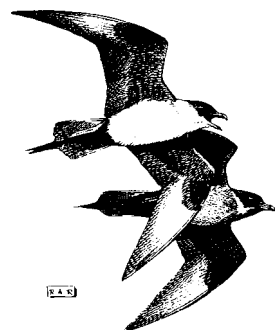




# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 2020



FAIR



**Plate 1.** The northern cliffs looking towards Easter Lother Water and North Light (with Georgia Platt), 28th June 2020. © Alex Penn



**Plate 2.** Alex Penn and Dan Gornall photographing a juvenile Crossbill, Plantation, 5th July 2020. © Georgia Platt



# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY REPORT NO. 72 (2020)

Editor - Ian Andrews assisted by Barry Nightingale

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Cover photograph. Oystercatcher, Muckle Uri Geo, 21st June 2020. © Alex Penn

Published in October 2021 by: Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU.

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



# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST (FIBOT)

A company limited by guarantee.

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



Plate 3. Mavers Cup (before Obs 2 was built) and Sheep Rock, October 1968. © George Waterston/FIBO Archives

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David Okill (*Vice-Chairman*)

Mike Wood (*Director of Finance*)

Ian Andrews, Alexander Bennett, Mark Bolton, Ian Cowgill, Pete Ellis, Karen Hall, Paul Harvey, Fiona Mitchell (to August 2020), Jane Reid, Kerri Whiteside.

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**Administrator:** Susannah Parnaby

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**ISSN 0427-9190**



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

### Douglas Barr

Just as we were getting used to operating without an Obs building along came a pandemic to add to the mix. So, 2020 became another year to remember for all the wrong reasons in the history of FIBOT.

We were no different to anyone else in the world in suffering from the catastrophic effects of COVID-19. Fair Isle understandably went into lockdown for several months and this impacted us considerably in our ability to carry out the works of the Obs. We were unable to have our seasonal staff in place for the start of the season, but eventually were able to get them on the Isle in early June.

This was certainly not what was envisaged for Alex Penn and Dan Gornall who joined us as Assistant Wardens and Georgia Platt as Ranger, all of whom joined us for the first time (Plate 4). It was only due to considerable work undertaken by my fellow Directors, together with the assistance of NorthLink and Airtask, that we were able to get them on the Isle. I would like to thank them all for enabling us to do this in unprecedented circumstances.

Once more, due to the continuing support provided to us by the NTS, the seasonal staff were accommodated in the South Lighthouse. It wasn't long before they hit the ground running carrying out the work of the Obs. Without them, we were unable to carry out a spring census, but after their arrival we did complete most of the seabird work and then a full autumn census. We thank Nature Scot for their continued funding of the Ranger post.

A number of projects that we were involved in, or were due to commence, were unfortunately put on hold in part due to the limitations imposed by COVID-19. These will however either be restarted or begin in due course and long-term we will ensure that nothing is lost. One project that did get underway, thanks principally to the involvement of our Director Mark Bolton, and Dan and Glen Tyler, was nocturnal migration sound recording. It will be fascinating to see what this unearths in the coming years.

Plate 4. Dan Gornall, Alex Penn and Georgia Platt, Tor o' Ward Hill, 9th July 2020. © David Parnaby



Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the limitations placed upon us for accommodation due to the fire, we were unable to welcome any volunteers to assist the Warden and seasonal staff. The assistance the JHMF and SABF funds provide in allowing young volunteers to visit and work with us is an important aspect of the Obs ethos and allows us to encourage and develop the next generation of conservationists (see page 137). It is something that we are keen to make available again as soon as we possibly can.

Of course, on top of all of this we had the small matter of rebuilding the Observatory! This occupied a significant part of the Directors' time, all of which is given on a voluntary basis. Significant progress was made in securing the relevant professional team to take this forward, a key part of which was the employment of a Project Manager in Susan Clark. We are grateful to the financial assistance provided to us for this by Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Part of Susan's remit also includes the production of a Fair Isle wide tourism action plan which it is envisaged will assist in developing further the tourist industry on Fair Isle which forms an important part of the Isle's economy.

We welcomed Ann Cleaves as a Patron of the Observatory. Ann's assistance will be invaluable in maintaining the profile of the Observatory and the Isle in the public's eye.

Funding opportunities were obviously reduced, with funds understandably being prioritised to deal with all the issues arising from COVID-19. However, we made significant progress in our funding applications which, together with the monies to be received from our Insurers, in respect of the fire. The huge response to our Rebuild Appeal launched in August will enable us to move the rebuild forward once we secure a builder, which will be as soon as we possibly can.

We were greatly assisted in promoting the Public Appeal by videos made by Ann Cleaves, Douglas Henshall and Chris Packham which promoted it worldwide. Furthermore, a public auction which we held in the run up to Christmas was extremely successful thanks to the many

generous donations we received and the bank accounts of the successful bidders!

By the end of 2020, with your generosity, we had raised £509,600 towards our target of £650,000. We thank everyone who has donated to the Appeal.

This total was the more remarkable given the lack of an in-person Rutland Birdfair in August 2020, removing the chance to launch the appeal there and for Fair Isle enthusiasts to meet at our stand. We thank David Parkin for talking on our behalf at the virtual Birdfair.

In parallel with the rebuild, we are also undertaking a full-scale review of the operations of the Obs. This is to ensure we remain compliant with the ever-increasing regulatory requirements we face and also that we don't become complacent given the opportunities that are always opening up which allow us to become more efficient in what we do. This by its very nature will be lengthy process which will take several years to complete but we will undoubtedly reap the benefits of it for many years to come.

During 2020, John Ginnever continued his work to rebuild the Obs library that was lost in the fire. The fruits of his labours will be much appreciated by all who visit the new Obs over forthcoming years. Our thanks go to the donors and John, as co-ordinator.

On the birding front, COVID-19 clearly impacted our work and hindered further the ability of birders to visit the Isle. The lack of birders was marked and although I was fortunate enough to visit, it was commented upon by a number of islanders how this paucity of visitors was adversely affecting the Isle.

The loss of the spring census and reduced seabird work was unfortunate; however, it will not unduly affect our long-term scientific studies in these areas of ornithology. As in recent years, the seabird breeding season brought mixed fortunes (see pages 102 for details). Gannet, Kittiwake, Common Guillemot and Razorbill populations all increased on 2019, but many other species decreased in number. Productivity however was generally good.





Plate 5. The FIBOT Board of Directors, virtual meeting, 6th June 2020, (from top left): David Okill, Ian Andrews, Karen Hall, Ian Cowgill, Alexander Bennett, Mike Wood, Pete Ellis, Susannah Parnaby (Administrator), Jane Reid, Paul Harvey, Roy Dennis, Douglas Barr, Fiona Mitchell, Mark Bolton, Kerri Whiteside (David Parnaby was also present).

Of the more unusual breeding records, a pair of 'Mealy Redpolls' nested for the first time on the Isle (in the Obs garden), Redwings nested for only the second time (first in 1935) and Red-necked Phalaropes bred again (as they have annually since 2017). Some scarce migrants also had a good year with Little Bunting and Red-breasted Flycatcher both equalling their record day counts of five. As ever, there was a number of good rarities such as Calandra Lark, Green Warbler and White's Thrush - are these the new Fair Isle specialties? Our first spring Booted Warbler (see pages 113), fifth Western Bonelli's Warbler (pages 115) and third Brown Shrike (pages 117) were also highlights in 2020. Overall, a species total for the year of 215 was excellent given the circumstances.

We welcomed Ann Cleaves as Patron and videos by Ann and also Chris Packham were aired on our website. Ann has also kindly donated all the worldwide royalties for the reprint of her novel *Blue Lightning* which is greatly appreciated.

The workload of the Directors has undoubtedly increased for a variety of reasons not least the rebuild process. Without this work, which is all

voluntary, the Obs simply wouldn't exist. I would like to thank them all for this and in particular the support they have given me throughout the year.

The Directors met in person in Aberdeen in January, but the year's eight other Directors' Meetings (including the AGM) were all conducted by means of online video conferencing (Plate 5). Virtual meetings will become a regular feature in the future, with only occasional in-person meetings.

During the year, Fiona Mitchell stood down as a Director. Can I on behalf of the Trust thank her for her contributions through many years of service.

Can I also on behalf of the Trust thank both David and Susannah, our long-serving Warden and Administrator, for all their work during the year.

Despite some hurdles in 2020, looking forward there is a lot to be optimistic about the future of the Obs and the new building will be a cornerstone of this. I'm sure it won't be long before we are welcoming the return of visitors to the Obs when we can all once more enjoy the delights of birding on Fair Isle.

### Eileen Thomson, Houll

I will start in the same manner as anyone writing a review of 2020, by pondering if January and February of that year ever happened - all we can remember is from March onwards, for very memorable and well-documented reasons.

That said, we did start 2020 with the same hopes and aspirations as ever. The New Year rung in with the age-old tradition of first-footing, or more specifically, *guising*, with the young and not-so-young of the Isle dressing up and taking their occasionally ramshackle troupes around the houses to sing, dance and make merry. Fair Isle folk know how to celebrate and brighten up the long winter nights, and the festive season is always special as we have more time to spend with friends and family who we don't always have time to see during the busier months.

There can often be a minor exodus from the Isle in late January through February, and again that was the case in 2020 with several families making use of the quieter time to get away for much-needed breaks and useful time on the mainland. I think everyone would have gone — even to the optician and bank — had we known about the impending lockdown and closure.

When the news broke of the new virus in China, we really did feel safely far away up here off the coast of some small islands, off the coast of a small country. But as we all know it got closer and closer and by April a significant number of cases of COVID were found in Shetland. We had lockdown just as elsewhere, and it felt very necessary when we were only a short flight or boat trip away from people who were seriously ill with the virus. Complacency was not an option as many of our valued community members were deemed high risk, and to evacuate someone suffering from the virus would have been nigh on impossible. Large RAF planes came to collect patients from Sumburgh to transfer to intensive

care on more than one occasion, but our small airstrip would not have accommodated them had there been the need in an emergency. Thankfully, though, it was not necessary and as I write, now in May 2021, we are still yet to have a single case of the virus in Fair Isle and are incredibly proud of that. Our lives were affected but we really have been in one of the best possible places to spend such a time. With 50 or so folk in the Isle, there was always a place to go for a walk without having to swerve off the road to 'social distance' as in towns. Personally, I took the opportunity to walk more and rediscover parts of the Isle that I hadn't been to for a long time - there is 26 miles of coastline, so plenty to see. The stunning views and ever-changing flora and fauna make for interesting walks all year round, but I find it especially good on an early summer evening when the wildflowers are at their best.

Here we were rather cut off from the outside world, with our flights and ferry service only taking the most essential travellers, and those were few and far between. The lifeline flight service maintained a weekly flight, regardless of the lack of passengers, to ensure that mail, prescriptions and medical supplies, fresh goods and other necessities could get to us. It became apparent that we were at the end of a very long supply chain when supplies of toilet roll and flour started to run low, but with great credit to Robert and Fiona at Stackhoull Stores, we never felt in danger of missing out on essentials and we could even buy things here that friends on the Mainland could not find! On one occasion a lady here posted a packet of bakers' yeast to a sister in Scotland, such was the shortage there! Our ferry, the Good Shepherd, could no longer take passengers as it is too small for social distancing but the crew ably continued their service, bringing us our fuel, mail, animal feed, machinery and of course the freight arriving for the shop - very much a lifeline service too.



Of course, many usual Fair Isle events could not happen - no visitors, no cruise ships and even the island community meetings had to move to the now ubiquitous Zoom. However, as restrictions lifted, we enjoyed the visits of several artists taking up residencies at Lower Leogh, the small duck-egg croft-house in the south of the Isle. Painters, poets, knitters, weavers and more came to find inspiration in Fair Isle and left with plenty of it, as well as many friendships and hopes to return here as soon as possible. Seeing new friendly faces and a handful of returning visitors lifted the spirits and helped us to feel 'normal'.

The Isle is undergoing major works at Tirryfield, where Scottish Water have been implementing a major upgrade. The visiting workers, along with local folk, have been working hard to get the job done, especially as much of the work was delayed in lockdown.

We enjoyed a fine spring and summer in 2020, with plenty of sunshine and warm days, and with other distractions in short supply the hay parks were cut earlier than in recent years and provided a good supply of hay and haylage for the sheep in the winter to come. Cutting, turning and baling still had to be done so folk came together to help, enjoying a little socially distanced community time whilst following the safety guidelines. The good spring made for an easier lambing season too and many Fair Isle crofters saw excellent prices for their lambs come autumn. Hundreds of lambs are shipped out to the marts in Shetland each year and often command high prices but 2020 was exceptional. What a good time to lift the spirits of hard-working crofters.

Our nurse Vicky and her husband Bob decided to head for the mainland of Scotland in October of 2020, and we wished them well in their new adventures. NHS Shetland is looking at new ways to provide us with the essential nursing care we need, so we look forward to seeing how this comes to fruition soon. In the meantime, we have been cared for by a number of relief nurses - all different, all interesting and all showing a high level of experience, which is so important here.



Plate 6. North Haven, 18th June 2020.  
© Eileen Thomson

Fair Isle knitters had a quieter summer as most sales are made in person from visitors looking for an authentic Fair Isle souvenir. Some took to the internet to boost sales, including Marie Bruhat of Taft who launched her first online collection of beautiful Fair Isle knitwear in late 2020. Marie and partner Thomas have big plans for the abandoned homestead on the Pund croft and we look forward to seeing that part of Fair Isle coming to life in the coming years.

Back to winter and it was a quiet one, with time to reflect again on a strange year but also to be appreciative of the good situation in which most of us find ourselves here. Fair Isle has remained healthy and is looking forward to seeing you all - friends, family and visitors - you will all be most welcome!

## RARITIES BY MONTH



2020 sightings



A selection of vagrant and rare species photographed in 2020 are reproduced here. A complete diary of sightings during the year can be found on our website at: [www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk/2020](http://www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk/2020)



**Plate 7.** Song Sparrow, Vaadal Reservoir, April 2020. The fifth Fair Isle record of this North American sparrow.  
© David Parnaby



**Plate 8.** Stone-curlew, Chatham's Land, 26th May 2020. The ninth Fair Isle record. © David Parnaby



**Plate 9.** Red-rumped Swallow, Field Ditch, 31st May 2020. The 14th record for the Isle. © David Parnaby





**Plate 10.** Hobby, School Brae, 1st June. The second of two spring records. © David Parnaby



**Plate 11.** Blyth's Reed Warbler, Schoolhouse, 8th June 2020. The last of four spring records in 2020. © David Parnaby



**Plate 12.** Rose-coloured Starling, Utra, 8th June 2020. The second bird of the spring. © Alex Penn



Plate 13. River Warbler, Meadow Burn, 9th June 2020. The 20th record for the Isle. © Alex Penn



Plate 14. Thrush Nightingale, Schoolhouse, 13th June 2020. The first of three records in the year. © David Parnaby



Plate 15. Greenish Warbler, Schoolhouse, 15th June 2020. © Daniel Gornall



Plate 16. Green Warbler, Vaila's Trees, 16th June 2020. Fair Isle's second record. © Alex Penn





**Plate 17.** Crane (with Oystercatchers), over the School, 22nd June 2020. © David Parnaby



**Plate 18.** Calandra Lark, Bergaroo (west of North Light), 22nd June 2020. FIBO's seventh record. © Daniel Gornall



**Plate 19.** Booted Warbler, Shirva, 30th June 2020. Fair Isle's 16th record, and the first in spring © Alex Penn



**Plate 20.** Rose-coloured Starling, Shirva, 12th July 2020. The fifth bird of the year. © Daniel Gornall



**Plate 21.** Thrush Nightingale, Utra, 14th August 2020. The first autumn record since 2015. © Daniel Gornall



**Plate 22.** Mediterranean Gull, Kenaby, 16th August 2020. This moulting 3cy bird was the fourth Fair Isle record. © Alex Penn



**Plate 23.** Western Bonelli's Warbler, Midway, 23rd August 2020. The fifth record for the Isle © Alex Penn



**Plate 24.** Curlew Sandpiper, Easter Lothar Water, 24th August 2020. © Alex Penn



**Plate 25.** Rose-coloured Starling, Schoolhouse, 29th August 2020. This 1cy bird was the seventh of the year. © Steve Arlow





**Plate 26.** Arctic Warbler, Vaadal, 1st September 2020. © Alex Penn



**Plate 27.** Pectoral Sandpiper, Easter Lothar Water, 14th September 2020. © Daniel Gornall



**Plate 28.** 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll', Wester Lothar, 25th September 2020. © Daniel Gornall



**Plate 29.** White's Thrush, Hill Dyke, 26th September 2020. © Alex Penn



**Plate 30.** Little Grebe, Golden Water, 30th September 2020. © Daniel Gornall





**Plate 31.** Rustic Bunting (right) with Reed Bunting, Boini Mire, 1st October 2020. This 1cy male stayed from 22nd September to 5th October. © Steve Arlow



**Plate 32.** Rustic Bunting, Utra, 1st October 2020. A second 1cy bird. © Daniel Gornall



**Plate 33.** Spotted Crake, Gillsetter, 1st October 2020. © Daniel Gornall



**Plate 34.** White's Thrush, Wirvie Burn, 1st October 2020. A different bird to the one on 26th September © David Parnaby



**Plate 35.** Grey Plover, Sprittery Hol, 2nd October 2020. © Daniel Gornall



**Plate 36.** 'Pale-bellied Brent Goose', Muckle Uri Geo, 8th October 2020. © Alex Penn



**Plate 37.** White-tailed Eagle (with Raven), Wester Lother, 9th October 2020. © Alex Penn





Plate 38. Great Tit, Lower Leogh, 10th October 2020. © Steve Arlow



Plate 39. Red-throated Pipit, Quoy, 11th October 2020. © Alex Penn



Plate 40. Red-flanked Bluetail, Jivvy Geo, 14th October 2020. The first of two in the autumn. © Alex Penn





**Plate 41.** Brown Shrike, South Naaversgill, 15th October 2020. The third Fair Isle record. © *Daniel Gornall*



**Plate 42.** Dusky Warbler, Haa, 15th October 2020.  
© *Alex Penn*



**Plate 43.** Buff-bellied Pipit, Meoness, 28th October 2020. The fifth Fair Isle record. © *Alex Penn*



**Plate 44.** Velvet Scoters, North Haven, 15th December 2020. © *David Parnaby*

# SYSTEMATIC LIST 2020

## David Parnaby

The species order and taxonomy are taken from the 'British List' published by the BOU in January 2021. 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)
2cy+	second-calendar-year or earlier bird (e.g. an adult bird in autumn)
3cy	third-calendar-year bird (i.e. hatched two years earlier)
AON	Apparently Occupied Nest
AOS	Apparently Occupied Site
AOT	Apparently Occupied Territory
n/c	No count
Obs	Fair Isle Bird Observatory
*	Indicates record(s) requiring assessment by the relevant records committee

## Brent Goose

*Branta bernicla*

*Rare visitor; 54 records of 103 individuals in the FIBO period, 29 records in autumn (September to November), 13 in spring (March to June), 11 winter records (December to February) and one in July. 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 12 confirmed records (of 20 individuals) in the FIBO period; seven in autumn, three in winter and two in spring*

One was around the Meadow Burn area from 13th–23rd December, only the second record of this subspecies since 2009.

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

*There have been 32 records (of 63 individuals) in the FIBO period; 16 in autumn, eight in spring, seven in winter and one in summer (there are also nine records of 20 individuals that have not been assigned to subspecies)*

In a good year for this subspecies, there was one in South Harbour on 22nd–23rd April and two were around Muckle Uri Geo on 7th–8th October after no records in 2019, the first blank year since 2014.



Plate 45. Pale-bellied Brent Geese, Muckle Uri Geo, 8th October 2020. © Alex Penn

**Canada Goose**

*Branta canadensis*

*Rare visitor; 38 previous records of 91 individuals, mostly spring (predominantly May and June, with three records in April and singles in March and July), five winter records and one in October. All records have been of feral European stock, other than a 'Todd's or Lesser Canada Goose' B.c. interior/parvipes in December 2018 and one that arrived with Pink-footed Geese (October 1997), which was possibly also a transatlantic vagrant*

Two typical spring records involved singles on 6th–7th May and 11th–16th June, both presumably from feral European stock.

**Barnacle Goose**

*Branta leucopsis*

*Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring and winter*

The first January arrival since 2016 involved one at Utra from 24th that lingered into April, when spring passage saw birds present throughout the month, peaking at 12 on 16th. Later spring records involved sightings from 9th–17th May (peaking at six on 16th) and two from 4th–8th June, with one remaining the following day. There have now been June records in every year bar one since 2016, with at least one of these involving feral birds from Highland. Autumn passage was largely concentrated from 1st–12th October, with daily records including peaks of 552 on 4th and 253 on 9th and there were then up to two from 22nd–30th October, the last of the year.



## Greylag Goose

*Anser anser*

### *Common spring and autumn migrant*

**Table 1.** Maximum monthly counts of Greylag Goose on Fair Isle 2020.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
142	176	219	140	9	13	4	7	21	332	470	182

The wintering flock started the year at a similar level as the end of 2019, although there were signs of an increase in late February and early March (when the spring peak of 219 occurred on 4th). From mid-March, numbers declined and counts from then on were generally just over 100, other than 140 on 7th April. From mid-April, numbers declined considerably and only single figures were recorded throughout May. Regular sightings in June were largely wandering birds and there was no indication of any breeding attempts, with only two sightings in July. Scattered records occurred slightly more frequently in August and early September, and later in the month there were signs of genuine autumn passage that peaked at 21 on 25th. An arrival of 52 on 1st October began daily sightings until the end of the year, with heavy passage from 9th–14th October peaking at 332 on 12th. Numbers declined during the rest of the month until further passage in early November saw 250 on 3rd, before dropping to less than 100 again until mid-month. The heaviest movement of the year around mid-November saw the year's peak of 470 on 19th with numbers dropping away gradually after that. Counts indicated a wintering flock of around 130, although 182 on 23rd December suggested some late arrivals.

## \*Taiga Bean Goose

*Anser fabalis*

*Vagrant, nine previous records of at least 15 individuals; five in autumn (September to November), two in December and singles in February and March, although most previous Bean Goose records were not assigned to species*

One arrived with a Tundra Bean Goose on 2nd December and lingered until 5th. As the previous record was in February 2017, this is the first individual of this species to occur on the Isle since the BOU adopted the split of 'Bean Goose' in January 2018. It is also the first to be seen on the Isle since 2014, as the 2017 record involved birds fitted with satellite tags that made it to within 17 km of the Isle, so occurred in the Fair Isle recording area.

## Pink-footed Goose

*Anser brachyrhynchus*

*Common autumn migrant, with smaller numbers in spring and winter*

A wintering bird remained from 2019 until March, with two on three dates from 31st January. Spring passage involved 38 on 25th March and regular sightings throughout April, peaking at 23 on 15th. Eight were regularly recorded in May to 16th, with nine on 9th, with one remaining to 30th. Autumn passage began early, with 41 on 8th September, with the main passage falling in the second half of the month that included peaks of 290 on 19th and 452 on 23rd. After 131 on 9th October, there were regular records throughout the rest of the autumn, largely involving a dwindling flock, with just a couple left by mid-November, until up to nine were present from 7th–19th December.

## Tundra Bean Goose

*Anser serrirostris*

*Rare migrant; 12 confirmed records of this species involving at least 146 individuals. Four autumn records (October and November), including large influxes in 2011 and 2014, seven winter (January, February and December) 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 in the Greylag flock from 17th–25th November was the first record since January 2019, with another arriving on 2nd December that remained until the end of the year.

## White-fronted Goose

*Anser albifrons*

*Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter. Approximately 68 records (of 266 individuals) in the last 20 years, including 11 records of birds not identified to subspecies*

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

*Approximately 27 records (of 67 individuals) in the last 20 years, with 17 in autumn (September to November, mostly October) and five each in spring (March and April) and winter (December to February)*

Singles on 3rd–4th and 22nd–28th April were a good showing; the first spring to produce two records since 2012.

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

*Approximately 30 records (of 157 individuals) in the last 20 years. Although the majority are in the autumn (15 records, often arriving later than 'Greenland' birds), including several influxes, this subspecies is more prone to winter arrivals (12 records) and is scarcer in the spring (three records) than A.a. flavirostris*

The group of four that arrived on 28th November 2019 remained until 6th January, a rare example of overwintering on the Isle. A small December arrival involved an adult on 13th–19th and two juveniles from 17th until the end of the year.

## Whooper Swan

*Cygnus cygnus*

*Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring and winter*

An overwintering bird remained until 11th April but was then sadly found dead. During that time, there were also two further adults present on 18th–21st January and the only spring passage record when two arrived on 22nd March. Autumn passage began on the earliest date since 1997, when two arrived on 6th September, with one remaining to the following day. There were no more until six (unaged) moved through on 9th October, with further records during the month involving eight (two family parties each with two juveniles) on 10th, four (a family with two juveniles) on 12th, two adults on 19th, five adults on the sea off Lerness on 23rd and an adult that moved south on 28th. The peak count of the year was 15 (a flock of ten adults and a family party containing three juveniles) on 2nd November, with the family lingering to the following day. There were then eight adults on 5th November and a single on 7th–9th.

## Shelduck

*Tadorna tadorna*

### *Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn*

There was just a single record, with one in South Haven on the typical date of 3rd April which remained in the north for a few days before relocating to Da Water and lingering in the south of the Isle until 19th April.

## Shoveler

*Spatula clypeata*

### *Scarce and irregular spring and autumn migrant*

An early male added a splash of colour to Da Water from 23rd–27th March and was the only record of the spring. It was an excellent autumn, with one at Da Water from 1st–7th August, which was joined by two more on 6th. There were further singles on 11th and 21st–24th August, before two arrived on 5th October, both still the following day with one until 9th. With nine individuals, it was the best year on record for this species on Fair Isle.

## Gadwall

*Mareca strepera*

### *Rare spring and autumn migrant, three winter records; total of 58 records of 87 individuals*

A male was on Da Water from 25th–28th May and a pair was on Golden Water on 8th October in the best year for the species since 2016.

## Wigeon

*Mareca penelope*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter*

Up to nine wintering birds were present at the start of the year, with spring passage seeing no more than seven throughout April. May records involved a pair on Da Water on 1st–2nd and a male from 23rd that was joined by a second from 25th–31st. Summer records were limited to a female on Da Water on 16th–21st June, one north on 5th July and two on 23rd–24th August until regular sightings from 2nd September saw the start of autumn passage. There were just single figures until early October as migration started slowly, then counts rose to a peak of 80 on 9th, before dwindling through the autumn. A small flock remained for the winter, peaking at 21 on 3rd December.

## Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*

### *Present year round and small numbers breed, also regular autumn migrant*

The wintering flock peaked at 19 in January, with counts declining through March. Only two broods were noted, with five ducklings in the Vaadal stream on 12th June and eight on Da Water on 23rd June. There was no pronounced autumn passage and the peak count in the latter half of the year was 25 on 25th November.



## Pintail

*Anas acuta*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant; female raised hybrid ducklings with Mallard in 2018*

Following the breeding attempt in 2018 that saw a female hybridise with a Mallard, a pair lingering around Da Water from 9th–14th April raised some interest, although they proved to be no more than passing migrants. The only other record of the year involved one on 2nd–5th October.

## Teal

*Anas crecca*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter*

The wintering flock peaked at 18, with 23 on 25th March representing spring passage. After 20 on 16th April there were less than ten until the end of the month before May saw one on 6th, then up to four on Da Water from 18th until 24th June. Autumn passage began with scattered sightings from 17th July, although there were no double-figure counts until 22nd August, with numbers then rising to 28 on 3rd September. Smaller counts then occurred until early October, when another rise saw the year's peak of 51 on 6th. There were regular sightings of small numbers until the end of the year, with a wintering flock of up to 13.

## Tufted Duck

*Aythya fuligula*

### *Regular migrant, commoner in spring than autumn*

A pair on Da Water on 24th April kicked off spring passage, which then saw a female on Golden Water on 30th April and a male on Da Water on 23rd–25th May. Two males on 1st–2nd July were followed by another two on 2nd August, with one of these remaining until 18th, joined by a female on 5th. The final record of the year was a male from 30th September until 5th October.

## Scaup

*Aythya marila*

### *Scarce migrant, commonest in autumn (most September to November), rare in spring with a few summer and winter records*

Recorded for the third year in succession when a female was found in South Harbour on 16th June before moving to Da Water where it lingered until 22nd. It was the first spring record since 2011 and the first June record since 1997. A more typical record was a juvenile on Da Water on 3rd September.

## Eider

*Somateria mollissima*

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

The first brood was noted on 23rd June in the Gully, three days earlier than 2019. The only autumn count was a worryingly low 86 on 15th August.

## Velvet Scoter

*Melanitta fusca*

*Rare migrant, mostly in autumn; 129 previous records of 181 individuals*

The best year for individuals since 2011 started with one in Finnequoy on 13th April. There was then a lingering youngster in Furse from 14th–28th October and another in Furse on 13th December which was joined by a second individual the following day, with both then showing well in North Haven until 16th. The December birds were part of a small influx into Shetland at the time.

## Common Scoter

*Melanitta nigra*

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

One of the wintering birds remained around the north of the Isle until 27th January. The next sightings were on 2nd and 11th October, then one that lingered from 21st October until the end of month, when three went east past South Light. Up to two were seen on several dates in November until 16th, but none remained for the winter.

## Long-tailed Duck

*Clangula hyemalis*

*Regular autumn migrant, less common in spring, with small numbers often seen in winter*

Up to two wintering birds remained around the Isle until 13th March, with no further records through the spring. Two males on 30th September began autumn passage on the same date as 2019 and sightings became more regular during the second half of October, when up to six were seen daily. As usual, there were scattered records during the winter, involving up to four birds.



Plate 46. Long-tailed Duck, Hoini Pool, 22nd October 2020. © Alex Penn

## Goldeneye

*Bucephala clangula*

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

One on Golden Water on 15th February was the only sighting until the autumn. Passage then occurred on three October dates from 21st that peaked at three on 28th, two on 12th November with one remaining the following day, then sightings of at least two individuals from 27th November until the end of the year.

## Goosander

*Mergus merganser*

*Scarce migrant in winter, spring and late autumn; 109 previous records of 154 individuals*

A female in Furse on 11th December was the first in that month since 2012.

## Red-breasted Merganser

*Mergus serrator*

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

After one on 6th–7th January, there were no more until light spring passage involved singles on 25th and 31st March, up to two on 13th–15th April, singles on six dates from 12th May until the end of the month and up to two in June. Typically, scattered records in the summer involved singles on 6th July, 2nd August and 1st September, followed by two on 13th September then regular records from 22nd September throughout October, peaking at four on 8th–9th. There were occasional records of up to two in November and until 11th December.

## Swift

*Apus apus*

*Frequent migrant, most in summer and early autumn*

Light spring passage saw singles on 27th May, 16th and 22nd June before the peak of the year involved four on 25th June. Autumn passage was also rather light, with up to two from 15th–20th July and singles on 3rd–5th and 10th August.

## Cuckoo

*Cuculus canorus*

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

A male at Midway on 2nd May was the earliest arrival since 1989 and was followed by birds on 7th and 9th then singles on seven dates between 19th May and 2nd June, with probably four individuals involved. There were no autumn records, the first blank in this season since 2016.

## Rock Dove

*Columba livia*

*Resident, breeds in small numbers*

The largest number recorded during the autumn was 103 on 28th October, the second-highest count (following 107 on 16th October 2018) suggesting the population is doing well. Although the species is not regularly counted on census, most years see a number of spot counts in the autumn and these indicate a real increase in the last decade.



## Stock Dove

*Columba oenas*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

A 1cy in Sloi Heelor on Malcolm's Head on 3rd October was the only record; the first in autumn since 2011.

## Woodpigeon

*Columba palumbus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

After two on 3rd March there were regular sightings of up to six during the month, up to seven in April and slightly less frequent sightings in May, with seven recorded on several dates. Sightings of up to two continued throughout June and until 9th July. There were then two on 2nd August, a single on 9th and regular autumn passage from 30th September, rising to ten on 7th October, with smaller numbers throughout the rest of the month and the last of the year lingering until 25th November.

## Turtle Dove

*Streptopelia turtur*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

One at Setter on 26th May and one at Field on 26th June were the only sightings, although with just one record in the preceding two years, it was the best showing since 2017.

Plate 47. Turtle Dove (with Meadow Pipit), Field, 26th June 2020.  
© David Parnaby



## Collared Dove

*Streptopelia decaocto*

### *Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn*

One from 6th–9th April was the earliest arrival since 2016 and there were then sightings from 17th–22nd, which rose to three on the latter date and included a singing bird at Schoolton. Sightings became regular from 28th April throughout May, peaking at four on 21st. There were singles on seven dates in June, two on 3rd July and one on 20th July, with the only later autumn sighting involving one on 6th October, the latest record since 2011.

## Water Rail

*Rallus aquaticus*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant, overwinters in small numbers*

There were wintering birds recorded at Burkle and Chalet until 26th March, with spring migrants noted at Gilsetter on 22nd April and the Vaadal on 30th May. Autumn passage began early with one at Setter on 3rd September then, after one at Boini Mire on 21st September there were regular sightings throughout the autumn. During October and November, records peaked at three on 3rd



Plate 48. Water Rail, Gilsetter, 22nd April 2020.  
© David Parnaby

and 5th October, although widely scattered sightings showed that several individuals were involved. Throughout November for example, there were sightings from Schoolhouse (two), Burkle (two), Chalet, Vaadal, Upper Leogh, Vaila's Trees, Meadow Burn and Quoy. By December, birds are usually established in their winter territories, and early in the month there were regular records of singles at Schoolhouse, Schoolton and Chalet. An apparent mid-month arrival though saw more widespread sightings, including a remarkable flock of up to four that fed on the short grass immediately south of the Chalet pond, with other records during this time from Upper Leogh, Haa, Skerryholm, Chapel Plantation and Quoy.

## \*Spotted Crake

*Porzana porzana*

*Rare migrant; 51 previous records (40 in autumn, 11 in spring)*

The first record since 2016 involved one in Gilsetter on 1st October, which showed very well along the base of a stone dyke before slinking away into the marsh.

## Moorhen

*Gallinula chloropus*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant, rare in winter; has bred (1933 and 1943)*

There was only one record, which involved one in the Haa chicken run on 23rd December, moving to the Chapel Brae the following day.

## Crane

*Grus grus*

*Rare visitor; 29 previous records (25 in spring) of 39 individuals*

The first record since 2016 involved one present for three hours from 08:30 hrs on 21st April, which was seen heading up the west coast twice. Seven of the previous eleven years with occurrences have involved more than one individual, and 2020 followed the same pattern, when one was circling the middle of the Isle on 18th June. On 22nd June, one flew over happy Calandra Lark observers at North Light and started to head out to sea, but presumably changed its mind as it was then seen later over the middle of the Isle and was seen again the following morning. Analysis of photographs showed it was the same individual as seen on 18th, so it seems likely that one over Brecks as it flew towards Quoy on 29th June was also the same bird.



Plate 49. Crane (with Oystercatchers), over school, 22nd June 2020. © David Parnaby

## Little Grebe

*Tachybaptus ruficollis*

*Rare visitor; 42 previous records, most in autumn (September to November), rarer in spring and winter*

The first since 2017 was found on Golden Water on 30th September where it could be remarkably elusive considering the small size and open aspect of its chosen location. It moved to Easter Lother Water on 4th October, where it remained until 8th.

## Slavonian Grebe

*Podiceps auritis*

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

The first spring record since 2018 involved a breeding-plumaged bird in South Haven on 17th April, which was presumably the bird seen off Jivvy Geo on 20th. Autumn sightings were restricted to singles in North Haven on 18th–25th September and around South Harbour and Hesti Geo from 1st–2nd October. December records remain very rare, although they have become more frequent in recent years and there was one in Furse on 31st December.

## \*Stone-curlew

*Burhinus oedicephalus*

*Vagrant; eight previous records with seven in spring (May–June) and one undated autumn record*

The first since 2009 was found sheltering below a wall next to the Ringing Hut on 26th May before relocating to Taing, where it showed well. A typical record in terms of date, as half of the spring records have arrived during 23rd–26th May.



Plate 50 a–b. Stone-curlew, Chatham's Land, 26th May 2020. © David Parnaby



## Oystercatcher

*Haematopus ostralegus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers*

There was one still present in early January, whilst one in North Haven on 22nd January was probably the first returning bird, with numbers rising from early February to 42 by the end of the month. There were around 46–47 throughout March and April with no particular peaks of spring passage. There was no specific count of breeding birds, although the total of 22 chicks ringed suggested a reasonable breeding season. The first chicks were noted hatching (at North Light) on 14th June, although the presence of chicks large enough to ring at the Obs on 17th June shows some had obviously hatched before this date. By late July there was a post-breeding build-up of numbers, with counts rising to an annual peak of 114 on 8th August. Numbers then dropped away rapidly, with no more than 14 in September, just one by the last week of the month and a single lingering through to 3rd December.

## Lapwing

*Vanellus vanellus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers*

There were five in early January with smaller numbers remaining throughout the next few weeks, with the first arrival of the year seeing 22 on 23rd February. There were no more than 17 in the spring, as around half a dozen pairs settled to breed across the Isle. The first chicks were noted from 3rd May, with three broods raised on Da Water in what appeared to be a relatively successful breeding season. The breeding flock dispersed throughout August, with the last seen on 23rd. There were no more records until 17th September, with two more in the month, up to seven throughout October and four lingering in November. A couple were present throughout December, with a small arrival mid-month peaking at seven on 23rd.

## Golden Plover

*Pluvialis apricaria*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant; scarce in winter and has bred (last recorded in 2017)*

After singles on 7th February and three dates in March, the species was regular in April with a peak of 86 on 15th, the highest spring count since 2014. There were sightings of up to 24 on five dates in May to 25th and four records of up to four in June. Sightings on ten dates in July included one on several occasions in potential breeding habitat around the top of Homisdale, although there was no sign of a breeding attempt. Up to 36 were seen regularly in August and numbers built through September to 72 on 23rd before dropping away throughout October and the only record after this month involved two on 28th December.

## Grey Plover

*Pluvialis squatarola*

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

One over Gilsetter on 2nd October was presumed to be the same individual that was recorded widely around the Isle in the following days, before settling on Bunes until 12th October.

## Ringed Plover

*Charadrius hiaticula*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers*

Two on 11th February were four days earlier than the first arrival in 2019, with numbers rising to 24 by 3rd March and a spring peak of 36 on 3rd April. Birds settled down to breed in May, although 18 at South Light on 26th showed north-bound passage was still in progress. The first fledged chick was noted on Bunness on 16th June and, although there was no count of breeding numbers, the population appeared stable. Passage in mid-August saw numbers rise to 68 and the autumn peak of 73 occurred on 3rd September, with numbers dropping rapidly after that until the last two were seen on 30th October.



Plate 51. Ringed Plover, South Light, 21st June 2020. © Alex Penn

## Dotterel

*Charadrius morinellus*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant; 109 previous records of 203 individuals*

The only record was a pair on Chatham's Land on 20th May, which provided a nice bonus to a daily exercise walk for Freyja's birthday!

## Whimbrel

*Numenius phaeopus*

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

One going north over Ditfield on 17th April was a day earlier than the first arrival date of 2019 and was followed by regular records throughout the rest of the month, with a peak of 13 on 22nd. Virtually daily sightings in May were of single figures, other than 18 on 7th and 13 on 18th. Up to ten were recorded throughout June and there were scattered records of up to six in July as spring migration merged seamlessly into autumn passage. There followed singles on nine dates in August and three in September up to the last of the year on 11th.

## Curlew

*Numenius arquata*

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

There were up to 44 in the first winter period, with numbers decreasing to single figures by late March, largely involving territorial birds. Display was first noted on 1st April, at Pund, with copulation observed at Da Water on 8th April and fledged young recorded near the Kirk on 23rd June, with at least two pairs getting to chick stage. Return passage was noted from 22nd June when eight were in Muckle Uri Geo, but autumn passage contained no notable counts, with no more than 24 recorded. There was no build-up of numbers in the winter, with only around 15 remaining until the end of the year.

## Bar-tailed Godwit

*Limosa lapponica*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

Two were recorded in spring; one around South Green on 2nd–5th May and a late migrant (or possibly an early autumn one) on 29th June. The only other record was a single at Skadan on 19th September.

## Black-tailed Godwit

*Limosa limosa*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant, very rare in winter*

Spring passage began on the typical date of 22nd April, when one was on Da Water, and was followed by further records in this season of two on both 26th April and 7th May. An impressive flock of 14 was on Meoness on 18th July, with three remaining to the 21st. After one on 4th–5th August there were ten on 15th August and later singles on 15th–19th and 27th September.

## Turnstone

*Arenaria interpres*

### *Common winter, spring and autumn migrant*

**Table 2.** Maximum monthly counts of Turnstone on Fair Isle in 2020 compared with previous ten-year average.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2020 count	220	300	210	73	45	15	95	155	169	213	267	230
2010–19 average	163	121	136	134	75	17	53	113	154	216	162	168

Winter numbers at both ends of the year were again high, with the highest count being approximately 300 on 13th February. Numbers dropped away rapidly after the first three days of March, with just occasional days of slightly higher counts during April and May. Birds were present virtually daily throughout the summer, although counts were all less than 30 until 95 on 28th July indicated the start of return passage.



## Knot

*Calidris canutus*

*Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring, rare in winter*

Five on 10th May was the highest spring count since 2013 and there were then up to four until 21st May. After one on 5th July there were regular sightings from 17th July and throughout August, all of up to five, other than 15 on 25th August. Regular sightings continued in September up to 17th, all of less than ten, other than an impressive 59 (which included 54 east past South Light) on 3rd. The only later records were singles on 28th September and 12th–14th October.



Plate 52. Knot, Muckle Uri Geo, 5th July 2020.  
© Alex Penn

## Ruff

*Calidris pugnax*

*Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring*

The species regularly debuts for the year in the last week of July, so two on Da Water from 26th–27th July were typical. After one over the Haven on 31st July there were up to three recorded on 24 dates between 11th August and 10th October.

## Curlew Sandpiper

*Calidris ferruginea*

*Rare migrant, most in autumn (predominantly August and September) and vagrant in spring (five previous records)*

After just single spring records in 2018 and 2019, a juvenile at Easter Lother Water on 24th–25th August was the first autumn record since 2011.



Plate 53. Curlew Sandpiper (right) with Ringed Plover, Easter Lother Water, 24th August 2020. © Daniel Gornall

## Sanderling

*Calidris alba*

### *Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring*

One in South Harbour on 20th April was the earliest arrival since 2017, with further spring passage restricted to three dates in May until 25th, with a peak of two on the latter date. The first returning birds were two on 17th July, rising to ten on 19th and sightings then became regular throughout August and until 24th September, with further counts of ten on 27th and 31st August and 4th September.

## Dunlin

*Calidris alpina*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred (last recorded in 2019)*

An early bird was present on 22nd–23rd February before light spring passage commenced on 23rd April with sightings becoming more regular in May, rising to 29 on 15th. Up to seven were seen in June, mostly passage birds, but occasional sightings came from suitable breeding habitat, and successful nesting was confirmed on 25th June, when three chicks were found near the Mast. Although suspected or confirmed breeding has been recorded recently in 2007, 2015, 2017 and 2019, chicks were not seen in any of these years. There was a scatter of migrants in early



Plate 54. Dunlin chicks, near the Mast, 25th June 2020. © Alex Penn

July and an influx in mid-month saw an autumn peak of 50 on 18th. August saw a regular presence of up to 25, there were up to 13 almost daily in September, dwindling numbers in October with the last of the year being singles on 14th and 27th–28th November.

## Purple Sandpiper

*Calidris maritima*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant, also overwinters in small numbers*

There were up to 15 in January then smaller numbers recorded through to 24th May. Autumn passage began with 36 on 13th July, which proved to be the peak count of the period. The first wave of movement continued until 21st August, after which there were no further records until 5th October, with numbers rising to 25 on 18th and then scattered records of smaller counts until the end of the year.

## Little Stint

*Calidris minuta*

### *Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring*

The recent run of quiet years for the species continued, with a 1cy on Easter Loch Water on 2nd October that relocated to Da Water where it remained until 15th October, with occasional commutes to Muckle Uri Geo. It was the first record since 2018, when there was also a single autumn 1cy.



Plate 55. Pectoral Sandpiper, Easter Lothar Water, 10th September 2020. © Alex Penn

## \*Pectoral Sandpiper

*Calidris melanotos*

*Rare visitor; 36 previous records, most from August to October, but four in spring*

The westerly winds in early September delivered a 1cy to the classic location of Easter Lothar Water, staying from 10th–14th September.

## Woodcock

*Scolopax rusticola*



Plate 56. Woodcock, Hesswalls, 22nd October 2020. © Daniel Gornall

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

One in Boini Mire on 1st January was the only sighting in the first winter period and there were spring migrants recorded on 6th April, and 3rd and 7th May. Autumn passage began on the typical date of 2nd October and sightings were then regular throughout the month, although other than 13 on 30th, all records were of single figures. Sightings continued into November and an arrival from 7th, when there were 13 recorded in the north, peaked on 10th with 77 counted, the largest autumn arrival since 2015. Given the area of the north that was covered (where the majority of the birds were), it was estimated that 200–300 were likely to have been present. Numbers trailed off rapidly after this, although 14 on 28th November indicated another small arrival and sightings of up to three during 2nd–3rd and 20th–21st December may also have suggested some movement.



## Jack Snipe

*Lymnocyptes minimus*

### *Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring*

For the second consecutive year, there were no records in the first winter period, and the first of the year were not until two were recorded on 16th–17th September. Virtually daily sightings followed from 23rd September to 30th October, reaching 11 by the end of September and remained in double figures until 12th October, with a peak of 29 on 6th. A couple of late migrants were recorded in November, with one in the Wirvie Burn on 8th and one in the Vaadal on 14th, but there were none in the later winter period.

## Snipe

*Gallinago gallinago*

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

Although present throughout the early winter, there were no counts and there was no notable passage in the spring as numbers slowly built up. The first chicks were a brood of three noted at North Restengeo on 8th June and breeding numbers appeared fairly stable, although there was no specific count. August started with counts around 20, rising to 40 towards the end of the month. There were some fluctuations in September, suggesting some waves of



Plate 57. Snipe chick, Vaadal stream, 24th June 2020. © Alex Penn

migration, with an obvious arrival towards the end of the month seeing numbers rise to 141 by 1st October, with counts remaining high throughout the month. Reasonable numbers again remained scattered across the Isle throughout the winter.

## Red-necked Phalarope

*Phalaropus lobatus*

### *Former vagrant, with 25 individuals recorded prior to 2017 (11 in spring, 14 in autumn), with breeding occurring in 2017 (two individuals fledging three young), 2018 (four individuals fledging two young, with another juvenile predated shortly before fledging) and 2019 (three individuals fledging one youngster), with a further five migrants recorded during this time (three in spring, two in autumn)*

Breeding birds arrived in 2018 on 14th May and in 2019 on 13th May, so a female on 15th May was pretty much bang on schedule. A second bird was present from 22nd May and three were seen from 7th June, with at least two males and two females involved in sightings during the summer,

until the last male was seen on 4th July. At least one of the males made a nesting attempt and was thought to reach chick stage when it was seen attacking Arctic Skuas on 24th June, but no young fledged for the first time since the species started breeding on the Isle. There were further migrant males noted on Da Water on 14th July and Golden Water on 29th July.



Plate 58. Red-necked Phalarope, Golden Water, 29th July 2020. © Alex Penn

## Common Sandpiper

*Actitis hypoleucos*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Spring passage saw scattered sightings of up to three between 26th April and 24th May. Autumn passage was very quiet, with sightings on eight dates between 13th July and 21st August, peaking at three on 20th–21st August, before a late bird was around Utra from 6th–8th October.

## Green Sandpiper

*Tringa ochropus*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

A quiet spring saw records on 20th April and 7th May. Autumn passage was recorded from 22nd July to 15th September, with sightings of up to four regularly throughout this period.

## Redshank

*Tringa totanus*

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

Good numbers were present in the early winter period, with 76 on 25th February and 85 on 1st March, before counts decreased to less than 30 for most of the month with similar numbers in April. Birds were present until 12th May, but there was only one more later in the month, then with up to

three regularly in June before numbers increased slightly at the end of the month as autumn migrants started to move. The species was generally more numerous throughout July, with a peak of 71 on 18th. August saw counts generally around 30–40, and September and October saw 30–70 until the year's peak of 94 on 27th October, the highest count since 2017. Up to 65 lingered into the winter, the second consecutive year with high numbers recorded in the latter part of the year.

## Wood Sandpiper

*Tringa glareola*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

There was just one in the spring, which flew over Schoolton before settling on Da Water on 12th May. Autumn records, which have been scarce in recent years, started with an unusual occurrence of one in the tidal pool at Muckle Uri Geo on 7th August. Another was present from 12th–23rd August, usually around Utra Scrape and the third of the month was at Quoy on 29th August, making it the best autumn since 2014.

## Greenshank

*Tringa nebularia*

### *Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring*

There were no spring records and records in the autumn consisted of birds on 22nd–30th July, then 11th–13th, 20th and 26th–28th August; a decent showing.

## Kittiwake

*Rissa tridactyla*

### *Common passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers*

There were just occasional sightings of one or two in the winter, with numbers gathering round the Holms by 27th March. Although numbers are still vastly reduced from peaks of the late 1980s, there were a few encouraging signs from the monitoring plots. The number recorded breeding in the productivity plots increased by 44.4%, to the highest number since 2016, although the only plot to hold any breeding birds was that at Holms and Dog Geo. The first chicks were seen on 24th June, the first fledged birds were noted on 20th July and the productivity of 1.1 chicks fledged per AON was the highest since 2000. Numbers dispersed rapidly from August, with just single figures present by late September. Counts in October were of less than ten until 18th, when 145 gathered around South Harbour, with numbers then dropping again until 28th when there were 131. For the rest of the year, there were generally only small numbers.



Plate 59. Kittiwake, North Haven, 16th August 2020. © Alex Penn



## Black-headed Gull

*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

After sightings on 1st and 3rd January there were scattered records of one or two in February. Numbers increased slightly in late March when there were up to four and sightings became regular in April, with a peak of seven on 25th. Sightings continued regularly throughout May, with the heaviest passage later in the month seeing a rise to 30 on 24th, and there were up to seven regularly recorded throughout June and early July. Return passage was marked by the first juvenile recorded on 15th (three days later than 2019), with a total of 41 birds on 19th. There were no more than 16 during August and September, and numbers dropped to single figures after that, with increasingly less-frequent sightings as the year went on and the only records in December were singles on 2nd and 27th.

## \*Mediterranean Gull

*Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

### *Vagrant; three previous records (one in July and two in October)*

With previous records in 1995, 2016 and 2018, a trend of more regular occurrences is starting to emerge (as predicted in the 2016 FIBO Annual Report, although the prediction of spring occurrences during passage of other small gulls has not yet materialised). The fourth for the Isle occurred on 15th August when a moulting 3cy bird was found on the sea off Hjukni and Kroga Geos. It was later seen off South Light and the following day was in fields near Kenaby before visiting Da Water. Interestingly, the third record for the Isle was also an autumn occurrence off Kroga Geo; a 1cy two years previously, although it seems likely that this is coincidental, and it is not a returning individual.

## Common Gull

*Larus canus*

### *Common spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers*

Present throughout the early winter months, although there were no more than five until March, when numbers started to rise slightly, with ten by late in the month and up to 16 in April. The heaviest spring passage was in May, with a peak of 44 on 19th. There were three chicks noted on Buness on 16th June and another four pairs bred on Goorn, with the first fledged chick being seen on 21st July. Passage was noted from mid-July, with 80 on 15th, with the first juvenile moving through from 19th and a peak of 270 on 26th. Waves of movement continued through early August, with 247 on 7th but numbers starting dwindling after that. Although a constant presence through the rest of the autumn, numbers were generally fairly low other than occasional days of heavier passage, including a late movement of 143 on 19th October. Birds were then present for the rest of the year, with up to 16 throughout November and December.

## Great Black-backed Gull

*Larus marinus*

### *Common migrant, breeds in small numbers*

There were at least three pairs breeding (Goorn, Dronger and Green Holm), with the first chicks seen on 16th June. Counts in the low hundreds were made on several occasions in the autumn as flocks loafed in the north.



Plate 60. Glaucous Gull, Malcalm's Head, 29th July 2020. © Daniel Gornall

## Glaucous Gull

*Larus hyperboreus*

### *Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter*

It was a good start to the year, with sightings up to 11th January peaking at six (an adult, 4cy and four 2cys) on 3rd, although unusually there were no more in the first half of the year. An adult on Da Water on 27th July then lingered around South Light until 2nd August, the first July record since 2009. A 1cy in Homisdale on 8th October was a typical first autumn arrival, with sightings of single 1cys on four further days during the month and on five dates in November. It was not an especially good winter for white-wingers, although there were sightings on six dates from 9th–29th December, peaking at four (an adult and three 1cys) on 11th.

## Iceland Gull

*Larus glaucooides*

### *Scarce migrant in winter, late autumn and spring*

The year opened with a 2cy at Bergaroo on 1st and there were then two on 7th January, with one remaining to 9th. Another 2cy was present on three dates from 9th–17th February, with an adult on 21st February. March saw records on 11th and 25th and there were 2cys on 10th, 16th and 20th April as birds moved through on spring passage, which continued with 2cys on 2nd and 10th May and a 3cy from 7th–19th May. A 1cy was in Furse on 24th October, a typical arrival date, but the only further records were 1cys at South Light on 11th November and Burkle on 22nd November.

## Herring Gull

*Larus argentatus*

### *Common migrant, breeds in small numbers*

A total of 52 AONs counted on Goorn on 29th June was the highest number recorded there for many years, although reduced seabird monitoring meant that the only other confirmed nesting activity was at least one pair on Green Holm. A total of 32 chicks was ringed at the Goorn colony on 9th July, suggesting productivity was reasonable, although not fantastic. There were no counts made during the year, although large numbers were noted ashore in stormy conditions occasionally during the autumn and winter.

### **Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull** *Larus argentatus* x *L. hyperboreus*

A 3cy gull that was possibly a hybrid of this combination was at South Light on 12th October and over Leogh the following day.

## **Lesser Black-backed Gull**

*Larus fuscus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers*

It was a late start to the year, with six on 24th March the first and numbers building slowly to a spring maximum of 24 on 23rd–24th May. Five pairs bred on Goorn, with seven chicks ringed, suggesting a reasonable productivity. Autumn numbers were unremarkable, with no more than 16 in August and sightings less than daily in the second half of the month, a maximum of three on six dates in September and the last of the year on 6th October.

## **Sandwich Tern**

*Thalasseus sandvicensis*

### *Scarce spring and summer migrant, rare in autumn*

Records of this species have declined in recent years, and one in the Haven on 15th July was the first since 2016.

## **Common Tern**

*Sterna hirundo*

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

An adult and two juveniles were around South Harbour on 16th July, with an adult at South Light on 21st July. Another family party of an adult and two juveniles was in North Haven on 20th September, a rather late record.

## **Arctic Tern**

*Sterna paradisaea*

### *Frequent summer visitor, breeds in small numbers*

The first 12 were seen on 7th May on Buness, with a larger arrival on 13th and at least 200 present by early June. A total of 248 nests was counted, all bar one (at South Light) on Buness and the first chick was recorded on 16th June. The first youngsters fledged on 8th July and a total of 126 chicks fledged, with the productivity of 0.51 chicks per AON being the highest figure since 2000. The first 2cy birds were noted amongst the colony from 12th June, with a peak of 25 in a post-breeding flock at South Light on 14th July. Although there were still 134 birds present at the start of August, numbers dwindled rapidly and the last two of the year were seen on 2nd September.



Plate 61. Arctic Tern, Buness, 27th July 2020.  
© Daniel Gornall



## Great Skua

*Stercorarius skua*

### *Frequent passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers*

The earliest arrival since 2016 was at Easter Lothar on 26th March, with numbers rising rather rapidly from the second week of April and the bulk of the breeding population returning by the third week of the month. The breeding population decreased by just over 12% in comparison to 2019, to 430 AOT. Despite the decrease, the population has now been at over 400 pairs since 2018. The first chick was seen on 16th June at Eas Brecks, but it was a poor breeding season, with just 0.20 chicks fledged per AOT, although that represented a 42.9% increase in comparison to 2019. As birds started to move away from breeding areas in late summer some passage was noted offshore, with 48 passing South Light in two and a half hours on 29th August. There were noticeably fewer around the Isle from mid-September and only small numbers remained in October, with 22nd being the first blank day, after which there were occasional sightings until 2nd November.

## Arctic Skua

*Stercorarius parasiticus*

### *Frequent passage migrant, breeds in small numbers*

The first were three on 29th April, with numbers slowly building in May as the breeding population returned. Copulation was noted from 22nd May, with the first egg in Johnny Arcus' Park on 27th May and the first chicks seen there and the airstrip on 22nd June. A total of 27 pairs held territory (the lowest number since 2013), with 26 of these laying eggs. Only two pairs failed at egg stage but seven failed at chick stage, with predation of chicks by Bonxies apparently the main issue. The remaining 17 pairs fledged a total of 26 chicks, with the productivity of 0.96 being the highest since 1992. The first chicks fledged on 19th July (from Johnny Arcus' Park), with the final bird fledging (on Ward Hill) on 20th August. There were still 16 present on 2nd September, with the last of the year being three on 6th September.



Plate 62. Arctic Skua, Parks, 24th July 2020. © Alex Penn

## Long-tailed Skua

*Stercorarius longicaudus*

*Rare migrant; 54 previous records of 110 individuals, occurs in spring (May–June) and autumn (July–October), mostly in small numbers, but peak day counts in spring of 40 (May 2015) and autumn of seven (September 1988)*

The first record since 2018 involved an adult seen over Vaassetter on the early date of 7th May.

## Little Auk

*Alle alle*

### *Regular late autumn migrant and winter visitor in smaller numbers*

There was one off Wirvie Geo on 20th January, the only record in the first part of the year. The first of the autumn was in South Haven on 12th October and there was then a total of 17 (mostly off South Light) over five more dates between 17th–19th and 29th–31st, peaking at seven on the latter date. Nine were recorded off South Light on five November dates to 29th, peaking at three on 11th and 20th, with the only other record of the year involving one grounded in the garden at Kenaby on 27th November which was released at Muckle Uri Geo.

## Common Guillemot

*Uria aalge*

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

Present occasionally during January, often in large numbers offshore, although the species was generally absent from around the Isle during the winter. The breeding ledges were full on 27th March but attendance at the colonies was sporadic until early May, after which birds settled. The population plots produced a total of 1,253 individuals, 2.4% higher than 2019, and in keeping with the suggestion that the rapid decline noted from the late 1990s through the first decade of the 2000s appears to have levelled off somewhat. The first chicks were noted on 24th June at Dog Geo but productivity monitoring was not possible, although an estimate from the Pietron colony suggested a figure of approximately 0.26 chicks fledged per egg laid, which would be slightly lower (6.1%) than 2019. The feed watch at Pietron showed an average of 5.2 feeds per chick per day, 108% higher than 2019. A mass fledging of chicks was noted from Kristal Kame on 8th July, after which birds started to thin out from the colonies, with very few left by early August. After that, there were counts of no more than ten until 8th November, when large numbers were again offshore and there were several days through to the end of the year when substantial numbers were present, with birds back on the cliffs by 28th December.

## Razorbill

*Alca torda*

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

The first of the year were birds returning to the cliffs on 20th March, with hundreds present by 26th. April saw birds coming and going until 29th, by which point the population finally settled on the cliffs. There was an estimated increase of 20.7% in the population plot at Lericum compared to 2019, continuing the hesitating increase in breeding numbers noted since 2013 (following a large crash in 2007). The first egg was seen in Maver's Geo on 3rd May, with the first chick recorded at Lericum on 11th June (two days later than the first chick date in 2019) and fledging noted from Maver's Geo on 26th June. Birds were present in ever decreasing numbers at the colonies until 5th August, with none then seen until 20th August, after which there were up to 21 recorded regularly offshore until early November. Occasional sightings after that probably referred to a single bird that was wintering around Furse, the first December record since 2012.

## Black Guillemot

*Cephus grylle*

### *Resident, breeds in moderate numbers*

Present all year, but no counts of the monitoring plot were possible in the spring and no visits to colonies were able to be carried out.

## Puffin

*Fratercula arctica*

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

Singles off the Holms and Furse on 26th March were the first of the year and were a day earlier than 2019's arrival date. The first larger arrival occurred on 4th April, with birds on land on 8th. By 18th April there were lots returning to land and the first chicks were known to have hatched by 11th June when adults were seen bringing fish into burrows. No monitoring of numbers or productivity was possible, although feed watches and food samples suggested that prey provision was unlikely to have been a problem, with the mean mass of samples collected from the Tor o' da Ward Hill (9.4 g) being the second-highest since 1996. Interestingly the samples (which were predominantly small sandeels) were collected in a much quicker time than usual, with the all-day feed watch on 8th July showing a total of 8.72 feeds per burrow per day, almost 11% higher than 2019, which corroborated the theory that food was seemingly plentiful. By mid-August, only a few could be seen around the Isle and sightings were less than daily after 21st, although one seen still carrying fish at Green Holm on 24th suggested a few late chicks were still in burrows. In a very quiet autumn however, there were none seen after 30th August.

## Red-throated Diver

*Gavia stellata*

### *Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn*

Quiet spring passage saw the only records on 10th April and 28th May (two) and there was then a pair around from 12th–16th June, which was regularly seen displaying over the Isle. Up to two were seen on nine dates from 3rd July to 11th August, and then autumn passage involved sightings on 12 dates between 26th August and 20th October, all singles except for two on 10th September. A late individual was seen in South Harbour on 2nd and 16th November.



Plate 63. Red-throated Diver, South Harbour, 13th September 2020. © Alex Penn



## Great Northern Diver

*Gavia immer*

### *Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter*

Between 1992 and 2011 there was just one record in the first three months of the year, but one in Furse from 13th–15th January meant that birds have been recorded in that period annually since then, other than in 2014. June records involved one off Shalstane on 3rd, one in North Haven on 6th and 9th–11th June and then sightings on 22nd and 23rd June that were likely to be different individuals. A non-breeding plumaged bird was off Ditfield and the Haven from 8th July to 1st August and a bird moulting out of breeding plumage was off the south of the Isle from 12th–19th August. After one on 3rd September, there were further singles on nine dates from 30th September to 22nd November.

## Storm Petrel

*Hydrobates pelagicus*

### *Common summer migrant, breeds in small numbers*

The first of the year was seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 20th June. Trapping (mostly in the Haven, with a couple of sessions also taking place around South Light) took place from 10th July to 19th August, with 1,233 birds ringed and a further 94 caught that had been ringed previously either on the Isle or elsewhere. The highest total was 308 trapped overnight on 9th August. During July there were also birds recorded at presumed breeding colonies, including approximate counts of 40 at Vaasetter on 21st and 30 at Malcolm's Head on 23rd July. The only later record was a juvenile found at the top of South Light on 20th September, which was released safely that night.



Plate 64. Storm and Leach's Petrels, North Haven, 11th July. © Alex Penn

## Leach's Petrel

*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

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

It was a busy year at the nets for the species, with a total of nine ringed being the sixth-highest total of all time for the Obs, with multiple catches on three nights suggesting a lot were around and a fully-operational Obs and some kinder weather in the summer would have resulted in more being caught. The bulk of captures were in July, with birds trapped in the Haven on 11th (two), 15th, 16th and 23rd (two), with one of the latter being recaptured at South Light on 27th. The final record was on 9th August when three were caught in the Haven.

## Fulmar

*Fulmarus glacialis*

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

Monitoring revealed a decrease of 7.2% in the population plots and an average of 0.47 chicks fledged per AOS in the productivity plots, an increase of 2.2% compared to 2019, with the first fledged youngster recorded on 22nd August. Both figures were typical of the short-term fluctuations witnessed in recent years. 'Blue' Fulmar sightings involved singles on 25th January, 30th March and 24th May before records on ten dates during 8th–31st October that totalled 83 individuals, with peaks of 25 on both 15th and 18th, and one on 7th December.



Plate 65. Fulmar, Linni Geo, 12th July 2020. © Alex Penn

## Sooty Shearwater

*Ardena grisea*

*Regular autumn migrant*

It was a very late start to autumn passage, with none recorded until 2nd September when there were five, with six passing South Light the next day and three on 4th. Two on 13th September were followed by singles on 20th and 23rd, 15th October and three on 18th October that were the last of the year.

## Manx Shearwater

*Puffinus puffinus*

*Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring*

With records on only four dates, it was the quietest year for the species since 2013. With staff living in the prime seawatching location (as much as anywhere on Fair Isle can be considered a prime seawatching location) of South Light it suggested the species was genuinely scarce offshore rather than a lack of coverage. The first two records were from the *Good Shepherd IV* with a single on 19th May and two on 30th June. The only land-based sighting occurred on 17th July when three were off South Light, with the *Good Shepherd IV* registering the last record of the year, when two were seen on 4th August.

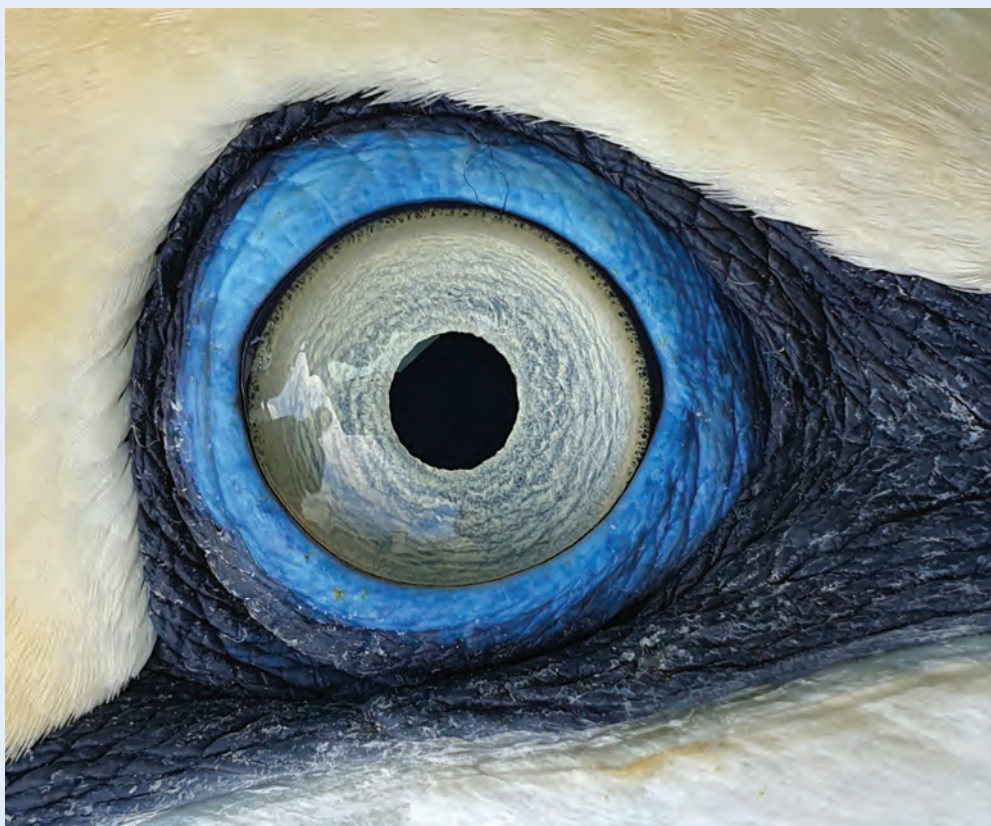


Plate 66. Gannet eye detail, South Light, 18th July 2020. © Alex Penn

## Gannet

*Morus bassanus*

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

As usual, only small numbers were seen offshore early in the year, with the first birds noted returning to the Stacks on the typical date of 9th February. The breeding population was recorded as 4,683 AON during a count on 15th June, the highest-ever total for the Isle. The usual monitoring of breeding birds was not possible due to the late start to the season, but a different methodology produced a figure of 0.63 chicks fledged per AON, a 1.6% decrease from the 2019 figure, with the first fledged youngster noted at Lerness on 13th August. Numbers dwindled through the autumn, with infrequent sightings of very few by December.

## Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

A light spring passage saw a single on 18th–19th March and two on 3rd May before an immature lingered from 21st–29th June. Sightings on 3rd and 4th July probably involved the first autumn movements, and then almost daily sightings in August peaked at 19 on 15th, the highest count since 2011. There were up to seven regularly in September, scattered records of up to two in October and singles on four dates in December.



## Shag

*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

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

Although it was not possible to carry out the usual population monitoring, an estimate from the productivity plots suggested a decrease of around 18% since 2019, although the small numbers in the plots mean that such apparently large swings may not be statistically significant. The first eggs were noted in Maver's Geo on 26th April (a week later than 2019) and the productivity plots revealed a healthy 117% increase in productivity to 1.78 chicks fledged per AON, the highest figure since 2014.

## Grey Heron

*Ardea cinerea*

### *Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring*

Spring passage consisted of singles on 23rd–24th March, 7th April and then sightings from 23rd–26th April that peaked at five on the latter date. There were up to two on seven dates in May, two on 26th June, with one remaining until 29th and up to three on three July dates. After one on 9th August there were nine the following day, with regular sightings of smaller numbers until 10th September. The next arrival saw 11 on 17th September, with ten the following day and then up to three remaining until the end of the month. Seven on 2nd October was the last notable count, after which smaller numbers lingered until 28th and one remained feeding around the rock pools of the south coast until it was found dead on 28th November.

## Osprey

*Pandion haliaetus*

### *Scarce migrant; 133 individuals, with 112 in spring (mostly May and June, with four in April) and 21 in autumn (mostly September, but two in October and singles in July, August and November)*

After none in 2019 and just singles in both 2018 and 2017, there was a return to slightly better form, with two spring sightings in 2020. The first was seen circling high over Field on 7th May, a pleasant bonus to a daily exercise walk for Grace's birthday. The second roamed the north of the Isle on 10th June.

## Sparrowhawk

*Accipiter nisus*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Winter records are unusual, so one over Vatnagaard on 2nd February that remained on the Isle until 9th was of interest. Spring passage consisted of one from 26th–29th March, then sightings on seven dates from 15th April to 4th May, with a peak of two on 27th April. Autumn passage was incredibly late to get started, with sightings then restricted to 1st–14th November, with probably just two individuals involved, and one on 22nd–25th November.

## Marsh Harrier

*Circus aeruginosus*

*Rare migrant; 60 previous records, with 47 in spring (mostly April–May but three in March and four in June) and 13 in autumn (mostly in August and September, with two October and one in July)*

Two records saw the species stretch its current run of consecutive annual appearances on Fair Isle to six years. Both were females in April, with the first seen over Vaasetter on the rather early date of 17th and the second moving north over the Obs on 26th.

## Hen Harrier

*Circus cyaneus*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant, with occasional winter records*

The ringtail that arrived on 24th December 2019 successfully overwintered (the first to do so on the Isle) and was last seen on 8th April. An adult male on 23rd May was a typical spring record. Autumn passage was the quietest since 2009 with a single female touring the Isle on 6th November. An adult male on 29th December was the last sighting of the year.

**Harrier sp.** *Circus sp.*

A ringtail harrier seen briefly a couple of times on 1st and 5th May was thought likely to be either Pallid *C. macrourus* or Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* but views were never good enough to confirm the identification.



Plate 67. Hen Harrier and Great Skua, Bullock Holes area, 23rd May 2020. © David Parnaby

## White-tailed Eagle

*Haliaeetus albicilla*

*One pair formerly bred until sometime between 1825 and 1840 and an unsuccessful reintroduction attempted (1968), but now vagrant; 16 records (13 in spring, three in autumn); in 1935, 1949 then 14 since 1981, at least four of which have known to have been birds released as part of Scottish reintroduction projects*

The third record in four years involved an adult that left Sumburgh Head, Shetland, at around 13:05 hrs on 9th October and was seen around 25 minutes later as it came in over Buness. It wandered up and down the Isle before heading off high to the south-west at around 15:15 hrs.



Plate 68. White-tailed Eagle, over Klinger's Geo, 9th October 2020. © Daniel Gornall

## \*Buzzard

*Buteo buteo*

*Rare spring and autumn migrant*

Recorded for the third consecutive year (for the first time since 2010–12) when one went north up the east coast of the Isle in the early afternoon of 8th May.

## Long-eared Owl

*Asio otus*

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

A quiet spring passage saw one at Schoolhouse on 30th March and a late bird at Kirn o' Skroo on 11th June. For the first time since 1993, there were no autumn records until November, when one was at Chalet on 9th, with three the following day (two at the Obs and one at Meadow Burn). Occasional sightings of up to two at the Obs until the end of the year were probably lingering birds, with the only other sighting involving a migrant at Burkle on 30th November.

## Short-eared Owl

*Asio flammeus*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Given the scattered records in December 2019, it is possible that one on the School Brae on 29th January and sightings on 23rd and 26th February may have related to a wintering bird. Spring passage saw records on 20th–21st March, and 6th, 21st and 30th April, with the latter lingering until 7th May, with another on 12th May. There were then two on 12th June, one of which lingered in the Wirvie Burn until 23rd (although it was found dead shortly afterwards having fallen foul of Fulmars) and another on 15th June. A pale individual was around Gilsetter on 18th–26th July, with a different bird present from 28th July that was possibly responsible for sightings on eight dates through August until 18th. In September, there were singles on 10th and 18th–19th, then two on 2nd October preceded regular sightings, with a slight increase at the end of the month seeing a peak of five on 30th. There were up to three in Gilsetter early in November, with the last of the year at Da Water on 13th November.



## Wryneck

*Jynx torquilla*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Spring was average, with three records (the mean number recorded during the previous six springs is 2.67), although unusually all were in April. Beginning with one on 20th in Bull's Park (just two days later than the earliest-ever Fair Isle record), further singles followed in the Walli Burn on 25th and Schoolhouse on 30th. For only the second time in FIBO history, there were no autumn records (the only previous blank autumn was 1959).

## Great Spotted Woodpecker

*Dendrocopos major*

### *Rare (and irruptive) migrant, mostly in autumn*

A 1cy at Haa on 18th July was the first record since 2018 (and only the second since 2015) and just the second July arrival for Fair Isle (the first was in 2014). A more typical record involved a female on 9th–10th October that was found on the Skadan before roaming the crofts.

## Kestrel

*Falco tinnunculus*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

A very quiet spring saw one on 21st April then none until 12th June, with scattered records until 4th July involving at least two birds. Two on 1st August began a run of regular sightings through the month that peaked at four on 21st–22nd. There were up to two on 13 dates in September, then passage from 2nd–9th October peaked at five on 4th, with a later bird at Barkland on 28th October.

## Merlin

*Falco columbarius*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant, small numbers overwinter*

Regular sightings of up to two from the start of the year until 23rd April were largely comprised of wintering birds, although no doubt some spring migration will also have taken place as Shetland birds headed back to their breeding grounds. The first returning bird was seen from 8th–10th August, the earliest return date since 1992, with the next sighting not until two on 14th September, after which there were regular records of up to three during the autumn with at least a couple remaining until the end of the year.



Plate 69. Merlin, Plantation, 29th October 2020. © Alex Penn

## **\*Hobby**

*Falco subbuteo*

*Rare visitor; 67 previous records, 54 in May–June, six in July and seven in autumn (August–September)*

There have been two spring records in each of the three previous years and 2020 repeated the pattern, beginning with one over Houll on 22nd May and one on 1st June that circled over Gunnawark before showing well on the School Brae.

## **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, with territories also established in other recent years*

There were occasional sightings of up to two throughout the year until 6th December, although there was no evidence of any breeding attempt. At least three individuals were present in the early winter period and the peak time for sightings was early October, although there was no real evidence of any passage.

## **\*Brown Shrike**

*Lanius cristatus*

*Vagrant; two previous records (October)*

You wait 18 years for a second Brown Shrike then a third comes along the year after! After the relatively showy bird of 2019, this year's bird was seen only by its finder and was present at South Naaversgill on 15th October. Initially seen only briefly, it disappeared for some time before being tracked down and the identification confirmed, although it had gone for good by the time other observers arrived.

A write-up of this occurrence can be found on pages 117–118.

## **Red-backed Shrike**

*Lanius collurio*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

A good spring showing began with a female around Boini Mire from 23rd–27th May (four days later than the first arrival in 2019), with further records in the month involving a male at the Vaadal on 30th May and a female around the Airstrip on 31st to 1st June. Early June saw females at Utra from 3rd–12th and Meadow Burn from 4th–8th, then an arrival of males saw two on 8th, increasing to three the next day, with one remaining to 10th. A female was at Meadow Burn on 17th June, with another at the Obs from 18th–23rd, bringing the spring total to ten (four more than 2019). Autumn passage began with a



Plate 70. Red-backed Shrike, Obs., 18th June 2020.  
© Alex Penn

mid-August arrival that saw 1cy birds at Lerness on 11th, Obs then Chapel area from 12th–20th, a 2cy+ at Wirvie Burn then the Obs from 12th–23rd and a 1cy around Schoolton from 13th–24th. There were two later records, with 1cys at Chapel Plantation on 26th–27th August and Linni Geo on 17th September, bringing the autumn total to six, the highest total in this season since 2006.

## Golden Oriole

*Oriolus oriolus*

*Rare migrant; 48 previous records (41 in spring, seven in autumn)*

A female or immature male flew out of the Plantation on the evening of 22nd May and was then seen at Setter before continuing south. It was near the Kirk the next day, and was the first record since 2016.

## Jackdaw

*Corvus monedula*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

There was only one record during the year, with a single around Upper Stoneybrek on 21st–22nd April.

## Rook

*Corvus frugilegus*

*Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn*

There were spring sightings at Field on 24th–31st March and 19th–22nd May, with autumn sightings limited to a single 1cy from 22nd–27th October.

## Carriion Crow

*Corvus corone*

*Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn. Has been recorded nest-building (2017)*

The three birds that lingering from 2019 (two that arrived in 2016 still around South Light and one around the Setter area, which has had a seemingly resident bird since 2017) remained in the early winter period, with spring passage noted in the last week of April, when numbers rose to 17 on 29th. May saw two main arrivals, with 30 on 5th (the highest count since 2018) and 25 on 20th. Throughout the summer there was one on the west coast (usually around Lericum, which may be the bird that winters around Setter) and a pair in their usually territory around Malcolm's Head. Although no breeding activity was noted, there were up to five on the Isle in the summer, suggesting breeding may have taken place (the pair in the south would certainly be expected to be breeding by now, being at least five years old). The resident pair had some questions raised as to their ancestry when they first arrived and, whilst they appeared to be pure Carriion Crows, the presence at the end of July of two Carriion Crows and two apparent hybrid chicks around Utra complicated things somewhat. The most obvious explanation would be that the pair of 'Carriion Crows' fledged at least two youngsters, but that the adults were actually hybrids (although not first generation) and that the regressive Hooded Crow genes became apparent in their offspring. Other than a small arrival that saw numbers rise to eight on 18th October (with six still present to 26th), counts were of five or less throughout the autumn. The Malcolm's Head pair and one of their youngsters remained throughout the winter.



## Hooded Crow

*Corvus cornix*

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

Up to 15 were present in the first three months of the year. There were no large counts in the spring, with just a couple of presumed migrants noted in late April (occurring with Carrion Crow passage). Three fledged chicks were at South Raeva on 5th July, with four in Furse on 10th and at least two other pairs were thought to be present on the Isle. A flock of 18 on the west coast on 12th November was late for migration and therefore probably consisted of resident birds, with smaller numbers noted throughout the rest of the winter.

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

Aside from the two noted in the Carrion Crow systematic list entry, a third was present from 8th–22nd August.

## Raven

*Corvus corax*

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

Although present all year, numbers were small and there were no obvious migrants recorded. A pair bred in the established territory at Gunnawark and, although one other pair was present in the north of the Isle, it was not clear if they attempted breeding. Occasional 'spot-checks' of the population in the autumn and winter revealed no more than seven individuals.

## Waxwing

*Bombycilla garrulus*

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

One that flew north over the Kirk on 22nd October was the only record, making it the quietest year for the species since 1999.

## Blue Tit

*Cyanistes caeruleus*

### *Vagrant: 14 previous records of 26 individuals; five in spring (March and April), 21 from October to December*

Huge movements to the Norwegian coast, where Utsira recorded a record total of 1,500 on 3rd October (the previous record for the site was 1,000 on 8th October 1996), brought a large invasion into the Northern Isles, so just two records were perhaps lower than might have been expected. One was at Lower Leogh on 6th October, although it was found in very wet and windy weather and was obviously weak, so it was not a surprise when it was found dead the following day. Later, on 7th, another was seen at Brecks, but only briefly and it proved to be the last of the year, despite continued arrivals in Shetland. These were the first records since 2018, although 16 have now occurred since 2012 as the species has seen an interesting change in status.

## Great Tit

*Parus major*

*Rare spring and autumn migrant and occasional winterer; 41 previous records involving around 55 individuals*

The first autumn record since 2013 and the first in any season since 2017 involved a multiple arrival of three on 6th October when one was at Quoy and another two were at Chalet. This preceded virtually daily counts when up to three were recorded until 28th October, although four individuals were ringed during 7th–9th. Multiple records of this species are not unusual (there were three in autumn 2012 for example), although four is a record annual ringing total. Two remained until at least 12th November, with one staying to the end of the year when it became a daily visitor to the Schoolhouse garden feeders; the first overwintering record since 2012/13.



Plate 71. Great Tit, Springfield, 26th October 2020. © Daniel Gornall

## Skylark

*Alauda arvensis*

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

There were three at Lower Leogh on 1st January, then up to two throughout February before an arrival in early March saw numbers rise to 80 on 3rd, 210 on 8th and a spring peak of 230 on 12th. Singing was first noted on 25th March and the first fledged youngster was seen on Meoness on 12th June, four days earlier than 2019. There was no estimate made of the breeding population and autumn census resumed with counts around 40, rising gradually in September to an autumn peak of 285 on 17th, with numbers remaining high to the end of the month and throughout early October. Thereafter followed a rapid decline, with numbers dropping away from 180 on 9th to 73 on 10th, with the only count over 100 after that being 102 on 26th October, after which numbers fell quickly and there were only single-figure counts by the second week of November. There were scattered records of up to three during the rest of the year, mostly birds that appeared to be lingering at sheep feeding areas, although one at North Light on 3rd December suggested perhaps some movement was still taking place.

## \*Shore Lark

*Eremophila alpestris*

*Scarce migrant in both spring (mostly late April and May) and autumn (mostly late September to mid-November)*

On 6th October, one was flushed from the cliff top above Dog Geo and flew inland, with presumably the same bird seen later in the day over Quoy.



Plate 72. Short-toed Lark, Haa, 18th October 2020. © Steve Arlow

### \*Short-toed Lark

*Calandrella brachydactyla*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant; 164 previous records of 179 individuals*

Although never common on the Isle, the species had gone through an impressive unbroken run of annual occurrences between 1963 and 2016, although no sooner was this pointed out in the 2016 report, then there was a run of three consecutive years with none. It was a welcome return to form then in 2020, when one was on the road near the Gully on 25th May before one showed well around Meoness from 15th–19th October.

### \*Calandra Lark

*Melanocorypha calandra*

*Vagrant; six previous records in 1978, 1999, 2000, 2008, 2014 and 2016 all between 20th April and 22nd May*

One showed well on the short turf at Bergaroo on 22nd June for around 50 minutes before dropping over the cliff and not being seen again. Found during Guillemot monitoring, it was a highlight of the spring and something of a surprise, occurring exactly a month later than the previous window of sightings. The species is occurring with increasing regularity and Fair Isle now accounts for around a third of UK records.



Plate 73. Calandra Lark, Bergaroo, 22nd June 2020.  
© Daniel Gornall

### Sand Martin

*Riparia riparia*

*Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn*

Spring passage was restricted to singles on 21st April and 5th May, seven on 7th May, two on 19th May and singles on 22nd and 30th June. There were no records during July, with records of one or two on seven dates from 1st–31st August, three on 5th September and up to three daily from 13th–20th September before one on 6th October; the latest record since 2010.



## Swallow

*Hirundo rustica*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds (last recorded 2019)*

After three on 20th April there was regular passage in May with peaks of 54 on 7th, 42 on 19th and 50 on 28th. There were no more than 13 in June, including several lingering birds, with breeding confirmed when a nest was found at the Mast buildings, where four chicks were ringed in July and went on to successfully fledge. Another pair appeared to be summering around the Boini Mire area, although no nest was found. Numbers in August never exceeded 17 and passage in September was very light with up to 11 on only nine dates. There were up to six daily from 3rd–19th October and the last of the year was at the Obs on 29th October; the latest record since 1997.

## House Martin

*Delichon urbicum*

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

One on 30th April was the forerunner of scattered spring sightings to 16th June, with passage strongest in late May, peaking at seven on 24th and 28th. A couple of typical mid-summer records involved up to two from 28th–30th June and one on 13th July, but autumn was very quiet with the only records involving singles on 26th–27th August and 5th–9th October.

## \*Red-rumped Swallow

*Cecropis daurica*

*Vagrant; 13 previous records, 12 in spring, one in autumn*

Recorded for the fifth year in a row, when one was near Aesterhoull on 28th May. It went on to show very well at Field Ditch and Gilsetter until 1st June and, as with all recent records, matched the appearance of the typical 'western' subspecies *C.d. rufula*.

## Wood Warbler

*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Singles at Schoolton on 19th and the Obs on 29th May were a fairly typical spring showing. Schoolton was also the location for the first autumn record, with one there on 10th August and a quiet autumn was completed by a single at Vaila's Trees on 31st August.

## \*Western Bonelli's Warbler

*Phylloscopus bonelli*

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

The earliest Fair Isle record (all previous occurrences have been from 10th–22nd September) showed well as it fed in the Angelica *Angelica sylvestris* at Midway on 23rd–24th August. Having remained silent after it was found, it was trapped to confirm the identification to species level. Biometrics indicated Western and the following day it repeatedly gave the distinctive disyllabic, upturned 'hoo-eet' call of Western, with the identification also being confirmed by DNA analysis.

A write-up of this occurrence can be found on pages 115–116.



Plate 74. Western Bonelli's Warbler, Midway, 24th August 2020. © Steve Arlow

## Yellow-browed Warbler

*Phylloscopus inornatus*

### *Regular autumn migrant*

The first of the year was at North Shirva on 15th September, six days earlier than 2019, and there were then virtually daily sightings through to 19th October. Numbers increased to seven on 17th, then dropped away until an arrival of 24 on 27th September, which was the only double-figure count of the autumn apart from 13 on 29th September and 15 on 2nd October. The only later bird was at Schoolton on 29th October, which brought the autumn total to an estimated 55 individuals.

## \*Dusky Warbler

*Phylloscopus fuscatus*

*Vagrant; 20 previous records, 19 in autumn (September to November) and one in spring (May)*

One at Shirva on 14th October moved north up the Isle and disappeared, but what was presumably the same bird was refound at Field Ditch the following morning then Walli Burn that afternoon. It then relocated to Leogh, where it remained until 18th (during which time it was trapped and ringed and proved to be a 1cy) and was seen again on 23rd October at Haa. An unringed individual feeding along the south side of the Hill Dyke near the clifftop at Gunnawark on 27th October made it the first autumn with multiple records since 2013.



Plate 75. Dusky Warbler, Hill Dyke, 27th October 2020. © Daniel Gornall

## Willow Warbler

*Phylloscopus trochilus*

### *Common spring and autumn migrant*

Four on 18th April were the first of the year (five days later than the first arrival date in 2019) and sightings were regular to 11th May, peaking at 15 on 30th. There were then one or two from 21st May and passage continued into June, with a slight increase seeing a peak of six on 8th and the last of the spring on 2nd July. Autumn passage started on 1st August, with the first juveniles recorded moving through from 7th. Counts remained in single figures until 24 on 26th–27th August, which was the peak of the year. Small numbers were seen regularly throughout September, with a high count of 13 on 18th and low numbers continued to be seen until 15th October.



Plate 76. Willow Warbler, Midway, 26th August 2020.  
© Steve Arlow

## Chiffchaff

*Phylloscopus collybita*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant, summers in small numbers*

The earliest arrival since 2017 was at Chalet on 25th March, where it remained until the end of month, during which time another was at the Obs on 27th. Occasional sightings in early April became more frequent from 16th, with numbers rising to a spring peak of 19 on 24th. There were up to eight almost daily throughout May and, after five on 1st June, up to three were seen in the rest of the month, with one bird summering at Schoolton. The first of the autumn was present on 25th August and there were no more until 16th September, after which up to two were regular until the end of the month. There were daily sightings in October until 30th, with the first major arrival involving 31 on 2nd. Numbers increased to 55 on 6th, 85 the next day and an autumn peak of 88 on 8th; the second-highest autumn count in FIBO history following 100 on 18th October 1990. Numbers remained at over 40 until 16th and thereafter declined rapidly by the last week of the month. A small arrival in November saw up to two from 7th–12th, with one remaining to 18th. One at the Obs on 17th December was the latest Fair Isle record since 2003.

### **‘Siberian Chiffchaff’** *P.c. tristis*

#### *Regular autumn and rare spring migrant*

Although the totals in the main Chiffchaff section include all birds, attempts are made to subspecifically identify as many individuals as possible. ‘Siberian’ birds (including those not heard to call, but which match the expected appearance of the subspecies based on several individuals confirmed by DNA analysis in previous years) were recorded regularly from 2nd October to 10th November, with counts of up to four, other than an arrival during 13th–18th October that peaked at 15 on 17th. Interestingly, very few ‘Siberian’ birds were identified in the large arrival earlier in the month, with the percentage of *tristis* birds increasing during the mid-month arrival, with half of the 30 present on 17th being ‘Siberian’. During the last ten days of October, ‘Siberian’ birds represented between a quarter and two thirds of all Chiffchaffs on the Isle.

## **\*Green Warbler**

*Phylloscopus nitidus*

### *Vagrant; one previous record (July 2017)*

Although a recent addition to the Fair Isle list, the species is going through a rapid rise of UK records (perhaps aided by a better understanding of the identification criteria), with the first in 1983 followed by birds in 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, so a second record for the Isle so soon after is perhaps not as surprising as it may first have seemed. A smart individual (much brighter in plumage than the 2017 record) was at Vailla's Trees on 16th June. Although very elusive at first, it went on to show well to all observers in the sunshine throughout the afternoon. The south-easterly airflow in the spring that was presumably responsible for good numbers of Blyth's Reed Warblers and Rose-coloured Starlings also seemed to encourage an arrival of this species, with one on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) in early June and further northern European records involving individuals in Denmark (second record), Norway (first record), Netherlands (second record) and Sweden (second record).

A write-up of this occurrence can be found on pages 111–112.

## **\*Greenish Warbler**

*Phylloscopus trochiloides*

### *Rare migrant; 56 previous records with 45 in autumn (August–September) and 11 in spring (eight in June, two in July and a single in May)*

One seen briefly near Schoolhouse on 15th June was later trapped in the garden there; the first spring occurrence since 2016.

## **\*Arctic Warbler**

*Phylloscopus borealis*

### *Rare migrant; 98 previous records, most in August and September, also recorded in June (two), July (five) and October (seven)*

A 2cy+ bird seen briefly at Leogh on 31st August was trapped at Chapel Plantation later that day. It was then refound at the Plantation the following day and lingered there until 7th September. During this time, an often-vocal 1cy bird was found at Nether Taft on 1st September, which went on to roam the crofts until 4th. A fairly average showing for recent years, although made more memorable for the fact that the latter bird was the 100th Arctic Warbler for Fair Isle.

## **Sedge Warbler**

*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

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

One singing in the Plantation on 29th April was the first of the year and there were then regular records in May from 7th, peaking at seven on 21st May, and on five dates in June to 25th. Autumn passage was quiet, with up to three from 1st–8th August then singles on 22nd August and one from 15th–18th September around Chalet.



## **\*Blyth's Reed Warbler**

*Acrocephalus dumetorum*

*Rare migrant; 53 previous records, 37 in autumn (August–October) and 16 in spring (May–June)*

All four records were in the spring (the previous highest spring total was three in 2014) reflecting a large arrival of this species into north-west Europe at this time. The first was a male in sub-song at the Obs on 29th May, with two arriving on 31st May; one at Schoolton that lingered until 4th June and one trapped at Chalet. One was then at Schoolhouse, where it was trapped, on 8th–11th June (although it went missing on 9th) and often showed very well as it visited the small pond just outside the kitchen window.

## **Reed Warbler**

*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

*Regular migrant, more common in autumn*

A strong spring passage began with one at Chalet on 21st May, followed by singles at Schoolton on 3rd, 17th and 28th June. A 2cy+ bird trapped in the Plantation on 10th July was unusual, with more expected autumn passage largely taking place from 11th–26th August, peaking at four on 14th. There were later records in September on 2nd–6th at Quoy and 18th at Setter, with one on 1st October and three on 2nd being the last of the year.

## **Marsh Warbler**

*Acrocephalus palustris*

*Scarce migrant, mostly in spring (typically late May and June, occasionally July), rarer in autumn (mostly August and September with fewer in October)*

A total of 16 in the spring equalled the record for this season set in 2013 (and was quite a contrast to the blank spring of 2019). The first two were both recorded on 31st May, at the Plantation and Schoolton, with the latter site then producing two on 6th June, one of which was a singing male that remained until 8th, whilst another was at Da Water on 7th. A singing male at the Plantation on 11th June was followed by birds at Wirvie Burn on 12th, Lower Leogh on 13th–15th, Meadow Burn on 13th–14th, Obs on 14th–15th, Vaila's Trees then Meadow Burn (a singing male) on 16th–17th, Schoolhouse on 17th and a very short-winged bird (with a wing length of 65 mm; the shortest wing length in the FIBO database) that was confirmed by DNA analysis at the Plantation on 18th–21st. A final late flush of records saw a singing male at Plantation on 23rd June, when there was also one in the Walli Burn and finally a singing bird in the Gully on 25th June. That was the last of the year though, with no autumn records for the first time since 2015.

## **\*Booted Warbler**

*Iduna caligata*

*Vagrant; 15 previous records, all in autumn (late August to early October)*

The first since 2016 involved the first spring record for the Isle, with a beautifully showy bird singing at Vaila's Trees then Shirva on 30th June.

A write-up of this occurrence can be found on pages 113–114.

## Icterine Warbler

*Hippolais icterina*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

A reasonable spring saw a scatter of records from the end of May, which is typical timing for this species. The first was at the Obs on 28th May, with another in the same location from 31st May to 9th June. One was at Schoolhouse on 1st June, another was around Haa and Burkle during 7th–8th June and the fifth of the year was at Kirn o' Skroo on 8th June. A relatively quiet autumn saw a lingering bird around Schoolton and Midway from 12th–20th August with another at Wirvie Burn on 20th–24th August before the last of the year was in North Raeva on 17th September.



Plate 77. Icterine Warbler, Midway, 14th August 2020.  
© Daniel Gornall

## \*River Warbler

*Locustella fluviatilis*

### *Vagrant; 18 previous records, ten in May–June (one lingering until July) and eight in September–October*

This species seems to show a tendency for pulses of records and, following one in June 2019, there was another spring record this year, on 9th–10th June. It was found in the Meadow Burn 'reed box' and occasionally showed very well on the fence line, although it was generally typically elusive.



Plate 78. River Warbler, Meadow Burn, 9th June 2020. © Alex Penn

## Grasshopper Warbler

*Locustella naevia*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

One on 20th April in the Upper Vaadal was two days earlier than the first arrival in 2019 and further records in the month followed on 22nd at Setter and in the Plantation on 30th. The latter bird may have been the same one that was singing in the Plantation on 3rd May and there was a further spring migrant at Leogh on 5th–7th May. Autumn passage began in August, with one at Burkle on 12th–15th then sightings on three further dates in the month and one at North Shirva on 2nd–5th September. Later sightings were at Burkle on 2nd October and then one that lingered in Boini Mire from 8th–28th October, becoming the latest-ever Fair Isle record.

## Blackcap

*Sylvia atricapilla*

### *Common spring and autumn migrant*

As with 2019, the first was a male at Schoolton, although the arrival date of 7th April was three days later than in 2019. From 17th April onwards there were regular sightings through to 8th July (the latter being the latest spring migrant since 2010), with peaks of nine on 7th May and ten on 17th June. Records in the autumn began on 9th September, with regular counts in single figures until the end of the month. After 43 on 1st October, sightings increased to 301 on 2nd, the second-highest-ever Fair Isle count (topped only by 1,000 on 21st September 1981). Although numbers had dropped to 36 by 4th, another fall brought 107 on 5th before dwindling rapidly, with just single figures recorded from 10th–26th and a late flurry bringing 21 on 27th. Small numbers moved in early November, including seven on 7th but after 10th, the only record was a male in South Haven on 27th November, the latest since 2017.

## Garden Warbler

*Sylvia borin*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

The year started very slowly, with the first record not until 27th May when one was in the Schoolhouse garden. The main spring passage was in June, with regular records peaking at five on 17th and one arrived on 3rd July at the Obs, which then lingered throughout August; the first summering record for the Isle. The first returning migrants were noted from 1st August and were seen regularly throughout the month, peaking at six on 14th. There were records on nine dates in September, mostly involving singles, although there were six on 17th. The only October sightings were one on 1st and six on 2nd followed by a very late bird at Shirva on 7th November.



Plate 79. Garden Warbler, Vaila's Trees, 24th August 2020. © Steve Arlow



Plate 80. Barred Warbler, Chalet, 19th September 2020. © Alex Penn

## Barred Warbler

*Curruca nisoria*

### *Regular autumn migrant, vagrant in spring (four records)*

A 2cy male at the Chapel Plantation on 24th June was later trapped at Burkle and was one of the highlights of an impressive late spring spell of birding. The previous spring records were 28th May 1992 and three individuals (which were all trapped) between 6th and 23rd June 1997. An autumn total of 13 (one less than in 2019) began with two on the typical date of 10th August (one remaining until 12th), with further August birds on 11th, 12th (two, one remaining until 15th, the other until 3rd September), 14th–15th, and 18th–24th. September saw singles on 3rd–6th and a concentrated arrival mid-month, with four individuals recorded during 15th–19th (with a daily peak of three on 16th) before a late bird was at Hjukni Geo on 3rd October.

## Lesser Whitethroat

*Curruca curruca*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Earlier records seem to be occurring with greater frequency in recent years, and one at South Harbour from 21st–29th April kept up this trend, with another at Schoolhouse on 29th April. There were scattered records throughout May, rising to five by 31st and there were virtually daily records of up to five that continued through to 17th June, before a late migrant was present on 27th–28th June. The first returning birds were recorded from 20th August and there were then regular sightings throughout the autumn, with a peak of five on 27th September with the last on 25th October. The only bird that has DNA analysis undertaken was a nominate *C.c. curruca* trapped on 8th September.

### **‘Siberian Lesser Whitethroat’** *C.c. blythi*

The only bird specifically logged as such was at Quoy on 24th September, although it is likely that many of the later autumn birds will have belonged to this subspecies.



## \*Western Subalpine Warbler

*Curruca iberiae*

*Vagrant, although 'subalpine warbler agg.' is a rare migrant, with 101 previous records (97 in spring and four in autumn). Of the previous records, 11 are currently accepted as Western Subalpine Warbler (with an additional four as Western Subalpine/Moltoni's Warbler) and ten as Eastern Subalpine Warbler, with the rest currently acceptable only as Western Subalpine/Eastern Subalpine/Moltoni's Warbler*

A female at the Obs on 31st May was trapped and showed plumage details consistent with Western Subalpine Warbler, which was later confirmed by DNA analysis. 'Subalpine Warbler' has been recorded annually on Fair Isle since 2000.

## Whitethroat

*Curruca communis*

*Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn*

Spring passage consisted of sightings of up to two from 29th April to 29th May, then another wave of sightings from 11th–25th June, with a peak of four on 17th. During this period, a male was recorded nest building in the Plantation on 16th, an interesting record, although in this species this is a display activity, rather than a sign of a serious breeding attempt taking place. Autumn passage was quiet, with two on 12th August then singles seen regularly to 25th August, before one was present from 29th September to 4th October.

## Goldcrest

*Regulus regulus*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Two on 21st March were the earliest arrivals since 2016 and there were then up to three regularly until 22nd April, with a later individual on 3rd May. One in Steensi Geo on 13th September preceded regular sightings to 30th October. During this time there were no more than 14 in September, but a large fall on 2nd October saw numbers increase from two the previous day to 191. Counts then dropped to 56–62 in the next three days, before an autumn peak of 211 on 6th (the highest count since 2016) with numbers dropping away rapidly after that. A small, late arrival saw up to five on 9th–10th November.



Plate 81. Goldcrest, Lower Leogh, 7th October 2020.  
© Daniel Gornall

## 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 was not noted until 27th March when one was in song on Bunes. Only 20 territories were confirmed as being occupied (compared to 34 in 2019), but coverage was

incomplete and there was nothing to suggest that an actual decline had taken place. The first fledged juveniles were in Jivvy Geo on the late date of 28th June (12 days later than 2019), one of just six locations to record fledged chicks. Although this will undoubtedly be an underestimate, coverage was more extensive by this time, and it suggests the breeding season may have been a poor one. Fledglings were noted on 15th July and 17th August in Gunnawark, suggesting two successful broods. Although the species is not counted on census, obvious migrants were noted from mid-October, with the species being much more numerous on the island top than usual and a count of 69 was made on 27th October (previous counts during apparent passage have often produced around 40 birds).

## **\*Rose-coloured Starling**

*Pastor roseus*

*Rare migrant; 50 previous individuals, with 14 in spring (May–June), 11 in summer and 25 in autumn (August–November)*

Although there were none in 2019, the species has generally been going through a steady increase in occurrences on Fair Isle, culminating in a record four birds (including a record three in the spring) in 2018. It proved, therefore, to be an outstanding year as large numbers moved into north-west Europe in the spring and Fair Isle cashed in with six adults in spring and early summer. The first was at Upper Stoneybrek on 5th June, which roamed as far as South Green until 8th, during which time it was joined by a second bird at Utra on 7th. There was another at Chalet on 24th June, then one found during Gannet monitoring on Dronger on 30th June. The next was at Roskillie on 8th July, when it became probably the rarest bird to be found during the Puffin feed watch, before being seen to head south over the Plantation. What was presumed to be the same bird was around the Shirva area on 11th–12th (with this individual thought to be the one found long-dead in Midway on 23rd August). The sixth adult of the year was around South Restengeo then Wirvie from 14th–20th July. It wasn't the end of the year for the species though, with a 1cy at Houll on 23rd August. What was presumed to be the same bird was then at Lower Stoneybrek on 28th August, which lingered around the crofts until 16th September, during which it spent a lot of time frequenting the Schoolhouse compost bin, which it often defended aggressively from its commoner cousins.



Plate 82. Rose-coloured Starling, Stackhoull, 28th August 2020. © Steve Arlow



Plate 83. Rose-coloured Starling, between Stackhoull and Reavas, 23rd August 2020. © Steve Arlow

## Starling

*Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Although Starlings aren't counted as part of census, large numbers gathered in the early spring, with up to 360 in March. There was no estimate of breeding numbers, with the first fledgling noted on 1st June, the earliest date since 2017.

## \*White's Thrush

*Zoothera aurea*

*Vagrant; 16 previous records, 15 in autumn (September–October), one in February*

One was found at the Hill Dyke near Gunnawark on 26th September and showed to all the birders on the Isle before it headed north. The second of the autumn was at Wirvie Burn on 1st October; a much darker individual than the Hill Dyke bird, it represented only the second year with a multiple occurrence (following three in 2008). There have now been 12 records since the turn of the century.



Plate 84. White's Thrush, Hill Dyke, 26th September 2020. © Steve Arlow

## Ring Ouzel

*Turdus torquatus*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

A male in the Plantation on 17th April was the first of the spring and there were then records on seven dates between 23rd April and 2nd May, with a peak of four on 29th. An unexceptional autumn passage saw records between 28th September and 9th October, with a peak of ten on 6th, then up to three daily from 20th–23rd October.



Plate 85. Ring Ouzel, South Light, 7th October 2020. © Alex Penn



## Blackbird

*Turdus merula*

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

There were 12 in the south in January and some movement was indicated by 25 at the end of February, with counts in March all of single figures except for 23 on 26th. There were up to five in April, including a singing male at Barkland, which was often in the company of a female. This pair remained in the crofts throughout May, with another territorial pair also noted around the Plantation and Obs, and they were especially conspicuous as there was no migration noted throughout the month. A nest was found at Midway, but it failed at egg stage, whilst the other pair probably also bred in or around the Plantation, although no nest was found. With these two pairs lingering, the first definite migrants were not identified until a small fall of 20 on 28th September. Numbers hovered around 20–50 in early October, with a fall towards the end of the month that peaked at 367 on 22nd. It had been generally a very quiet autumn for the species and the expected larger fall eventually came at the end of the first week of November, rising to a peak for the year of 430 on 10th, with most moving on quickly after this. Counts through December indicated a wintering population of around 20–30 birds.



Plate 86. Blackbird, Lower Leogh, 17th October 2020.  
© Daniel Gornall

## Fieldfare

*Turdus pilaris*

*Common spring and autumn migrant, often overwinters*

There were up to 23 in the first two months of the year, with a few lingering birds but probably some small movement also taking place. Numbers dwindled by early March, when just two singles were seen after 8th. Spring passage occurred from 6th–13th April, when up to four were present, then again 26th April to 6th May during which the peak was 60 on 3rd. Autumn passage began on the latest date since 2009, with none recorded until 28th September and counts were all in single figures until 108 arrived on 12th October. The next arrival was of 280 on 19th, with numbers increasing after this to a maximum of 1,626 on 22nd, the highest count since 2015. Numbers gradually dwindled throughout the rest of the month and around 50 were still present at start of November. Another fall saw 680 on 10th November, with 110 still present to 18th and much smaller numbers thereafter, with up to 20 throughout December.

## Redwing

*Turdus iliacus*

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

Larger overwintering numbers than usual saw around 70 present at the start of the year. There were still 65 on 24th February, but just single-figure counts in early March until 12th, as wintering birds gradually dispersed. Light spring passage commenced from 25th March, with a heavier movement noted from 8th to 16th April, peaking at 160 on 14th. There were no more than five after 2nd May,



although regular sightings continued throughout the month as it became clear that there were territorial birds present on the Isle. One was singing on 9th and 19th May at Schoolhouse and what was presumed to be the same bird was then singing at Quoy from 20th–24th, Chalet on 26th and the Plantation on 27th, as it appeared to roam the Isle in search of company. From 28th–30th May, two birds were noted in the Gully and a nest belonging to a *Turdus* species was visible in the small plantation at the bottom of the Gully on the latter date, although it was never seen to



Plate 87. Recently fledged juvenile Redwing, Parks, 9th August 2020. © Alex Penn

be in use. Records were regular in June, mostly around the Obs and traps. One trapped in the Gully on 4th had a brood patch and was one of the adults that would go on to be involved in the breeding attempt and remained until at least 25th August, although it was unclear if these were the birds involved in the sightings in May. A total of four were seen on 9th; given that there were other migrants passing through at the time at least some of these may have been northward bound still. Two were trapped together in the Planation on 9th June, one remaining until 27th September and became part of the breeding pair, but the other was not recorded again. Another was ringed at the Obs on 13th June, with one singing there the next day. Successful breeding was confirmed on 23rd June when food carrying was observed at the Gully. To avoid disturbance, the nest was never looked for, but appeared to be amongst the vegetation growing up the side of the west face of the Gully. On 27th June, however, the male was singing in the Gully and another bird was observed carrying nest material, whilst neither was carrying food, suggesting the breeding attempt had failed. It appeared that a replacement clutch was laid almost immediately however, with a nest with five eggs being noted in vegetation alongside the Gully ladder on 3rd July. During July, an unringed bird was at the Obs, with singing noted there on 3rd. Meanwhile the ringed pair at the Gully continued to be noted regularly, with one carrying food on 20th and the nest noted as being empty on 29th, with the presence of three fledged juveniles confirmed the following day. This was just the second breeding attempt for Fair Isle (the first was at Setter in 1935), both of which involved the Icelandic subspecies *T.i. coburni* (this year's breeding birds both had wing lengths of 126 mm) and both of which were successful. The three chicks were all caught around various traps in mid-August and lingered until at least 13th August, 9th and 24th September respectively, by which point some had started wandering around the crofts. An Icelandic adult ringed at the Obs on 9th August was heavily in moult and therefore assumed to be one of the summering birds. In summary, a pair of *coburni* Redwings bred in the Gully, with the first attempt failing at chick stage and the second attempt producing three fledged young. Another three individuals were ringed between June and August, with at least two of these apparently summering.

A total of 14 on 17th September included the first migrants, with the first substantial fall on 28th September of 198. Generally good numbers were recorded throughout October, with the first wave of arrivals early in the month peaking at 1,010 on 5th and a larger arrival towards the end of the month bringing a total of 1,924 on 22nd. Counts in November were generally of up to 30, although there was an arrival of 310 on 10th November. In contrast to the end of 2019, December counts were generally of only up to a dozen or so, with a small arrival of 48 on 20th December.

## Song Thrush

*Turdus philomelos*

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

Up to eight were in the south of the Isle in January, a much larger number than usual for winter. One singing at Schoolton on 8th April was a pleasant addition to the dawn chorus, but did not go on to hold territory. There was no evidence of passage until late April, when there was an arrival of 46 on 30th, with smaller numbers then present until 8th May and one bird summering around the Obs and Gully. The first migrant was on 6th September and one or two were recorded on several dates throughout the rest of the month until a fall of 171 on 28th September. A large arrival at the start of October peaked at 693 on 3rd, the highest count since 2014, with numbers dropping away rapidly after that with no more than 22 after 10th. A small fall in November brought up to three mid-month, although there were no more until one took up residence around Schoolton from 15th December until the end of the year and another was at the Obs on 29th December.

## Mistle Thrush

*Turdus viscivorus*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Since the turn of the century there have been only two previous January records, so it seems possible that the individual recorded around the Barkland area from 21st January to 2nd February may have been the bird seen on School Brae in December 2019. None were recorded in spring, and autumn passage was quiet, being restricted to 2nd–25th October, with sightings of singles on seven dates, involving perhaps just four individuals.

## Spotted Flycatcher

*Muscicapa striata*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Spring passage spanned 19th May to 17th June, with a peak of ten on 15th June. Autumn passage began very quietly with two on 27th August, one of which lingered to 29th, the other to 31st, and there were then no more until up to three from 2nd–8th October and a late bird in South Harbour on 14th–15th October.

## Robin

*Erithacus rubecula*

*Common spring and autumn migrant, often summers and overwinters in small numbers and has bred (2006)*

Sightings from scattered locations across the Isle (mostly around the crofts) in the first part of the year showed around half a dozen birds wintering, with numbers thinning out by early March. A few migrants started moving through by the end of March, with the first fall taking place from 19th April and numbers rising to a peak of 35 on 23rd. After 8th May the only sightings involved lingering birds at Schoolton and Chalet, which remained until mid-June. A couple of migrants were noted from 24th September, with a major fall seeing 248 arriving on 2nd October, rising to 394 on 7th October. Numbers dwindled fairly rapidly thereafter, and November saw up to nine, with at least five throughout December.

## Bluethroat

*Luscinia svecica*

*Regular migrant, commonest in spring and scarce in autumn. Most that are identified to subspecies are 'Red-spotted Bluethroat' L.s. svecica, although there are 16 previous records of 'White-spotted Bluethroats' presumed L.s. cyanecula. These include 12 males, 2 females that arrived at the same time as white-spotted males and two females whose arrival dates suggested this subspecies, which tends to arrive in March or April*

Just four spring records made it the quietest year in this season since 2015 (when there were three), with the first being a male at Quoy on 23rd May. The other three were all females in the Vaadal, with one on 23rd–24th May, a new individual on 25th May and one on 23rd June, the latter being the third latest spring arrival in FIBO history. An elusive 1cy at the Obs on 27th–28th September was the first of the autumn and it was followed by one around the Lower Stoneybrek area that lingered from 8th–20th October, one at Koolin on 14th October and a long-staying bird that arrived in the Meadow Burn on 14th October and roamed around the Aesterhoull, Boini Mire and School Brae area until 4th November. The four autumn records made it the best showing in this season since 2016.



Plate 88. Bluethroat, Lower Stoneybrek, 10th October 2020. © Daniel Gornall

## \*Thrush Nightingale

*Luscinia luscinia*

*Rare migrant; 66 previous records, 54 in spring (May–June) and 12 in autumn (August–September, with one in October)*

The third spring in a row to produce a sighting saw one at Schoolhouse on 13th–14th June, which showed well at times, occasionally scampering around on the drive. The first autumn record since 2015 was at Utra on 14th August.



Plate 89. Thrush Nightingale, Utra, 14th August 2020. © Daniel Gornall

## \*Nightingale

*Luscinia megarhynchos*

*Rare migrant; 57 previous records, 48 in spring (April–July) and nine in autumn (August–October)*

A typically elusive bird was in the Schoolhouse garden on 2nd–3rd June, the first record since two in May 2017.

## \*Red-flanked Bluetail

*Tarsiger cyanurus*

*Vagrant; 22 previous records, most in September and October with one in March–April*

One in Jivvy Geo on 14th October often showed incredibly well near the top of the cliff and was a typical arrival (two were found on the same date in 2019). A 1cy was then found in the Gully on 16th October. Having initially been seen perched on the outside of the trap (by a Warden on the inside of the trap!), it was later trapped and examination of plumage details and the extent of wear compared to photographs of the Jivvy Geo bird proved it to be a second individual.

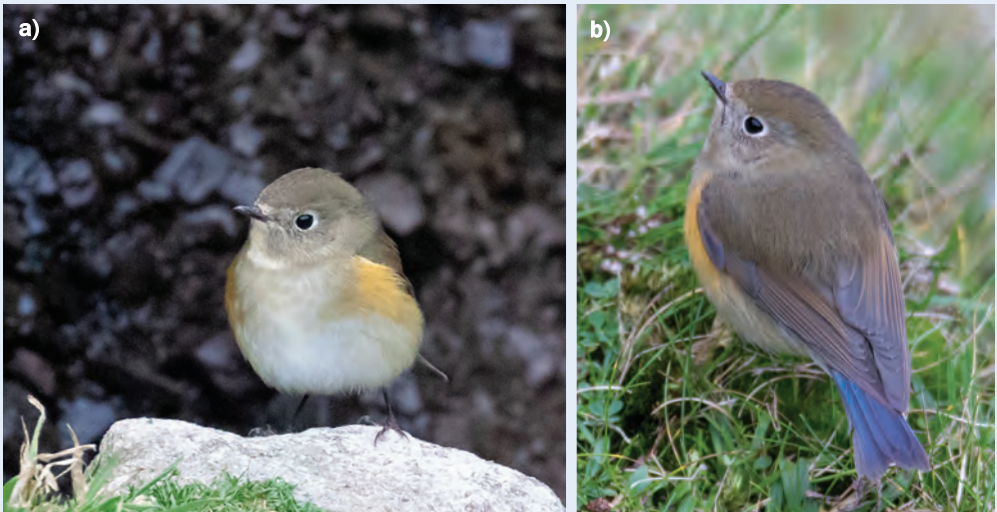


Plate 90 a–b. Red-flanked Bluetail, Jivvy Geo, 14th October 2020. © Daniel Gornall & Alex Penn

## Red-breasted Flycatcher

*Ficedula parva*

*Rare in spring (37 previous records), scarce autumn migrant*

A female or immature male in the Gully on 11th June was the first spring record since 2018, and the latest in this season since 2009 (during which time there have been eight spring records). Autumn was the best since 2016, with nine records including the joint highest-day count for the Isle. The stretch of coast from Steensi Geo to the Raevas seems particularly popular with this species and the first two of the autumn occurred there, with one at the former on 17th September and the next in South Raeva on 1st October. That bird was still present on 2nd October with four others arriving that day, at Steensi Geo, Shalstane, Midway and Schoolton. One at Klinger's Geo on 9th October moved up the Isle to Lower Stoneybrek and Schoolhouse later in the day and the next was in Swarzie on 16th and 25th October (which was considered to probably be the same bird, despite the gap between sightings). The last of the year was in the Raevas on 20th October.



## Pied Flycatcher

*Ficedula hypoleuca*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Ten along the west and north coast between Gunnawark and Lericum on 30th April were the first of the year, the highest count of the year and the joint-highest spring count since 2013. There then followed just five records throughout May, all singles apart from two on 2nd and females at the Gully on 8th June and Chalet on 15th–16th June. Autumn began with one on 13th August in Gunnawark, two the following day then records on six further dates during the month, peaking at three on 26th. There were no big falls in September, with records on twelve dates typically involving three or less, other than nine on 17th, and two were recorded on both 2nd and 4th October.

## Black Redstart

*Phoenicurus ochruros*

### *Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn*

There were singles on 7th and 25th March, up to three during 19th–25th April and up to two on three dates in May until 7th. A scattering of later spring records involved female types at North Light on 6th–8th June, Hesti Geo on 12th June, Chalet on 25th June then Chalet and the Vaadal on 2nd July. In a ridiculously quiet autumn for the species, the only record was one at Byerwalls on 10th November.

## Redstart

*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

A male at Barkland on 17th April was the first of regular sightings to 5th May, with a peak of five on 2nd May. There were then none until singles on four dates during 22nd–27th May and sightings on six dates from 6th–17th June, with a peak of two on 15th. Autumn passage began very quietly, with one around the Chapel Plantation area from 28th August to 1st September, followed by a male at the Obs on 30th September, which was the only one to arrive that month. October was better however, with 18 on 2nd, followed by gradually dwindling numbers until 21st October.



Plate 91. Redstart, Upper Stoneybrek, 2nd October 2020. © Steve Arlow

## Whinchat

*Saxicola rubetra*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Spring passage was restricted to two on 30th April, singles on three dates in May and up to two from 11th–14th June. Autumn passage was typically fairly protracted, with birds recorded from 13th August to 15th October, although was generally light and peaked at just seven on 2nd October.

## Stonechat

*Saxicola rubicola*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

The earliest arrival since 2014 saw a male at Midway on 1st March, with up to three then recorded almost daily until 13th. There were then up to three on 19th–20th and two individuals during 25th–27th March. There were records on seven dates from 7th–22nd April, all singles apart from two on 17th, then a female from 11th–17th May and one on 3rd June. After one on 17th September there were daily records from 26th September to 8th October, although these largely involved one lingering bird, with a peak of three on 4th.

## \*Siberian Stonechat

*Saxicola maurus*

*Vagrant; two previous confirmed records (a 'Caspian Stonechat' S.m. hemprichii in April 2014 and a Siberian Stonechat S.m. maurus confirmed by DNA analysis in October 2016). There are an additional 45 records of 'Eastern (Siberian/Stejneger's) Stonechat' Saxicola maurus/stejnegeri, mostly in autumn (13 in September, 27 in October and three in November) with two in spring (May), the majority of which are likely to have been Siberian Stonechat*

One found at Lower Leogh on 10th October roamed elusively around the Midway and Boini Mire area for the afternoon, during which time a faecal sample was collected. Analysis of this sample at Aberdeen University confirmed the identity as Siberian Stonechat, which was expected given the bird's appearance.



Plate 92. Siberian Stonechat, Midway, 10th October 2020. © Daniel Gornall

## Wheatear

*Oenanthe oenanthe*

### *Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers*

Two males at Ditfield on 6th April were the first of the year and numbers remained low until 17th when there were 35, with at least 130 (including 117 in the North census area) on 20th April indicating a major arrival. Although census began in August with around 175 present, numbers



Plate 93. Wheatear, Rippack, 27th August 2020. © Steve Arlow

increased rapidly to 299 on 9th, with 220 on 15th also indicating passage, although counts then dwindled with only 59 on the last day of the month. A small arrival in early September peaked at 94 on 4th and, whilst numbers were generally thinning out, there were also smaller arrivals of 72 on both 15th and 23rd. Although present throughout October until the last of the year on 30th, numbers dropped to single figures from 7th.

## House Sparrow

*Passer domesticus*

### *Resident, breeds in small numbers*

There was no estimate of the breeding population, although there was nothing to suggest any major change from the most recent estimates, which suggest up to 50 pairs present on the Isle. The first fledged youngsters were seen on 10th June, a week later than in 2019. The peak from a couple of autumn counts (the species is not counted routinely on census) produced 104 on 23rd September.

## Tree Sparrow

*Passer montanus*

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

One wandering around croft gardens in the south from 21st–25th April was followed by a flock of six from 19th–25th May and a single on 11th–13th June that was joined by a second on the latter date, in a fairly typical showing.



Plate 94. Tree Sparrows and House Sparrow, Schoolhouse, 20th May 2020. © David Parnaby

## Dunnock

*Prunella modularis*

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

After a singing bird at Burkle on 29th March there were a few scattered records of up to two in the spring to 6th May. Two then arrived from 31st May and were present until at least 17th June, with one of these going on to summer at the Obs, where it was present until at least 27th September. After the species bred in 1993, there were no summering records until 2012, with birds again recorded throughout the summer in 2017 and 2018 and one seen throughout June 2019. The first autumn migrants were seen on 29th September, with numbers rising to a peak of ten on 6th October and the last of the year seen on 27th October.

## Yellow Wagtail

*Motacilla flava*

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

It was an exceptionally poor year for this species, with the only sightings involving a female 'Blue-headed Wagtail' *M.f. flava* near the Airstrip on 11th June and an unidentified *flava* wagtail on 16th–17th June.

Plate 95. 'Blue-headed Wagtail', Airstrip, 11th June 2020. © Alex Penn



## \*Citrine Wagtail

*Motacilla citreola*

### *Scarce migrant; 80 previous records, 75 in autumn (August–October) and five in spring (April–June)*

A male found at Da Water on 4th June (from the Schoolhouse bedroom) lingered there until 24th June. Although elusive at first, it started singing from 7th and was heard daily until 22nd, with the repetitive 'tseeup tseeup' becoming a regular backdrop to all outdoor activities in the area. Remarkably, there have now been three spring records (half of the overall total in this season) in two years. A 1cy at Da Water and Boini Mire (where it usually frequented the recently cleared main ditch) from 4th–14th September was a more expected occurrence, and was assumed to be the same individual that was in Field Ditch on 16th September (although a strong case



Plate 96. Citrine Wagtail, Furse, 29th September 2020. © Daniel Gornall





could have been made for that being a new arrival). One at Furse on 29th September initiated some discussion as its face pattern was not as obvious as most Citrine Wagtails (potentially suggesting Eastern Yellow Wagtail), although other features were more Citrine-like. It lingered until 8th October, roaming between Furse, Da Water and Setter, during which time it was well photographed and sound-recorded, which confirmed the original identification.

Plate 97. Citrine Wagtail, Da Water, 12th October 2020. © Steve Arlow

## Grey Wagtail

*Motacilla cinerea*

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

Spring sightings were restricted to individuals on 6th and 8th April. One at Field Ditch on 6th August was the earliest autumn record for Fair Isle and what may have been the same bird was at Skadan on 12th August. More expected autumn passage occurred from 24th September to 10th November, with birds seen on 20 dates during the period, peaking at five on 8th October.

## Pied Wagtail

*Motacilla alba*

**'Pied Wagtail'** *M.a. yarrellii*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers*

After the first *alba* wagtail on 5th March, Pied Wagtails were seen regularly from 21st March, with a maximum of six in April, after which most records of this subspecies referred to breeding birds. Fledged chicks were noted at North Light on 6th June and the Haven on 15th June. Passage was noted from early August, with a peak of 24 on 14th August, on which day the autumn peak of 62 *alba* wagtails occurred, including 32 not identified to subspecies. There were no more than single figures throughout September and numbers thinned out in October, with a late bird on 28th October and the last *alba* wagtail of the year seen the following day.

**'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*

The first 'White Wagtail' was noted on 1st April, with numbers rising to 11 by 27th (when the total *alba* count for the day was 19). Up to ten were recorded in May until 24th, with two on 30th May the last of the spring. One on Golden Water on 24th July was an interesting mid-summer record. Return passage was noted from 6th August and by late in the month, the majority of *alba* wagtails passing through were of this subspecies, with numbers tailing away in September. A few lingered into early October, then there were two on 27th October, with one still the following day.

## Richard's Pipit

*Anthus richardi*

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

Just as it seemed like the first blank year since 2006 was on the cards, the latest arrival since 1989 was flushed from School Brae on 6th November and showed a few more times before it eventually headed to Klinger's Geo. The quietest year since 2011 when there was also just a single record.

## Meadow Pipit

*Anthus pratensis*

### *Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers*

Although there was one at Shirva on 1st January there were no further sightings until 5th and 21st March, with sightings daily thereafter and a minimum of 135 present by 6th April. Singing was noted from 30th March and the first fledged chick by 7th June, eight days earlier than 2019. There were 120 in early August with a mid-month peak of 223 on 11th then a notable rise to the end of the month, with 362 present on 30th. Numbers continued to build up throughout the first half of September, peaking at 669 on 15th, with continued fluctuating counts during the next three weeks that then started to drop off rapidly after 9th October, the last date to produce a three-figure count. Counts for the remainder of October were generally around 40–60 and decreased rapidly in early November with occasional singles for the rest of the month and just one record in December, on 16th at Shirva.

## Tree Pipit

*Anthus trivialis*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Two on 22nd April were five days later than the first arrival of 2019, with sightings on three further dates in the month, peaking at four on 30th. There were records on ten dates in May until 30th, with a peak of 12 on 2nd. A quiet autumn passage began with records of up to two on 12 dates from 12th August to 4th September, with one on 15th September then records on 13 dates from 30th September to 22nd October, peaking at three on 4th.

## \*Olive-backed Pipit

*Anthus hodgsoni*

### *Scarce migrant; 114 previous records, 112 in autumn and two in spring*

One at Midway and Stackhoull on 21st October was on the School Brae the following day. Another was at Da Water on 28th October and the third of the autumn (making it the best year since 2016) was at Quoy on 7th November; a fairly typical set of records for this species which has made annual autumn appearances on the Isle since 2009.

Plate 98. Olive-backed Pipit, School Brae, 22nd October 2020. © Steve Arlow



## \*Red-throated Pipit

*Anthus cervinus*

*Rare migrant, 92 previous records; 52 in spring (most in May, but ten in June) and 40 in autumn (most in September, but 15 in October and one in August)*

A 1cy around Schoolton and Quoy was present from 10th–16th October, although was generally elusive. Another was then at Shirva and the Meadow Burn on 21st–22nd October, making it the best autumn for the species since 2016.



Plate 99. Red-throated Pipit, Meadow Burn, 22nd October 2020. © Steve Arlow

## \*Buff-bellied Pipit

*Anthus rubescens*

*Vagrant; four previous records all arriving between 17th and 29th September*

A vocal individual fed around a large puddle that had formed in the south-east corner of Meoness on 28th October. Although it generally showed well, it could be flighty at times and after a couple of hours it disappeared down onto the rocks below the cliffs and was not refound. It considerably widened the window of occurrences for Fair Isle, falling over four weeks later than the previous latest record. With records in 1953, 2007, 2010 and 2012, the species seems to be on an upward trend of occurrences. This was the first autumn record of an American passerine on the Isle since Grey-cheeked Thrush in 2014 and Buff-bellied Pipit now moves alongside that species and Song Sparrow as the commonest American passerines on Fair Isle, with five records each.



Plate 100. Buff-bellied Pipit, Meoness, 28th October 2020. © Alex Penn

## Rock Pipit

*Anthus petrosus*

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

There was no count of breeding numbers and the first fledged chicks were noted in the Wirvie Burn on 12th June, 12 days later than the rather early first fledging date noted in 2019. The first census count in August produced a total of 110, with numbers increasing to 219 on 9th August, with most counts during the month generally around 150. It was a similar situation at the start of September, with a few higher counts and a peak of 239 on 13th. The last week of September saw a marked decrease, with no more three-figure counts after 23rd and counts in October were generally between 50 and 60 with some fluctuations, and a peak of 97 on 29th. Smaller numbers remained scattered across the Isle throughout the winter, although there were no counts from this season. There were no records of 'Scandinavian Rock Pipit' *A.p. littoralis*.

## Chaffinch

*Fringilla coelebs*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

After an early bird on 9th March there were regular sightings of up to two from 22nd March to 16th April, then a late female on 17th May. Autumn passage saw regular records from 17th September to 15th November, with counts of no more than 15, other than a spell from 3rd–7th October, which peaked at 40 on 3rd. Winter records are not that unusual and there was a male on 5th December.

## Brambling

*Fringilla montifringilla*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

After one on 25th March, spring passage occurred from 4th–30th April, with a peak of nine on 20th, and included a male singing at Schoolhouse on 28th–29th. Autumn passage commenced slowly, with four on 17th September then single figures recorded regularly to the end of the month. The greatest movement was in early October, peaking at 100 on 8th before numbers dropped off rapidly, with counts for the rest of the month generally of 15 or less other than 23 on 22nd. In November there were up to three until 10th followed by a female at Schoolhouse on 28th, which was the last of the year.

## Hawfinch

*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant; 147 records of 165 individuals*

There were three spring records with singles flushed from the Plantation on 21st April, over the Vaadal on 30th April and a male at Brecks on 7th May. Autumn records began with an early male at Barkland on 8th August, followed by a female at Troila on 15th September, then a male at North Raeva on 17th September that was then at Burkle from 18th–22nd. Further records followed at Chalet on 27th September and Field on 1st October, then a male at Haa then Burkle from 4th–9th October and the seventh of the autumn, a female trapped at the Obs on 14th October that then lingered at Springfield until 22nd October.



**Plate 101.** Hawfinch, Burkle, 20th September 2020.  
© Daniel Gornall



**Plate 104.** 'Mealy Redpoll' (breeding adult), Obs,  
3rd July 2020. © David Parnaby



**Plate 102.** 'Northern Bullfinch', Obs Garden,  
8th October 2020. © Steve Arlow



**Plate 105.** 'Mealy Redpoll' (juvenile), Obs,  
8th July 2020. © David Parnaby



**Plate 103.** Goldfinch, Malcolm's Head,  
17th October 2020. © Daniel Gornall



**Plate 106.** 'Mealy Redpoll' (juvenile), Obs,  
13th July 2020. © David Parnaby



## Bullfinch

*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

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

The first record since 2018 involved a 2cy+ female at the Obs from 7th–10th October. The wing length of 92 mm easily identified it as a 'Northern Bullfinch', with the call being a typical Bullfinch call, rather than the 'toy trumpet' sound associated with some northern birds.

## Common Rosefinch

*Carpodacus erythrinus*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

There were three records of 'pairs' in the spring, all around the Schoolhouse area and all involving immature males in song with a second bird accompanying them for part of their stay. The first was singing from 22nd–25th May with a second individual on 23rd–24th. The second singing bird was present on 29th May to 1st June, with a second bird on 30th May and the next singing bird was on 6th–9th June, which was accompanied on 7th. One at Chapel Plantation on 11th July was the first July record since 2015 (although they have occurred in this month 11 times since 2000), with nine further individuals recorded throughout the rest of the autumn. These began with an adult male at Burkle from 16th–18th August, a 1cy at Meadow Burn on 27th August and two initially around Haa on 30th August with one remaining to 1st and the other until 8th September. One was at Dronger on 15th September and then one at the Quoy allotment from 16th–23rd September was joined by a second from 17th–21st. The same area held two again on 1st October, with one remaining until 8th.



Plate 107. Common Rosefinch, Muckle Uri Geo, 27th August 2020. © Alex Penn

## Greenfinch

*Chloris chloris*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

The only record of the year saw one at Burkle on 28th April, making it the joint-worst year in in FIBO's history, matching 2017's poor showing and continuing the recent run of very small numbers of migrants passing through Fair Isle.



## Twite

*Linaria flavirostris*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant, small numbers breed and overwinter*

**Table 3.** Maximum monthly counts of Twite on Fair Isle 2020.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	17	7	16	18	n/c	n/c	145	216	149	11	11

There were none noted until 17 on 2nd February, and spring passage was unremarkable. Singing was noted from 26th March and the first fledged chicks were recorded on 25th June, a week later than in 2019. Numbers built up from early August with the highest counts from late August to early September and the annual peak, of 216, recorded on 8th September. Reasonable numbers remained into early October and then dwindled as birds moved south, with just scattered records remaining throughout the winter.

## Linnet

*Linaria cannabina*

*Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn. Has bred (in 2017 and 2019 and possibly 2012)*

After the first of the year on 10th April there were up to two regularly throughout the month and virtually daily sightings in May, although of no more than four. Three pairs were then present in June as the stuttering start to colonisation finally started to gather momentum. There were two pairs present in the south, with one at Schoolton fledging at least three chicks on 20th June and the other probably breeding although not successfully, and one at the Obs that fledged at least three juveniles on 30th June. One to nine were recorded regularly throughout the autumn, with many of these probably involving lingering birds from the breeding population, although there will also have been some passage as Shetland birds moved south for the winter. Early October saw up to three on several dates then, after one on 14th, there were no more until the last of the year on 28th October.

## Common Redpoll

*Acanthis flammea*

**‘Mealy Redpoll’** *A.f. flammea*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

An unremarkable spring passage began in April with one on 16th, two from 22nd–23rd and one on 27th–29th. After singles on 2nd and 19th May there were two around Schoolhouse from 25th–27th May and one on 2nd June. From 4th June, a pair were regularly observed in the Obs garden, with nest material noted being carried from 8th and copulation observed on 18th; the first breeding attempt for the Isle. An individual at Utra on 29th June showed that there was still movement taking place, and migrants were noted regularly from 3rd July, with a peak during this time of seven (including the breeding pair) on 5th. Two recently fledged youngsters were seen at the Obs on 8th July, with four confirmed by 15th, with regular migration continuing during this time, peaking at 16 in total at the Obs on the latter date. Smaller numbers continued to be seen through to 23rd August, during which time the breeding family slipped away from the Isle (one of the youngsters was caught on North Ronaldsay on 13th August). The next arrival was noted from mid-September, with a few Common Redpolls from 14th and the first confirmed ‘Mealies’ from 17th when there were eight. Small numbers (up to eight)

continued to be seen throughout the rest of the month and into October, and there were up to three regularly in November. A small arrival in early December saw a maximum of five recorded, with three lingering to the end of the year.

**‘North-western Redpoll’** *A.f. rostrata/islandica*

*Rare autumn migrant, occasional spring sightings*

A reasonable showing in the autumn began in early September with singles at South Naaversgill on 4th, Kirn o’ Skroo on 13th and the Chapel Plantation on 17th. One was then trapped at the Obs on 27th September, with one around Boini Mire and School Brae from 1st–8th October, another at the Mast on 9th and another lingering bird around the classic redpoll location of School Brae from 20th October to 2nd November.



Plate 108. ‘North-western Redpoll’, Mast, 9th October. © Alex Penn

## Lesser Redpoll

*Acanthis cabaret*

*Scarce migrant in spring, summer and autumn*

The first of the year accompanied a small arrival of ‘Mealy Redpolls’ on 26th July and there were further individuals on 19th–23rd August and 4th–8th September. A reasonable scattering of autumn records saw sightings on six dates in September from 17th, peaking at three on 25th and up to three on 11 October dates. Regular sightings in November were mostly comprised of a lingering individual, with a second on 26th, and one remained throughout December, becoming apparently the first to overwinter on the Isle.

## \*Arctic Redpoll

*Acanthis hornemanni*

*Rare migrant; 95 previous records, most in autumn (September–November) but ten in spring and has also occurred in July (two) and winter (four). Although historically A.h. exilipes is the commoner of the two Arctic Redpoll subspecies recorded on Fair Isle (with 55 accepted records), many of them have occurred in major influx years.*





Plate 109. 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpolls', Wester Lothar, 26th September 2020. © Daniel Gornall

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

*Around 29 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 typically confiding snowball of an individual was at Wester Lothar on 25th September and was joined there by a second, slightly more streaked individual the following day. The two then relocated down the Isle on 27th, being seen at Midway then settling around the Springfield and Brecks area. The first bird was kept indoors overnight on 28th after having apparently stunned itself against a window, but it appeared unscathed after a rest and both were together again on 29th (the last day the second individual was recorded). There were then intermittent sightings of the ringed bird around the south of the Isle until 9th October. It seems likely that it then headed back north, as two 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpolls' on Unst on 23rd October included a ringed bird that appeared to match the Fair Isle individual in plumage.

## Crossbill

*Loxia curvirostra*

*Irregular irruptive summer and autumn migrant*

One at Taft on 30th May was the only 'spring' record. After a period of lean years for the species, there was a decent invasion in the summer, beginning with a 1cy at Midway on 20th June, followed by five further sightings of up to five until the end of the month. Sightings were regular throughout July, peaking at 18 on 30th. After a few scattered records in early August, there were 57 on 7th, the highest count since 2009. There were then daily records of declining numbers through to 11 on 15th and no more than three on six dates to the end of the month. September saw two on 1st, singles on 13th and 23rd–25th with the last of the year on 27th, when two were present.



Plate 110. Crossbill, Plantation, 6th July 2020.  
© Alex Penn

## \*Two-barred Crossbill

*Loxia leucoptera*

*Irruptive vagrant; 31 previous records of 81 individuals (most July and August, although seven in September and singles in June and October)*

A 1cy was located by its distinctive call at the Schoolhouse on 26th August, where it was briefly in the garden before, remarkably, alighting on a driftwood log being carried by the Warden! It then flew south over the Chapel and was lost to view and could not be relocated. Following last year's bumper arrival of 22 as part of a nationwide influx of an estimated 219 birds, this was one of only around nine individuals (including a flock of five in Kergord, Shetland in July) recorded in Britain in the summer and autumn of 2020.

## Goldfinch

*Carduelis carduelis*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant, has overwintered*

A reasonable spring passage saw singles on 6th–8th, 15th–20th and 26th April, with one on 5th May being joined by a second the following day, whilst the last of the spring was on 14th May. One from 15th–17th October was joined by two others on the last date, and another small wave of passage saw two on 27th October increase to five on 28th–29th, with up to two remaining until 16th November.

## Siskin

*Spinus spinus*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Spring migration began with two on 10th March, a single on 17th March then records from 4th–17th April, peaking at seven on 11th. There were up to seven on eight scattered dates in May, with records continuing in a similar vein throughout June, before sightings became more regular later in month, with the first juveniles noted from 24th. Typical midsummer movement saw records on six dates in July and 1st–2nd August and then autumn passage occurred from 16th September to 15th October, being heaviest in early October, with a peak of 29 on 2nd.

## Lapland Bunting

*Calcarius lapponicus*

*Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring*

Two early spring records involved a male at Quoy on 4th April and one in Gilsetter on 6th April. A reasonable autumn passage began with one at Wester Lothar on 3rd September, then virtually daily records throughout the month that saw a rapid increase to 27 on 6th, rising to an autumn peak of 52 on 15th, with numbers dropping to single figures from 24th. Although records were regular throughout October until the last of the year on 28th, the highest count was just nine.



Plate 111. Lapland Bunting, Hoini, 10th September 2020.  
© Alex Penn

## Snow Bunting

*Plectrophenax nivalis*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant, often overwinters*

There were just a couple of singles in the first part of the year and a maximum of six in March, before sightings became slightly more regular in April, when up to eight were recorded. Light passage in May saw a female at North Haven on 9th, a male at the same place from 12th–17th and a pair at Skadan on 15th–19th. Autumn passage began with one on Ward Hill on 10th September, with sightings on ten further dates during the month peaking at 12 on 23rd. Sightings became more regular in October, although there was no particularly heavy passage noted, with a peak of just 33 on 29th. Up to 26 were recorded in November, but after mid-month, there were just scattered records of single figures until the end of the year.

## Yellowhammer

*Emberiza citrinella*

### *Scarce spring and regular autumn migrant*

Spring sightings consisted of a male on 7th May and another on 9th June (the second consecutive year with a June record). It was another quiet autumn, with a single from 14th–16th October the only record.

## Little Bunting

*Emberiza pusilla*

### *Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring (31 previous spring records)*

A remarkable autumn passage saw 16 individuals recorded, as the general trend of rising numbers continued. The first was in Field Ditch on 16th–18th September, with further individuals in this period in Boini Mire on 17th–19th and the Vaadal then Wirvie Geo on 17th–21st before late September saw arrivals at Chalet on 27th and Wirvie Geo on 29th. Three arrived on 2nd October, with one in the Vaadal, another at Field Ditch that relocated to the Vaadal then the south of the Isle until 6th and one in Boini Mire until 8th. During this time there were further individuals at Haa from 4th–8th, Setter on 5th, Furse then Field and Chalet on 7th–9th, the Vaadal and Obs on 7th–9th and Leogh, Shirva and Boini Mire on 8th–11th, with another individual at Boini Mire from 11th–23rd that was also seen at the Obs. The maximum daily count during this period was four (although five must have been present on 8th), and ringing was crucial in helping to determine the numbers involved, with five individuals (all 1cy birds) trapped during the autumn, a new annual record. The last of the year were singles at Lower Leogh on 26th and the top of Hill Dyke on 27th October.



Plate 112. Little Bunting, Field Ditch, 16th September 2020. © Alex Penn



## **\*Rustic Bunting**

*Emberiza rustica*

*Rare spring and autumn migrant; 138 previous records (73 in spring, mostly in May and June with three in April and one in July and 65 in autumn, mostly September and October with one in November)*

A 1cy male was trapped at the Plantation on 22nd September and lingered there to 25th before moving south, remaining in Boini Mire until 5th October. During this time, a second 1cy bird was at Utra on 1st October and, being unringed, confirmed it as a second individual. The most recent autumn records were in 2017 and 2009, and this was the first multiple occurrence in this season since 2001, although spring records have been annual since 2015.

## **Reed Bunting**

*Emberiza schoeniclus*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

March records were restricted to an early bird on 3rd and one at Chalet on 25th. There were then no more until a light scatter of records from 4th April to 16th May, peaking at three on 2nd May, with a later spring sighting on 30th May. The main autumn passage occurred from 24th September to 16th October, when virtually daily records peaked at 16 on 6th October. Further individuals followed on 23rd–24th October and on three dates in November until 10th.

## **\*Song Sparrow**

*Melospiza melodia*

*Vagrant; four previous records, three in April and one in May*

One found in the Vaadal on the evening of 9th April was present elusively in the Gully on 10th–11th. Although it was the earliest Fair Isle record by two days, it fitted well with the established pattern of early spring occurrences on the Isle, which occurred in 1959, 1979, 1989 and 2018.

A write-up of this occurrence can be found in Parnaby (2020).



Plate 113. Song Sparrow, Vaadal Reservoir, 9th April 2020. © David Parnaby



## CATEGORY E SPECIES (ESCAPES)

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### Greylag Goose

*Anser anser*

Four white geese on 14th November were Greylag-types and were presumed to be of feral 'farmyard goose' stock.

#### Reference

Parnaby, D. 2020. Song Sparrow, Fair Isle, 9–11 April 2020 - fifth record for Fair Isle and Scotland. *Scottish Birds* 40(3): 282–283.

### Corrections to previous Annual Reports

#### 2019 Buzzard (pages 9, 34 and 76)

The record on 1st September has been withdrawn and resubmitted as a 2cy Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*, a potential first for the UK. Further details can be found on page 108. Two 2019 records of Buzzard remain.

#### Common Rosefinch (page 112)

The birds on 10th and 14th August were considered the same individual, therefore the autumn total was reduced to eight.

#### Tiger Hoverfly (pages 23 and 178)

This hoverfly has been reidentified as a Large Tiger Hoverfly *Helophilus trivittatus* (rather than a Tiger Hoverfly *H. pendulus*). This is the first record for Fair Isle and one of only six Shetland records. Thanks to Mike Pennington who brought this to our attention.

#### 2016 Pechora Pipit (pages 28 and 100)

The bird was last seen on 15th (not 20th).

**Plate 114.** Storm Petrel, North Haven, 10th July 2020. © Alex Penn



# RINGING SUMMARY

David Parnaby

Table 1. Summary of ringing activity per month in 2020

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Birds ringed	2	4	6	31	34	127	1,325	857	193	631	100	5	3,315
Species ringed	2	3	2	16	20	39	37	38	44	49	15	5	107

The total of 3,315 new birds ringed in 2020 (Tables 1 & 2) ranked 63rd in FIBO's 73-year history and was the lowest since 1957. Several factors impacted the ringing in 2020, particularly the BTO-led restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in ringing only being undertaken at Burkle and Schoolhouse between late March and late May. Once restrictions were eased and the seasonal staff arrived, ringing migrants during spring passage was still restricted by the damage sustained to the traps over the winter. Other factors that effected ringing totals included: Redwings breeding in the Gully (resulting in the trap being out of action to prevent disturbance to a Schedule One breeding species during the spring and early summer), very few visitors to the Isle (so a very limited number of people outside of the team and resident ringers to add to the ringing effort) and poor weather for migration in a lot of the early autumn. As with 2019, the team all being based in the south of the Isle meant that the traps were not operated as regularly as when the Obs was functioning, although the traps were generally run at least a couple of times a day in the autumn, usually as part of census.

The Obs overtook the Plantation as the main location for trapping migrants, with 285 birds (of 37 species) caught there (compared to 427 birds of 44 species in 2019), with the totals for the other netting sites being: Schoolhouse 138 birds of 31 species (compared to 13 birds of ten species in 2019), Burkle 85 (19 species), Chalet 17 (10 species), Lower Leogh five (five species) and Chapel Plantation three (three species).

The damage sustained to the Plantation trap roof over the winter was not repaired until the autumn, whilst all the Dyke traps had varying degrees of damage and the North Grind was roofless, which impacted the number of birds caught in the traps.

Table 2. Total number of birds (and species) ringed in each trap, Fair Isle, 2019 and 2020

Trap	Number of birds in 2020 (number of species)	Number of birds in 2019 (number of species)
Plantation	227 (32)	469 (42)
Gully	265 (33)	462 (39)
Vaadal	114 (30)	189 (30)
Hjon Dyke	10 (3)	92 (17)
Double Dyke	3 (3)	49 (14)
North Grind	0 (0)	14 (7)
Single Dyke	1 (1)	24 (9)
Roadside	0 (0)	6 (2)

The seasonal staff were enthusiastic ringers and particularly keen to explore the options for catching some of the less regularly ringed species on the Isle. As a result, the ringing totals for several waders and wildfowl were high, with dazzling around South Light, Da Water and other water bodies producing a number of interesting records. Mist netting Short-eared Owls and a spiral trap at the airstrip for Lapland Buntings also resulted in this species recording good years. It was, however, difficult to draw many conclusions from the variations in comparison to previous years in the numbers of most species ringed, due to the varying circumstances outlined above, although a trend for poor numbers of several long-distance migrants apparently continues.

New ringing records were set for Pink-footed Goose (three), Great Tit (four) and Little Bunting (five). Other species (with a total of more than ten ringed previously on Fair Isle and more than three ringed in 2020) to register totals in their top ten years were Ringed Plover (36 being the third best year), Jack Snipe (eight, joint fifth), Snipe (16, joint eighth), Redshank (10, joint seventh), Leach's Petrel (nine, joint sixth), Yellow-browed Warbler (17, third), Marsh Warbler (six, joint sixth), Blackcap (188, eighth), Pied Wagtail (42, fifth), Linnet (eight, joint ninth), Lesser Redpoll (11, joint third) and Crossbill (six, tenth).

No species were added to the ringing list in 2020, but unusual species for Fair Isle ringed during the year included the Observatory's second Common Scoter and Black-tailed Godwit, third Velvet Scoter and Western Bonelli's Warbler, fifth Red-flanked Bluetail and eighth Dusky Warbler.

Two colour-ringing projects continued, with 130 Great Skuas (129 chicks and one adult) fitted with white darvics with black four-digit alpha-numeric

codes but only three Shags (one adult and two chicks) fitted with blue darvics with three-digit white letter codes, as access to the main colonies was not possible.

Storm Petrel remains the most frequently ringed bird on Fair Isle for its tenth consecutive year, with the same species as 2019 making up the rest of the top ten, albeit in a different order.

**Table 3.** Ten most-commonly ringed species on Fair Isle in 2020, with species totals (2019 totals in brackets for comparison)

Species	2020	(2019)
Storm Petrel	1,234	(923)
Arctic Tern	199	(226)
Blackcap	188	(119)
Great Skua	172	(150)
Puffin	144	(144)
Robin	137	(264)
Fulmar	120	(202)
Redwing	109	(140)
Blackbird	106	(114)
Starling	67	(350)



**Plate 115.** Pink-footed Geese dazzled for ringing at Byerwalls, 21st October 2020. © Alex Penn



# RINGING SUMMARY

Table 4. Ringing totals by species in 2020

Species	Total 1948–2019	Adult	Ringed 2020 Pullus	Total
Greylag Goose	104	2	0	2
Pink-footed Goose	21	3	0	3
Wigeon	58	2	0	2
Teal	92	1	0	1
Velvet Scoter	2	1	0	1
Common Scoter	1	1	0	1
Long-tailed Duck	21	2	0	2
Rock Dove	334	2	0	2
Water Rail	365	3	0	3
Oystercatcher	1,629	1	22	23
Lapwing	398	0	1	1
Ringed Plover	886	23	13	36
Whimbrel	18	3	0	3
Curlew	223	4	1	5
Black-tailed Godwit	1	1	0	1
Turnstone	123	1	0	1
Knot	117	2	0	2
Ruff	42	1	0	1
Sanderling	135	1	0	1
Dunlin	685	15	3	18
Purple Sandpiper	193	1	0	1
Woodcock	686	14	0	14
Jack Snipe	166	8	0	8
Snipe	650	13	3	16
Green Sandpiper	65	1	0	1
Redshank	306	10	0	10
Wood Sandpiper	19	1	0	1
Greenshank	16	1	0	1
Common Gull	342	0	7	7
Great Black-backed Gull	2,900	3	2	5
Glaucous Gull	40	1	0	1
Herring Gull	4,841	0	32	32
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1,490	0	7	7
Arctic Tern	12,673	17	182	199
Great Skua	5,934	3	169	172
Arctic Skua	4,171	1	37	38
Little Auk	15	1	0	1
Puffin	14,917	143	1	144
Storm Petrel	46,047	1,234	0	1,234
Leach's Petrel	148	9	0	9
Fulmar	18,756	26	94	120
Gannet	651	4	0	4
Shag	23,966	1	2	3
Grey Heron	25	1	0	1
Short-eared Owl	20	2	0	2
Red-backed Shrike	393	3	0	3
Great Tit	16	4	0	4
Skylark	1,460	3	3	6
Swallow	339	0	4	4
Western Bonelli's Warbler	2	1	0	1
Yellow-browed Warbler	352	17	0	17
Dusky Warbler	7	1	0	1
Willow Warbler	4,799	20	0	20

Species	Total 1948–2019	Adult	Ringed 2020 Pullus	Total
Chiffchaff	2,419	42	0	42
Greenish Warbler	27	1	0	1
Arctic Warbler	39	1	0	1
Sedge Warbler	714	7	0	7
Blyth's Reed Warbler	30	2	0	2
Reed Warbler	415	5	0	5
Marsh Warbler	189	6	0	6
Icterine Warbler	161	2	0	2
Grasshopper Warbler	183	2	0	2
Blackcap	7,444	188	0	188
Garden Warbler	4,097	18	0	18
Barred Warbler	515	6	0	6
Lesser Whitethroat	1,030	12	0	12
Western/Eastern Subalpine Warbler	45	1	0	1
Whitethroat	1,188	3	0	3
Goldcrest	2,212	17	0	17
Wren	1,191	23	0	23
Starling	33,811	65	2	67
Ring Ouzel	579	1	0	1
Blackbird	27,555	106	0	106
Fieldfare	728	6	0	6
Redwing	11,750	109	0	109
Song Thrush	3,654	29	0	29
Spotted Flycatcher	942	4	0	4
Robin	11,210	137	0	137
Bluethroat	337	2	0	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	4	1	0	1
Pied Flycatcher	1,078	5	0	5
Black Redstart	176	1	0	1
Redstart	1,979	3	0	3
Stonechat	55	1	0	1
Wheatear	19,438	16	4	20
House Sparrow	2,520	50	0	50
Tree Sparrow	153	2	0	2
Dunnock	3,152	8	0	8
Pied Wagtail	1,212	42	0	42
Meadow Pipit	12,970	38	5	43
Rock Pipit	10,252	5	0	5
Chaffinch	3,651	12	0	12
Brambling	5,326	37	0	37
Hawfinch	52	2	0	2
Bullfinch	314	1	0	1
Common Rosefinch	310	1	0	1
Twite	7,738	23	0	23
Linnet	254	8	0	8
Common Redpoll	1,059	14	4	18
Lesser Redpoll	81	11	0	11
Arctic Redpoll	27	1	0	1
Crossbill	581	6	0	6
Siskin	748	3	0	3
Lapland Bunting	106	10	0	10
Little Bunting	49	5	0	5
Rustic Bunting	17	1	0	1
Reed Bunting	596	2	0	2
Other species not ringed in 2020	68,189	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>406,212</b>	<b>2,717</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>3,315</b>

# RINGING RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

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## David Parnaby

During 2020, there were 12 controls (birds ringed elsewhere and found on Fair Isle) of ten species. This total involved six birds trapped, single birds that had a neck collar, colour rings and metal ring read respectively and three found dead. There were 2,081 'new' birds ringed on Fair Isle in 2020, meaning that a control was caught for roughly every 347 birds ringed, compared to a control for every 310 new birds caught in 2019 (note that all these figures exclude Storm Petrels, of which there were 94 controls and retraps from earlier years amongst 1,328 caught in 2020). Foreign birds involved two from Norway (Blackcap and Chiffchaff), a Greylag Goose from Iceland and a Sparrowhawk from the Netherlands. The other

controls were from the UK and comprised of two from Shetland, three from Orkney, two from Highland and one from England.

There were 15 birds (of ten species) ringed on Fair Isle and found elsewhere during 2020 (that have been reported so far). Particularly eye-catching recoveries included an Arctic Tern offshore from Nigeria and a Dunnock to Belgium. 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.

Fair Isle longevity records were set for Rock Dove and Common Gull.

### KEY TO RECORDS

#### 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
- 3j = definitely hatched this calendar year and still partly or completely in juvenile body plumage (passerines only)
- 4 = hatched before calendar year of ringing, but exact year unknown
- 5 = definitely hatched during calendar year previous to year of ringing
- 6 = hatched before calendar year previous to year of ringing, but exact year unknown
- 7 = definitely hatched in the calendar year 2 years previous to the year of ringing
- 8 = hatched three or more calendar years previous to year of ringing, but exact year unknown

**Sex:** M = male, F = female

#### Condition at recovery:

- X found dead
- XF found freshly dead or dying
- + shot
- VV alive and probably healthy, ring or colour marks read in the field
- R caught and released by ringer

## Greylag Goose

142724	3M	21 Jul 2017	ICELAND: Blonduos, Austur-Hunavatns	
Orange 'LUS'	VV	25 Nov 2018	Birsay Orkney	
	VV	8 Jul 2019	ICELAND: Blonduos, Austur-Hunavatns	
	VV	17 Jul 2019	ICELAND: Blonduos, Austur-Hunavatns	
	VV	29 Nov 2020	Stackhoull, Fair Isle	3y 4m 8d

*One of a number of sightings of Icelandic-ringed birds on Fair Isle in recent years. Interestingly, there have still not been any sightings of birds neck-collared on Shetland on the Isle yet. The fact that this was a one-day bird showed that there was still movement of geese through Fair Isle at the time.*

## Rock Dove

A number of birds were resighted or trapped in the Schoolhouse garden during the course of the year, including birds originally ringed in 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014 (three) and EW47189 which had been ringed on 20th March 2013 and was resighted on 25th November 2020 (7y 8m 5d), with the latter becoming the oldest known Fair Isle-ringed Rock Dove.

## Oystercatcher

FP17319	1	5 Jul 2000	Eas Brecks, Fair Isle	
	VV	22 Jun 2020	North Light, Fair Isle	19y 11m17d
FJ19301	6	18 Mar 2013	Fair Isle	
	R	29 Dec 2020	Skelbo, Loch Fleet, Highland	7y 9m 11d, 228 km, SW (218°)
FP4848(?)*	8	29 Nov 2015	Balintore, Highland	
	X	4 Aug 2020	Fair Isle	4y 8m 6d

*\*badly worn ring*

*FP17319 is part of a breeding pair at North Light, and has also had its ring read there in 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2020. Fair Isle Oystercatchers are well travelled, with movements between the Isle and around 29 other recording areas in Britain and Ireland recorded, as well as France, Spain and Iceland. It seems likely that these two records involved birds that winter in Highland and breed on the Isle. FP4848(?) was a badly worn ring and the last digit could not be read.*

## Black-tailed Godwit

EA63200	3	14 Sep 2020	Fair Isle	
	X	30 Nov 2020	Fairhaven, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire	2m 16d, 650 km, S (188°)

*The only previous movement involving Black-tailed Godwits and Fair Isle was a French-ringed bird seen in July 2018. This was just the second to be ringed on the Isle, so to get a recovery of it was unexpected.*

## Sanderling

NB00842	6F	29 Apr 2018	Hine Greenie, Sanday, Orkney	
	VV	13 Aug 2020	Fair Isle	2y 3m 15d, 52 km, ENE (60°)
BT33505	4	13 Sep 2018	Heacham, Norfolk	
	VV	13 Aug 2020	Fair Isle	1y 11m, 747 km, N (351°)

*There have been sightings of Orkney-ringed birds previously on the Isle, but this is the first record of an English-ringed bird.*



### Kittiwake

FX28078	1	Jul 2019	FRANCE: Pointe du Raz, Plogoff, Finistère, Brittany
	W	20 Aug 2020	Fair Isle

*A colour-ringed bird seen in the roost at South Light, this was presumably a young, wandering bird. The only ringed bird previously found on the Isle was an Icelandic nestling found predated.*

### Common Gull

ET84356	1	2 Jul 2006	Fair Isle	
	X	2 Aug 2020	Fair Isle	14y 1m

*This adult was found freshly dead in the Walli Burn and becomes the oldest known Fair Isle-ringed Common Gull, although some way short of the national record of 27 years.*

### Herring Gull

*There were two birds that had been ringed on Fair Isle being recorded, with GR11292 (ringed as a chick on Goorn on 4th July 2016) found dead at Upper Stoneybrek on 29th July (4y 25d) and GR11019, which was ringed as an adult at the Obs crow trap on 20th July 2010, which continued to feed in the Schoolhouse garden until 20th August at least (10y 1m).*

### Lesser Black-backed Gull

*GH08750 was ringed as a chick on Goorn on 16th July 2013 and was photographed on the Schoolhouse garden wall on 3rd July 2020 (6y 11m 17d).*

### Arctic Tern

SX77451	1	1 Jul 1996	Brae of Moon, Rousay, Orkney	
	R	2 Aug 2020	Fair Isle	24y 1m 1d, 92 km, ENE (65°)
SK08856	1	1 Jul 2020	Fair Isle	
	R	9 Sep 2020	NIGERIA: offshore	2m 8d, 6037 km, S (175°)

As well as SX77451, mist-netting on Buness in late summer produced a number of recoveries of birds ringed previously as chicks on Fair Isle. SR62903 was ringed on Buness on 9th July 2018 and was retrapped on 2nd August (2y 24d). The same night also saw two birds that had been ringed as chicks on 24th June 2000 retrapped: SV17275 and SV17160 (both 20y 1m 9d), whilst SV17355, which had been ringed on the same day as those two, was retrapped in Muckle Uri Geo on 29th July (20y 1m 5d).

*SX77451 is the third-oldest Arctic Tern reported from Fair Isle, whilst the rapid movement of SK08856 was notable in that it was captured to have its ring read as it was being fed fish by hand!*

### Great Skua

HT55213	1	11 Jul 1994	Fair Isle	
	X	25 Jul 2020	South Unst, Shetland	26y, 14d, 139 km, NNE (17°)
HT62325	1	3 Jul 1995	Fair Isle	
	X	23 Sep 2020	THE NETHERLANDS: Texel	25y 2m 20d, 819 km, SSE (152°)
HT55991	1	7 Jul 1995	Papa Stour, Shetland	
	X	25 Apr 2020	Fair Isle	24y 9m 18d, 88 km, S (178°)

HT64748	1	11 Jul 1997	Fair Isle	
	X	31 Jul 2020	NORWAY: Sandhåland, Karmøy, Rogaland	23y 20d, 388 km, E (96°)
HT8656	1	12 Jul 2007	Fair Isle	
	X	25 Jun 2020	Fair Isle	12y 11m 13d
White 'BF'	1	2014	Handa, Highland	
	WV	24 Jun 2020	Fair Isle	
MA40194	1	27 Jul 2017	Fair Isle	
2C14	WV	1 Aug 2020	Papa Westray, Orkney	3y 5d
MA40294	1	26 Jul 2018	Fair Isle	
2C90	WV	14 Aug 2020	CANADA: Bonavista Bay, Newfoundland	2y 19d
MA53285	1	21 Jul 2019	Fair Isle	
	X	22 Feb 2020	GERMANY: Friedrichskoog-Spitze, Trischendamm	7m 1d

In addition, a number of darvic-ringed birds returned to the colonies, although the earliest was seen on 14th July and none were holding territory. A total of 13 birds ringed as chicks in 2017 returned were seen, along with two from 2018.

*Another very interesting set of movements, with the first three in this list all breaking the previous longevity record for the Isle. Germany and The Netherlands are relatively regular destinations for Fair Isle's Bonxies, but HT64748 is only the third to move to Norway, whilst 2C90 is the first to go to Canada. The latter was photographed during an inshore boat trip and was seen chasing American Herring Gulls and Kittiwakes, although paying no heed to the thousands of Great and Sooty Shearwaters present at the same time (or to the dozens of Humpback Whales).*

### Common Guillemot

Y17908	6	25 Jun 2016	Isle of Canna, Highland	
	X	29 Oct 2020	Fair Isle	4y 4m 4d, 399 km, NE (47°)

*Found recently dead on the beach at South Haven.*

### Puffin

Four birds were trapped on Tor o' da Ward Hill on 9th July 2020 that had all been ringed at the same site: three were ringed as adults (in 2003, 2016 and 2017) and EW47792, which was ringed as a chick at the same site on 5th July 2016 (4y 4d). Two birds had their rings read on Buness on 14th July 2020, both of which had been ringed as adults on Buness on 1st July 2011 (9y 13d) and 7th August 2008 (9y 13d).

*Annual catching of birds on Tor o' da Ward Hill for the collection of food samples mean that there are regular retraps from that site, although it is always nice to encounter a bird ringed as a chick again!*

### Storm Petrel

E540993	4	6 Aug 1996	NORWAY: Hernyken, Rost, Nordland	
		8 Aug 2020	Fair Isle	24y 3d, 1102 km, SW (218°)
2731575	4	25 Jul 2017	Fair Isle	
	X	31 Mar 2020	GHANA: 70 km offshore Takoradi	2y 8m 7d, 2553 km, SSW (192°)

There were 32 other Storm Petrels controlled on Fair Isle during the summer. This involved: 12 from Sumburgh Head (one from 2018, three from 2019 and eight from 2020); nine from North Ronaldsay (singles from 2016 and 2018, three from 2019 and four from 2020); four from Highland (all ringed in 2020); two from elsewhere in Norway (ringed in 2018 and 2019); and singles from Faroe Islands (ringed in 2018), elsewhere in Orkney (ringed in 2019), Moray (ringed in 2020), Aberdeenshire (ringed at the house of a former Fair Isle resident in 2020), North Yorkshire (ringed in 2018).

There were also 42 other Fair Isle-ringed birds caught elsewhere during the year. This involved: 21 that moved to Sumburgh Head or Grutness (singles from 2017, 2018, three from 2019 and 16 from 2020); eight caught in Highland by Fair Isle stalwart Rob Hughes (one from 2014, three from 2017, two from 2018 and singles from 2019 and 2020); six caught on Birsay, Orkney (all ringed in 2020); three on North Ronaldsay (one from 2019 and two from 2020); two in the Faroe Islands (ringed in 2017 and 2018); and singles to the Calf of Man (ringed in 2017) and Yell (ringed in 2019).

*An interesting set of movements. E540993 was also trapped on Fair Isle in 1997, whilst 2731575 (one of the record-breaking cohort of 2017) is a rare example of where 'our' birds go in the winter.*

### Leach's Petrel

BT97610	4	11 Jul 2020	Fair Isle	
	R	31 Jul 2020	Sumburgh Head, Shetland	20d, 41 km, NNE (30°)

*Another wandering, presumably immature, non-breeder.*

### Fulmar

FC99619	1	2 Aug 2014	Homisdale, Fair Isle	
	R	4 Aug 2020	Homisdale, Fair Isle	6y 2d

### Shag

Resightings of darvic-ringed birds resulted in records of birds ringed in 2019 (two), 2016 (three), 2015 (three) and 2014, pleasingly, most of these had been ringed as chicks and hopefully many of them have now been recruited into the breeding population.

### Sparrowhawk

5288055	4F	18 Jan 2020	THE NETHERLANDS: Terschelling	
	R	26 Apr 2020	Fair Isle	3m 8d, 806 km, NW (329°)

*Three Fair Isle-ringed Sparrowhawks have been found in The Netherlands, but this is the first to be recorded moving in the opposite direction.*

### Chiffchaff

4A3113	2	29 Sep 2020	NORWAY: Jomfruland O-Runda, Kragero, Telemark	
	R	14 Oct 2020	Fair Isle	15d, 644 km, W (277°)

*The third Norwegian-ringed Chiffchaff to be found on Fair Isle, although both of the previous records were spring overshoots.*

### Blackcap

EL92290	3M	26 Sep 2020	NORWAY: Haland, Tysvaer, Rogaland	
		7 Oct 2020	Fair Isle	11d, 404 km, W (274°)

Three of the four previous Norwegian-ringed Blackcaps found on Fair Isle were also birds making the crossing in the same autumn they were ringed. Only The Netherlands and Belgium have provided more birds caught on Fair Isle than Norway.

### Wren

JHL662	3	11 Oct 2016	Fair Isle	
	R	27 Oct 2020	Fair Isle	4y 16d
LKT642	3	12 Oct 2019	Fair Isle	
	R	25 Jun 2020	Fair Isle	8m 13d

Both of these birds were trapped in the Obs garden and there have still yet to be any cases of 'Fair Isle Wrens' moving away from the Isle.

### Starling

CL02981	3J	11 Jun 2004	Fair Isle	
	X	29 Aug 2020	Drymuir, Maud, Aberdeenshire	16y 2m 18d, 228 km, S (188°)

A number of Starlings were retrapped during the year, including birds originally ringed in 2019 (three), 2018, 2016 (two), 2014 (two), 2013 and LB75857 which had been ringed as a chick on 31st May 2010 and was retrapped at the Schoolhouse on 7th October (10y 4m 7d).

The recovery of CL02981 involved a leg and ring only, so it is not known when the bird died, and it therefore cannot claim the longevity record for the species (which is 17y 7m 25d nationally and 12y 3m 2d for Fair Isle). LB75857 is the fourth-oldest known Fair Isle-ringed Starling.

### Blackbird

LN03497 was ringed as a 3F in the Plantation on 14th November 2019 and was retrapped at Burkle on 18th August (9m 4d). It was presumed to be the female of the pair that nested at Midway.

### Redwing

RF55282	4	22 Oct 2014	Fair Isle	
	X	11 Apr 2020	Lionel, Lewis, Western Isles	5y 5m 20d, 289 km, WSW (247°)
RY52805	4	24 Sep 2020	Fair Isle	
	R	26 Sep 2020	Fair Isle	
	R	6 Oct 2020	Brae, Shetland	12d, 96 km, N (10°)

RF55282 hit a glass window as it was presumably heading back to its breeding grounds; it is the second oldest known Fair Isle-ringed Redwing and the oldest Icelandic bird. RY52805 was notable for its northerly autumn movement (a phenomenon relatively regularly observed in Fair Isle-ringed birds, which suggests some wandering around the Northern Isles during migration).

### Robin

AFK8122	3	4 Oct 2020	Fair Isle	
	R	12 Oct 2020	NORWAY: Brusand Fuglestasjon, Rogaland 8d, 435 km, ESE (105°)	

The sixth Fair Isle-ringed Robin to move to Norway and the second to make a rapid easterly return in the autumn (the previous bird was ringed on Fair Isle on 1st October 1978 and was caught in Rogaland seven days later), having presumably been blown further west than it intended.



### Wheatear

TS52367	3J	31 Jul 2016	Fair Isle	
	R(4F)	13 Jun 2020	Fair Isle	3y 10m 13d
VZ47829	3J	5 Aug 2019	Fair Isle	
	R(5M)	16 Jun 2020	Fair Isle	10m 11d

### House Sparrow

Two birds ringed on Fair Isle in previous years were retrapped at Schoolhouse; one from 2019 and 4F TR34474, ringed as a 3J in the Plantation on 15th June 2017 and retrapped on 17th June (3y 2d).

### Dunnock

TS52194	5	4 Apr 2016	Fair Isle	
	X	3 Apr 2020	BELGIUM: Lille, Antwerpen	3y 11m 30d, 1008 km, SSE (157°)

The first Fair Isle-ringed Dunnock to move to Belgium, although two have moved in the opposite direction. This unfortunate individual died upon hitting a window.

### Meadow Pipit

APB1250	4	30 Aug 2018	Fair Isle	
	R	3 Sep 2020	Fair Isle	2y 4d

*A fairly typical record, although it isn't entirely clear whether these autumn retraps refer to Fair Isle breeding birds, or passage following the same route in subsequent years.*

### Twite

S465862 was ringed on the Isle on 28th April 2018 and recaptured on 20th April 2020 (1y 11m 23d).

### Linnet

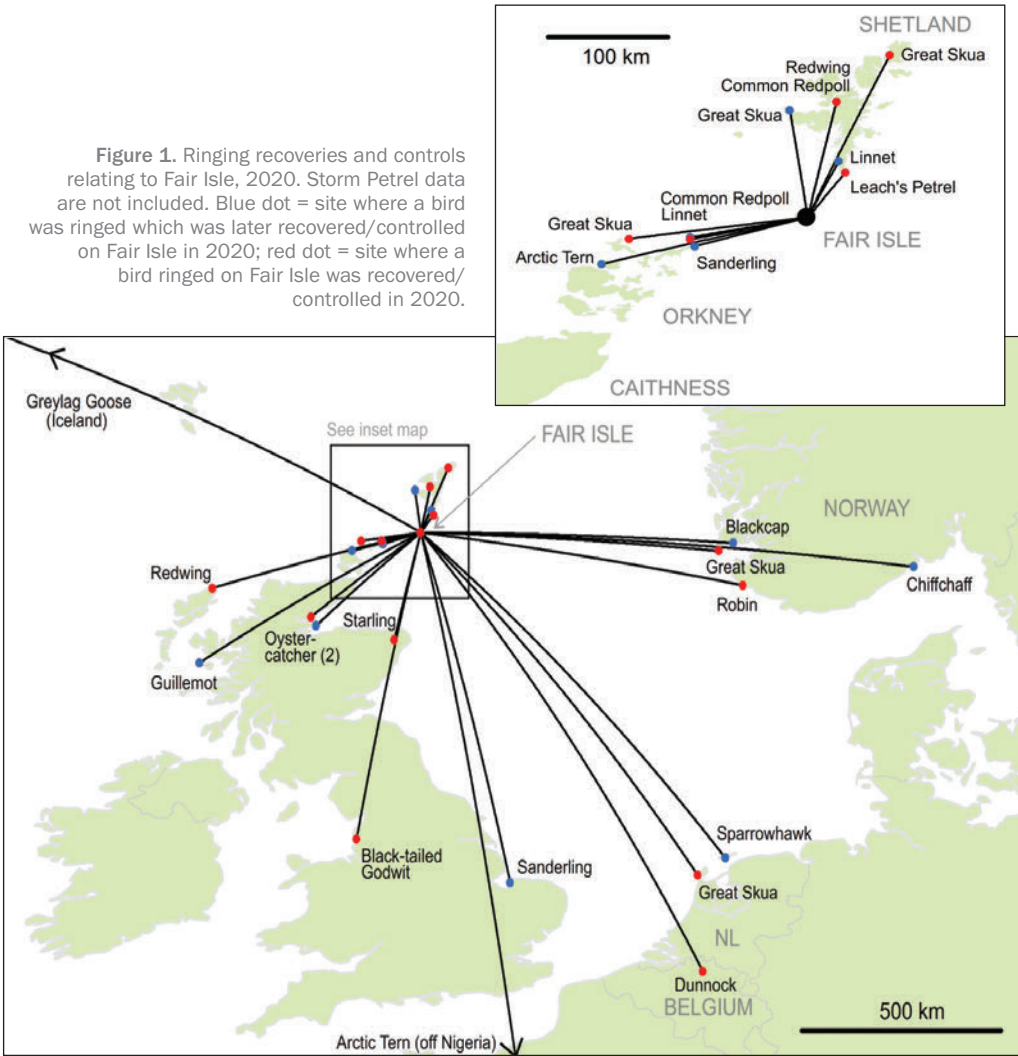
D975158	5F	4 May 2015	Fair Isle	
		1 Sep 2015	Scousburgh, Shetland	
		24 Aug 2016	Scousburgh, Shetland	
		5 Jun 2017	Scousburgh, Shetland	
		21 Aug 2017	Scousburgh, Shetland	
		5 May 2018	Scousburgh, Shetland	
		22 Apr 2020	Scousburgh, Shetland	4y 11m 17d
ALJ3553	3F	18 Aug 2019	Scousburgh, Shetland	
	R	25 Apr 2020	Fair Isle	8m 7d, 48 km, SSW (202°)
ANK7301	6M	28 Apr 2020	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	
	R	11 Jun 2020	Fair Isle	1m 14d, 49 km, ENE (68°)

Common Redpoll

ABJ0352	1J	15 Jul 2020	Fair Isle	29d, 54 km, WSW
	R	13 Aug 2020	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	
AFK8621	3	7 Nov 2020	Fair Isle	2d, 96 km, N (10°)
	R	9 Nov 2020	Brae, Shetland	

Like the Redwing, AFK8621 made a northerly autumn movement. This would provide some circumstantial evidence that the ringed 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll' seen on Unst in October 2020 was indeed the bird ringed on Fair Isle earlier in the month. ABJ0352 was one of the chicks of the first pair of 'Mealy Redpolls' to breed on Fair Isle, so it was especially interesting to see where it headed.

Statistics given are taken from the BTO online ringing report (Robinson, R.A., Leech, D.I. & Clark, J.A. (2020) The Online Demography Report: Bird ringing and nest recording in Britain & Ireland in 2019. BTO, Thetford ([www.bto.org/ringing-report](http://www.bto.org/ringing-report), created on 10 September 2020).



# FAIR ISLE'S SEABIRDS IN 2020

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Alex Penn

## Overview

The 2020 season of seabird monitoring was not a straightforward one, with the delayed arrival of the seasonal staff, changes to methodologies to comply with COVID-19 restrictions, and some species plots being impossible to access due to safety equipment and the boat being unable to be tested. However, upon arrival the team got on with the job enthusiastically and an impressive proportion of the population and productivity monitoring was able to be completed.

In line with recent years, the season brought mixed fortunes across the board, though many species showed promising breeding success. Population trends were mixed, with Gannet, Kittiwake, Common Guillemot and Razorbill all showing increases on 2019, but many other species decreased in number on monitoring plots and whole-island counts. Productivity however was generally good, with encouraging increases in all but two of the species able to be monitored, with Arctic Tern and Kittiwake having their highest productivities since 2000, and Arctic Skua their highest since 1996.

## Species accounts

**Fulmar:** A population decrease of 7.2% was recorded in the monitoring plots (397 AOS) in comparison with 2019 (428 AOS). This species has shown a gradual, fluctuating increase in the monitoring plots since the early 2000s, with the 2019 count being the highest since 1996 and a 17.9% increase on 2018, so this slight decrease should not be a cause for concern. Breeding success on the monitoring plots showed a slight increase however, with 0.47 chicks fledged per AOS, an increase of 2.2% on the 0.46 chicks fledged per AOS in 2019. The long-term trend in breeding success in the monitoring plots is of relatively short-term fluctuations rather than consistent increase or decrease.

**Gannet:** An increase of 11.2% was noted in the Gannet population (4,683 AON) in comparison to 2019 (4,211 AON). Gannets first colonised Fair Isle in 1975, with rapid expansion in the population noted from 2008 to 2010, followed by a levelling off or slight decline from 2011 to 2015, after which the population rose again. With some areas unable to be counted by boat in 2020, this may represent a slight undercount, though all subsites were counted.

Productivity was 0.63 chicks fledged per AON, representing a slight decrease of 1.6% from 2019 (0.64 chicks fledged per AON). The 2020 figure is the lowest since 2002 but maintains the high productivity values seen over the last 20 years - above 0.6 in all years with data from 2001 to 2019.

**Shag:** *No visits to the population plots (which are all accessed by boat) were possible in 2020, so data presented is for the productivity plots. However, data from the population and productivity plots show that trends between the two are broadly similar, despite the absolute numbers not being comparable with previous years.*

A population decrease of 18.2% was recorded at the productivity monitoring plots (9 AON) in comparison to 2019 (11 AON). Shags have undergone a considerable long-term decline on Fair Isle since 1969, although since 2011 counts have stabilised. The productivity plots that hosted just nine AON this year held 76 AON as recently as 2000.

Shag productivity increased by 117.1% (1.78 chicks fledged per AON) compared to 2019 (0.82 chicks per fledged AON). The long-term trend since 1986 has shown a gradual decline in productivity, with particularly poor breeding success recorded recently in 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2017, and productivity in 2020 is the highest since 2014.

**Arctic Skua:** The population of Arctic Skuas decreased by 3.6% to 27 AOT in comparison to 2019 (28 AOT). The long-term trend in the population has been a gradual decline with occasional fluctuations. Since reaching a low of just 19 AOT in 2013, a very slight increase in fortunes had been noted, but the population has started falling again slowly since 2018.

Productivity increased by 60.0% to 0.93 chicks fledged per AOT in comparison to 2019 (0.6 chicks fledged per AOT). Productivity from 2011 to 2013 was very poor (with just one chick fledged in total during the three years), improved from 2014 to 2016 before just single chicks fledged in each year in 2017 and 2018. The 2019 productivity figure was the best since 2006 and was bettered again in 2020, with the highest productivity since 1992.

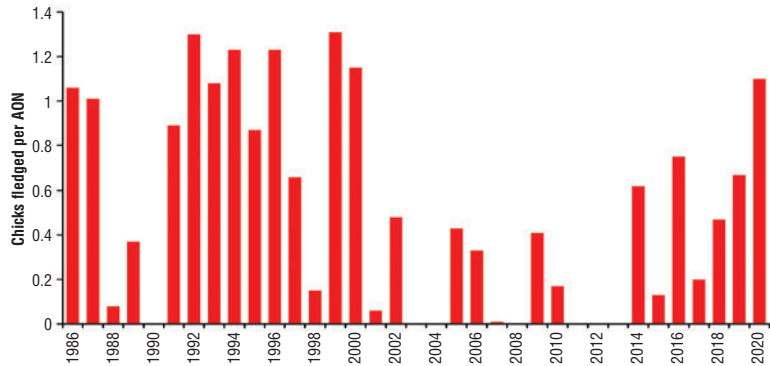
**Great Skua:** The count of 430 AOT represented a 12.2% decrease from the 2019 count of 490 AOT. The overall trend has been a long-term increase, with a surge in numbers between 2004 and 2008. Numbers then stabilised until 2013, after which counts have fluctuated markedly, although still with an overall upward trend. The number of AOT has now remained over 400 since 2018.

Breeding success was 42.9% higher (0.20 chicks fledged per AOT) than in 2019 (0.14 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 and has only exceeded 0.5 chicks fledged per AOT on three occasions in the last decade.

**Kittiwake:** Counts in the Holms and Dog Geo plot (the only plot to have any nesting attempts for the third consecutive year) produced 52 AON, an increase of 44.4% in comparison to 2019 (36 AON) and was the highest count since 2016, following two very poor years.



Productivity also increased by 64.2%, rising to 1.10 chicks fledged per AON in comparison to the 0.67 chicks fledged per AON in 2019. Since 2016 there have been some signs of improved productivity, with no years of complete failure and productivity above 0.5 on three occasions, with the 2020 figure the highest since 2000. This is now the seventh consecutive year to see chicks fledge from the productivity plots after none at all from 2011 to 2013.



**Figure 1.** Breeding success of Kittiwakes on Fair Isle, 1986–2020. Data presented are means from ten plots until 2010. Data after this is the breeding success of total fledged chicks per AON across all plots

**Arctic Tern:** The whole-island count showed a decrease of 13.3% (248 AON) in comparison with 2019 (286 AON). All nests were located on Buness, apart from one at South Light. Breeding numbers have fluctuated greatly since 1987, although a general upward trend until 2001 has now clearly been reversed and a long-term decline now seems to be occurring.

Arctic Tern productivity increased by 81.5% to 0.51 chicks fledged per AON, compared to the 0.28 chicks per AON recorded in 2019, representing the highest productivity figure since 2000. Many recent years have seen productivity of 0.1 or less (often zero), so recent increases in productivity have been very welcome.

**Common Guillemot:** Counts in the Common Guillemot plots increased by 2.4% (1,253 individuals) in comparison to 2019 (1,224 individuals). Since 1999, the overall pattern has been of a decline in numbers, although this appears to have stabilised somewhat since 2008.

No productivity monitoring was possible for Common Guillemots in 2020, however an estimate of a decrease of productivity of 6.1% was made. This estimate used the maximum number of chicks counted during the all-day feed watch (46) in comparison to the same figure from 2019 (49). This is a very crude method of judging productivity, but there is generally a reasonably strong correlation between the two figures.

**Razorbill:** Razorbill numbers at the Lericum monitoring plot increased by 20.7% (42 individuals) compared with 2019 (35 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, and the 2020 count is the same as that recorded in 2018.

No productivity monitoring was possible for Razorbills in 2020, with the colony at Easter Lothar inaccessible. No other data exists to form a meaningful comparison, although observations from Easter Lothar and other colonies (e.g. Maver's Geo) suggested another good season.

**Black Guillemot:** There was no count of Black Guillemots due to the delayed arrival of the seasonal staff. Black Guillemot productivity was formerly monitored at nests in the boulder beaches along the east coast of Fair Isle (1987–2000). However, use of these nest sites has greatly declined (possibly due to predation by cats) and accessible Black Guillemot nest sites are now extremely rare. New sites containing accessible nests for productivity monitoring have not been found, despite searches being made annually from 2011–2019, although no searches were possible in 2020.

**Puffin:** It was not possible to undertake a whole-island count of Puffins this year due to the lack of observers. The most recent count remains the 6,666 individuals recorded in 2015.

No visits to the Green Holm colony were possible and no other sites on Fair Isle lend themselves to productivity studies for this species, so no productivity studies were possible.

Graphics showing the long-term population and productivity trends of all the seabirds on Fair Isle are available at: [www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk/seabird\\_research](http://www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk/seabird_research)

### At a glance...

Species	Change since 2019	
Fulmar	Population - 7.2%	Productivity + 2.2%
Gannet	Population + 11.2%	Productivity - 1.6%
Shag	Population - 18.2%	Productivity + 117.1%
Arctic Skua	Population - 3.6%	Productivity + 60.0%
Great Skua	Population - 12.2%	Productivity + 42.9%
Kittiwake	Population + 44.4%	Productivity + 64.2%
Arctic Tern	Population - 13.3%	Productivity + 81.5%
Common Guillemot	Population + 2.4%	Productivity (est) - 6.1%
Razorbill	Population + 20.7%	Productivity monitoring not possible
Black Guillemot	No monitoring possible in 2020	
Puffin	No monitoring possible in 2020	

# FIRST AND LAST MIGRANT DATES

David Parnaby and Ian Andrews

Species	Earliest ever	Earliest 2020	Latest 2020	Latest ever
Quail	30th Apr 1961	n/a	n/a	13th Oct 1989 <sup>1</sup>
Swift	16th Apr 2013	27th May	10th Aug	26th Oct 1975 #
Cuckoo	17th Apr 1987	2nd May	n/a	8th Oct 1977
Turtle Dove	23rd Apr 1971	26th May	26th Jun	1st Nov 1982 & 1990
Corncrake	10th Apr 1966	n/a	n/a	3rd Nov 1977
Dotterel	25th Apr 1973	20th May	n/a	3rd Dec 1986
Whimbrel	9th Apr 2013	17th Apr	11th Sep	12th Dec 1907
Red-necked Phalarope	9th May 2005	15th May	29th Jul	16th Sep 1979
Common Sandpiper	5th Apr 1983	26th Apr	8th Oct	2nd Nov 1908 ^ ^
Green Sandpiper	1st Apr 2017	20th Apr	15th Sep	12th Nov 1970
Wood Sandpiper	25th Apr 1968	12th May	29th Aug	2nd Oct 1998
Greenshank	8th Apr 1979 & 1998	n/a	28th Aug	6th Dec 2015
Lesser Black-b Gull	2nd Feb 2011	24th Mar	6th Oct	12th Dec 1957
Sandwich Tern	26th Mar 2006	n/a	15th Jul	1st Oct 1993
Common Tern	25th Apr 1983	n/a	20th Sep	18th Oct 1975
Arctic Tern	13th Apr 1995	7th May	2nd Sep	30th Oct 1972
Great Skua	7th Mar 1985	26th Mar	2nd Nov	25th Nov 2014 ^
Arctic Skua	4th Apr 1965 & 1988	29th Apr	6th Sep	25th Oct 1961
Storm Petrel	8th May 1962 (GS)	20th Jun (GS)	20th Sep	10th Nov 1962 (GS)
Manx Shearwater	26th Mar 1966 (GS)	19th May	4th Aug	27th Oct 2006
Osprey	25th Apr 1966	7th May	10th Jun	4th Nov 1935
Honey-buzzard	21st May 1966 & 2009	n/a	n/a	19th Oct 1984
Marsh Harrier	24th Mar 1995	17th Apr	n/a	26th Oct 1976
Wryneck	18th Apr 1981	20th Apr	n/a	17th Oct 1974
Hobby	1st May 1964	22nd May	1st Jun	3rd Oct 1973
Red-backed Shrike	4th May 1984	23rd May	17th Sep	8th Nov 1993
Sand Martin	31st Mar 2006	21st Apr	6th Oct	19th Oct 1978
Swallow	31st Mar 2002	20th Apr	29th Oct	30th Nov 1991
House Martin	24th Mar 1995	30th Apr	9th Oct	2nd Nov 2011
Wood Warbler	14th Apr 1981	19th May	31st Aug	7th Oct 2017
Willow Warbler	25th Mar 2010	18th Apr	15th Oct	23rd Nov 1927
Chiffchaff	12th Mar 1973 & 2008	25th Mar	17th Dec	31st Dec 1975
Sedge Warbler	19th Apr 1987	29th Apr	18th Sep	11th Nov 1975
Reed Warbler	28th Apr 2001	21st May	2nd Oct	31st Oct 1980
Marsh Warbler	18th May 2013	31st May	25th Jun	10th Oct 2004
Icterine Warbler	8th May 2013	28th May	17th Sep	20th Oct 2016
Grasshopper Warbler	7th Apr 2002	20th Apr	28th Oct	28th Oct 2020
Blackcap	27th Mar 2012	7th Apr	27th Nov	21st Dec 2017
Garden Warbler	21st Apr 1968	27th May	7th Nov	20th Nov 1976

# FIRST AND LAST MIGRANT DATES

Species	Earliest ever	Earliest 2020	Latest 2020	Latest ever
Barred Warbler	28th May 1992	24th Jun	3rd Oct	5th Nov 2018
Lesser Whitethroat	13th Apr 2018	21st Apr	25th Oct	9th Nov 1997
Subalpine Warbler agg.	20th Apr 2000	31st May	n/a	29th Oct 2007
Whitethroat	10th Apr 2016	29th Apr	4th Oct	1st Nov 1995
Goldcrest	28th Jan 2000	21st Mar	10th Nov	19th Dec 2003
Ring Ouzel	16th Mar 1988	17th Apr	23rd Oct	19th Dec 1968
Spotted Flycatcher	20th Apr 1949	19th May	15th Oct	26th Oct 1985
Bluethroat	22nd Mar 1908	23rd May	4th Nov	13th Nov 1983
Pied Flycatcher	21st Apr 1983	30th Apr	4th Oct	29th Oct 1961
Black Redstart	5th Jan 1995	7th Mar	10th Nov	31st Dec 1986 x
Redstart	10th Apr 2016	17th Apr	21st Oct	11th Nov 1981
Whinchat	14th Apr 1981	30th Apr	15th Oct	26th Nov 1990
Stonechat	14th Feb 2008	1st Mar	8th Oct	28th Dec 2000
Wheatear	13th Mar pre-1959	6th Apr	30th Oct	19th Nov 1959
Yellow Wagtail <sup>2</sup>	27th Mar 1973	11th Jun	17th Jun	20th Nov 1957
Grey Wagtail	14th Mar 1999	6th Apr	10th Nov	30th Nov 2017
Pied Wagtail <sup>3</sup>	25th Jan 2016	21st Mar	29th Oct	30th Nov 2017
Tree Pipit	10th Apr 2016	22nd Apr	22nd Oct	9th Nov 1908
Red-throated Pipit	8th May 1936 & 1954	n/a	22nd Oct	1st Nov 1908
Common Rosefinch	4th May 1995	22nd May	8th Oct	30th Nov 1991
Crossbill	7th Jan 2013	30th May	27th Sep	13th Nov 2012
Siskin	3rd Feb 1994	10th Mar	15th Oct	29th Dec 2006
Ortolan Bunting	26th Apr 1964	n/a	n/a	7th Nov 2015
Little Bunting	4th Apr 1958	n/a	27th Oct	19th Nov 1975
Rustic Bunting	25th Apr 1980	8th May	5th Oct	8th Nov 1975

This table was initially compiled by Hywel Maggs in 2002 and has been updated annually by Deryk Shaw and David Parnaby. In the 2019 report, the list was updated and expanded by Ian Andrews.

<sup>1</sup> 1989 found dead & 2008 alive

<sup>2</sup> all subspecies

<sup>3</sup> both subspecies

\* new record

x this bird went on to over-winter

^ an injured, flightless bird survived on the island until 19th December 2016

^^ an unidentified *Actitis* sandpiper was seen on 16th November 2018

# an unidentified swift sp. was seen on 7th November 2011

GS from the *Good Shepherd*

Maggs, H. 2002. Earliest and latest migrant dates. *FIBO Report for 2001*: 36.



## LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD, 1ST SEPTEMBER 2019; FIRST FOR FAIR ISLE

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Tom Gale, with comments from Nick Riddiford and David Cooper

After spending the summer of 2019 volunteering at the Observatory, I was fortunate to be able to return for a few weeks during September before I had to go back to university. During July, there had been a wonderful invasion of Two-barred Crossbills, among many other highlights, so I was absolutely buzzing to return. However, whilst arriving in Lerwick on the NorthLink ferry, I received a message confirming that due to the weather, I would be unable to get onto Fair Isle for at least another day. Thankfully, of course, there are worse places to be stuck than Shetland! This meant that I was able to go out exploring the area and visit some legendary birding sites in the meantime.

On the following morning (1st September), I was able to get a lift to Quendale. After a few hours exploring, I decided to head back along the road towards Dunrossness. After passing through Hillwell, I suddenly heard some Ravens making a commotion above my head. I looked up and realised they were mobbing a raptor of some sort. My instant gut reaction was that it was a buzzard species, but it was a very odd bird - it was strikingly pale and seemed to be in a heavy state of moult. Due to the light, I couldn't make out much else, so I quickly went for my camera to record as much of the bird as possible. Thankfully, I was able to get some shots and video as it then headed over the Loch of Spiggie before disappearing out of sight. This all happened within about a minute or so but based on the features I'd seen (mainly through my camera), it appeared it was most likely a Buzzard - in itself, this would have been a good record for Shetland, so I was quite excited by this. However, looking through my photos on the back of my camera subsequently confused me. The bird was very strange! My photos didn't reveal the upperparts, but the underparts appeared off-white with dark patches around the thighs and carpals. The heavy state of moult made the bird look even more confusing. At the time, I thought that structurally the bird seemed OK for Buzzard, based on my photos.

The following day, I was able to get the *Good Shepherd* to Fair Isle. As it happened, a "Honey-buzzard" had been found flying south over the isle by Nick Riddiford several hours after I had seen the bird over Hillwell. The bird had passed through quickly, although Richard Cope also saw it from Malcolm's Head at 15:15 hrs and managed to get some record shots as it headed over Shirva. Comparing our photos, we were surprised to find we had, in fact, seen the same bird as the state of moult and plumage matched perfectly. This was confusing from both ends - the impression gained by both Nick and Richard was of a long-necked and long-tailed bird, more fitting to the structure of a Honey-buzzard and yet my photos clearly revealed a much more Buzzard-like bird.

Nick commented *"My mind must have shut down after I saw the longish narrow tail (particularly) and somewhat projecting neck and head (as per the last series of photos in the Hillwell pictures sent), leading me towards honey buzzard. One thing was sure in my mind, that jizz-wise it did not remind me of common buzzard."*

Over the next few days, we went back over the images together and asked a couple of others for their opinions, trying to decide what it was. This involved googling images of various other species (including some rather outrageous candidates), but none of these seemed to click at the time and the consensus we reached was that it was a Buzzard, albeit an odd one. In retrospect, our contrasting impressions of the bird should have raised the alarm bells! Despite this, over the following weeks, we couldn't confidently come up with a more plausible alternative. After four weeks of excitement on Fair Isle, followed by a sudden return to university work, the bird slowly worked its way to the back of my mind over the following months.

During this time, the record was also under discussion by the Shetland Bird Club Records Committee. Fast forward to 2021 and I received an email from David Parnaby with the subject line "first for Britain", which seemed intriguing... I opened the email and instantly got a thump of adrenaline (I imagine this isn't usually the way it happens in rare bird finder's accounts!). Attached was a pdf from David Cooper, titled "Long-legged Buzzard Hillwell Fair Isle". Picking up my jaw from the bowl of sweet potato curry on my lap, I read through the pdf, which explained how this bird was a perfect candidate for a second-calendar-year Long-legged Buzzard! The quality of Dave's notes was outstanding and made everything suddenly click into place. The bird's 'strange' shape and plumage features could now be explained, and the different impression Nick and Richard had gained of the bird compared to me now made much more sense. This was clearly the realisation that we had missed at the time.



**Plate 116 a-e.** Long-legged Buzzard, Malcolm's Head, 1st September 2019. © Richard Cope

**Dave also gave the following comments:**

*"During the first circulation(s), I read the descriptions and looked at the images and I don't recall thinking too much about it. I've seen some 'whacky' Common Buzzards and even Nils Van Duivendijk's Advanced ID Handbook makes mention of their plumage being extremely variable, from white to dark brown and almost everything in between.*

*"The first time I watched [the video] I found it puzzling to say the least. To me, the video conveys a far more interesting impression, perhaps a combination of better capturing its structure combined with its plumage... a large, powerful, long-winged, long-tailed but rather long-necked raptor... but combined with a very pot-bellied appearance, its overall jizz reminds me much of a Rough-leg, as do its deep wingbeats.*

*"The video also provides the first visual documentation of its upperparts that I find best appreciated by freezing frames - the pale head, pale-based tail, sandy-coloured mantle and forewings, broad pale median-covert bar contrasting with its darker secondaries & hand, and then there are those eye-catching white bases to its outer primaries...*

*"Playing around with the levels and saturation of some of the images hopefully better-reveal the true colours of its underparts, underwings and tail... the whole ground colour of the bird's head, underparts and underwings including its underwing coverts become whiter, its thighs cinnamon and its carpal patches more contrastingly obvious... and I wasn't anticipating its tail would 'colour up' quite like it does...*

*"I couldn't help but feel the parts of the puzzle were falling into place and that a whole suite of characters was pointing in one direction... and on starting to read and digest various identification literature there was more... a staring white iris with dark pupil, large deep-based bill and stage of moult for a 2cy bird in autumn all seem consistent with it being Britain's first Long-legged Buzzard!! Even the date of occurrence seems as good as could be hoped for!"*

It would be easy to look back on this and feel frustrated that we were unable to identify the bird correctly at the time. However, I feel it's better to take the positives from experiences such as this. It's been a great learning experience for me and I'm glad we were able to record the bird in sufficient detail in such a short time. Had the whole series of events unfolded differently, this bird could have simply slipped past as an 'odd buzzard'. It seems funny that I saw the bird on a day when I was 'supposed' to be on Fair Isle. All my daydreams in the weeks beforehand had involved finding rare birds when I actually got there, not on the way! It does seem a nice turn of fate that it was later observed over the Isles and, as David Parnaby pointed out, this could be one of the only finder's accounts written for the FIBO report by someone who didn't actually see the bird on Fair Isle!

*This record is subject to acceptance by the BBRC and BOURC.*

## GREEN WARBLER, 16TH JUNE 2020; THE SECOND FOR FAIR ISLE

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David Parnaby

Early June was a frantic time of seabird monitoring on Fair Isle. It was also turning out to be a splendid extended spring migration season, with a series of glorious sunny days and south-easterly airflows bringing a variety of migrants. Highlights from 1st–15th June included River Warbler, Thrush Nightingale, a singing Citrine Wagtail, Greenish and Blyth's Reed Warblers, Nightingale, two Rose-coloured Starlings, Red-breasted Flycatcher and a scatter of Marsh and Icterine Warblers, Red-backed Shrikes and Common Rosefinches.

Recent years have seen 16th June develop a really good reputation for a 'last hurrah' of the spring, with Eastern Olivaceous and River Warblers in 2019, Serin in 2018, Woodchat Shrike in 2017 and Paddyfield Warbler in 2013, so we were hoping to keep that record going, especially given the light easterly wind. Some early morning birding and ringing had produced a few new common migrants before the attention switched to seabirds after breakfast. A Common Guillemot population count was the first task, followed by a visit to the Fulmar population and productivity plots.

With the temperature steadily climbing (it would go on to reach 15°C, the peak for the year) and with the team having been putting in some long shifts in recent days, I felt 'elevenses' on the beach at North Haven was a necessary part of the work programme for the day. So, I took ice cream orders and headed to Stackhoull Stores whilst they continued checking other seabird plots.



Plate 117. Green Warbler, Vaila's Trees, 16th June 2020. © Alex Penn



Any visit to the shop on Fair Isle should involve checking Vaila's Trees, a small planted area that regularly holds migrants, and so I had a quick look. There were a few bits moving around and I picked up Blackcap, Whitethroat and Chiffchaff before an unstreaked *Acrocephalus* warbler flew into a patch of *Rosa*. Whilst trying to refine this, a couple of *Phylloscopus* warblers pinged through the garden, with one being a worn adult Chiffchaff that had been on the Isle a while, but the other being a bit more of a puzzle. It was being incredibly difficult, with initial very brief views suggesting a bright bird. Willow Warbler was the first thought on what were largely flight views, a glimpse of a yellow face and bright green mantle briefly suggesting maybe Wood Warbler, but eventually a couple more split-second sightings showed a wing bar. I was fortunate enough to trap a Green Warbler on Fair Isle in spring 2017, which proved to be a really educational bird as it was a rather dull individual, so I realized that the combination of these bright colours, well-marked face and wing bar could only really add up to that species. My main worry was that the previous day I had trapped and ringed a Greenish Warbler a few hundred yards away at Schoolhouse. Having known that it was an exceptional spring for Green Warbler in north-west Europe, and being aware that the duller Green Warblers can easily approach a bright Greenish Warbler, I had carefully checked for that species and was happy that I'd caught the commoner of the two. It seemed a pretty big coincidence though and I started to wonder whether the bird I was watching now (or trying to watch) was actually that bright, or had I been fooled by the briefness of the views and reflections of colours from the foliage - surely this would turn out to be yesterday's Greenish? I messaged the team to say I was delayed chasing a wing-barred *Phyllosc* so they'd have to wait for the ice cream (rather than sit on the beach in the sunshine waiting for me, they'd started digging rose bushes - they're a keen bunch!). Finally, around an hour after the first sighting, the warbler hopped onto a fence panel long enough for me to grab a quick image. I was delighted to see it wasn't ringed, so it wasn't yesterday's Greenish! The photo also showed the other relevant features; a very yellow face and supercilium, a strong wing bar, bright green upperparts, a fairly long primary projection and a 'beaky' look, that I'd noticed in my brief views so far. So, all the things I'd thought I'd seen were actually there and they all added up to a safe identification of Green Warbler. Nice! The team were soon on the scene when I relayed the news to them and a few other people came to twitch it as well (although it was a nervous wait for Deryk Shaw who had missed the previous Fair Isle record and was crewing on the *Good Shepherd IV* when this one was found; luckily it waited for him!). Shortly after people arrived, it began to be a bit more active, flycatching a couple of times and perching briefly in the open. It was noticeably harder to make out the colours when the bird was in the direct sunlight and it could be difficult to make out much yellow below. However, once it dropped back down onto the fence in the shade the true colours (and structural differences) could be appreciated.

## BOOTED WARBLER, 30TH JUNE 2020; THE FIRST SPRING RECORD FOR FAIR ISLE

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Alex Penn

After a morning of mapping Bonxie territories, I stopped off at the shop with Georgia Platt to check Vaila's Trees on our way back and immediately flushed from the *Rosa* a small warbler which then helpfully perched up on a low fence panel. My initial impression as the bird flew was of a fairly small, sandy brown warbler, with a bouncy, uneven flight similar to that of a *Phylloscopus*, or perhaps a spooked Marsh Warbler. Interesting!

As I raised my bins to the bird as it sat facing me on the fence, it became quickly clear that this was no *Phyllosc*! The bird was very pale, almost white underneath, with some 'tea-coloured' wash to the upper flanks, a strikingly pale orange bill with contrastingly a darker upper side to the upper mandible, a clear pale supercilium and pale straw-coloured legs. From what I could see of the upperparts as the bird faced me, they appeared to be a similar colour to the flanks - a slightly washed-out 'milky tea' colour. Despite the plumage clearly not fitting a *Phyllosc* sp., the structural impression was not far off - fairly small and neat, without the long bill and sloping forehead of an *Acrocephalus*, but with crown feathers that it would periodically raise to give a more *Hippolais*-like head structure.

As I tried to process all this and frantically make mental notes of all I was seeing, the bird started to quietly sing, gaining confidence and increasing in volume. The song was not one that I recognised and was pleasant and rapid - lots of notes packed into a roughly five-second phrase. To my ear, it was reminiscent more of Melodious Warbler than an *Acro* sp., fast but tuneful, lacking much in the way of harsh or grating notes, but without mimicry. After giving a few phrases of song, the bird decided it had made its point, and promptly flew over the back of the shop and out of sight.

At this point I knew that I was watching an *Iduna* warbler, but I was also painfully aware that I was out of my depth in terms of further knowledge, so called David Parnaby and Dan Gornall, who came down to try to refind the bird and offer additional knowledge. I opened up the *Collins Bird Guide* app to check up on identifying features, and to listen to recordings



Plate 118. Booted Warbler, Shirva, 30th June 2020.  
© Daniel Gornall



Plate 119. Booted Warbler, Shirva, 30th June 2020. © Alex Penn

of the songs of Booted, Sykes's and Eastern Olivaceous Warblers. By the time that the others arrived, I was more confident that the bird was a Booted Warbler, based on what I had heard of the song and the plumage and structural characteristics that I could remember. But having not had my camera to hand, and with the bird now having disappeared, I was keen to relocate it and try to get some photos and/or recordings.

Fortunately, after spreading out for a brief search, I relocated the bird at nearby Shirva, where it was again singing in the sunshine. Now, reassuringly armed with cameras, we all enjoyed good views of the bird as it showed very well, feeding voraciously in Shirva's small garden and giving regular snatches of song. Over the next few minutes, what I now knew to be important features were noted, such as the bill length and structure (relatively short and *Phyllosc*-like, without the 'spiky' impression of Sykes's, and with a smudgy darker tip to the lower mandible), and the tertial pattern (always appearing contrasting in changing light conditions). These along with the continuing *Phyllosc*-like impression of the bird and the regularly given song, cemented our conclusion that the bird was a Booted Warbler - the 16th record for Fair Isle, and perhaps surprisingly, the first spring occurrence.

A recording of the song by Dan Gornall can be heard via this link: <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/246707301>

## WESTERN BONELLI'S WARBLER, 23RD AUGUST 2020; THE FIFTH FOR FAIR ISLE

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Alex Penn

An afternoon wander around the crofts of the south end of Fair Isle was more in hope than expectation, with the morning's census failing to turn up anything of much note, and north-westerly winds not giving much cause for excitement. A few Willow Warblers were lingering along the roadside fences as I made my way northwards from South Light, but I had so far turned up little else. As I approached Midway, watching a Willow Warbler flitting along the fence, a second *Phylloscopus* warbler flew down towards me from the Midway garden to join it, and then disappeared into a small patch of cover just a few metres in front of me. As it had approached, it seemed rather pale to be another Willow Warbler, so thoughts turned to the chance of a Greenish Warbler, given the time of year and with a scattering of them across Shetland in recent days. However, when the bird in question jumped out again to join the Willow Warbler on the fence, it quickly became apparent this wasn't a Greenish!

The bird was clearly a *Phyllosc* in structure, but with very pale white underparts, a pale brownish mantle and head with a clear pale supercilium extending well behind the eye, and bright yellowish-green wings and tail with a 'shining' quality to the colour that was reminiscent of Wood Warbler. The dark eye stood out strikingly in the pale face, with a bright white eye ring and rather pale lores. A Bonelli's warbler - what a little stunner! This elation was quickly tempered by some trepidation, as I knew that out-of-range individuals, particularly in autumn, were not always straightforward to narrow down to species.

Fortunately, the bird was incredibly confiding, taking little notice of me gawking at it a few metres away, and I was able to watch it feeding along the fence line without it giving me so much as a second look, often hovering to pluck insects from amongst the thistles before flitting back to the wire fence. It remained stubbornly silent however, so after everyone that had gathered to see the bird had obtained good views of it feeding in the *Angelica* of the Midway garden, a mistnet was erected and the bird was trapped to obtain biometrics, and any feathers that may be dropped during handling, in an attempt to confirm



Plate 120. Western Bonelli's Warbler, Midway, 24th August 2020.  
© Steve Arlow





Plate 121. Western Bonelli's Warbler, Midway, 23rd August 2020. © Alex Penn



Plate 122. Western Bonelli's Warbler, Midway, 23rd August 2020. © Daniel Gornall

the identity to species. In the hand, the wing length proved to be at the shortest end of the range for Eastern but fell comfortably in range for Western, and with the 2nd second primary tip falling between the 6th and 7th supported an identification of Western Bonelli's. The bird also dropped a small number of body feathers during handling, and these were collected and sent off for DNA analysis, which later confirmed the mtDNA to be a match for Western.

On the second day of its stay, the bird found its voice and began calling regularly - a distinct disyllabic, upturned 'hoo-eet', neatly matching recordings of Western Bonelli's Warbler. This final piece of the puzzle made for a very satisfying 'complete set' of identification features with biometrics, call and DNA evidence all obtained. This becomes the fifth Fair Isle record of Western Bonelli's (along with one Bonelli's Warbler sp.), with Eastern yet to make it onto the Fair Isle list...

## BROWN SHRIKE, 15TH OCTOBER 2020; THE THIRD FOR FAIR ISLE

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Daniel Gornall

On 15th October, I set out for the north census in a fresh NNW breeze. Early October had delivered some great birding and a couple of large falls, but migrant numbers had started to drop off as we approached mid-month. There were still one or two good birds turning up nevertheless, and it felt like the rarity scale had stepped up a notch, with a healthy proportion of new birds being good ones. Dusky Warbler and Red-flanked Bluetail were both found on the 14th and kept hopes remaining high. That said, I was a good three-quarters into north census, heading anti-clockwise from the Obs, with little in the way of 'new arrivals' in the notebook. I headed around the coast past North and South Naaversgill,



Plate 123. Brown Shrike, Naaversgill, 15th October 2020.  
© Daniel Gornall

before checking the cliffs at Tineside and then walked east up the slope alongside Troila Geo. Upon reaching the top of the hill, a bird perched on a rock 40 metres in front stopped me in my tracks. After lifting my bins, it became apparent I was looking at a shrike, but it flew up, went over the brow, and down towards South Naaversgill out of sight. The initial views were brief, but deep down I knew this was an interesting bird and not one to let go. From the limited detail I did see, it looked a reddish-brown colour above and appeared to have a buffy wash to the flanks. A bold eye mask and strong bill were also apparent. I was pretty confident this wasn't going to be a Red-backed Shrike, and suspected Brown, although I certainly didn't have enough to clinch it and a re-find would be necessary to rule out the Isabelline pair. I pinged a message out to the rest of the wardening team to say I'd just had a potentially interesting shrike, before continuing with the search. Several laps of the area later, and things were starting to get a bit nervy, with a real fear this bird had disappeared for good. But persistence pays off I told myself and trudged up the slope alongside Troila yet again. Then out of nowhere I flushed the shrike from behind a large bolder, just a few metres in front of me. To my relief, it perched up on a rock, this time giving slightly more prolonged views... Brown Shrike, surely? I quickly reached for my camera and fired off a few photos, before the bird once again flew up over the brow and out of sight.

The large-headed appearance, heavy stubby bill and long tail were all very apparent in the field. The plumage consisted of russet brown upperparts and tail with minimal contrast, and a slightly brighter rump. The underparts were pale with buffy and vermiculated flanks and this, coupled with faint barring to the mantle and fringing to the coverts, made it a first-winter bird. The prominent dark eye mask extending from the ear coverts into the dark nostril feathering made it a male. Further examination of the photos revealed a lack of white-based primaries, dark-centred and buff-fringed tertials, a short primary projection and graduated outer tail feathers - all features leaving no doubt that this was Fair Isle's third Brown Shrike.

This bird was far from cooperative, and it's incredible how elusive a shrike can be in an area with absolutely zero cover. After a couple more glimpses my final view was as it flew over the edge of the cliffs, before the arrival of any additional observers. Extensive searching followed for the next few hours but alas there was no further sign. A real shame it didn't hang around long enough for others to see. However, it will remain a memorable encounter for me, and made for a pretty 'epic' species/location combination (as many Fair Isle finds do) as it roamed around the rocky slopes of Naaversgill to a backdrop of the west cliffs.

After an 18-year wait for Fair Isle's second record of Brown Shrike in 2019, following the first on 21st October 2000 (only the second for the UK at the time), it only took a year for the third to turn up. With the recent upturn in UK records of this species, there will surely be more Fair Isle records to follow in the not-too-distant future.



Plate 124. Brown Shrike, Naaversgill, 15th October 2020. © Daniel Gornall





Plate 125. Lanceolated Warbler, Ringing Hut, 15th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

## COMMITTEE DECISIONS ON RARITIES FROM 2019

The following 2019 records were accepted:

Species	Date, Location, Observers	Committee
Mandarin Duck	13–18 Aug, Da Water, M. Hellicar <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Nightjar	18 Sep, Obs, D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Red-necked Grebe	24–27 Jan, South Harbour, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Black-winged Stilt	9 Oct, North Haven, S. Thomson <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Little Ringed Plover	20 Apr, Boini Mire, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Little Ringed Plover	2 May, Walli Burn, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Pectoral Sandpiper	26 Sep–8 Oct, Easter Lothar Water, T. Gale <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Lesser Yellowlegs	18–19 May, Da Water then Utra, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Franklin's Gull	6 Jun, offshore then Chalet, D. Parnaby, L. Steijn <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Honey-buzzard	15 May, over South, M. Hellicar <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Honey-buzzard	25 Aug, Hill Dyke, M. Hellicar <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Black Kite	19 Apr, 28 Apr–1 May, Ward Hill, R. Cope, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Buzzard	14 May, Obs, R. Cope	SBCRC
Buzzard	27 May, Ditfield, D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Hoopoe	23 Apr–1 May, Buness, M. Hellicar <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Hobby	2 Jun, South Harbour, C. Dodd <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Hobby	9–15 Jun, Boini then roaming, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Brown Shrike	13 Oct, Schoolton, G. Tyler <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Woodlark	29 Oct, Busta, R. Cope & N. O'Hanlon	SBRC
Shore Lark	6–10 Apr, Hoini and South Green, R. Cope, G. Tyler <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Shore Lark	2–7 May, Gunnawark, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Shore Lark	16 Oct, Linni Geo, O. Metcalf & S. Mitchell	SBCRC
Red-rumped Swallow	21 May, Malcolm's Head then South Harbour, C. Dodd <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Pallas's Warbler	14–15 Oct, Dog Geo then Haa/Burkle, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Radde's Warbler	17–18 Oct, Klinger's Geo, R. Hughes <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Dusky Warbler	14 Oct, Shirva, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Greenish Warbler	27 Aug, Midway, D. Shaw <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC



Species	Date, Location, Observers	Committee
Arctic Warbler	13–15 Jul, Obs, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	5 Jun, Plantation, M. Hellicar <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	18–21 Aug, Shirva then School, M. Hellicar <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	16–20 Jun, Obs then Schoolton, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Melodious Warbler	7 Jun–7 Jul, Lower Stoneybrek, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Lanceolated Warbler	15 Oct, Gilsetter, R. Cope, R. Hughes, N. O'Hanlon, D. Parnaby, D.N. Shaw <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
River Warbler	16–18 Jun, Obs then Gully, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Subalpine Warbler	13 May, Haa, S. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'	9–19 Jun, Lower Leogh, Lower Stoneybrek and Schoolton, C. Dodd <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Firecrest	15–17 Oct, Kroga Geo then roaming, S. Arlow <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
'Northern Treecreeper'	9–12 Apr, Skadan then South Raeva, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Thrush Nightingale	24–26 May, Plantation, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-flanked Bluetail	23 Sep, Wester Lother, T. Gale <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Red-flanked Bluetail	6 Oct, Wester Lother, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Red-flanked Bluetail	14 Oct, Obs, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Red-flanked Bluetail	14 Oct, South Raeva, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Red-flanked Bluetail	15 Oct, Gunnawark, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
'Eastern Stonechat'	13 Oct, Quoy and Meadow Burn, B. Doe, M.A. Golley, N.A. Riddiford <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	4–9 Apr, Gilly Burn, R. Cope, N. O'Hanlon & G. Tyler	BBRC
Citrine Wagtail	14 May, South Harbour then Easter Lother Water, A.W. Barker, A. Heavisides, I.R. Poxton <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Citrine Wagtail	27–28 Jun, Da Water, S. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Citrine Wagtail	26–27 Aug, Utra, Hesti and South Harbour, R. Cope, A. Perkins <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Tawny Pipit	26–27 May, Rippack, R. Cope, C. Dodd, D. Parnaby	BBRC
Olive-backed Pipit	16–17 Oct, Easter Lother, R. Hughes <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Olive-backed Pipit	16–18 Oct, Stackhoull area, O. Metcalf, S.L. Mitchell <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Pechora Pipit	15–17 Oct, Upper Stoneybrek and Chalet, S.L. Mitchell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-throated Pipit	13–14 Oct, Haa and Lower Taft, O. Metcalf, S.L. Mitchell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll'	20–24 Oct, School Brae, K. Kelly <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Two-barred Crossbill	9–18 Jul, 16, Guidicum, Troila, South Raeva and North Naaversgill, C. Dodd, T. Gale, M. Hellicar, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Two-barred Crossbill	4–12 Aug, five, various locations, T. Gale, M. Hellicar <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Two-barred Crossbill	3–4 Sep, Lower Leogh, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Ortolan Bunting	15 May, Wirvie Burn, D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Rustic Bunting	21–23 May, Burkle, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	BBRC

**The following 2019 records were found not proven:**

Buzzard	1 Sep, Puffinn and roaming	SBCRC
'White-spotted Bluthroat'	19 May, Walli Burn	SBCRC
'White-spotted Bluthroat'	13 Apr, Chalet	SBCRC

**In addition, the following record that did not feature in the Annual Report was found not proven:**

Nightingale	28 Apr, Kenaby	SBCRC
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**In addition, the following record was published elsewhere but was either withdrawn by the observer(s) or not supported by a description:**

Thrush Nightingale	4 Jun, Shirva
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**Key to abbreviations:**

<b>BBRC</b>	British Birds Rarities Committee
<b>SBRC</b>	Scottish Birds Records Committee
<b>SBCRC</b>	Shetland Bird Club Records Committee



**Plate 126.** Killer Whale, South Harbour, 16th June 2020. © Alex Penn



# CETACEANS AND OTHER MARINE WILDLIFE

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David Parnaby

## Cetaceans

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### **Minke Whale**

*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

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

The first of the year was seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 4th July. The north coast of the Isle probably provides the best chance of encountering this species (although whether that is based on actual distribution of the animals, or better viewing conditions isn't clear) and this area provided the next records, with two on 14th August (singles off Dronger and North Light) and one was again off North Light the following day. The *Good Shepherd IV* recorded one seven miles north of the Isle on 18th August and the last of the year was again off North Light (when very calm conditions were perfect for cetacean watching and a barbeque) on 27th August.

### **Unidentified whale species**

One seen blowing and surfacing on 8th July from North Light may have been a larger rorqual species (possibly Fin Whale *Balaenoptera physalus*), whilst a couple of blows seen from North Light on 20th December were thought to have possibly been a Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*, but neither could be confirmed.

### **Risso's Dolphin**

*Grampus griseus*

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

The most regularly encountered dolphin around the Isle in recent years made its first appearance of the year on 14th August when three were off Meoness. Further sightings during the month involved four off North Light on 27th and ten off South Light on 30th. September produced three records, with four on 13th and 15th and three on 30th and there were records on eight dates in October between 7th and 27th, peaking at ten on 12th. It seems likely that small groups linger off Fair Isle in the autumn, although no animals have been individually identified that would prove this.

### **White-sided Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus acutus*

*Scarce visitor, most records from July to October, usually in small groups*

The first record since 2017 involved five off Dronger on 25th August.



Plate 127. Killer Whale (with Razorbill for scale), Dronger, 27th September 2020. © Alex Penn

### **White-beaked Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*

*Regular visitor, most records from July to September, usually in small groups*

There were four off North Light on 27th August, the first record since 2018 of this increasingly scarce visitor.

### **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 good year for sightings, with a highlight of the spring involving a group of 14 (actually two groups, the 27s and 65s) that patrolled close in off the south coast on 16th June, whilst the team were still on a high from the Green Warbler earlier that day - classic Fair Isle! There were three seen 12 miles east of the Isle from a fishing boat on 27th August. A run of autumn sightings saw four distantly off North Light on 9th September, including a bull and a younger animal, whilst four (that included a bull) were also off North Light on 27th September, with the latter group proving twitchable as they showed well and lingered off Dronger. The 27th September group included three animals that had previously been seen from the Isle on 19th September. The final sighting was of seven animals that headed south down the west coast on 6th October, apparently fishing as they did so.

### **Harbour Porpoise**

*Phocoena phocoena*

*Recorded in small numbers from May to October*

Another fairly quiet year for porpoise showed a similar pattern of records to 2019, beginning with four off South Light 20th July followed by two from the *Good Shepherd IV* the following day. There were just three records in August, all between 14th and 18th, peaking at six on the latter date, whilst the only September records were from the *Good Shepherd IV* with three on 10th and ten on 13th. The last of the year were two off South Light on 18th October.



## Other marine wildlife

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### Grey Seal

*Halichoerus grypus*

Although the number of adults is not counted, a notable 215 were hauled out on the northern beaches of Easter Lothar Geo, Wirvie Geo and Jivy Geo on 26th March. The first pup was noted on 9th October in Gunnawark, with this site going on to produce 15 of the 39 pups recorded during the autumn.

### Common Seal *Phoca vitulina*

There were no records during the year, continuing the recent decline of the species (since February 2017 there has been only record).

### European Eel *Anguilla anguilla*

Now Critically Endangered (CE), the European Eel continues to be seen during ditch maintenance activities, if in much lower numbers than historically. There were also records from Muckle Uri Geo on 25th June (which was taken by a Cormorant) and Utra Scrape on 19th August.



Plate 128. Grey Seals (adult and pup), Kroga Geo, 27th October 2020. © Daniel Gornall

# BUTTERFLIES, INSECTS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

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Georgia Platt

## Butterflies

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### Large White

*Pieris brassicae*

Another relatively good year for this species, with all sightings occurring throughout July. A single was recorded on 9th, then another single was thought to be doing an 'island tour' with sightings of one at South Light, Houll, Schoolton and Burkle on 20th–23rd. It was then joined by two others on 24th, bringing the count to an impressive three, with two on 26th being the last sighting of the year. Following on from a good year of sightings in 2019, Fair Isle may be seeing more of this species again in years to come.

### Red Admiral

*Vanessa atalanta*

One on 26th April at the Obs site set the earliest-ever Fair Isle record again (by just one day), with singles then occurring on 7th and 8th May at Quoy and 19th May at the school. From 1st–30th June, there were regular sightings on 18 dates, with the peak count of 45 on 15th June. The next sighting was not until the autumn passage, with five on 12th August and sightings on 11 dates up to 16th September, with a peak count of nine on 25th August. There were then two late-autumn stragglers, with one on 2nd October and a single on 5th October, in Bull's Park.

### Painted Lady

*Vanessa cardui*

The first sighting of the year for this species was a single on 1st June, followed by regular sightings from 11th–26th June on 12 dates, with a peak count of 25 on 15th June. Autumn migration saw a handful of individuals throughout the middle of August, with sightings on eight dates from 14th–25th August, with a peak count of just four on 19th.

### Peacock

*Aglais io*

An early record for this species, with one at Barkland on 26th March, followed by just one other sighting for the year on 30th August.

### Small Tortoiseshell

*Aglais urticae*

A few individuals were sighted in what was a fairly good year for this species, with two on 20th April (the earliest Fair Isle record), singles on 1st and 15th June, singles on 9th and 20th August (both sighted on Dronger) and one on 31st August.

## Moths

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Observatory staff took turns to use the moth trap, at their different residencies of South Light and Schoolhouse, both of which provide quite contrasting habitats for moth trapping. For reference, South Light is a very exposed coastal site with minimal vegetation and Schoolhouse garden is quite sheltered with some varied vegetation, so it was interesting to note the overlap in species, as well as different species between the two sites (see Table 1.).

Some of the more interesting moth and other insect records from census and casual observations during the year are listed below.

### **Diamond-back Moth**

*Plutella xylostella*

The only field records of this species were during a notable influx from 13th–17th June. There were also singles caught in the Schoolhouse moth trap on 8th and 15th August.

### **Convolvulus Hawk-moth**

*Agrius convolvuli*

One field record for this species was on 24th August, sighted on the *Montbretia* flowers at Shirva. Two individuals were also trapped at Lower Stoneybrek on 21st August, giving a total of three individuals of this species occurring on Fair Isle in 2020 - an impressive count for this rare visiting migrant.

### **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum*

A single record of this species in 2020, with one on 30th June on the flowers at Shirva whilst the team were looking at the Booted Warbler that was also there!

### **Silver Y**

*Autographa gamma*

In what seemed like a good year for this species, the first sighting of the year was a single on 26th May (the earliest Fair Isle record). Throughout June there were regular sightings on 19 dates, with a peak count of 25 on 27th June. A single on 1st July was then the only sighting until 7th August, when there were sightings until 25th August on 12 dates, with a peak count of six on 12th August. Singles on 23rd September, 27th September and 2nd October were the last records of the year for this stylish species of day-flying moth.

### **White Satin Moth**

*Leucoma salicis*

A first record for Fair Isle of this beautiful species was sighted on 26th June at the Obs site, where it rested in some long grass for a little while whilst it had some photos taken.



Plate 129. White Satin Moth, Obs, 26th June 2020. © Alex Penn

## **Magpie**

*Abraxas grossulariata*

A couple of recordings of this species in 2020, with four on 3rd July and a single on 23rd July.

## **Other insects**

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### **‘Shetland Bee’**

*Bombus muscorum agricolae*

Sightings were recorded for this species with a single on 18th April at Kenaby, singles on 21st and 22nd April, and marked as present on 18th and 19th May.

### **‘White-tailed Bumblebee’** *Bombus lucorum (sensu lato)*

Singles of this species were all recorded at the school on 30th April, 3rd May and 19th May, which may indicate that it was just one individual that stayed for a few weeks.

### **Buff-tailed Bumblebee**

*Bombus terrestris*

Sightings of this species were singles recorded on 21st April and 8th May, both at the school.

### ***Eristalis intricaria***

This species of hoverfly that mimics bumblebees emerged in reasonable numbers on 7th May.



Table 1. Summary of moths trapped at FIBO staff residences in 2020 (SL = South Light, SCH = Schoolhouse)

Scientific/English name	First date		Last date		No. of nights trapped		Max. catch		Max. catch date		Total indiv-iduals	
	SL	SCH	SL	SCH	SL	SCH	SL	SCH	SL	SCH	SL	SCH
<i>Aderis Aspersana</i> Ginger Button	-	18th August	-	18th August	-	1	-	4	-	18th August	-	4
<i>Amphipoea</i> agg. Ear egg	-	15th August	-	15th August	-	1	-	1	-	15th August	-	1
<i>Apamea crenata</i> Cloud-bordered Brindle	1st July	-	1st July	-	1	1	-	1	1st July	-	1	-
<i>Apamea monolypha</i> Dark Arches	17th July	2nd August	25th August	19th September	6	11	7	51	21st July	8th August	18	238
<i>Apamea remissa</i> Dusky Brocade	20th July	2nd August	20th July	18th August	1	3	1	2	20th July	15th & 18th August	1	5
<i>Autographa gamma</i> Silver Y	-	17th September	-	18th September	-	2	-	1	-	17th & 18th September	-	2
<i>Cerapteryx graminis</i> Antler Moth	17th July	2nd August	25th August	18th September	6	12	10	34	20th July	10th August	33	146
<i>Depressaria badella</i> Brown Flat-body	-	16th August	-	16th August	-	1	-	1	-	16th August	-	1
<i>Diasia mendica</i> Ingailed Clay	17th July	2nd August	17th July	18th September	1	11	1	67	17th July	18th August	1	230
<i>Eudonia lineola</i> White-line Grey	17th July	-	17th July	-	1	-	1	-	17th July	-	1	-
<i>Eana osseana</i> Dotted Shade	17th July	10th August	21st July	15th August	4	4	12	4	20th July	14th August	28	8
<i>Eana penziana</i> subsp. <i>colqhounana</i> Pentz's Tortix	11th July	18th August	25th August	18th August	4	1	6	3	21st July	18th August	17	3
<i>Eugnorisma glareosa</i> Autumnal Rustic (pale)	-	10th August	-	18th August	-	5	-	7	-	15th August	-	14
<i>Eugnorisma glareosa</i> Autumnal Rustic (dark)	-	10th August	-	19th September	-	3	-	1	-	10th, 14th & 18th August	-	3
<i>Hydraea micacea</i> Rosy Rustic	25th August	8th August	25th August	23rd September	1	11	1	12	25th August	18th August	1	41
<i>Hydriomena furcata</i> July Highflier	-	18th August	-	18th August	-	1	-	1	-	18th August	-	1
<i>Lacanobia oleracea</i> Bright-line Brown-eye	20th July	-	20th July	-	1	-	1	-	20th July	-	1	-
<i>Lobesia litoralis</i> Shore Marble	-	15th August	-	18th August	-	2	-	1	-	15th & 18th August	-	2
<i>Mythimna impura</i> Smoky Wainscot	-	12th August	-	12th August	-	1	-	1	-	12th August	-	1
<i>Noctua pronuba</i> Large Yellow Underwing	-	6th August	-	19th September	-	11	-	4	-	Multiple dates throughout	-	29
<i>Pharmacis fuscinebulosa</i> Map-winged Swift	19th July	-	19th July	-	1	-	1	-	19th July	-	1	-
<i>Plutella xylostella</i> Diamond-back Moth	-	8th August	-	15th August	-	2	-	1	-	8th & 15th August	-	2
<i>Rhigognostis annulata</i> Ringed diamond-back	-	12th August	-	13th August	-	2	-	1	-	12th & 13th August	-	2
<i>Standfussiana lucerneae</i> Northern Rustic	1st July	2nd August	25th August	18th August	6	9	3	9	12th July & 22nd August	10th August	11	32
<i>Udea lutealis</i> Pale Straw Pearl	-	8th August	-	18th August	-	8	-	10	-	13th August	-	37
<i>Xanthorhoe decoloraria</i> Red Carpet	-	8th August	-	18th August	-	5	-	4	-	8th August	-	12
<i>Xanthorhoe fluctuata</i> Garden Carpet	-	18th August	-	18th August	-	1	-	1	-	18th August	-	1
<i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i> Silver Ground Carpet	-	8th August	-	15th August	-	3	-	2	-	9th August	-	4
<i>Xestia xanthographa</i> Square-spot Rustic	-	10th August	-	19th September	-	11	-	27	-	18th August	-	74
Total species for SL											12	
Total species for SCH												25

## Other sightings of note

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### Large unidentified bat sp.

A large unidentified bat, apparently larger than a pipistrelle (which is Fair Isle's most expected bat taxa - although bats are still not regular), was seen flying around Upper Leogh/Nedder Taft on 26th September and was sighted once more in the evening on 3rd October at Quoy.

In addition, the unmistakable sound of a bat using its echolocation was picked up by the team's nocturnal migration recording equipment at South Light on the night of 6th/7th October, but unfortunately as the sound was only recorded with a standard microphone and not a specialized bat recorder, the species could not be identified using frequency. However, as there had been a couple of sightings of the unknown large bat earlier in the week then it could have been that individual touring the island, a possible *Myotis* (eared bat) species.

### Bioluminescence

#### *Noctiluca scintillans*

An incredible display of this natural phenomenon was witnessed when the team were doing a Storm Petrel ringing session in South Haven on the night of 18th/19th August. There was a further display the following evening, but not nearly as vibrant.



Plate 130. Aurora borealis (Northern Lights), 28th September 2020. © Alex Penn

## SOME NON-AVIAN HIGHLIGHTS

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Nick Riddiford

### Flora and vegetation

#### Phenology

The earliest ever flowering dates for a large number of flowers were flagged up for 2019. That pattern continued with several species flowering even earlier in 2020.



Plate 131. Annual Cornflower, Field, 11th August 2020. © David Parnaby

#### Newcomers

Four species were new to Fair Isle. One, Large-flowered Pink Sorrel *Oxalis debilis* was a garden escape. Two species of *Centaurea* more associated with the Mediterranean than northern climes flowered in a rig of turnips and oats at Field. These were Annual Cornflower *Centaurea cyanus* (Plate 131) and Perennial Cornflower *Centaurea montana*. It is assumed both arrived with seeds purchased for the rig. These were a 'Shetland mix' sourced from Shetland, but clearly provenance for at least some of the seed must have been much farther afield. The fourth species, False Fox Sedge *Carex otrubae*, was found a few metres beyond the rig. It may also have arrived with the seed mix but colonisation by other means - for instance from seed transported by migrant birds - cannot be ruled out. False Fox Sedge is native to the UK but infrequent and coastal from northern England northwards. All four species are new to Shetland. The three 'exotics' listed above are not expected to establish but it will be interesting to monitor whether the False Fox Sedge survives. In Scotland, it is generally restricted to coastal regions. The Fair Isle plant is some 200 m from the sea.

New flora are reported on a regular basis but rarely survive more than a year or two. One exception is Perennial Wall Rocket *Diplotaxis tenuifolia*. A small plant appeared, source unknown, in 2013 at Upper Leogh. It seemed to struggle, flowering poorly at the end of each summer, but in 2020 there was an explosion of growth with strong flowering from the end of May through into October. It has clearly adapted to local conditions.

The survivorship of two potentially invasive species first noted in 2018 is being closely monitored. There are now two additional small rosettes of Common Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* close to the original but the Rosebay Willow-herb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, noted in 2018 and 2019, appears to have gone.

### Species of conservation interest

*Juniper*: Moderate berry production was registered amongst Fair Isle's internationally important Prostrate Juniper *Juniperus communis nana* population within the Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Until 2014, berry production on the hill was very low and often nil. The high number of berries that year was unprecedented in living memory. Moderate berry production was recorded again in 2018 and 2019; similar amounts in 2020 made it three years' decent productivity in a row.

*Oysterplant*: With the Observatory's seasonal staff delayed by the COVID-19 lockdown, the Oysterplant *Mertensia maritima* population was left exposed to sheep grazing until the fencing was erected in June. There was clear damage to plants at this stage, but they recovered strongly and an estimate in August put the population at about the same level as in 2019. The enclosure is currently protecting several other important plants including Early Orache *Atriplex praecox* and Sea Sandwort *Honckenya peploides*. The sandwort returned in 2018 after a 40-year absence from the isle so there was concern it would be targeted by the sheep. One of 2019's two plants was lost but the other grew robustly. Its tenuous hold on the isle was further threatened by lambs which had jumped into the enclosure in late summer so it will not be known until next year whether it has survived.

## Fungi

Islanders of all ages contributed some excellent records during the year. These included the Big Blue Pinkgill *Entoloma bloxamii*, a rare taxon of national and international conservation interest. Recent studies have shown that this involved a complex of species. Professor Roy Watling is thanked for confirming a specimen from September 2020 as *Entoloma bloxamii sensu stricto* (= in the strictest sense i.e. the meaning of the original author). The finder, young Luca Rotolo, did it again two weeks later by finding one of the others in the complex: *Entoloma atromedidum*, described as new to science as recently as 2018.

The pick of the other finds was the eye-catching Split-gill *Schizophyllum commune* (Plate 132). The only previous record, in 2015, was on a softwood trunk retrieved from the seashore. The Split-gill was formerly rare but from mid-20th century onwards it has expanded its range throughout the UK. It has a predilection for old silage and indeed all three 2020 records, from Quoy, Midway and Setter, were on that pabulum.



Plate 132. Split-gill, Quoy, 4th October 2020. © Deryk Shaw



## Fauna

### Biodiversity (Invertebrates)

Invertebrate field activities in 2020 particularly targeted taxa of direct relevance to birds as food resources, namely flies (Diptera) and aphids (Homoptera). The searches inevitably led to other previously overlooked resident taxa. In addition, time spent investigating the maritime fringe provided new records amongst the resident marine fauna. These included three taxa revealed by dredging works which transferred sand from the Good Shepherd docking approach onto the beach at North Haven. The full list of additions is as follows:

Flies: the craneflies *Osmia depilata* and *Dicranomyia autumnalis*, the fever fly *Dilophus febrilis* and the Muscid *Coenosia antennata*.

Aphids: the Willow-angelica Aphid *Cavariella archangelicae*, the Olive-brown Grass Aphid *Jacksonia papillata* and the Orange Grass Aphid *Atheroides serrulatus*.

Beetles: the Clay-coloured Weevil *Otiorhynchus singularis*.

Marine: the Cnidarian *Clytia islandica*, the Bryozoan *Celleporella hyalina*, the Alga *Chaetomorpha ligustica*, the Northern Lucine *Lucinoma borealis*, the Thin Tellin *Macomangulus tenuis* (both molluscs) and the Harbour Crab *Liocarcinus depurator* - the presence of the last three exposed by the dredging.

### Invertebrates and Climate Change

Reference has already been made to the continuing phenological advance amongst the flora. There is a similar pattern of increasingly earlier first dates amongst the Lepidoptera. The most extreme was a Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* on 20th April which preceded the previous earliest by nearly a month. A Silver Y *Autographa gamma* on 2nd May was the earlier ever by 11 days and a Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba* on 13th June was the earliest by four days.

Insect studies in the UK are registering considerable population shifts northwards for some species and this is reflected by the arrival of taxa well beyond their established range. Such species appearing for the first time included Triangle Plume *Platyptilia gonodactyla* and White Satin *Leucoma salicis* (both moths) and the distinctive parasitic wasp *Ophion mocsaryi* (Ichneumonidae). Further scarce moths were Diamond-spot Pearl *Loxostege sticticalis*, recorded for only the second time, and Garden Grass-veneer *Chrysoteuchia culmella* for just the third time.

The impact of climate change on the marine ecosystem is becoming well known and a cause for concern. This is driving dramatic changes in the biota occurring in Fair Isle waters. Changes in the species composition of jellyfish have been noted in previous reports and they continue. Many-ribbed Jellyfish *Aequorea forskalea* was first recorded in 2011 and again in 2013. It has been annual since 2017 and in increasing numbers. In late July and August, a number of *Neoturris pileata* were recorded. The only previous record was one

in August 2017. *Neoturris* does not have a vernacular name, an indicator of how infrequent it is in UK waters. The same applies to *Clytia islandica*. Several were observed over a three-day period in August. There are no previous records in Fair Isle waters of this little-known northern species. In addition to the Cnidaria, there was an unprecedented wreck of Buoy Barnacles *Dosima fascicularis*. Previous records were limited to 'single clumps' in 1982 and 2006 and several small clumps in 2018. The 2018 event was a precursor to dozens littering South Haven beach in mid-August 2020. All these taxa are pelagic species which seem to be drifting into northern UK waters.

### Accidental imports

Not all arrivals can be associated with climate change. The most curious arrival in 2020 was two European Pepper Moths *Duponchelia fovealis* found indoors in January and April, presumably imported as larvae or pupae with plants. This species, more associated with the Mediterranean, is unlikely to survive but the Vine Weevil *Otiorhynchus sulcatus*, first reported in 2009, is now well established though so far restricted to domestic premises and gardens.

### Aeronauts

It has long been known that spiders and other tiny invertebrates can displace large distances through the air; indeed, a Linyphiid spider was the first terrestrial taxon recorded on the island of Surtsey after it emerged from the sea. A new study has been registering arrivals on Fair Isle based on captures in light traps and associated weather conditions. The first year's work shows a close relationship between slack winds over the North Sea incorporating an east to south-east element and the capture of Linyphiid and other small spiders. These conditions were recorded on 26 occasions between 8th April and the end of October and each brought at least one spider. The most intense displacements were from 16th–25th April (16 of six taxa) with another strong movement from mid-September to early October. Over the entire study period 48 individuals (males and females) from 11 species were intercepted. The captures may also suggest that aeronaut spiders are attracted to ultraviolet light.

## Fish

### Species of conservation interest

Spur Dogfish *Squalus acanthias* and Tope *Galeorhinus galeus*, were caught and released in May. Both are members of the shark family classified as Vulnerable (VU) globally by the IUCN and are also listed as British Action Plan (BAP) species. Historically, both were relatively common in Fair Isle waters but were targeted by Norwegian vessels in 1960s, possibly fishing them to near local extinction. For Tope this is the first record since then, while the Spur Dogfish was only the second this century. It is possible that a small population of Tope may be re-establishing. The Fair Isle Marine Protected Area designation has the potential to enhance its survival prospects.

# FIBOT FINANCIAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2020

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## Mike Wood

FIBO remained closed to guests during the year to 31st October 2020 and our three main aims for the year were (i) to continue essential ornithological research work, (ii) to raise funds through a public appeal to enable the Observatory rebuild project to continue and (iii) to work with the Obs 5 design team on the detailed design of the new Observatory.

Continuing with the ornithological research (and therefore incurring the considerable staff costs necessary to carry out this work) without having the normal income from guests staying at the Observatory has resulted in a very significant loss, as shown in the operating accounts opposite. This loss eats into our financial reserves and is not something we can sustain indefinitely. However, FIBOT's directors decided it was important to continue with this research work, for as long as it was financially prudent to do so, in order that the unique ornithological database built up over more than sixty years would remain complete and consistent.

The public appeal, which is specifically to fund the rebuilding of the Observatory, has been very successful and our thanks go out to everyone who has donated to it. We initiated this public appeal with an ambitious target of £650,000 and it is great news that we have now made substantial progress towards that target. We are optimistic that these donations, together with proceeds from our insurance policy, a contribution from the FIBOT Endowment Fund, a large grant from the Garfield Weston Foundation and generous support from public-sector bodies such as Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Shetland Islands Council and the Scottish Government will enable the new Observatory to become a reality next year.

The design of the new Observatory has progressed well, and we are hopeful that we will have good news to announce about our progress during the autumn and winter of 2021/22.

Although our ability to welcome volunteers will be very restricted in 2022 because of limited accommodation, please be aware of the grants for young people available from FIBOT through the John Harrison Memorial Fund and the Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund, and we ask you to encourage any young (under 25 years old) birdwatchers to apply for one or other of these grants when the Observatory re-opens.

Any readers wishing to make a specific or non-specific donation to support the Observatory can be assured it would be gratefully received and effectively used. A summary of FIBOT's accounts for the year ended 31st October 2020 appears on the following page. The full statutory accounts can be seen at Companies House or by requesting them from myself at [mikewood14@aol.com](mailto:mikewood14@aol.com).

**Mike Wood**  
Finance Director

## Income and Expenditure Report for the year ended 31st October 2020

<b>Sales Income</b>	<b>2020 (£)</b>	<b>Other Expenses</b>	
Accommodation & Meals	1,347	Administration	3,290
Shop Sales	192	Energy	6,096
Bar Sales	0	Establishment	16,442
	<u>1,539</u>	Insurance	1,173
		Ornithology	2,686
		Sales & Marketing	572
		Financial & Legal	5,479
<b>Cost of Sales</b>		Depreciation	<u>1,647</u>
Purchases	13,812		<u>37,385</u>
Wages & Salaries	<u>52,526</u>		
	<u>66,338</u>		
<b>Trading Loss</b>	<b>(64,799)</b>	<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>(78,790)</b>
<b>Other Income</b>			
Interest Received	5,522		
FOFI Subscriptions	8,849		
Grants Received	9,023		
Other Income	<u>0</u>		
	<u>23,394</u>		
<b>Gross Loss</b>	<b>(41,405)</b>		



## WATER FEATURES

BM Boini Mire  
DW Da Water  
ELW Easter Lother Water  
FD Field Ditch  
G Gilsetter  
GB Gilly Burn  
GW Golden Water  
H Homisdale  
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

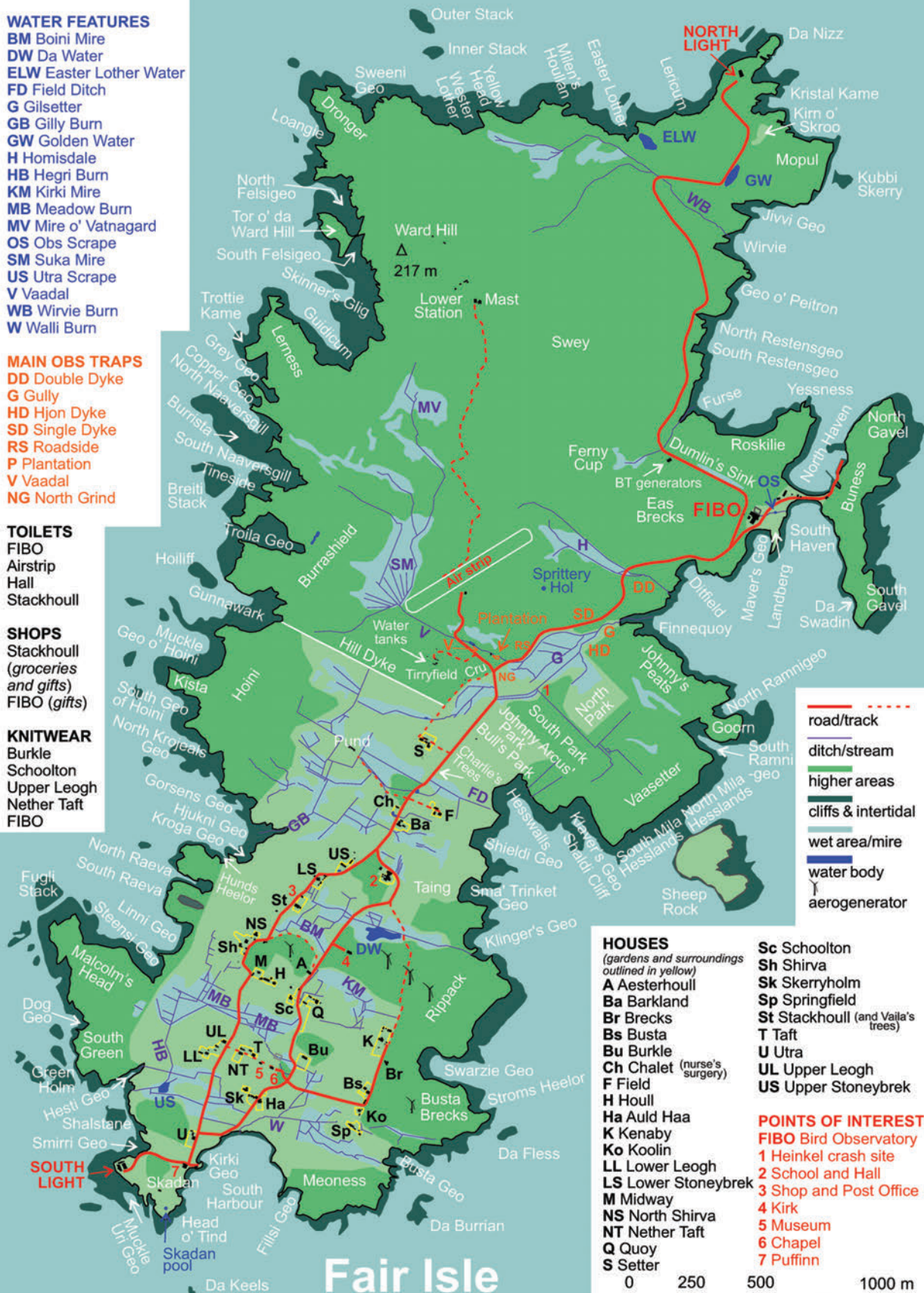
FIBO  
Airstrip  
Hall  
Stackhoull

## SHOPS

Stackhoull  
(groceries  
and gifts)  
FIBO (gifts)

## KNITWEAR

Burkle  
Schoolton  
Upper Leogh  
Nether Taft  
FIBO



## ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION AT FIBO

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### **John Harrison Memorial Fund (JHMF) and Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund (SABF)**

Fair Isle Bird Observatory runs two schemes to enable keen birdwatchers aged between 15 and 24 to stay at the Obs at minimal cost. The JHMF and SABF funds provide brilliant opportunities for enthusiastic young birdwatchers to stay at and contribute to the work of a world-famous bird observatory.

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 Obs. 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.

Full details of how and when to apply for these funds will be made available via our website [www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk/jhmf\\_sabf.html](http://www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk/jhmf_sabf.html) and on social media as soon as the opportunity to stay at the new Obs becomes available.



**Plate 133.** John Harrison and ox cart, Schoolton, June 1966. © R.A. Richardson/FIBO Archives

# 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 2020. All decisions follow those of the BBRC and BOURC (although note that the totals include all 2020 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.

For the first time since 2010, there were no additions to the Fair Isle list during the year other than one associated with a taxonomic change announced by the International Ornithological Congress (IOC, the body the BOURC follow for taxonomic issues), which has seen 'Subalpine Warbler' split into Eastern Subalpine Warbler and Western Subalpine Warbler, both of which currently appear on the Fair Isle list. This split results in another Fair Isle addition to the British list, with the male shot on 6th May 1908 becoming the first record of Eastern Subalpine Warbler (subspecies *Curruca cantillans albistriata*). Fair Isle also recorded the first record of the other subspecies of Eastern Subalpine Warbler, with the male trapped in the Gully on 8th May 2014 confirmed by DNA analysis as belonging to the subspecies *C.c. cantillans*.

This change means that the Fair Isle list stands at 395 at the end of 2020 (not including Daurian/Turkestan Shrike, none of the records of which are currently accepted to species level).

The BOURC has also recently rejected a number of older records of British firsts associated with a taxidermist in Brighton in the late 19th century (BOU 2021), which has resulted in the Common Rosefinch collected on Fair Isle on 3rd October 1906 becoming the first British record. Fair Isle is now responsible for 35 additions to the British list.

## 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:

Occasional Breeder	OB	
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

## References

Gill, F and Donsker D (Eds). 2020. *IOC World Bird List* (v 10.2). Doi 10.14344/IOC.ML.10.2. [www.worldbirdnames.org](http://www.worldbirdnames.org)  
British Ornithologists' Union (BOU). 2021. British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC): 52nd Report (January 2021). *Ibis* 163: 305–308.



Species	Status	Breeding status	Records (individuals)				
Quail	S	OB		Corncrake	S	OB	
Brent Goose	R		57 (107) <sup>a</sup>	Spotted Crane	R		51
Canada Goose	R		39 (92)	Moorhen	S	OB	
Barnacle Goose	FM			Coot	R		94
Greylag Goose	CM			Baillon's Crane	V		2
Taiga Bean Goose	V		10 (16) <sup>b</sup>	Little Crane	V		1
Pink-footed Goose	CM			Sandhill Crane	V		1
Tundra Bean Goose	R		14 (148) <sup>b</sup>	Crane	R		31 (41)
White-fronted Goose	S			Little Grebe	R		43
Mute Swan	V		12 (17)	Red-necked Grebe	V		23 (25)
Bewick's Swan	V		6 (17)	Great Crested Grebe	V		14 (15)
Whooper Swan	FM			Slavonian Grebe	S		
Shelduck	S			Stone-curlew	V		9
Mandarin Duck	V		4	Oystercatcher	FM	BS	
Garganey	V		13 (23)	Black-winged Stilt	V		1
Shoveler	S			Avocet	V		1
Gadwall	R		60 (92)	Lapwing	FM	BS	
Wigeon	FM			Golden Plover	FM	OB	
American Wigeon	V		1	Pacific Golden Plover	V		2
Mallard	RM	BS		American Golden Plover	V		11
Black Duck	V		1	Grey Plover	R		
Pintail	S	OB <sup>c</sup>		Ringed Plover	FM	BS	
Teal	FM			Little Ringed Plover	V		8
Green-winged Teal	V		3	Kentish Plover	V		1
Pochard	R		58 (74)	Caspian Plover	V		1
Ring-necked Duck	V		2	Dotterel	S		110 (205)
Tufted Duck	RM			Upland Sandpiper	V		2
Scaup	S		109 (144)	Whimbrel	FM	OB	
Lesser Scaup	V		1	Hudsonian Whimbrel <sup>d</sup>	V		2
Steller's Eider	V		1	Curlew	FM	BS	
King Eider	V		14	Bar-tailed Godwit	S		
Eider	FM	BS		Black-tailed Godwit	S		
Harlequin Duck	V		2 (3)	Turnstone	CM		
Surf Scoter	V		2	Knot	RM		
Velvet Scoter	R		132 (185)	Ruff	RM		
Common Scoter	RM			Curlew Sandpiper	R		64 (147)
Long-tailed Duck	RM			Temminck's Stint	V		19
Goldeneye	RM			Red-necked Stint	V		1
Smew	V		7	Sanderling	FM		
Goosander	R		110 (155)	Dunlin	FM	OB	
Red-breasted Merganser	RM	OB		Purple Sandpiper	FM		
Nightjar	V		31	Baird's Sandpiper	V		4
Alpine Swift	V		5	Little Stint	S		
Swift	FM			White-rumped Sandpiper	V		5
Pallid Swift	V		1	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	V		18 (19)
Little Swift	V		1	Pectoral Sandpiper	R		37
Great Bustard	V		1	Semipalmated Sandpiper	V		3
Little Bustard	V		1	Long-billed Dowitcher	V		2
Cuckoo	S	OB		Woodcock	FM		
Pallas's Sandgrouse	V		1 (40)	Jack Snipe	FM		
Rock Dove	FM	BS		Great Snipe	R		46
Stock Dove	S			Snipe	CM	BS	
Woodpigeon	FM			Terek Sandpiper	V		1
Turtle Dove	S			Red-necked Phalarope	V	OB	51 <sup>e</sup>
Oriental Turtle Dove	V		1	Grey Phalarope	R		48
Collared Dove	FM			Common Sandpiper	FM		
Water Rail	RM			Spotted Sandpiper	V		1
				Green Sandpiper	RM		
				Solitary Sandpiper	V		1



Lesser Yellowlegs	V		4	Glossy Ibis	V		2 (6)
Redshank	CM	OB		Little Bittern	V		1
Wood Sandpiper	S			Night-heron	V		2
Spotted Redshank	R		106 (120)	Grey Heron	FM		
Greenshank	RM			Purple Heron	V		3
Collared Pratincole	V		2	Great White Egret	V		1
Black-winged Pratincole	V		1	Little Egret	V		2
Kittiwake	CM	BM		Osprey	S		135
Ivory Gull	V		2	Honey-buzzard	R		61 (64)
Sabine's Gull	V		5	Golden Eagle	V		1
Black-headed Gull	FM			Sparrowhawk	RM		
Little Gull	R		34	Goshawk	V		6
Laughing Gull	V		2	Marsh Harrier	R		62
Franklin's Gull	V		1	Hen Harrier	S		
Mediterranean Gull	V		4	Pallid Harrier	V		6
Common Gull	CM	BS		Montagu's Harrier	V		4
Ring-billed Gull	V		4	Red Kite	V		8
Great Black-backed Gull	CM	BS		Black Kite	V		3
Glaucous-winged Gull	V		1	White-tailed Eagle	V	OB	13 <sup>g</sup>
Glaucous Gull	RM			Rough-legged Buzzard	V		46 (49)
Iceland Gull	S			Buzzard	R		
Herring Gull	CM	BS		Barn Owl	V		6
Lesser Black-backed Gull	FM	BS		Scops Owl	V		2
Gull-billed Tern	V		1	Snowy Owl	V		23 (24)
Caspian Tern	V		2	Long-eared Owl	RM		
Sandwich Tern	S			Short-eared Owl	RM		
Bridled Tern	V		1	Hoopoe	R		42
Roseate Tern	V		4 (5)	Roller	V		1
Common Tern	RM	BS		Kingfisher	V		1
Arctic Tern	FM	BS		Bee-eater	V		8 (10)
White-winged Black Tern	V		4	Wryneck	RM		
Black Tern	V		2	Great Spotted Woodpecker	S		
Great Skua	FM	BM		Lesser Kestrel	V		1
Pomarine Skua	R		105 (135)	Kestrel	RM		
Arctic Skua	FM	BS		American Kestrel	V		1
Long-tailed Skua	R		55 (111)	Red-footed Falcon	V		5
Little Auk	RM			Merlin	RM		
Brünnich's Guillemot	V		1	Hobby	R		69
Common Guillemot	CM	BL		Gyr Falcon	V		13 <sup>h</sup>
Razorbill	CM	BL		Peregrine	RM	OB	
Black Guillemot	FM	BM		Brown Shrike	V		3
Puffin	CM	BL		Red-backed Shrike	RM		
Red-throated Diver	RM			Lesser Grey Shrike	V		20 (21)
Black-throated Diver	V		5	Great Grey Shrike	S		
Great Northern Diver	S			Woodchat Shrike	V		32
White-billed Diver	V		4	Red-eyed Vireo	V		1
Black-browed Albatross	V		1 <sup>f</sup>	Golden Oriole	R		49
Storm Petrel	CM	BM?		Magpie	V		1
Swinhoe's Petrel	V		2	Jackdaw	S		
Leach's Petrel	S			Rook	RM		
Fulmar	CM	BL		Carion Crow	FM	OB	
Cory's Shearwater	V		3 (90)	Hooded Crow	RM	BS	
Sooty Shearwater	RM			Raven	RM	BS	
Great Shearwater	V		16 (140)	Waxwing	S		
Manx Shearwater	S			Coal Tit	V		7
White Stork	V		4	Blue Tit	V		16 (28)
Gannet	CM	BL		Great Tit	R		45 (59)
Cormorant	RM			Woodlark	V		57
Shag	CM	BM		Skylark	CM	BS	

Crested Lark	V		1	Swainson's Thrush	V		2
Shore Lark	R			Hermit Thrush	V		3
Short-toed Lark	S		166 (181)	Ring Ouzel	FM		
Bimaculated Lark	V		1	Blackbird	CM	OB	
Calandra Lark	V		7	Eyebrowed Thrush	V		2
Sand Martin	RM			Black-throated Thrush	V		14
Swallow	FM	OB		Dusky Thrush	V		1
Crag Martin	V		1	Fieldfare	CM		
House Martin	FM	OB		Redwing	CM	OB	
Red-rumped Swallow	V		14	Song Thrush	CM	OB	
Wood Warbler	RM			Mistle Thrush	RM		
Western Bonelli's Warbler	V		5 <sup>i</sup>	Spotted Flycatcher	FM		
Hume's Warbler	V		3	Asian Brown Flycatcher	V		2
Yellow-browed Warbler	RM			Robin	CM	OB	
Pallas's Warbler	V		43	Rufous-tailed Robin	V		1
Radde's Warbler	V		9	Bluethroat	RM		
Dusky Warbler	V		22	Thrush Nightingale	R		68
Willow Warbler	CM			Nightingale	R		59
Chiffchaff	FM			Siberian Rubythroat	V		8
Green Warbler	V		2	Red-flanked Bluetail	V		24
Greenish Warbler	R		57	Red-breasted Flycatcher	S		
Arctic Warbler	R		100	Pied Flycatcher	FM		
Great Reed Warbler	V		14	Collared Flycatcher	V		7
Aquatic Warbler	V		38	Black Redstart	RM		
Sedge Warbler	FM	OB		Redstart	FM		
Paddyfield Warbler	R		25	Rock Thrush	V		3
Blyth's Reed Warbler	R		57	Whinchat	FM		
Reed Warbler	RM			Stonechat	S		
Marsh Warbler	S			Siberian Stonechat	V		3 <sup>k</sup>
Thick-billed Warbler	V		2	Wheatear	CM	BS	
Booted Warbler	V		17	Isabelline Wheatear	V		1
Sykes's Warbler	V		3	Desert Wheatear	V		5
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	V		4	Western Black-e Wheatear	V		2 <sup>l</sup>
Melodious Warbler	V		20	Eastern Black-e Wheatear	V		2 <sup>l</sup>
Icterine Warbler	RM			Pied Wheatear	V		1
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	R		25	Dipper	R		40
Lanceolated Warbler	S		98	House Sparrow		BS	
River Warbler	V		19	Tree Sparrow	S	OB	
Savi's Warbler	V		7	Alpine Accentor	V		2
Grasshopper Warbler	RM			Siberian Accentor	V		2
Blackcap	CM			Dunnock	FM	OB	
Garden Warbler	FM			Yellow Wagtail	RM	OB	
Barred Warbler	RM			Eastern Yellow Wagtail	V		1
Lesser Whitethroat	FM			Citrine Wagtail	S		83
Sardinian Warbler	V		2	Grey Wagtail	S	OB	
Western Subalpine Warbler	V		12 <sup>j</sup>	Pied Wagtail	FM	BS	
Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler	V		2	Richard's Pipit	S		
Eastern Subalpine Warbler	V		10 <sup>j</sup>	Blyth's Pipit	V		4
Whitethroat	FM			Tawny Pipit	V		19
Dartford Warbler	V		1	Meadow Pipit	CM	BS	
Firecrest	V		10	Tree Pipit	RM		
Goldcrest	FM			Olive-backed Pipit	S		117
Wren	RM	BS		Pechora Pipit	R		45
Treecreeper	V		11	Red-throated Pipit	R		94
Rose-coloured Starling	R		57	Buff-bellied Pipit	V		5
Starling	CM	BM		Rock Pipit	FM	BS	
Siberian Thrush	V		2	Chaffinch	FM		
White's Thrush	V		18	Brambling	FM		
Grey-cheeked Thrush	V		5				

Hawfinch	S	175	<b>Not identified to species:</b>	
Bullfinch	S		Daurian/Turkestan Shrike	V 4
Common Rosefinch	RM		<b>Category D:</b>	
Greenfinch	RM		Daurian Starling	1
Twite	FM	BS	Red-headed Bunting	1
Linnet	RM	OB		
Common Redpoll	FM	OB	<b>Category E:</b>	
Lesser Redpoll	S		Red-breasted Goose	1
Arctic Redpoll	R	97	Bar-headed Goose	4 (9)
Parrot Crossbill	V	6 (68)	Black Swan	1
Crossbill	RM		Wood Duck	1
Two-barred Crossbill	R	32 (82)	Lanner Falcon	1
Goldfinch	S		Saker Falcon	1 <sup>m</sup>
Citril Finch	V	1	Gyr Falcon	1
Serín	V	4	Waxwing	1
Siskin	FM		Blackcap	1
Lapland Bunting	FM		White-shouldered Starling	1
Snow Bunting	FM		Chinese Grosbeak	1
Corn Bunting	R	OB	Long-tailed Rosefinch	1
Yellowhammer	RM		Pallas's Rosefinch	1
Pine Bunting	V	13	Chestnut Bunting	2
Ortolan Bunting	S		Black-headed Bunting	5
Cretzschmar's Bunting	V	3	Red-headed Bunting	c48
Chestnut-eared Bunting	V	1	Yellow-headed Blackbird	1
Little Bunting	S		Black-headed Grosbeak	1
Yellow-browed Bunting	V	1	Indigo Bunting	2
Rustic Bunting	R	141	Lazuli Bunting	2
Yellow-breasted Bunting	R	103	Varied Bunting	1
Black-headed Bunting	V	26	Painted Bunting	1
Black-faced Bunting	V	1		
Pallas's Reed Bunting	V	2	<b>Other records:</b>	
Reed Bunting	FM		Turtle Dove x Barbary Dove	1
White-crowned Sparrow	V	1	House Finch <sup>n</sup>	2
White-throated Sparrow	V	5	<b>Extinct:</b>	
Savannah Sparrow	V	2	Great Auk	1
Song Sparrow	V	5		
Bobolink	V	1		
Baltimore Oriole	V	1		
Brown-headed Cowbird	V	1		
Tennessee Warbler	V	2		
Magnolia Warbler	V	1		
Blackburnian Warbler	V	1		
Blackpoll Warbler	V	2		
Yellow-rumped Warbler	V	2		

#### Notes

- Since 1948 only
- Plus another 21 records of 63 unidentified bean geese
- Hybridised with Mallard in 2018
- Split from Whimbrel by IOC in January 2020 (Gill & Donsker 2020)
- Including six fledged juveniles
- Plus an unidentified albatross in 1949
- 11 since 1900, excluding four known reintroduced birds
- Escaped bird in 2018
- Also a bonelli's warbler sp. in 1992

- 80 additional records accepted only as Western Subalpine/Eastern Subalpine/Moltoni's Warbler
- Plus another 45 records of 'Eastern Stonechat' (Siberian/Stejneger's)
- Plus another Western/Eastern Black-eared Wheatear. Split by IOC in January 2020 (Gill & Donsker 2020)
- 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

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Crane	27	Gull, Herring	39
Crossbill	84	Gull, Iceland	39
Crossbill, Two-barred	85	Gull, Lesser Black-backed	40
Crow, Carrion	52	Gull, Mediterranean	38
Crow, Hooded	53	Harrier, Hen	48
Cuckoo	25	Harrier, Marsh	48
Curlew	31	Hawfinch	79
Diver, Great Northern	44	Heron, Grey	47
Diver, Red-throated	43	Hobby	51
Dotterel	30	Jackdaw	52
Dove, Collared	26	Kestrel	50
Dove, Rock	25	Kittiwake	37
Dove, Stock	26	Knot	32
Dove, Turtle	26	Lapwing	29
Duck, Long-tailed	24	Lark, Calandra	55
Duck, Tufted	23	Lark, Shore	54
Dunlin	33	Lark, Short-toed	55
Duncock	75	Linnet	82
Eagle, White-tailed	49	Mallard	22
Eider	23	Martin, House	56
Fieldfare	67	Martin, Sand	55
Flycatcher, Pied	72	Merganser, Red-breasted	25
Flycatcher, Red-breasted	71	Merlin	50
Flycatcher, Spotted	69	Moorhen	27
Fulmar	45	Nightingale	71
Gadwall	22	Nightingale, Thrush	70
Gannet	46	Oriole, Golden	52
Godwit, Bar-tailed	31	Osprey	47
Godwit, Black-tailed	31	Ouzel, Ring	66
Goldcrest	64	Owl, Long-eared	49
Goldeneye	25	Owl, Short-eared	49
Goldfinch	85	Oystercatcher	29
Goosander	25		
Goose, Barnacle	19		



Peregrine	51	Starling, Rose-coloured	65
Petrel, Leach's	45	Stint, Little	33
Petrel, Storm	44	Stonechat	73
Phalarope, Red-necked	35	Stonechat, Siberian	73
Pintail	23	Stone-curlew	28
Pipit, Buff-bellied	78	Swallow	56
Pipit, Meadow	77	Swallow, Red-rumped	56
Pipit, Olive-backed	77	Swan, Whooper	21
Pipit, Red-throated	78	Swift	25
Pipit, Richard's	77		
Pipit, Rock	79	Teal	23
Pipit, Tree	77	Tern, Arctic	40
Plover, Golden	29	Tern, Common	40
Plover, Grey	29	Tern, Sandwich	40
Plover, Ringed	30	Thrush, Mistle	69
Puffin	43	Thrush, Song	69
		Thrush, White's	66
Rail, Water	26	Tit, Blue	53
Raven	53	Tit, Great	54
Razorbill	42	Turnstone	31
Redpoll, Arctic	83	Twite	82
Redpoll, Common	82		
Redpoll, Lesser	83	Wagtail, Citrine	75
Redshank	36	Wagtail, Grey	76
Redstart	72	Wagtail, Pied	76
Redstart, Black	72	Wagtail, Yellow	75
Redwing	67	Warbler, Arctic	59
Robin	69	Warbler, Barred	63
Rook	52	Warbler, Blyth's Reed	60
Rosefinch, Common	81	Warbler, Booted	60
Ruff	32	Warbler, Dusky	57
		Warbler, Garden	62
Sanderling	33	Warbler, Grasshopper	62
Sandpiper, Common	36	Warbler, Green	59
Sandpiper, Curlew	32	Warbler, Greenish	59
Sandpiper, Green	36	Warbler, Icterine	61
Sandpiper, Pectoral	34	Warbler, Marsh	60
Sandpiper, Purple	33	Warbler, Reed	60
Sandpiper, Wood	37	Warbler, River	61
Scaup	23	Warbler, Sedge	59
Scoter, Common	24	Warbler, Western Bonelli's	56
Scoter, Velvet	24	Warbler, Western Subalpine	64
Shag	47	Warbler, Willow	58
Shearwater, Manx	45	Warbler, Wood	56
Shearwater, Sooty	45	Warbler, Yellow-browed	57
Shelduck	22	Waxwing	53
Shoveler	22	Wheatear	73
Shrike, Brown	51	Whimbrel	30
Shrike, Red-backed	51	Whinchat	73
Siskin	85	Whitethroat	64
Skua, Arctic	41	Whitethroat, Lesser	63
Skua, Great	41	Wigeon	22
Skua, Long-tailed	41	Woodcock	34
Skylark	54	Woodpecker, Great Spotted	50
Snipe	35	Woodpigeon	26
Snipe, Jack	35	Wren	64
Sparrow, House	74	Wryneck	50
Sparrow, Song	87		
Sparrow, Tree	74	Yellowhammer	86
Sparrowhawk	47		
Starling	66		

**Plate 134.** Turnstone flock passing Burkle (with Malcolm's Head in the background), 26th October 2020. © *Daniel Gornall*



**Plate 135.** Dan Gornall at the 'Easter Lothar' Fulmar monitoring plot, 11th June 2020. © *Daniel Gornall*





