

Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust

FRIENDS of FAIR ISLE

newsletter



No. 9 Autumn 1991

AUTUMN MIGRATION

If we thought that the spring had let us down, the autumn certainly made up for it. Fair Isle lived up to its ornithological reputation by providing a feast of national and local rarities.

August produced a summer plumaged adult American Golden Plover, which only stayed for an hour, a long-staying Greenish Warbler, Wryneck and Barred Warbler.

September was outstanding. It started with Fair Isle's second ever Baird's Sandpiper on North Haven beach on the 5th, followed by the first of five Yellow-breasted Buntings on the 6th. South easterly winds on the 12th saw the arrival of a Pechora Pipit, two Arctic Warblers, and three Yellow-breasted Buntings. On the 17th a second Pechora Pipit was found along with a new Yellow-breasted Bunting, Common Rosefinches and the first Yellow-browed Warbler of the autumn. A third Pechora Pipit appeared on the 18th, and the next few days logged Icterine Warbler, Red-throated Pipit, Nightingale, Corncrake, Barred Warblers, Rosefinches and the fourth Pechora Pipit. A confiding Citrine Wagtail and an elusive Buff-breasted Sandpiper were present on the 26th, followed by the autumn's fourth American Wader, a juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper on the 27th. A light north easterly on the 28th produced Fair Isle's second ever Baillon's Crake, a Lanceolated Warbler, Little Bunting, Bluethroat and good numbers of common migrants. Eight Greenland White-fronted Geese were seen on the 19th and the month ended with a new bird for Fair Isle - a stunning Blackpoll Warbler, which graced Busta on the afternoon of the 30th, along with the first of

four Short-toed Larks, a Richard's Pipit and four Red-breasted Flycatchers.

The first ten days of October recorded Grey Phalarope, Hen Harrier, Goosander, Glaucous Gulls, Long-tailed Skua and a Little Bunting. The Baillon's Crake was picked up dead on the 3rd following atrocious overnight conditions. South easterlies on the 10th produced a spectacular fall of migrants which was to continue for the next few days. Birds were everywhere, and the log for the 10th read: 25,000 Redwings, 500 Song Thrushes, 250 Blackbirds, 250 Fieldfares, 8 Ring Ouzels, 60 Chiffchaffs, 350 Skylarks, 450 Meadow Pipits and 20 Jack Snipe. Rarities unearthed among the masses of birds included a Radde's Warbler, Lanceolated Warbler, the first of four Olive-backed Pipits, two Short-toed Larks and three Richard's Pipits.



Arrivals continued with a second Olive-backed Pipit, four Little Buntings, two Shore Larks, Hawfinch, Blue-throat, Pintail and several Long-eared Owls. The 14th recorded heavy goose passage, with 1500 Greylags, 100 Barnacles and 50 Pinkfeet heading south. The 15th-20th saw the arrival of Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes, two more Richard's Pipits, four Glaucous Gulls, the third

Olive-backed Pipit and Little Auk, whilst Shore Larks increased to five.

The latter third of the month was not without excitement. A Desert Wheatear was found on the 26th, three Siberian Stonechats, three Spotted Crakes, lots of Little Auks, Yellow-browed Warblers, Northern Bullfinch, Long-eared Owls, a Great Grey Shrike (which sampled Mediterranean cuisine by killing a Short-toed Lark), and a large arrival of 3000 Fieldfares and Woodcock.

The first few days of November were also exciting, with a Little Swift present around the north on the afternoon of the 1st and also a fourth Olive-backed Pipit found. Another Shore Lark was seen and there was a small influx of Northern Bullfinches.

Hugh Harrop, FIBO

NEWS FROM THE ISLE

We congratulate Paul and Elizabeth on the safe arrival of their third daughter, Vaila, in September. While Elizabeth was on maternity leave Hugh Harrop (who wrote the preceding article and came to Fair Isle as a 'computer-feeder'!) stood in very competently as relief administrator - and helped in many other ways too. We are most grateful to him. Ann Prior, who maintained the high catering standard set by her predecessor Joan MacDonald, has decided not to return in 1992, so we are again looking for an experienced cook-caterer. Anyone who knows of a suitable person is asked to contact Michael Murphy at 21 Regent Terrace.

Elsewhere on the Isle there are changes too. Kennaby, completely rebuilt, is now occupied by Ian and Lise Best and their baby son, Tomas. And Derek & Linda Grieve, a young couple from Kerrera, have moved into the Haa. They plan to make their livelihood largely through craft work. The high quality of the restoration work on the Haa has attracted a Rural Design Award from the Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland - congratulations to the NTS.

FIBOT AFFAIRS

It has been decided not to hold an Edinburgh meeting this winter, as we clearly have not as yet found a formula which attracts a reasonable number of Friends. The London meeting will, however, be held as usual, at The White Hart, 71 Theobald's Road, Holborn, on Saturday 15 February, 1992, at 6.30pm. The charge for meeting plus buffet supper is £5.50 per person. Cheques should be made payable to D.P.Bell and sent to him at The Finches, Village Road, Coleshill, Amersham, Bucks.

A copy of our 1992 brochure is enclosed. This gives next season's tariffs and details of the programme of one-week courses. With a number of the islanders now enthusiastic about introducing visiting groups to their own special interest, we are planning a new venture for next year - a 'Crofting and Crafts' course. This will be tutored entirely by islanders. Please tell any friends - or relations - who might be interested about this new venture. Fuller details are available from Elizabeth.

You are reminded about the concessionary bookings available to Friends in August (although the 'low season' rate no longer appears in the tariff chart an equivalent reduction will be made), and the one-month priority for advance bookings for the peak September period.

You are also reminded about the pre-publication offer for Nick Dymond's 'The Birds of Fair Isle' (details were sent out with the last Newsletter), which is due out shortly. If you have not already applied for your copy you should do so without delay. Your attention is also drawn to the fact that Valerie Thom's 'Fair Isle - an Island Saga' is now available from her direct (19 Braeside Gardens, Perth PH1 1DB) at £8.50 plus £1.50 postage & packing.