

FRIENDS OF FAIR ISLE NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the latest news from Fair Isle and I firstly must apologise for the lack of publications recently. The new building project and the disruption it has caused occupied far more of my time than I anticipated it would. It has been an arduous process getting the new building to a stage where we can open, not helped by the building firm going bust in early June but I was absolutely delighted to open the doors to our Directors on 21st June and to welcome our first 'proper' guests a few days later. As I write in early October, there is still a bit of work required on the Warden's accommodation – a leak in the roof in particular – and some facings around the outside plus the expected 'snagging' issues. Aside from these, the building is magnificent and all our visitors have been suitably impressed.

After 12 seasons this is to be my (and Hollie's) last year in charge but I am pleased that we will be handing over a completed, modern, luxurious Fair Isle Bird Observatory and Lodge to our successors (David & Susannah Parnaby) in February, which should secure the future of FIBOT for many decades to come. I hope you enjoy reading the happenings on Fair Isle and it

encourages you to visit the isle and its brand new Bird Observatory.

All the best Deryk

Migrant Birds in Spring 2010

It was an all together quiet spring with few birding highlights (by Fair Isle's high standards!) and very few common migrants to compensate for the absence of rarities and scarcities. A cold **March** brought us 6 Pale-bellied Brent Geese at the beginning of the month and then an avian lull until the Chalet Boys (Assistant Wardens) arrived in late March. With their arrival it wasn't long before the 1st Dunnock of the Year was unearthed at the Chalet (20th). Soon the 1st Puffin was back just offshore (21st) and the first few Meadow Pipits began to trickle through. With passerines back and a 300 strong flock of Skylarks about it didn't take long for predatory birds to follow with the breeding male Peregrine, a Long-eared Owl and a Short-eared Owl arriving on the 22nd. This rule also applied to the islands breeding seabirds and with auk numbers beginning to build up it didn't take much encouragement for the 1st Bonxie's and Lesser Black-backed Gulls to make their appearance (25th). With nice SE'ly winds, the 25th was also the turning point for the 1st true spring migrants, including a Stock Dove, 17 Chiffchaffs (a very respectable early spring count), a single Grey Heron, 7 Continental Stonechats and the earliest Willow Warbler and Blackcap ever recorded on Fair Isle.

April's weather on the other hand was predominantly governed by westerly winds and it therefore remained relatively quiet for migrants from the near continent. However this isn't to say we didn't host our fair share of Icelandic

visitors and it was quantity rather than quality for the most-part. The month began with the 1st returning Swallow and a Yellowhammer closely followed by a Jack Snipe and a ring-tailed Hen Harrier (2nd), the latter making the most of an influx of Common Snipe. A Long-eared Owl, a Canada Goose, 6 Rooks and 3 Reed Buntings showed their faces on the 4th as did a Lesser Redpoll which was subsequently trapped. Lesser Redpoll is a scarce migrant on the isle in comparison to its larger relative the 'Mealy' Common Redpoll, one of which also frequented the crofts in early April. The 1st Grasshopper Warbler arrived on the 8th as did the 1st Sand Martin and 73 Blackbirds and 18 Barnacle Geese followed on the 10th. A single Pale-bellied Brent Goose on the 11th began a short stint in South Harbour and the 1st Arctic Skua and Whimbrel of the year arrived on the 12th just ahead of a 'blue' Fulmar in Hesswalls on the 13th. The first scarcity of the year arrived on the 14th and took the form of a beautiful drake Garganey on Da Water that was followed by an equally beautiful summer-plumaged Slavonian Grebe and a drake Tufted Duck on the 15th and it would have taken a lot more than a volcanic ash cloud to cast a shadow on this trio of cracking water birds. Wildfowl continued to arrive in force with 1225 Pink-footed geese on the 20th completely obliterating previous spring records by at least 1200 birds and makes you question the full extent of damage induced by the Icelandic volcanic eruption. By the 21st of April the already prominent shadow over the island caused by the volcanic dust was somewhat exacerbated by the presence of a giant bird and although you would have been forgiven for thinking a phoenix had arisen from the flames the bird in question was in fact a White-tailed Eagle that spent 3 days on the island between Hoini and Vaasetter.



A young bird bearing wing-tags and transmitter, it was traced back to the release programme in Fife. An unusual-looking bird turned up on the 24th amidst a flock of 44 Barnacle Geese – a



Canada Goose x Greylag Goose hybrid. The 25th saw the 1st Kestrel, Redstart, Lesser Whitethroat and House Martins of the year. By the very end of the month year ticks were coming thick and fast with Common and Green Sandpipers alongside Dunlin (4) on the 28th, The 1st Common Tern, Whinchat and Scandinavian Rock Pipits by the 29th and the 1st Yellow Wagtail and Dotterels (2) of 2010 arriving on the 30th.

Although **May** was a lot better, numbers of common migrants were quite small and we never experienced a large fall of birds similar to that of the past two years. With this said, the month did open with a bang with a flighty Hoopoe on the 1st (our first since 2001), 159 Golden Plovers in the south - just 16 short of the Spring record and 549 Meadow Pipits (also a very high

spring count) on the same date. A summer plumaged Black-tailed Godwit opposite the shop on the 2nd was as good an excuse as any to do the shopping and a drake Shoveler on Da water arrived on the same day as the 1st returning Arctic Tern (3rd). The 1st Whitethroat made landfall on the 4th, and the 2 Dotterel that arrived in late April reappeared on Busta Brecks and amazed all observers as they fed happily just feet away.



Unfortunately this couldn't be said for a Great-Grey Shrike on the 6th and a Little Bunting on the 9th that disappeared just as quickly as they arrived. The 13th was far from unlucky with a nice scattering of migrants including a Wood Sandpiper, an *abietinus* Chiffchaff and the 1st Bluethroat and Goldfinch of the year. Equally as good was the 15th which brought a Pied Flycatcher, a male Redstart, a Bluethroat and the 1st Reed Warbler of the year. Four Goldfinches at Auld Haa on the 16th were quite literally charming and with freshly sown crops scattered around the crofts in the south it didn't take long for a Short-toed Lark to discover the seed. Corvids were equally as fast to take advantage of the upturned leather jackets, none more so than the 1st Jackdaw of the year and 46 Carrion crows (2nd highest spring record) on the 17th. Insectivores didn't stop there though with a Bluethroat and the 1st Spotted Flycatcher of the year on the 18th closely shadowed by the 1st Red-backed

Shrike of the year, 2 female Yellow Wagtails, another Bluethroat (trapped in the Plantation), the 1st Garden Warbler of the year, 4 Whitethroats, a Water Rail and a beautiful Golden Oriole that toured the islands crofts (19th).



The 19th was by far the best day of spring and was reinforced by the discovery of a tan-striped White-throated Sparrow at the Bird Observatory; the day there was also an American Yacht in North Haven!! A male Rustic Bunting frequented the Utra scrape area on the 20th and a Cuckoo resided at Kenaby on the same date though was heard at Upper Stoneybreck in the early hours. The 1st Swift and Greenshank whizzed through on the 21st as did the 1st Rosefinch on the 22nd arriving alongside 2 Wood Sandpipers. With heavy fog and rain on the 23rd of the month, no less than 200 Dunlin were forced to take refuge on the island and smashed previous spring Dunlin records! The following day a cracking male Red-throated Pipit appeared at Lower Leogh.



A new spring record of 47 Ringed Plovers on the 26th was overshadowed by the 1st Icterine Warbler of the year. A Citrine Wagtail on the 28th didn't linger, probably due to presence of an apparently wild Saker Falcon at Wirvie. Another falcon, a Hobby, arrived on the 29th along with the 1st Marsh Warbler of the year, a drake Pintail and 2 Red-backed Shrikes. The month ended on a high note with yet another raptor but this time a fish-eating (rather than bird-eating) Osprey cruising over the island, plus a singing Rosefinch at Burkle and a Tree Sparrow.

June opened with 2 Spotted Flycatchers and a Common Swift followed by another Rosefinch and a Redstart on 2nd. A Marsh Warbler arrived in the company of a male Red-backed Shrike and a Bluethroat the following day. A new Bluethroat was the highlight of 5th and a Honey Buzzard flew through the following day. Birds that made landfall between the 8th- 11th included a Blyth's Reed Warbler (10th), 2 Short-eared Owls, a female Red-backed Shrike, 2 Quails, 5 Spotted Flycatchers and a migrant female Peregrine. Two Red-throated Divers and a European Bee-eater toured the island (13th) and a female Pied Flycatcher and Bluethroat were trapped (14th). A Rustic Bunting and a female Red-backed Shrike arrived (15th). A Common Crane, a Great Northern Diver and 2 House Martins were seen from the confines of the new Observatory (16th). There was a drake Common Scoter on 17th, followed by the first Turtle Dove and Cormorant of year. A Shorelark (23rd) was short-staying as were 2 Crossbills the following day. Bright calm conditions at the month's end brought in 2 Marsh Warblers, 2 Rosefinches and a Hobby (28th), a Turtle Dove, a Whitethroat, 4 Siskins (29th) and 4 Swifts (30th).

A Green Sandpiper on the 3rd **July** was perhaps the first sign that autumn was already on its way and was soon reinforced by the arrival of 2 Dunlin (4th). Waders continued to arrive with small groups of Redshanks coming in off the sea alongside small parties of Black-headed Gulls (5th). Passerines then began to drift in, with small parties of Crossbills in off the sea from the 6th as well as 2 House Martins, a Siskin, 2 Swifts, a Grey Heron, a Dunlin, and 2 Chiffchaffs. Incursions continued with a Sand Martin, a Willow Warbler and 2 Woodpigeons (8th) a Blackcap, a Chiffchaff, 3 Crossbills, 47 Redshanks, 20 Black-headed Gulls, 30 Common Gulls, 48 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 400 Arctic Terns (including 10 1st Summers) a Green Sandpiper and a Teal (9th). Undoubtedly the isle's bird highlight of the month came on 17th in the form of a Mute Swan that, with only nine records, is RARER than White's Thrush. Equally as appreciated was a Little Stint on the 18th that had a supporting cast of a Pintail, 5 Teal, 2 Wigeon, 2 Grey Herons, a Green Sandpiper, a Sanderling, the first and ONLY Arctic Tern fledgling of the year, a Siskin and a Garden Warbler. A Great Northern Diver, 2 Crossbills, 2 Sand Martins and ever increasing flocks of Turnstones, Redshanks, Dunlin and Whimbrel were noted on the 20th as was a single Sanderling (21st). The first returning Golden Plover and a Green Sandpiper (22nd) were followed by a Rosefinch and a Quail (24th). A Storm Petrel ringing session on 25th revealed a Leach's Petrel and the 1st juvenile Willow Warbler and 2 juvenile Dunlins were discovered (26th). Another Willow Warbler (27th) was joined by 2 Siskins and on 28th 2 Shelduck and a Shoveler were seen.

Seabird Breeding Season 2010

Overview: A similar season to last year with a few successes (Gannet, Fulmar) but on the whole relatively low (or zero) fledging success for most species. The continued lack of suitable food (1-group Sandeels) would appear to be the driving force behind the poor productivity.



Gannet: The breeding population continues to rise, up 10% on last year to 3968 AON (Fig 1). A new colony at Sheena Weetha held 20 AON whilst the Sheep Rock colony now stands at 115 AON. It was, as usual, a successful breeding season for this species, which is not dependent on Sandeels for food, with a final productivity of 0.72 being slightly above average.

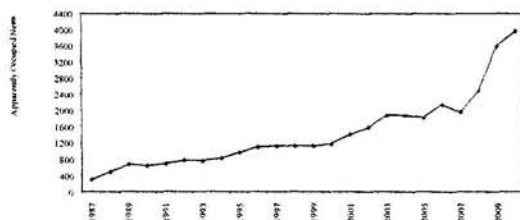


Fig 1: The Rise of the Fair Isle Breeding Gannet Population

Fulmar: As in 2009, numbers on the breeding plots were the highest since 2000 (+5.5% on 2009) (Fig 2) and breeding success was similarly high with around 50% of nests fledging a chick.

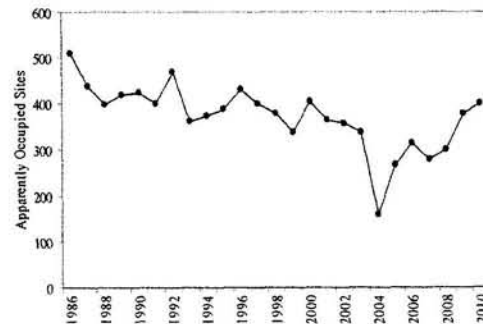


Fig 2: Plot counts of Northern Fulmar on Fair Isle, 1986 - 2010.

Shag: Breeding numbers on the monitoring plots rallied from 2009's slump (from 20 to 49 AON) but are still just 23% of the figure in 1986 (217) when monitoring began. Just 22 nests on the productivity plot produced 19 chicks to fledging giving a somewhat distorted productivity of 0.86 (Fig 3). Elsewhere on the isle, very few chicks fledged, with birds dying at the small chick stage. Later broods fared better than early ones.

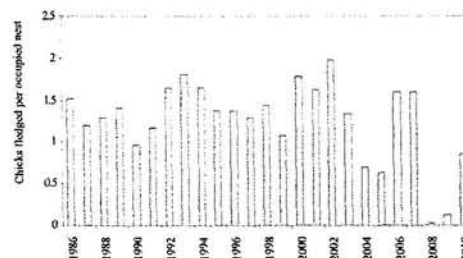


Fig 3: Shag Productivity at Monitored Nests, 1986 - 2010.

Arctic Skua: Following a long period of decline, numbers increased from just 37 AOT in 2008 to 65 AOT in 2009 and rose again slightly in 2010 to 70 AOT (Fig 4). However just 11 chicks managed to fledge giving a productivity of 0.16, continuing the recent run of poor form – a total of just 28 fledging in the past four years, many of which will then have succumbed to Bonxies.



Great Skua: Following record numbers in 2008 (294 AOT), there was a slight reduction in 2009 to 277 AOT but numbers increased by 1% to 280 AOT this year (Fig 4). A final productivity of 0.62 is similar to last year.

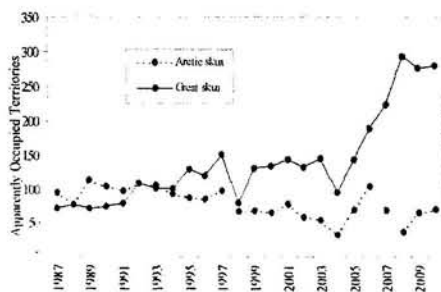


Fig 4: Whole island counts of Arctic Skua and Great Skua on Fair Isle, 1987-2010.

Kittiwake: From a record low number of AON on the plots (166 – just 12% of the figure 20 years ago), just 29 chicks fledged giving a productivity of 0.17 – the tenth consecutive season of poor fledging success. The future for Fair Isle's Kittiwakes looks grim.

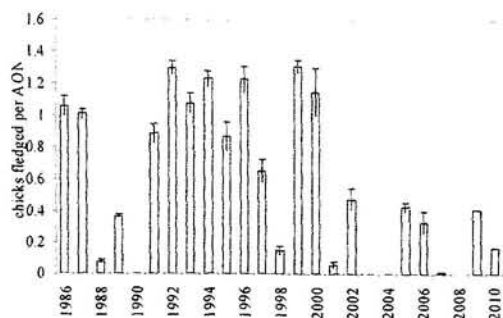


Fig 5: Breeding success of Black-legged Kittiwake on Fair Isle, 1986-2010.

In the summer of 2009, 18 of our breeding adult Kittiwakes were fitted with tiny data-loggers as part of a North Atlantic-wide collaboration to research the species habits and movements outside of the breeding season. Given the poor state of the species on Fair Isle, we were wondering if we would see any of them return this year! We were however delighted to see and retrieve no less than 15 of them!! The data has been downloaded and sent away to be processed and we eagerly await the results.

Arctic Tern: A colony of around 600 birds on Bunes, with smaller numbers at Shalstane, Bullock Holes and Horsti Breckas, totalling some 800 birds, failed to fledge any chicks. Most nests failed at the egg or very small chick stage. Birds were frequently observed hawking insects over land – always a sure sign that preferred food (fish) is scarce.

Common Guillemot: A whole island count indicated that the population had fallen by 30% since 2005, to 19,500 birds. Breeding success (0.43) was not brilliant but on a par with the performance since 2002 but below the years 1990-2002 when an average productivity of 0.62 was achieved. With fewer breeding birds and continued poor fledging success, the population looks set to decrease further.

Razorbill: The situation for Razorbills is even worse than for its larger cousin. A whole island count found just 1,365 birds – a 60% decrease since 2005 (Fig 6) whilst the Easter Lother productivity plot, for the third time in the last four years, failed to fledge any young.

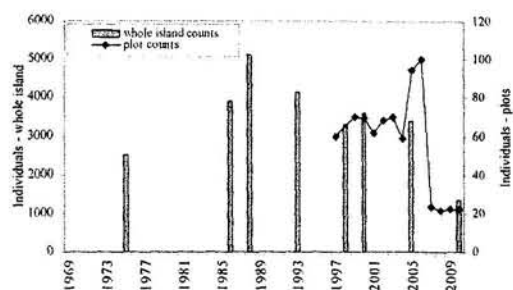


Fig 6: Whole island and plot counts of Razorbills on Fair Isle 1969-2010.

As has been the case recently, adult birds were finding it hard to feed their chicks and as a result young were losing weight between colony visits and eventually starving to death. One breeding adult, fitted with data-logger, was tracked to the Aberdeenshire coast in its search for food for its chick. It was seen to return *two days later* without food, (possibly having lost it to a gull or skua on the way home). If this situation is replicated throughout the colony it is little wonder that chicks are starving to death. What of the struggling adults? Having to work so much harder to find food for their young must surely have an adverse affect on their long-term fitness and survival – hence why the breeding population seems to be falling. Suffering extreme losses at both ends of the life cycle, the viability of the colony looks in doubt!

Atlantic Puffin: A whole island count in 2009 indicated that the island population has dropped by a massive 46% since 2001. However Puffins have always seemed fairly resilient, even when the other auks are struggling to breed successfully. A large number of occupied burrows (with eggs) were found on Greenholm this year but fledging success was particularly low. A productivity figure of 0.32 is the third lowest on record (apart from 0.31 in 2001 & 0.17 in 2007) and a long way short of the 0.72 mean achieved in the 1990s. Many chicks were still in the nest well into August

indicating a late season and perhaps that adults were struggling to supply enough food to maintain normal chick growth rates.

Food sample and feeding watch analysis indicated that chicks were being fed a mixture of 0-group Sandeels (60%), Rockling fry (30%) and Gadoids (10%). The mass of samples was very low (Fig 7), a further indication that chicks were underfed.

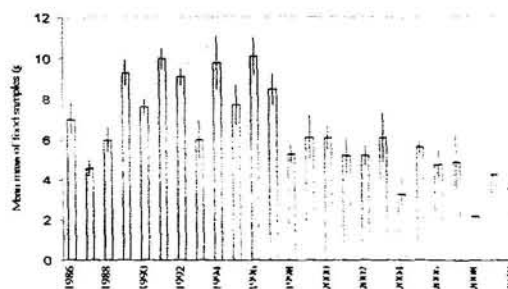


Fig 7: Mean mass of food samples of Atlantic Puffin on Fair Isle, 1986-2010.

Fair Isle's seabirds are clearly struggling and some have been struggling for ten years or more. However, because seabirds are long-lived birds and take several years to reach maturity, it can take many years before the failure to produce young has an impact on total numbers. This is now being felt with many sections of the cliff and boulder beaches far quieter than they used to be or even entirely deserted. If the situation does not improve soon then breeding Kittiwakes, Arctic Terns, Razorbills, Shags days are numbered! Have Sandeels become fewer? Or has their breeding season simply shifted so that it no longer coincides with that of the seabirds and they are spending longer buried in the sand where they are not accessible? More research is urgently required to determine what is happening to the Sandeels and why!

Note: AOT/N = Apparently Occupied Territory/Nest

Swallows and Sedge Warblers Breed!

It has been a surprisingly good year for Swallows. No less than three pairs successfully bred on the isle, including one pair that found the brand new Observatory garage to their liking and, despite the frequent unavoidable disturbance from the workmen, managed to fledge four young. Nests in the Airstrip shed and the Mast buildings also fledged young in July. Swallows only occasionally remain to breed on the isle (last in 2006) and so it was a great surprise to get three pairs in one year.

However, the Swallows were out-done by a pair of pioneering Sedge Warblers which nested in Schoolton Ditch. This is the first time this species has attempted to nest on Fair Isle and only the fourth record for Shetland. They successfully fledged two young in August!

Cetacean Sightings

Cetacean watching is mainly restricted to either pelagic trips or on days when the sea is flat calm. Anyone who has been to Fair Isle will therefore know that flat calm seas around the isle are few and far between, even during the summer months. Efforts (made mainly by the kitchen staff as they washed up) were rewarded with some nice observations. Dolphins were observed on a few occasions including 4 White-beaked Dolphins feeding off Bunness on the 29th July.



Porpoises were the most widely seen sea mammal with a c20 on the 15th August, 5

on the 28th August (2 off Meoness and 3 from the *Good Shepherd*).

The only Orca sightings of the spring/summer have been 2 seen off Bunness on the 21st March by one lucky Assistant Warden and a handful of other sightings from the *Good Shepherd*.

Other Observatory News

New Building Project – the latter stages

Since last December, progress with the new building was hampered by a combination of poor weather, lack of manpower and difficulty in obtaining building materials and thus things moved forward only very slowly. As the projected opening date came ever closer it became apparent that the building was not going to be ready in time to take visitors and we thus unfortunately had no option but to cancel the first three weeks of guests. The problems persisted and we then had to cancel a *further* five weeks of guests – a huge disappointment! Finally, in mid-June the building reached a habitable state and we were granted a Temporary Habitation Order so that we could allow people to stay. This was achieved in the nick of time as the following day the contractors, AHW Building Solutions of Orkney, went into receivership!!! This news stunned us and obviously came as a huge blow to the project and the six AHW workers who were still on-site. We are grateful to these men for doing their utmost to tidy up some loose ends before they had to leave, despite the extremely worrying situation that they personally found themselves now in. Thus, it turned out that our first visitors were our Board of Directors on 21st June!!! They were all delighted to be able to look around the fabulous new building and made lots of appreciative noises. We then invited the whole island

to an open afternoon and the Directors gave groups of islanders a guided tour. Following a month of uncertainty and legal discussions, the Receivers allowed us to employ Fair Isle's Northmen to complete the project and they have been able to take on some of those workers who had been working here when they were made redundant! Although the Warden's house and the new Obs garage still required a lot of work, the Guesthouse side of the operation was all but complete (apart from a few snagging issues) and since opening we have been extremely busy with guests. All have been delighted with what they have seen – the spacious, comfortable, ensuite bedrooms, the luxurious lounge with its leather sofas, solid wood coffee tables and stylish bar and the matching solid wood dining room furniture and the new information-filled Interpretation Room.

Nearing the end of October the building is now almost complete but with so little of the season left, it does not seem worth the effort for Deryk, Hollie & family to move from Burkle into the new Warden's house, only to move back again in a couple of months before the new Warden & Administrator arrive!

A lot of work has also been carried out on the observatory environs. A sheep-proof fence surrounds the site and a cattle-grid installed for vehicular access. So, no longer will the sheep lay at the back door!! More car parking space has been provided. We have begun planting up the grounds with bushes and flowers and re-instating the Obs veggie patch - although it may take several years for these to become established! A series of small pools have been dug on the opposite side of the road, adding further habitat and these have already been used by a wide variety of birds – including this Spring's White-throated Sparrow!.

Donations Board

The splendid new Observatory owes a huge amount of thanks to several government grant-giving bodies but also to many independent Charitable Trusts and ordinary individuals. To commemorate this, a 'Donors Board' is to be placed in the main foyer showing the names (if so-wished) of all those who donated **£250** or more. Our specially produced appeal flier only gave room for initials and surname, it would be very helpful therefore if everyone who donated such sums could contact the Observatory (preferably by e-mail -details on front page) and confirm exactly how you would like the name to appear. If we have not heard from any £250+ donors by the end of the year, we will record the name as it was written when the donation was made.

2010 Staff

In late March, Simon Davies and Jack Ashton-Booth both returned as Assistant Wardens for their 4th and 2nd years respectively, to their temporary home at the Chalet. In mid-April familiar faces Ann Prior, Lois Smallwood, Tracey Weekes and Becki Rosser, along with new-comers June Taylor and Carrie Gunn, all arrived – occupying Springfield and the Puffinn - as we were under the impression that we were due to open the new Observatory at the end of the month. Unfortunately Ann Prior had to leave us almost immediately due to illness and our thoughts were with her all season, wishing her a speedy recovery. Lois therefore became the Cook until she also had to leave as planned due to commitments in late July. Luckily Phil Bell agreed to return and stepped into the role of Cook for the month of August and again for four weeks in September/October. Finally Lois returned mid-October to cook for last two weeks of the season. Volunteers helping with the

domestic side of things this year are Maggie Burgh, Marco Plebani and Rob Hughes, all here for stints of several weeks each. The new Observatory is a much larger building and we have been grateful to have extra help on the cleaning side of things. However the disruption with Cooks and the total lack of an Assistant Cook all season meant that Hollie has had to spend a large amount of her time in the kitchen (far more than in a normal year), with Deryk supporting her by taking on more of the office duties and our excellent new Ranger Carrie-Marell Gunn taking on more of the visitor liaison.

JHMF Volunteers

As in most years, we have awarded JHMF (John Harrison Memorial Fund) volunteer places this summer. This year, James Dixon, Oliver Simms and Tim Jones were the lucky recipients and each spent a number of weeks on the isle, gaining an enviable insight into Observatory work and participated in a variety of tasks including bird ringing, monitoring, data entry and Observatory maintenance. For more information on applying for a JHMF place see the FIBO website:

www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk/jhmf_grant.htm

Researchers

Despite the lack of an Observatory for half the year, it's been a busy season for ornithological students on the isle, with the Puffinn being well-utilised as accommodation until mid-June when the Observatory became available. Dr Jane Reid, Dr Peter Evans, Jessica Walkup, Daisy Brickhill, Johann Nilsson, Lilly Herridge and Martin Hughes were all present for varying lengths of time to continue delving deeper into the biology of the Fair Isle Starlings.

Meanwhile, Adam Seward, Dr Rob Thomas, Jez Smith and Dr Lucy Gilbert

were also here researching the effects of supplementary feeding on the breeding success and survival rates of our Wheatears.

In the summer, RSPB's Mark Bolton and Becki Langram visited for several weeks as part of a nation-wide project using data-loggers to look at the foraging activity of a suite of seabird species during the breeding season.

All of these projects are producing some very interesting results and we hope to see some of these in print in the near future.

Fancy New Wheels

In late June, Finance Director Mike Wood arrived with a new vehicle for the Obs – a swanky people carrier/minibus. It is the perfect vehicle, though only just light enough for the Good Shepherd crane to lift but is spacious and strong enough to comfortably carry eight passengers and their entire luggage!

A New Warden & Administrator

Deryk & Hollie Shaw have decided that this will be their final year of running the Observatory. The posts were therefore advertised in the spring, arousing a great deal of interest. The Interview Subcommittee deliberated long and hard over all the applications and eventually whittled it down to four couples. In late August, these lucky few were invited to the island for a long weekend to see the new Observatory, meet the islanders and current Obs staff and learn more about the jobs, culminating in a formal interview. At the end of it all, David & Susannah Parnaby (with baby Grace) were chosen to be Deryk & Hollie's successors. They will arrive on the isle to take up the reins sometime in the New Year!

E-mailed newsletter?

In this increasingly technological age and to conserve paper and reduce postage costs, many organizations are now e-mailing Newsletters to their members. If any FOFI members would prefer to receive future newsletters as an e-mail attachment then please would they drop us an e-mail and we will start a database.

Vaila's Trees

The area just north of Stackhoull Stores was planted with trees and bushes in 2009 in memory of Vaila Harvey, the daughter of ex-FIBO Warden & Administrator Paul Harvey & Elizabeth Eastham, whose life was cut tragically short at the age of 16 - an event that cut deep into the hearts of everyone on Fair Isle.

Despite a cold winter, it was relatively calm so the young saplings have survived well and already this little plantation has become a superb place for birds and has already played host to River Warbler, Greenish Warbler, Golden Oriole, Long-eared Owl and numerous Rosefinches as well as being a favourite with the *Phylloscopus* Warblers.

Paul & Liz also started a fund in her memory. Vaila's Fund was set up to support Shetland's young people achieve their aspirations through international study. Each year an award is made to a financially disadvantaged young person to assist them to participate in an international study project.

If any readers would like to learn more of this worthwhile cause, then details can be found at www.vailasfund.org

Other Island News

Blue Lightning

In early May, author Ann Cleeves arrived with a group including her Editors, Publisher, friends and Press to 'launch' the final book in her Shetland Quartet,

Blue Lightning. The crime novel is set on Fair Isle, and as a result Ann was particularly keen to celebrate this achievement on the isle. Originally booked to stay at the Observatory, but with it still not open, her guests were split up and housed in several homes around the isle, with the Observatory staff providing the buffet at the Community Hall. Ann then read sections from each of her Shetland Quartet of novels and these were interspersed with pieces of live music from Fair Isle's most famous fiddler, Chris Stout. The weekend proved very successful and we extend our thanks to all those who helped in any way and especially to those who accommodated people.

Tying the Knot

On 21st August the Observatory was the venue for the wedding reception for Marilyn Rowan and Gordon Rhind. Marilyn is Jimmy Stout's cousin and has visited the island many times in recent years. The happy couple stayed at the Observatory with their families for the days prior to and after the wedding. The wedding ceremony took place in the Chapel and afterwards the whole island community descended on the Observatory for a formal buffet style meal, dance and celebration. This was the first time the New Observatory had hosted a big event such as this but it was hugely successful and we received a great deal of positive feedback. It is hoped that the new building will continue to provide an alternative venue for island events in years to come.

George Stout 1928 - 2010

On the 25th May, George Stout, formally of Barkland and latterly of Aesterhoull passed away. Georgie (as he was known to everyone on the isle) had moved just a year before to a carehome in Lerwick. His funeral was held on the isle on 28th May

and was well attended by not only the whole isle community but also many family members and friends who travelled into the isle to pay their respects. It seemed fitting that Georgie, who was a great lover of the sea and boats should make his final journey to Fair Isle aboard the *Good Shepherd* – the boat he skippered for many years.

Chris Stout in Hot Water!

Apart from rare birds the most unusual sighting on the isle this year has been that of Chris Stout – he of Fiddlers Bid fame – taking a bath.....in the middle of a field at Setter!!! Had he gone mad? Or lost a bet? Well it turned out that neither was the case (not quite anyway!). He had been commissioned to help with an advertising campaign for Crofters Bubblebath, a product of the Shetland Soap Company!! It was quite a sight. Dave Wheeler was crouched down taking photos and Iain Stout was standing by with a whisk should the bubbles begin to dissipate!



Not sure what the sheep made of it all!!

If you wish to purchase some or any of the Shetland Soap Company's lovely products, check out their website www.shetlandsoap.co.uk

Fair Isle: Through the Seasons

A new coffee table photographic book entitled *Fair Isle: Through the Seasons* has been published and profits from sales are being split between FIBO and the Fair Isle Community Association. This attractive book retails at only £15 and makes a great gift or memento of the island. Compiled and written by Malachy Tallack and Roger Riddington, the book contains dozens of stunning photos of island life throughout a year, accompanied by interesting text. For more information and to see images from the book visit: www.fairislebook.co.uk

A New Observatories Book

It's been four years in the planning and producing but it has finally come to fruition, an update to the 1975 Bird Observatories Book is now on the shelves. A hardback T & AD Poyser publication, entitled *Bird Observatories of Britain and Ireland* it details the history, work and flavour of each of the 18 currently accredited Bird Observatories and is interspersed with photographs and anecdotes about 'memorable days' or 'big birds'. A huge amount of work has gone into the book and with nearly 600 pages it is quite a substantial volume. It retails at £60 and can be found at many good bookshops or bought from any Bird Observatory, including Fair Isle. An ideal Christmas present for anybody who likes visiting these important ornithological outposts.

And finally.....Thank you all for your continued support. Keep up to date with FIBO news on our website and blog www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk and fibowarden.blogspot.com