Rail	RM		151	Little Gull	R	33
87	Corncrake	S		152	Laughing Gull	V	2
88	Little Crane	V	1	153	Mediterranean Gull	V	2
89	Baillon's Crane	V	2	154	Common Gull	CM	
90	Spotted Crane	R	51	155	Ring-billed Gull	V	4
91	Moorhen	S		156	Great Black-backed Gull	CM	
92	Coot	R	93	157	Glaucous-winged Gull	V	1
93	Sandhill Crane	V	1	158	Glaucous Gull	RM	
94	Crane	R	29 (39)	159	Iceland Gull	S	
95	Stone-curlew	V	8	160	Herring Gull	CM	
96	Oystercatcher	FM		161	Lesser Black-backed Gull	FM	
97	Avocet	V	1	162	Gull-billed Tern	V	1
98	Lapwing	FM		163	Caspian Tern	V	2
99	Golden Plover	FM		164	Sandwich Tern	S	
100	Pacific Golden Plover	V	2	165	Bridled Tern	V	1
101	American Golden Plover	V	11	166	Roseate Tern	V	4 (5)
102	Grey Plover	R		167	Common Tern	RM	
103	Ringed Plover	FM		168	Arctic Tern	FM	
104	Little Ringed Plover	V	6	169	White-winged Black Tern	V	4
105	Kentish Plover	V	1	170	Black Tern	V	2
106	Caspian Plover	V	1	171	Great Skua	FM	
107	Dotterel	S	105 (194)	172	Pomarine Skua	R	102 (132)
108	Upland Sandpiper	V	2	173	Arctic Skua	FM	
109	Whimbrel	FM		174	Long-tailed Skua	R	52 (108)
110	Curlew	FM		175	Little Auk	RM	
111	Bar-tailed Godwit	S		176	Brünnich's Guillemot	V	1
112	Black-tailed Godwit	S		177	Common Guillemot	CM	
113	Turnstone	CM		178	Razorbill	CM	
114	Knot	RM		179	Black Guillemot	FM	
115	Ruff	RM		180	Puffin	CM	
116	Curlew Sandpiper	R	61 (144)	181	Pallas's Sandgrouse	V	1 (40)
117	Temminck's Stint	V	19	182	Rock Dove	FM	
118	Red-necked Stint	V	1	183	Stock Dove	S	
119	Sanderling	FM		184	Woodpigeon	FM	
120	Dunlin	FM		185	Turtle Dove	S	

186	Oriental Turtle Dove	V	1	251	Arctic Warbler	R	92
187	Collared Dove	FM		252	Green Warbler	V	1
188	Cuckoo	SM		253	Greenish Warbler	R	54
189	Barn Owl	V	6	254	Great Reed Warbler	V	14
190	Scops Owl	V	2	255	Aquatic Warbler	V	38
191	Snowy Owl	V	23 (24)	256	Sedge Warbler	FM	
192	Long-eared Owl	RM		257	Paddyfield Warbler	R	25
193	Short-eared Owl	RM		258	Blyth's Reed Warbler	R	47
194	Nightjar	V	30	259	Reed Warbler	RM	
195	Alpine Swift	V	5	260	Marsh Warbler	S	
196	Swift	FM		261	Thick-billed Warbler	V	2
197	Pallid Swift	V	1	262	Booted Warbler	V	15
198	Little Swift	V	1	263	Sykes's Warbler	V	3
199	Roller	V	1	264	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	V	3
200	Kingfisher	V	1	265	Melodious Warbler	V	19
201	Bee-eater	V	8 (10)	266	Icterine Warbler	RM	
202	Hoopoe	R	41	267	Grasshopper Warbler	RM	
203	Wryneck	RM		268	River Warbler	V	17
204	Great Spotted Woodpecker	S		269	Savi's Warbler	V	7
205	Lesser Kestrel	V	1	270	Lanceolated Warbler	S	95
206	Kestrel	RM		271	Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	R	25
207	American Kestrel	V	1	272	Blackcap	CM	
208	Red-footed Falcon	V	5	273	Garden Warbler	FM	
209	Merlin	RM		274	Barred Warbler	RM	
210	Hobby	R	62	275	Lesser Whitethroat	FM	
211	Gyr Falcon	V	13	276	Whitethroat	FM	
212	Peregrine	RM		277	Dartford Warbler	V	1
213	Brown Shrike	V	1	278	Subalpine Warbler	R	97
214	Red-backed Shrike	RM		279	Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler	V	2
215	Lesser Grey Shrike	V	20 (21)	280	Sardinian Warbler	V	2
216	Great Grey Shrike	S		281	Firecrest	V	9
217	Southern Grey Shrike	V	2	282	Goldcrest	FM	
218	Woodchat Shrike	V	32	283	Wren	RM	
219	Red-eyed Vireo	V	1	284	Treecreeper	V	10
220	Golden Oriole	R	48	285	Rose-coloured Starling	R	46
221	Magpie	V	1	286	Starling	CM	
222	Jackdaw	S		287	Siberian Thrush	V	2
223	Rook	RM		288	White's Thrush	V	15
224	Carrion Crow	FM		289	Grey-cheeked Thrush	V	5
225	Hooded Crow	RM		290	Swainson's Thrush	V	2
226	Raven	RM		291	Hermit Thrush	V	3
227	Waxwing	S		292	Ring Ouzel	FM	
228	Coal Tit	V	7	293	Blackbird	CM	
229	Blue Tit	V	13 (23)	294	Eye-browed Thrush	V	2
230	Great Tit	R	41 (55)	295	Black-throated Thrush	V	14
231	Woodlark	V	53 (70) a	296	Dusky Thrush	V	1
232	Skylark	CM		297	Fieldfare	CM	
233	Crested Lark	V	1	298	Redwing	CM	
234	Shore Lark	R		299	Song Thrush	CM	
235	Short-toed Lark	S	164 (179)	300	Mistle Thrush	RM	
236	Bimaculated Lark	V	1	301	Spotted Flycatcher	FM	
237	Calandra Lark	V	6	302	Asian Brown Flycatcher	V	2
238	Sand Martin	RM		303	Robin	CM	
239	Swallow	FM		304	Rufous-tailed Robin	V	1
240	House Martin	FM		305	Bluethroat	RM	
241	Red-rumped Swallow	V	11	306	Thrush Nightingale	R	63
242	Willow Warbler	CM		307	Nightingale	R	56
243	Chiffchaff	FM		308	Siberian Rubythroat	V	7
244	Western Bonelli's Warbler	V	4 f	309	Red-flanked Bluetail	V	17
245	Wood Warbler	RM		310	Pied Flycatcher	FM	
246	Dusky Warbler	V	18	311	Collared Flycatcher	V	7
247	Radde's Warbler	V	8	312	Red-breasted Flycatcher	S	
248	Pallas's Warbler	V	24 (40)	313	Black Redstart	RM	
249	Yellow-browed Warbler	RM		314	Redstart	FM	
250	Hume's Warbler	V	3	315	Rock Thrush	V	3

316	Whinchat	FM	
317	Stonechat	S	
318	Siberian Stonechat	V	2 g
319	Wheatear	CM	
320	Isabelline Wheatear	V	1
321	Desert Wheatear	V	5
322	Black-eared Wheatear	V	5
323	Pied Wheatear	V	1
324	Dipper	R	37
325	House Sparrow		
326	Tree Sparrow	S	
327	Alpine Accentor	V	2
328	Siberian Accentor	V	2
329	Duncock	FM	
330	Yellow Wagtail	RM	
331	Eastern Yellow Wagtail	V	1
332	Citrine Wagtail	S	77
333	Grey Wagtail	S	
334	Pied Wagtail	FM	
335	Richard's Pipit	S	
336	Blyth's Pipit	V	4
337	Tawny Pipit	V	18
338	Meadow Pipit	CM	
339	Tree Pipit	RM	
340	Olive-backed Pipit	S	110
341	Pechora Pipit	R	44
342	Red-throated Pipit	R	91
343	Buff-bellied Pipit	V	4
344	Rock Pipit	FM	
345	Chaffinch	FM	
346	Brambling	FM	
347	Hawfinch	S	127 (142)
348	Bullfinch	S	
349	Common Rosefinch	RM	
350	Greenfinch	RM	
351	Twite	FM	
352	Linnet	RM	
353	Common Redpoll	FM	
354	Lesser Redpoll	S	
355	Arctic Redpoll	R	94
356	Parrot Crossbill	V	6 (68)
357	Crossbill	RM	
358	Two-barred Crossbill	R	28 (59)
359	Goldfinch	S	
360	Citril Finch	V	1
361	Serin	V	3
362	Siskin	FM	
363	Tennessee Warbler	V	2
364	Magnolia Warbler	V	1
365	Blackburnian Warbler	V	1
366	Blackpoll Warbler	V	2
367	Yellow-rumped Warbler	V	2
368	Bobolink	V	1
369	Baltimore Oriole	V	1
370	Brown-headed Cowbird	V	1
371	Corn Bunting	R	
372	Yellowhammer	RM	
373	Pine Bunting	V	13
374	Ortolan Bunting	S	
375	Cretzschmar's Bunting	V	3
376	Chestnut-eared Bunting	V	1
377	Little Bunting	S	
378	Yellow-browed Bunting	V	1
379	Rustic Bunting	R	136
380	Yellow-breasted Bunting	R	103

381	Black-headed Bunting	V	26
382	Black-faced Bunting	V	1
383	Pallas's Reed Bunting	V	2
384	Reed Bunting	FM	
385	Song Sparrow	V	3
386	White-crowned Sparrow	V	1
387	White-throated Sparrow	V	5
388	Savannah Sparrow	V	2
389	Lapland Bunting	FM	
390	Snow Bunting	FM	

Not identified to species

Daurian/Turkestan Shrike	V	4
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Category D

Daurian Starling		1
Red-headed Bunting		1

Category E

Red-breasted Goose		1
Bar-headed Goose		4 (9)
Black Swan		1
Wood Duck		1
Lanner Falcon		1
Saker Falcon		1 h
Waxwing		1
White-shouldered Starling		1
Chinese Grosbeak		1
Long-tailed Rosefinch		1
Pallas's Rosefinch		1
Chestnut Bunting		2
Black-headed Bunting		5
Red-headed Bunting		c.48
Yellow-headed Blackbird		1
Black-headed Grosbeak		1
Indigo Bunting		2
Lazuli Bunting		2
Varied Bunting		1
Painted Bunting		1

Other records

Turtle Dove x Barbary Dove		1
House Finch		2 i

Extinct

Great Auk		1
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Notes

- Since 1948 only
- Plus another 21 records of 63 unidentified bean geese
- Plus an unidentified albatross in 1949
- One not submitted
- Including three fledged juveniles
- Also a bonelli's warbler sp. in 1992
- Plus another 44 records of Siberian/Stejneger's Stonechat
- Three other records are thought to be this species or hybrid falcons
- Both records refer to probable *Carpodacus* finches, but neither accepted as this species



Plate 116. Sarah Harris (BTO), Obs, 22nd June 2017. © David Parnaby



