

Friends of



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SEABIRD SUCCESS!



After many years of poor breeding seasons for our seabirds, it's a real pleasure to be able to report on a successful year for many species, with the reason behind this change in fortunes clear in the above photo of a Puffin this year (left) and one of last year's breeding birds. It's not yet clear why sand-eels and other small fish have been found in abundance this year, but for now we're just revelling in the fact that we've been able to enjoy the seabird colonies in full swing. Numbers of many species are still well down on their peaks of the late 1980s,



but there's a glimmer of hope that a recovery could be possible.

The breeding season is still going on for some birds as I write this, but some headline figures include:

- * Highest Razorbill productivity since 1998 — 0.68 chicks per egg laid.
- * Highest Guillemot productivity since 2006 — 0.57 chicks per incubating adult.
- * Highest Kittiwake productivity since 2000 — 0.62 chicks per nest (and the first increase in population for several years, to 963 nesting pairs).
- * Around 400 pairs of Bonxies, a record count (although productivity was low).
- * Fourteen Arctic Skuas chicks fledged (after only 1 in the last three years).
- * Black Guillemot population plot count at highest level since 1997.

A personal highlight for me was finally getting into auk colonies full of healthy, thriving chicks and coming back filthy and stinking, but incredibly happy!

Maybe we've turned a corner at last?



Arctic Skua feeding a fledged chick, Gilsetter.

Top: Kittiwakes, Dog Geo, including a fledged chick.

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Editorial

We're delighted to be delivering the 2013 Annual Report, which we hope you enjoy—work has begun on the 2014 one now, so hopefully that will be with you next summer. This year has already proved to be a very exciting one with a much better year for breeding seabirds, a host of rare migrants and another record-breaking year for visitors.

The team at FIBO have been especially busy this summer and have adapted very well to everything that has been thrown at them, so many thanks to all of them for their hard work. Amongst the team this year were Angela Wiseman of Barkland who did a brilliant job as cook before moving to Aberdeenshire with her family. The Head Teacher Nick Lucas has also left the island and we wish him and the Wisemans all the best in their respective new endeavours.

Another change has seen Roger Riddington stand down as Chairman of FIBOT to be replaced by Eric Meek (whose association with FIBO goes back to being an Assistant Warden in 1972). Roger played a huge part in overseeing the building of the new Obs and was a massive help to us as we started work at Fair Isle and we'd like to thank him for his work for FIBO and welcome Eric to his new role.

David & Susannah Parnaby

WIN A FAIR ISLE JUMPER, 5 NIGHTS ON FAIR ISLE or one of MANY OTHER FANTASTIC PRIZES!

The George Waterston Memorial Centre (the Fair Isle Museum) is raising funds for an extension by holding a raffle with some brilliant Fair Isle-based prizes on offer. They include:

- 5-night stay on Fair Isle for 2 people in 2015 (3 nights at FIBO, 2 nights at South Light), with return flights from Shetland included
 - Bespoke, made-to-measure Fair Isle jumper
 - Fair Isle scarf hand-knitted by Annie Thomson
 - Fisherman's Kep hand-knitted by Elena Mera-Long
 - Fair Isle Kep and wrist-warmer set, hand-knitted by Annie Thomson
 - Framed Fair Isle photo by Dave Wheeler
- Plus many other prizes...

Tickets are priced at only **£1 each** and can be bought on the island (from the Museum, FIBO or Stackhoull) or by contacting FIBO and either sending a cheque (made payable to 'George Waterston Memorial Centre') and a SAE or phoning with credit or debit card details.

Tickets must be purchased by **20th October 2014** and the draw will take place at the Fair Isle Community Hall on Saturday 25th October 2014 at 7pm.

GW Memorial Centre Reg Charity No. SC05177

Promoter: Hollie Shaw, Burkle, Fair Isle, Shetland, ZE2 9JU

Register under The Gambling Act 2005 with Shetland Islands Council, Licence number G.761.

Congratulations to Inness Thomson and Karen Veitch who were married on Fair Isle this summer, an especially memorable day was made even more so by almost 5.5 inches of rain falling in a 24 hour period, a new Fair Isle record!



The estate of George Shannon (the photographer on the Guy Mountfort expeditions to Spain, Bulgaria and Jordan, who visited Fair Isle in 1949) have kindly donated a copy of Kenneth Williamson's 'Fair Isle and its Birds' (1965) to be sold to raise funds for FIBO. It's a hard-back in good condition with a dust jacket and is the classic description of the early days of FIBO.

We'll sell it to the person who sends us the highest bid (bids by email or post only please to the usual FIBO address) by:

30th November 2014

BEST SPRING EVER?

When Fair Isle's first ever spring record of Red-flanked Bluetail was found in late March, it was a great start to the season, but nobody would have predicted that by the time July came round and spring finally came to a halt, the Bluetail would be barely scraping into the 'Top Ten' birds of the year so far!

There are so many ways of measuring the 'success' of a spring, that the title of 'best' spring is always going to be somewhat subjective, but the volume of 'top-drawer' rarities in 2014 has surely not previously been surpassed.

Amongst them came two firsts for Fair Isle in the form of **Glossy Ibis** and **Bridled Tern**, two fifth records for Britain (**Cretzschmar's Bunting** and '**Caspian Stonechat**', a distinctive subspecies of Siberian Stonechat), Britain's 11th **Hermit Thrush**, 18th **Calandra Lark** and a cracking male **Collared Flycatcher**. To top things off, the second **Swinhoe's Petrel** trapped in 2013 returned to Fair Isle for another summer. Of course, the supporting cast wasn't bad either and consisted of Laughing Gull, 3 Blyth's Reed Warbler, Eastern Subalpine Warbler, Greenish Warbler, 4 Western Subalpine Warbler, 4 Short-toed Lark, Crane, Green-winged Teal, 2 Roseate Tern, Mandarin, Nightjar, Temminck's Stint, 2 Honey Buzzard, Hobby, 2 Little Bunting, Richard's Pipit, 2 Garganey and a scattering of Bluethroats, Red-backed Shrikes, Common Rosefinches, Marsh Warblers, Icterine Warblers, Wrynecks, Dotterels, Corncrakes, Osprey, Quails, Hawfinch and Great Grey Shrike!

So 'best ever' spring? Well, it certainly wasn't a bad one!

And it's not just birds...

Of course, there's more to Fair Isle than the birds, and some of the other wildlife can be pretty spectacular too. Although it's been relatively quiet for cetacean sightings so far this year, there have been a few sightings of Killer Whales, which included a group that lingered distantly off the north of the island and allowed plenty of people the opportunity to twitch them.

Just as impressive was the Basking Shark seen off South Light on 29th July, an uncommon visitor to Fair Isle waters, but one that seems to be showing a long-term trend of gradual increase, hopefully a sign of a recovering population in British waters.

Less striking, but also significant, were the first records of Sulphur Pearl and Northern White-tailed Bumblebee for Fair Isle. Both were found by Susannah in the Obs garden, with Nick Riddiford helping to confirm the identification. The bumblebee was the second addition to the island's meagre bumblebee list, joining the resident Shetland Bee *Bombus muscorum* and the Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*, of which several individuals were recorded on the isle in 2012. The moth was not only a first for Fair Isle and Shetland, but also a first for Scotland, the previous most northerly UK record coming from Spurn in East Yorks.



Left: Sulphur Pearl *Sitochroa palealis*, Obs, July (D.Parnaby). **Middle:** Basking Shark, Skadan, July (D.Parnaby). **Right:** Northern White-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus magnus* (C.Dodd)



From top: Red-flanked Bluetail (David Parnaby), Cretzschmar's Bunting (Roger Riddington), Caspian Stonechat (Logan Johnson), Glossy Ibis (DP), Hermit Thrush (DP), Calandra Lark (Ciaran Hatsell), Collared Flycatcher (DP), Bridled Tern (RR), Swinhoe's Petrel (CH)

Visiting FIBO in 2015

It's been another really busy year for visitors at FIBO and 2015 is filling up quickly already, with the peak times of mid-September to mid-October and late May to early June already pretty full. If you're thinking of paying us a visit, it's probably best to get in touch sooner rather than later to enquire about room availability.

Visiting FIBO in 2015

The Obs is open from 17th April to 30th October.

2015 Standard Rates (full board, en-suite):

Single Room:	£70 per night
Double/Twin Room:	£65 per person per night
Single occupancy:	£85 per person per night
Children (6-12):	£30 per night
Children under 6:	free

2015 Discounts (per person):

- * Under 25s: £32.50 per night (excludes 24th September to 6th October).
- * FOI July offer: 20% off all room rates
- * 17th April – 11th May £50 per night
- * 1st - 31st August £50 per night
- * 18th - 30th October £50 per night

See website or contact FIBO for details



Volunteering for FIBO

Check the FIBO website and Warden's blog over the winter for volunteering opportunities at FIBO in 2015. You could help out with the Wardening team, be a domestic vol or maybe even come to work in the Obs bar.

There may also be opportunities to help out in other ways (for example helping to man the stands at the Birdfair) if you're not able to make the trip north to stay with us for a while.

Voluntary roles are often heavily applied for, so please complete the application form detailing what you hope to get out of the trip and why you want to be part of the FIBO team.

Visiting Britain's most remote inhabited island isn't as daunting as you may think! Just follow the steps below:

1. Contact us to find out if there are spaces for the dates you wish to visit.
2. Book your transport to Fair Isle.
3. Book your transport to Shetland.
4. Get back in touch with FIBO to confirm your booking and pay your deposit.

Transport to Fair Isle:

Flights:

Depart Tingwall (near Lerwick): daily except Sunday (one Saturday flight from Sumburgh)

DirectFlight: 01595 840246

Ferry:

Depart Grutness (near Sumburgh): Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

Good Shepherd: 01595 760363

Subsidised Taxi from Lerwick to Tingwall:
01595 745745 (must be booked in advance)

As well as the website and Warden's blog, you can follow the latest news from FIBO on Facebook and Twitter.

www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk

<http://fibowarden.blogspot.co.uk/>



[facebook.com/fairislebirdobservatory](https://www.facebook.com/fairislebirdobservatory)



twitter.com/FI_Obs



Get news and pictures first (like this Dotterel on Ward Hill in June, by Ciaran Hatsell) by following us on Facebook and Twitter.