



# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 2018



**Plate 1.** David Roche (left) and Richard Cope, Green Holm, 25th July 2018. © David Parnaby



**Plate 2.** Eleanor Stroud, Eas Brecks, 12th August 2018. © David Parnaby



**Plate 3.** Steve Arlow, Burkle, 9th October 2018. © Ian Andrews



**Plate 4.** Elizabeth Holmes, Greenholm, 26th June 2018. © David Parnaby



**Plate 5.** Hebe Boyd-Wallis, South Naaversgill, 4th July 2018. © David Parnaby



# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY REPORT NO. 70 (2018)

Editor - Ian Andrews assisted by Barry Nightingale

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Front cover. Yellow-browed Warbler, Field, 3rd October 2018. © Steve Arlow

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# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY TRUST (FIBOT)

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



Plate 6. Obs, 19th March 2018. © David Parnaby

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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

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### Douglas Barr

The Obs in 2018 had a record number of visitors which, in today's world of global travel, is a tremendous achievement. That, coupled with the excellent positive feedback we received from guests, is a testament to the hard work of all those employed in the running of the Obs and we gladly acknowledge this.

The high number of future bookings shows clearly how highly regarded the Obs is by visitors and it is a healthy platform for us to build upon, which we fully intend doing.

In terms of birds, a so-called 'quiet year' still resulted in records of Song Sparrow, Crag Martin, Siberian Rubythroat and White's Thrush to name but a few. Although the birding was hard going at times, perseverance usually paid off for most guests in the shape or form of some scarcities or rares.

On the breeding front, our population of Red-necked Phalaropes doubled to two! It will be fascinating to see whether this toehold continues and to what extent it can expand further. Seabirds again were a mixed picture showing only too clearly how invaluable the data we have accumulated over the decades as a barometer of the current situation.

Our bird report was again published to popular acclaim whilst the website continues to develop and really is a must go to for any information concerning the Obs. The WhatsApp group worked well in the dissemination of bird news on the Isle for guests and shows how technology changes our practices. The soon-to-be 4G mobile signal for the Isle can only make this service even more invaluable.

It has been decided to produce a new *Birds of Fair Isle* book. This project will take several years to come to fruition but I'm sure will be worth waiting for. In addition, a number of new research

projects are being initiated. These include sound recording of nocturnal migrants, the possible effect of cat predation on the Isle's bird population and the MOTUS tracking system for Yellow-browed Warblers in conjunction with other bird observatories. Staying static is not something that can be levelled at FIBOT in terms of cutting-edge technology in the world of ornithology.



Plate 7. Douglas Barr with Siberian Rubythroat, Midway, 28th October 2018. © David Parnaby



**Plate 8.** The three new wind turbines on Rippack (left to right, Lukki Minni, Grotti Finni and Tushi) and solar panels on School Brae, 15th October 2018. The dark green building left of the School houses the battery storage and control units. The green shed to the left of Grotti Finni is Tangi. © Ian Andrews

We attended the annual Birdfair at Rutland where, as ever, it was a pleasure to reacquaint with old friends and meet prospective new guests. A number of talks were also given to bird clubs throughout the year.

Staffing was a case of 'steady as you go' with many core members returning for another season and we are extremely grateful for all their hard work throughout the season. During the year, we also welcomed a number of volunteers, some of whom were assisted in their funding by the John Harrison and Simon Aspinall funds which we would encourage possible recipients to make applications for.

On the Isle, the new Fair Isle electricity scheme became operational in October. The Obs is linked into this which will produce a greater continuity of supply than has been previously available. With forthcoming 4G mobile signal coverage and upgraded broadband coverage further benefits should be provided for us. We are indebted to the Islanders for their sustained hard work over many years in securing this.

In a similar vein we are also extremely fortunate in being able to rely on so many of the Islanders for their assistance in helping us to run the Obs so smoothly, and I take this opportunity of thanking them for their year-round work for us.

It only remains for me to thank on behalf of the Directors, David and Susannah for their unstinting endeavours throughout the year which has allowed the Obs to function so well. Can I further thank my fellow Directors and in particular Mike Wood, for all their work which is entirely voluntarily in ensuring that the Obs operates so efficiently. During 2018, we welcomed back as a Director Paul Harvey, one of our previous wardens, and we look forward to his contributions.

Obviously, events have overtaken us as I write this with the devastating fire at the Obs in March 2019. I will simply say this. We shall rebuild the Obs and we look forward to seeing you all again in spring 2021.

# ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

## Susannah Parnaby

A real rollercoaster of a year, with the 2018 season kicking off with some great spring birding, and finishing with some great birding too, with a male Siberian Rubythroat showing well to the last guests of the year (it's not often the Administrator gets finder's credits), but in between was a whole mixture of ups and downs.

With the departure of some old faces, we were pleased to welcome a number of new team members, including David Roche as assistant warden, Vivienne Hastie as ranger and David Roberts and Joe Bolton as domestic assistants, alongside established staff; Orlando and Michael Krippner and Inessa Vetlugina heading up the catering team, Richard Cope returning as assistant warden and Hannah Bell combining childcare and cleaning. It was good to see our new staff getting stuck in to life on the Isle, building links with the community and braving the chilly waters of North Haven and Gunglesund, often on days when even

the residents were loathed to wade in. 2018 was an exceptionally busy year, with a record number of bed-nights in a season, even accounting for the substantial disruption to transport in the autumn that prevented a number of guests from reaching us. Thanks are due to the catering and housekeeping team for their exceptional efforts in keeping guests well fed and the Observatory clean and tidy through a very busy spring and summer, and for managing to keep the laundry running through the various changes in power supply and the loss of both tumble dryers just as the weather turned in the autumn.

Volunteers too were a mix of new faces and some increasingly established regulars, including ornithological volunteers Tom Gale and Eleanor Stroud, and Max Hellicar who managed to combine bar shifts with seabird work alongside the wardening team. Other bar volunteers included Abbey Savage, Julie Aitken and Tess Kowalczyk, whilst Joan Snape and



**Plate 9.** The 2018 FIBO team: (back row) David Parnaby (Warden), Susannah Parnaby (Administrator), Orlando Krippner (Cook), Michael Krippner (Assistant Cook), Inessa Vetlugina (Domestic Assistant), Richard Cope (Assistant Warden) and (front row) Vivienne Hastie (Ranger), David Roberts (Domestic Assistant), David Roche (Assistant Warden) and Hannah Bell (Childcarer), 24th April 2018. © David Parnaby

Mary Capes were very helpful in keeping the communal areas spotless during the holidays, and Euan Furness, Hebe Boyd-Wallis, Elliott Montieth, Toby Carter and Ben Moyes all contributed as ornithological volunteers during the summer. Chris Dodd also made a welcome return in late autumn, this time as a general volunteer, helping with both wardening and domestic tasks.

February saw the arrival of the first of many workmen as the new power project on the Isle got underway. A massive achievement for all involved, the project was delivered on time and within budget in October, with three new wind turbines on the Rippack supplemented by solar panels on the School Brae providing 24-hour power to the Isle for the first time. This meant a lot of cable laying, with the North Road closed in sequential sections for a month or so prior to the start of the season, to allow cable to be run down the centre of the road to the Haven. Cars placed at strategic intervals along the road and shuttling between the two on foot only led to the occasional mishap with a ditch in the dark, and the work put in by the main contractor CHAP to minimize disruption to Observatory operations through the year was greatly appreciated. Importantly, the Observatory is now connected to the Isle power supply for the first time, allowing us to benefit from a more sustainable source of energy and significantly reduce our dependence on diesel. It's also good to be able to welcome two new Isle residents, Andy and Thomas, who came to work on the power project and have since decided to make Fair Isle their home.



Plate 10. Laying the new electricity cables in the Obs garden, 13th March 2018. © David Parnaby

2018 saw a number of other changes to the Isle community over the course of the year, with a new member of the family at Houll, Ander Thomson-Rotolo, arriving in January, and Steven Wilson, his partner Elaine and son Lewis finally able to settle properly at Koolin. Brian and Angie Smith have moved on to pastures new, with Amy Stout and partner Andy taking over the croft at Upper Stoneybrek. Many of the keen knitters amongst visitors to the Observatory will no doubt remember Marie Bruhat, who arrived several years ago to work alongside Mati Ventrillon in her knitwear business; Marie and Thomas will now be settling at Taft. Both Steven and Thomas are valuable additions to the Good Shepherd boat crew, which had seen a greater level of dependence on relief crew from Shetland in recent years to ensure a regular service and will no doubt become familiar faces to all those making the sea crossing to Fair Isle in the next few years.

As is often the case, the excitement of new arrivals was mixed with sadness; Stewart Thomson, known to many for his wonderful fiddle playing, skill in spinning and constructing and repairing spinning wheels and for passing on these skills to countless others, but most of all for his enduring kindness and welcome to all who came through the door, passed away in April. Like his much-loved wife Annie, the expressions of loss from far-flung corners of the world were testament to a life well-lived, with an impact that reached far beyond Fair Isle.

One of the questions frequently asked by visitors to the Isle is to wonder how people manage to live on such a small island, without access to many of the services and facilities enjoyed by those living in a more urban environment. Apart from the quality of the birding of course, it becomes clearer over the years that there is much to be gained from living in a place that is small enough to see the difference that positive community life and environmental stewardship can have. After several years of limited research activity as the funding squeezes on universities become ever more apparent, it is exciting to see a new raft of research projects get underway, some linked to the granting of the Fair Isle MPA, others building on established





Plate 11. The 2018 wardening team mid-season (left to right): David Roche (Assistant Warden), David Parnaby (Warden) and Richard Cope (Assistant Warden), Obs, 13th July 2018. © FIBO

projects, with the research office in the Observatory busy for much of the field season. The opportunities offered by new technology are clearly making a significant contribution to seabird science, with the first results of the BTO Arctic Skua tagging project in the Northern Isles providing information on the wintering areas in the southern hemisphere, whilst low-tech darvic ringing of Great skuas by the Obs team is also playing a role, in building a picture of where 'our' birds go once they leave the Isle. For those living on the mainland the identification of the subjects of ornithological research is of course rarely so immediate and individual. One learns more about a species of course, but not so often about this particular bird, its life history and the positive and negative impacts of humans upon it as an individual.

Then too, life on Fair Isle, and at the Observatory in particular, provides many opportunities to see the positive impact that a stay on Fair Isle can have on visitors. It was very encouraging to have so many families staying during the summer,

some whose parents had visited many years before and were keen to share the experience with children and grandchildren. It is of course easy to sentimentalize, or overhype, such experiences, but it is certainly the case that the opportunity to spend time outdoors at a slower pace, where communication is encouraged and the possibility not to be concerned about keeping one hand on belongings at all times, does leave an impression on many visitors to the Isle.

This is due in no small part to the community of Fair Isle, and we are grateful as always to all those on the Isle who do so much to keep the Observatory running during the year and to make visitors feel welcome during their stay. We would also like to thank all those who have supported the work of the Observatory in 2018, through visits, membership of Friends of Fair Isle or volunteering; we hope you share our pride in the ornithological work the Observatory has been able to undertake this season as a result of these contributions.

# WARDEN'S REPORT

David Parnaby



Plate 12. Crag Martin, Furse, 15th May 2018. © David Parnaby

A great spring, a reasonable breeding season and an autumn that started with great promise but was blown away by a near constant spell of westerly winds was the basic summary of the year from a migration point of view. Rarity highlights were the Isle's:

<b>1st</b>	Crag Martin
<b>2nd</b>	Black Kite
<b>3rd</b>	Mediterranean Gull
<b>4th</b>	Song Sparrow
<b>4th</b>	Serin
<b>6th</b>	Pallid Harrier
<b>8th</b>	Siberian Rubythroat

A host of other rarities included two Lanceolated Warblers, White's Thrush, two Thrush Nightingales, five Arctic Warblers, Greenish Warbler, 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' (plus another Subalpine Warbler unidentified to subspecies), Rustic Bunting, Red-rumped Swallow, four Rose-coloured Starlings, 'Coes's Arctic Redpoll', two 'Black-bellied Dippers' and a 'Todd's Canada Goose'. Scarcities included three Tundra Bean Geese, three Quails, four Corncrakes, Osprey, Honey-buzzard, three Marsh Harriers, Buzzard, Curlew Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Little Gull,

Pomarine Skua, two Long-tailed Skuas, three Hobbies, four Wrynecks, 19 Red-backed Shrikes, three Waxwings, Shore Lark, 21 Yellow-browed Warblers, four Blyth's Reed Warblers, 17 Marsh Warblers, 14 Icterine Warblers, 22 Barred Warblers, 17 Bluethroats, three Red-breasted Flycatchers, two 'Grey-headed Wagtails', three Richard's Pipits, two Olive-backed Pipits, 13 Hawfinches, two 'Northern Bullfinches', 16 Common Rosefinches and two Ortolan Buntings. Not a bad haul for a year that was generally agreed to include one of the worst autumns on record (and saw the year list stumble to just 203, the lowest for years), but still, we'll be hoping for more productive winds in autumn 2019!

Amongst the other migration highlights, there were record day-counts for Meadow Pipit (2,034), Purple Sandpiper (160), Sanderling (57), Marsh Warbler (seven) and Water Rail (seven). The early spring period also produced some spectacular birding, with large numbers of thrushes and other species providing an exciting start to census. There were earliest-ever arrival dates for Dotterel and Lesser Whitethroat in the spring and Yellow-browed Warbler in the autumn, whilst at the other end of the year there was the latest ever Barred Warbler.

The seabird season saw record breeding numbers of Gannet and Bonxie, but Kittiwake and Arctic Skua were amongst the species for which the breeding numbers were especially poor. There appeared to be good numbers of sandeels around, with productivity amongst the auks in particular being very good. It was especially heartening to see Razorbill chicks leaving their nests in seemingly very good health (and certainly good weights), a massive contrast to 2017. Disappointingly, particularly considering the food being brought in by other species, Arctic Skua productivity was very poor.

Red-necked Phalaropes again fledged chicks and a female Pintail was seen with ducklings, which started off as an exciting breeding record until it was realised that the only youngster to fledge was a hybrid with a Mallard - very much the Ugly Duckling in reverse.

Susannah has covered the staff and volunteers in the Administrator's report, so I'll not repeat all the details here other than to also offer my thanks for all the work that they put into a very busy season. It was again a busy year for the directors and we'd like to thank them all for the effort they put in to the Obs and their continued support.

We would also like to thank JNCC, SNH, SOTEAG for their financial contribution towards the seabird work, Ranger service and seabird rings respectively.

Our visitors are a large part of what makes life at the Obs what it is and we were again able to enjoy a mix of new faces and regular visitors and it's good to know that many of them will be returning again to Fair Isle in 2019. Of course, birding on Fair Isle would be very different if it wasn't for the Fair Isle community and there's not a day goes by on the Island when I'm not thankful for the people here, without whom it is unlikely that Susannah and I would have stayed on the Isle for as long as we have; 2019 will be our ninth year running the Obs (so surely a first for Britain is due soon?).

Although Susannah has covered the main happenings on the Isle in her report, I'd also like to take a chance to thank Robert and everyone else involved in the power project, to welcome Thomas and Andy to the Isle and to say goodbye to Stewart Thomson of Shirva. Thank you for the lovely memories and everything else you have left us Daddad.



**Plate 13.** David Parnaby receiving the BBRC's Carl Zeiss Award from Simon King (left) with Roger Riddington (right), Rutland BirdFair, 18th August 2018. David's BBRC submission for the Green Warbler in July 2017 was voted the best overall submission in 2018. © Nina O'Hanlon

## NEWS FROM THE ISLE

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### Eileen Thomson, Houll

2018 was our first full year back on the isle after moving home from Edinburgh in spring 2017. There don't seem to be 'quiet' years on Fair Isle but 2018 certainly seems to be a contender for the busiest year yet! It was a year with much promise in the shape of new projects, new neighbours and, starting at the very beginning of the year, a brand-new isle resident. Shetland's first baby of 2018 arrived to us - a peerie boy, Ander, ready to start his life at Houll. He is the first isle baby born for six years and hopefully it won't be another six years before a friend comes along. The biggest news of 2018 was that the project to install a new electricity system, combining wind turbines, solar panels, batteries and generators was finally here. Physical work began in February and the contractors - CHAP - arrived for their eight-month stint on the isle. Joined by SSE, amongst others, they spent every daylight hour working very hard and were well cared for by an isle team ably lead by Josie Wennekes and returning isle lass Eve Eunson who made sure they had full bellies to work on. Various vacant houses on the isle were used as homes for the team over the next few months and it was great to see lights on and see the guys getting involved in the community - the darts club proved especially popular. On a serious note, the implementation of 24-hour power for the first time in our history is a momentous step. The old windmill and generators were not capable of generating the power needed by modern homes and for the Fair Isle Electricity Company to have instigated this huge project and to have brought it through to completion is incredible and will improve the lives of residents and visitors alike.

February brought another important milestone - having a resident nurse on the isle. Victoria Worrall and husband Bob arrived to take up residence at North Shirva, soon becoming valued members of our community and using their creative skills to become involved in local crafts. We returned to Fair Isle in April 2017, shortly after

the previous nurse Elena left for new adventures. Since then, the isle had very patchy cover which is not ideal, especially in our remote location, so to have our own nurse again is not only reassuring but rather essential.

Every year, spring brings happy times in the reopening of the Bird Observatory for the season and the return of familiar and new faces. We also had to say a sad goodbye to a true gentleman in the passing of Stewart Thomson of Shirva. He was a kind man who always had the time of day for you and was fascinated by the world around him. Many people will be able to call themselves his pupils - he taught folk to spin on his own spinning wheels, and was a super fiddle teacher. I would like to think we all learnt a little from him. Another goodbye or rather an *au revoir* was to Margo and Bill Murray of Koolin who, after 40 years in the Isle, decided to move to Edinburgh to be nearer to their children and little grandchild. Bill and Margo served the community well in various roles - lighthouse keeper, art teacher, weaver, knitter, school secretary, painter and joiner to name a few. They also brought life to Springfield, which was almost derelict, and turned it into a successful self-catering cottage. However, to many people, Margo and Bill will always be remembered for fantastic Halloween parties and Margo's excellent clottie dumpling at Burns' suppers. We hope they are enjoying their new city life and well-deserved retirement. Coming back to the isle to take over Koolin and Springfield is isle native, Steven Wilson, along with partner Elaine and young Lewis. Steven grew up here, returned on many occasions to visit his late father Stewart, the Kirk Minister and artist. Elaine and Lewis have settled well on the isle and have made welcome additions as staff and pupil at the school.

Summer brought more visitors including two National Trust for Scotland work camps to stay and learn a bit about island life. There isn't the same quantity of croft work for the teams to help

with as in previous generations but they always seem to enjoy their stay and friendships are inevitably formed.

The Fair Isle Community Hall launched a successful fundraising drive to replace the old faulty heating system. Various events had to be cancelled over winter as the heating either did not work or it filled the hall with fumes, neither being a good option! After auctions, concerts and sales, along with help from external funding bodies, the money was raised and the community were able to use the hall in comfort once more. It is an essential hub for the school and wider community, also welcoming ever-increasing numbers of cruise ship visitors each summer. One of the fundraisers was a superb concert by Haltadans, a modern traditional folk group from Shetland featuring Fair Isle's Ewen Thomson. The concert was well hosted by the Bird Observatory and attendees were treated to a fantastic evening. Our museum, the George Waterston Memorial Centre, also had some necessary improvements in 2018, with the old rotten windows being replaced. The museum is always popular with visitors and keeping the building and artefacts safe from the elements is no mean feat.

There was a golden wedding anniversary in July, when Anne and Barry Sinclair of Busta celebrated 50 years of marriage - certainly a milestone worth celebrating! A good number of cruise ships visited the isle in the summer. We appear to be a very popular stopping point and with more ships booking each year, the visits are becoming a big contributor to our local economy, boosting knitwear and art sales as well as providing income for the hall and for those involved in guiding and ferrying the visitors about. We were visited by the very exclusive ship *The World* in September, not a cruise ship but rather a collection of luxury apartments. The shareholders decide where in the world to visit and Fair Isle was chosen for part of their tour.

Another pair of friends left for pastures new in the autumn, with Angie and Brian Smith moving south to be nearer their growing grandchildren. We hear they are enjoying their new lives on the mainland and wish them well.

October brought the much-anticipated opening of our new power system. The three new turbines, Lukki Minni, Grotti Finni and Tushi were named after three of our local *guidfiks* (trows) by the school children. Accompanied by the solar panels and new generators and batteries, they started providing power very successfully, hugely reducing the need for diesel. The project was completed on schedule and on budget - a rare occurrence in this type of project. A large party of guests and local politicians were expected for the official opening, but October gales meant that the dignitaries had to cancel their trip and rather aptly the schoolchildren were asked to cut the ribbons. How appropriate to have our youngsters, the symbols of our future, marking the opening. Journalists had come beforehand to film and record so Fair Isle was still featured on the national news that day. People wondered how we could possibly survive without 24-hour electricity, and to be honest, now that I am used to being able to use central heating on a cold winter's night, I wonder myself!

Our island future has certainly had a boost, knowing that there will be enough electricity for the new homes that we hope will materialise soon, but the project itself also brought two good men, who came to work for a few months, and found fine reasons to stay. Andrew Davidson along with our own Amy, have made themselves a super home at the recently vacated Upper Stoneybrake. Fair Isle's cars will all be in very good hands in his garage! They are a hard-working and capable pair who are already busy with various essential jobs. Also staying on here after the work was finished was Thomas Fisher, who has joined the crew of the Good Shepherd as a much-needed relief member along with other work too. He and Marie, who came three years ago to learn the intricacies of Fair Isle knitwear, now call Taft their home. It is a splendid new era for the house where Queen Elizabeth had her tea all those years ago. I wonder what she would make of us all now, 60 years after her visit. We have a much-improved standard of living but not everything is simple and easy. However, as a community we are good at staying positive and looking forward, not back. Long may that continue.

## STEWART BLACK THOMSON 1924–2018

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### Anne Sinclair

How does one distil an incredible lifetime into a few paragraphs?

Born in a traditional croft house in Unst, Stewart's father and uncle were both woodworkers, inventors and fiddle players, his mother was a crofter and singer; and so, the stage was set. His early years were spent learning crofting skills, animal husbandry, woodwork, engineering and the traditional fiddle tunes of the islands. Becoming a lightkeeper was following a family

tradition - his brother was in the lighthouse service, as were several uncles and cousins on his mother's side of the family. Posted to Fair Isle after the bombing of the South Light in 1941, he stole the heart of Annie Wilson of Springfield. They married in March 1944 at Lerwick Methodist Church. Theirs was a lovely romantic story that lasted a lifetime. There followed postings to Ruvaal (Islay), Buchaness (Peterhead) and Auskerry (Orkney) but when Fair Isle was threatened with evacuation in 1956, Stewart resigned from the lighthouse service and in April 1957 the family, now five of us (Stewart, Annie, myself and younger brothers Stewart and Neil), came back to Fair Isle, initially to Springfield, Annie's family home. We moved to Shirva croft in 1959 and Stewart took over as postmaster, a job which included running of the telephone exchange and sending of daily weather reports to Kirkwall Meteorological Office. He was also the National Trust for Scotland's Ground Officer for many years.

Stewart received the British Empire Medal in 1984 for services to his community. Stewart and Annie retired in 1989, after 30 years of running the Post Office at Shirva.

From 1960, when International Voluntary Service camps started coming to the Isle, to 1985 when he took a backseat, Stewart was responsible for the welfare of the participants and for finding jobs for them. Not always easy as numbers escalated since many of the young volunteers who arrived from all over the world were reluctant to leave. I was a very lucky teenager. Thanks to Dad (and Mum) and the work they did in running the groups, I spent my summers with an international, ever-changing group of young people. Working at block making and house building as well as the usual croft work (I do remember a particularly death-defying machine, the stone crusher, which Dad nursed along until we had enough blocks made every year. Miraculously, we all survived it).



Plate 14. Stewart Thomson, aged 19, in the uniform of the Northern Lighthouse Board.



Plate 15. Stewart Thomson with Susannah and Freyja Parnaby, Obs, 4th July 2013. © David Parnaby

His skills as a handyman and inventor, with wood or metal, are legendary. "Stewart will fix it" became the byword when breakages occurred or engines failed. The Shirva garage and workshop eventually held a collection of components destined to be recycled, adapted or reformed into essential parts of often completely different objects. If a specialised tool was required for completion of this miracle, Stewart would make that too! It never mattered whether the item in question was vital to the Isle's economy or a much-loved toy; all were treated with the same care and consideration.

Work was put aside when there was any chance of a tune. He had a deep love of music of all kinds and encouraged generations of us to take up an instrument and enjoy the bonds that making music together create. Beginners were treated with the same courtesy, kindness and enthusiasm as the many professional musicians who visited to have a session with him, and all our repertoires were enriched.

In 1985, he created his first Shetland spinning wheel and taught himself to spin. Thirty years later, his hand-crafted spinning wheels are in use all over the world. Shirva had a constant stream of visitors of all nationalities who came to learn how to spin fine yarn. He was, as always, happy to spend time, teach and share ideas with all who were interested and was especially delighted when his grand-daughters and great grand-daughters began spinning their own yarn (and, in a couple of cases, made their own spinning wheels) under his guidance.

He was first and foremost a family man. He loved us all very deeply and was deeply loved in return, but he had a place in his heart for all humanity and cared greatly for Fair Isle and its future. He became Daddad to all who knew him after his first grandchild was born. In the many tributes paid to him, the same themes are repeated - his kindness, his patience, his gentleness, his resilience, his humour, his sense of right, his warmth and understanding. He was someone who will always hold a special place in the hearts of all who knew him.

# ORNITHOLOGICAL MONTHLY SUMMARY

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David Parnaby



Plate 16. Black Holm in a storm, 14th January 2018. © David Parnaby

## January

Species Recorded: **61**  
Year List at end of month: **61**  
Birds Ringed: **0**  
Species Ringed: **0**

There were just 35 species recorded on the first day of the year, although this may have reflected observer effort somewhat! There was a selection of unseasonal birds present at the start of the year though, headlined by Fair Isle's first overwintering Blue Tits (one at the Obs and two in the south), whilst other unusual winterers included Whooper Swan, Great Northern Diver (which remained until 18th, but was thought to have probably perished after this date, despite seemingly catching a good supply of flatfish and crabs), Slavonian Grebe (seen on 4th, but presumably the bird seen twice in December 2017), Common Scoter, Long-tailed Duck and three Carrion Crows. There were also eight Pink-footed Geese, two Oystercatchers, a Jack Snipe, three 'Mealy Redpolls', a couple of Lapwings, probably half a dozen Water Rails and at least four individual Glaucous Gulls noted (with at least six in the following week). There was also some movement, with a small arrival of Fieldfares on 1st, Greylag Geese increasing to 288 on 4th and a Tufted Duck on 6th. Strong south-easterlies in the following week caused the flat lights and television to sway on 14th, with snow falling on 16th and a few birds to be brought in, including five 'European White-fronted Geese' on 14th, increasing to seven the following day, Goldeneye (singles on 7th and 10th), Goosander (12th),



Woodcock (16th), 15 Snow Buntings (7th) and a small increase in Lapwings and Fieldfares on 15th. The most unusual arrival though was a small bat, thought to most likely be a Nathusius's Pipistrelle, found at Busta on 10th. Lingering ice saw no flights for over a week, as cold weather and some south-easterly winds took hold, although changes in the birds were minimal, with the first Meadow Pipit (20th), a handful of Woodcocks and a Jack Snipe, and Common Guillemots returning to the cliffs by 18th. The year list started to pick up the pace towards the end of the month, with the first Iceland Gull unfortunately found dead on 23rd, although a live one was present on 24th (when there were also four Glaucous Gulls), with other annual debuts coming from Red-breasted Merganser (24th), Cormorant (25th) and Grey Heron (26th), whilst the same period saw an increase in Fieldfare (84), Lapwing (18) and Twite (58).

With minimal coverage for most of the month and generally unpleasant weather that saw several periods of transport disruption, there was little of note for most of the month. The first Ringed Plover was back on the Isle on 3rd, on which date the first 'Fair Isle Wren' song of the year was heard. There was a general build up in wader numbers and some of the seabirds started appearing more regularly (with Gannets first noted back on their ledges on Sheep Rock on 10th). A little more movement was apparent towards the end of the month, with two 'blue' Fulmars and a minimum of 153 Fieldfares on 20th, Peregrine from 21st, a new Whooper Swan joining the lingering bird from 22nd (and both going on to put in a long stay) and the first Chaffinch of the year from 26th.

## February

Species Recorded: **55**

Year List at end of month: **65**

Birds Ringed: **2**

Species Ringed: **2**



Plate 17. Snipe, Quoy, 28th February 2018. © David Parnaby



Plate 18. Hawfinch, Obs, 31th March 2018. © David Parnaby

## March

Species Recorded: **83**  
Year List at end of month: **90**  
Birds Ringed: **100**  
Species Ringed: **13**

March opened bitterly cold and with snow, which seemed to clear out a lot of birds from the island, with little new arriving, although Snipe became more obvious as they sought out unfrozen areas along roadside verges, along with a couple of Jack Snipes and Woodcocks. An easterly airflow towards the end of the first week brought Stock Dove and Mistle Thrush on 7th and two Stonechats the following day, all classic early migrants. The cold period appeared to spell the end for one of the Blue Tits, with only two seen in early March, whilst a scatter of Glaucous Gulls was still present and another dead Iceland Gull was found on 13th. The temperature improved slightly the following week, with the easterly wind continuing and a couple more Stonechats and Mistle Thrushes arrive, along with a decent fall of thrushes on 12th/13th, with the first Woodpigeon of the year on 11th and the first sighting of Razorbill on 13th, on which date the first frog spawn of the year was seen. There was an Iceland Gull on 14th, with two the following day (when there were also three Glaucous Gulls) as winds building to severe gale force nine south-easterly on 15th brought more birds including the first Lesser Black-backed Gull (14th) and two Pied Wagtails (15th) of the year, along with Tufted Duck, Common Scoter, six Woodcocks, seven

Mistle Thrushes and two Stonechats. Razorbills returned *en masse* on 18th, when there were also 16 Song Thrushes, with a small surge of migrants around this time bringing several additions to the year list: Dunnock (17th), Reed Bunting (18th), Black Redstart (20th), Rook, Grey Wagtail and Siskin (all 21st) and Linnet (25th). Another south-easterly gale brought difficult birding conditions with heavy rain on 28th although there were still the first Shelduck and Short-eared Owl of the year, along with two Iceland Gulls. Spring migration started in earnest on 29th when Sparrowhawk, Greenfinch, Brambling and Hawfinch all arrived for the first time in 2018, which made the arrival of the assistant wardens the following day rather timely. The cold easterly wind and snow showers did bring a Chiffchaff, but things changed somewhat for the last day of the month. Warm weather (no need for fleeces, in complete contrast to the previous day) saw the first complete census of the year and a clear arrival of birds. Some particularly impressive counts included 49 Woodcocks, six Chiffchaffs, 894 Blackbirds, 170 Fieldfares, 303 Redwings, 81 Song Thrushes, five Mistle Thrushes and 268 Robins along with the first Great Skua and Wheatear of the year - a great start to the season!

The assistant wardens had arrived at a busy time, with David Roche really being thrown in at the deep end for his first season as fields, geos and notebooks were full of thrushes. The 1st saw snow, sunshine, blizzards and warmth in a classic day of mixed Shetland weather. Thrush counts increased, with 934 Blackbirds, 461 Redwings, 194 Fieldfares, 116 Song Thrushes and six Mistle Thrushes and the first Moorhen of the year was seen. The seabirds were showing signs of the forthcoming breeding season, with Kittiwakes back on the cliffs and lots of auks offshore through the day, with the first Puffin of the year seen from the Obs in the evening. With a cool north-easterly breeze on 2nd there was a similar set of birds, along with two Stonechats and the first Yellowhammer of the year. The wind increased from the same direction on 3rd bringing frequent wintry showers and although Song Thrushes increased to 138 and Mistle Thrushes to 13 there were not many new birds, although 160 Purple Sandpipers was an impressive spring count. The wind eased on 4th and thrushes increased again, with counts including 1,057 Blackbirds, 181 Song Thrushes and 15 Mistle Thrushes, along with two Stonechats and five Grey Wagtails. The wind went to the west on 5th although it still brought some bitter snow showers, so Fair Isle's earliest-ever Dotterel was a surprise. A south-east breeze on 6th delivered the first five Goldcrests of the year, Mistle Thrushes increased to 16 and there was the first large arrival of Puffins. The wind remained similar for the morning of 7th and migrants included the first Sand Martin and Willow Warbler of the year, along with 'Mealy Redpoll' and an increase in some common

## April

Species Recorded: **118**  
Year List at end of month: **124**  
Birds Ringed: **463**  
Species Ringed: **32**



Plate 19. Dotterel, South Green, 5th April 2018. © Richard Cope



Plate 20. 'Black-bellied Dipper', Gully, 11th April 2018. © Richard Cope

migrants, but the highlight was found by Freyja in the afternoon, when a 'Black-bellied Dipper' landed next to her as she was sunbathing on the old slip in the North Haven (her description of a bird "brown on top, with a white tummy, about as big as three Robins" was a reasonable summary for a five-year old!). A light north-east wind on 8th brought the first Ring Ouzel of the year, with a freshening wind on 9th bringing a new Hawfinch, Rook, Iceland Gull and an increase of a few common migrants, whilst the Dipper was relocated in the Vaadal, and it lingered around there and the Gully until 19th. A light south-east wind on 10th saw perfect conditions for a Tystie count and also for diurnal passage, with counts including 102 Oystercatchers, 23 Golden Plovers, 54 Redshanks and 737 Meadow Pipits. The remarkable run of easterly-based winds continued on 11th with more south-easterlies, with another Hawfinch arriving, along with the first Green Sandpiper, Long-eared Owl, Swallow and Blackcap of the year. The conditions remained the same on 12th with Grasshopper Warbler and Kestrel arriving for the first time, along with a Stock Dove. The wind became more easterly during 13th and brought a second 'Black-bellied Dipper', another Hawfinch, the first Knots and Lesser Whitethroats of the year (the latter a record earliest arrival date), along with increases in several other species including 45 Chiffchaffs and 22 Ring Ouzels. Thick fog

hampered birding on 14th, with the first Tree Pipit of the year the only arrival of note. Fog cleared during the morning of 15th with a light south-easterly increasing from the east providing perfect conditions for a fall. Counts included 82 Woodcocks, five Short-eared Owls, 56 Chiffchaffs, 15 Goldcrests, 16 Ring Ouzels, 1,115 Blackbirds, 234 Fieldfares, 282 Redwings, 16 Mistle Thrushes, 235 Robins, four Black Redstarts, 39 Wheatears, 63 Dunnocks, 17 Chaffinches, 138 Bramblings, six Reed Buntings as well as the first Lapland Bunting of the year - quite a day! Stronger winds made birding conditions more difficult on 16th, with Long-eared Owl and an increase in Fieldfares to 280 noted. A strong south-south-easterly and heavy rain for most of the morning spoiled 17th although there was a new Hawfinch, the first Goldfinch of the year and a Finnish-ringed Siskin. There had been a large clear out on 18th, although new birds included another Hawfinch, Iceland Gull, the first Collared Dove and Crossbill of the year and three Moorhens. A light south-west wind on 19th saw the first Lesser Redpoll of the year, two Lesser Whitethroats and 87 Wheatears. Similar conditions on 20th saw the first Arctic Skua of the year arrive, with a few common migrants although nothing especially dramatic, whilst Blackbirds heading north out to sea in the evening was a sign of the changing times. The first Whimbrel of the year and a very early Whinchat were amongst the new birds on 21st, a flyover Iceland Gull was wearing a darvic ring, but sadly couldn't be tracked down, whilst a Slavonian Grebe in Swarzie Geo provided a splash of colour amongst the 199 Black Guillemots counted in the early morning survey. A showery day on 22nd that started with south-easterly winds was spoiled by fog, although the first Sedge Warbler, *flava* wagtail and Black-tailed Godwit of the year were seen and Lesser Whitethroats increased to five and a different adult Iceland Gull was seen. A strong south-west wind halted planes on 23rd, but was good for getting a few practical jobs done (the Oysterplant fence was put up and the Skadan crop strip fencing was replaced), with the best bird of the day being the 'Pale-bellied Brent Goose' on Meoness. With a moderate south-westerly wind and showery conditions continuing, trap repairs took up most of the 24th, although a 'Blue-headed Wagtail' was found and a British-ringed Reed Bunting and Lesser Redpoll were both trapped. Similar weather on 25th saw a scattering of birds, although no outstanding highlights, but four Killer Whales and a Minke Whale were popular distractions and the first Common Sandpiper of the year was seen. A Hen Harrier was new for the year on 26th and the wind then went into the north-west for the rest of the month with new birds for the year involving Greenshank, Pintail (both 28th), whilst other highlights were Hawfinch and Barnacle Goose (28th), nine Pink-footed Geese (30th) and a remarkable three Blue Tits on 30th (the wintering birds were last seen on 13th), with six Killer Whales (28th) and Minke Whale and Harbour Porpoise (30th).



Plate 21. Iceland Gull, South Harbour, 22nd April 2018, © David Parnaby

# May

Species Recorded: **143**  
Year List at end of month: **162**  
Birds Ringed: **219**  
Species Ringed: **39**



Plate 22. Pied Flycatcher, Mast, 13th April 2018, © Richard Cope

With light south-easterly winds to open the month there was certainly promise of birds, with a flock of Tree Sparrows building throughout the day to a peak of seven the main highlight. South-west winds returned on 2nd when Pintail and 23 Carrion Crows were noted. With similar conditions on 3rd, a pre-breakfast Red-rumped Swallow was a real surprise, especially given the relative lack of other hirundines present (none at all had been seen the previous day and only five Swallows arrived on 3rd). A wet start on 4th didn't deter a few common migrants, with the first Sanderling of the year, a Stock Dove and two 'blue' Fulmars amongst the more uncommon sightings. As the wind became more south-easterly on 5th, the first House Martins and Whitethroats of the year arrived, along with Short-eared Owl, Lesser Whitethroat, 139 Wheatears, 'Blue-headed Wagtail' and Yellowhammer. A Marsh Harrier was another pre-breakfast find on 6th when Wheatears increased to 254 and the first Arctic Tern of the year was on Bunes. With the wind remaining in the north-east on 7th there were three Dotterels and a Pintail, with Grasshopper Warbler and Yellow Wagtail new on the 8th. The steady trickle of common migrants in a south-south-easterly wind continued on 9th with Cuckoo, Garden Warbler and Redstart all added to the year list and Collared Doves increasing to a high count of ten. With the wind calming on 10th, the three Dotterel were relocated on Ward Hill, the first Bluethroat and Manx Shearwater of the year and a new Hawfinch were found amongst a good spread of common migrants, whilst the first Bonxie egg of the year was found on Vaasetter. Despite the promising south-east wind on 11th, new birds were limited, with a Quail the highlight. Similar conditions on 12th brought just a scatter of new birds, although a Long-tailed Skua was seen from a survey vessel in Fair Isle waters. A moderate easterly on 13th finally brought a decent (although not massive) fall and, although a nightingale species evaded identification, the highlights were eight Bluethroats, Red-backed Shrike, 41 Swallows, 16 Willow Warblers, 43 Chiffchaffs, seven Sedge Warblers, Grasshopper Warbler, 14 Blackcaps, seven Lesser Whitethroats, nine Whitethroats, three Pied Flycatchers, four Black Redstarts and six Tree Pipits, whilst Reed Warbler and Spotted Flycatchers were the first of the year as were the 36 Silver Y moths. Things got even better on 14th, when a calm day with a light south-westerly then south-easterly breeze delivered Red-necked Phalarope, Hawfinch, 'Grey-headed Wagtail' and Wood Sandpiper, whilst increasing counts included two Red-backed Shrikes, six Dotterels, five Sand Martins, 64 Swallows, 26 Willow Warblers and 73 Chiffchaffs (including one *tristis* bird), 13 Whitethroats and ten Tree Pipits. News of late evening Marmora's Warbler and Black-faced Bunting on Unst inspired one final push to find a rarity to top Fair Isle's haul, and it was Keith Pellow who struck gold, finding a fantastic Crag Martin hawking around the cliffs of Bunes in the North Haven

harbour. The light south-east wind continued on 15th but it was an American vagrant that stole the headlines, with Richard Cope finding a Song Sparrow that was caught on morning trap round. Two charter planes (and five visitors who twitched on scheduled transport) arrived for the sparrow (and lingering Crag Martin), with a Quail, a second Red-necked Phalarope and the first Jackdaw since 2016 also being seen. A north-west wind on 16th saw a much quieter day for new arrivals although two decent year ticks involved a rare spring occurrence of Curlew Sandpiper (the first in any season since 2011) and a Buzzard. The two megas remained and attracted more visitors from Shetland and another charter plane. The charter had problems on landing that resulted in part of the undercarriage collapsing, although thankfully everyone on board was fine (by the time the nurse arrived to check on the passengers, they were already at the Obs getting a lifer!), but the plane was sufficiently badly damaged that it had to have a protracted stay on the airstrip. The wind was still in the south-west on 17th and the Song Sparrow attracted another charter plane and another visitor from Shetland, whilst an Icterine Warbler was new for the year and another Stock Dove was found. A spring-like day on 18th saw a number of migrant



Plate 23. Pintail (with Mallard), Da Water, 13th May 2018. © David Parnaby

warblers singing and the first mass arrival of displaying Arctic Skuas, a Red-breasted Flycatcher, two Red-backed Shrikes and Long-eared Owl amongst the new arrivals. The Song Sparrow attracted a final charter plane, Shetland twitchers and some very happy birders who arrived for the first day of their holidays just as it started wandering around the trapping area before apparently continuing its journey off the island. New arrivals the following day included a Corn Bunting at Field, the first Marsh Warbler of the year, another Red-backed Shrike, 'Blue-headed Wagtail' and Greenshank. Southerlies on 20th brought a new Bluethroat, whilst fog then rain spoilt the birding on 21st, when the Corn Bunting was relocated at Leogh where it lingered for a week (and was often singing) and the first Swifts of the year were seen. A light north-east wind on 22nd brought a brief Subalpine Warbler, with light variable winds on 23rd delivering Osprey, a new Icterine Warbler, Red-backed Shrike, Marsh Warbler and Cuckoo. Another foggy day on 24th saw few new arrivals, with similar conditions on 25th also stopping planes, although a Red-backed Shrike was new and two Icterine Warblers were at Schoolton. The north-east wind on 26th finally cleared the fog in the afternoon when a Common Rosefinch was seen, along with a second Red-backed Shrike. A warm and pleasant 27th with a light north-easterly, becoming easterly as the day went on, brought a Blyth's Reed and Marsh Warblers, an increase in Common Rosefinches to three along with singles of Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese. Light easterlies and foggy patches on 28th saw Red-backed Shrikes increase to eight and Icterine Warblers to two, two Bluethroats, a new Marsh Warbler, two Shovelers (the first of the year), 11 each of Willow and Garden Warblers, nine Lesser Whitethroats and 17 Spotted Flycatchers. Other wildlife was also well represented with six Killer Whales and an arrival of at least 40 Silver Y and 30 Diamond-back moths. Fog dominated again on 29th, although most migrants had cleared out, but things improved considerably with a light north-east wind on 30th. The highlights were the two Thrush Nightingales trapped in the Plantation five hours apart, whilst there were also five Red-backed Shrikes, three Marsh Warblers, two Bluethroats, an Icterine Warbler, four Goosanders and a large arrival of moths, including a Hummingbird Hawk-moth. Many of the highlights remained on 31st when the north-east wind went easterly and a number of new birds were also found, and the month ended with a roll call on the final day of Rose-coloured Starling, Hobby, two Thrush Nightingales, seven Marsh Warblers, six Icterine Warblers, five Red-backed Shrikes, three Bluethroats, Sparrowhawk, Cuckoo, Short-eared Owl, 23 Willow Warblers, 18 Garden Warblers, nine Pied Flycatchers, Black Redstart, 'Blue-headed Wagtail', ten Painted Ladies, seven Red Admirals, two Hummingbird Hawk-moths, 365 Silver Ys and at least 57 Diamond-back Moths.



Plates 24–26 (top to bottom). Red-backed Shrike, Mast, 28th May 2018. © Richard Cope. Marsh Warblers, Pund, 31st May 2018. © Ian Andrews. Bluethroat, Setter, 1st June 2018. © Ian Andrews





Plate 27. Black Kite (right) with Arctic Skua, Airstrip, 11th June 2018. © David Parnaby

The new month got off to a good start when a female 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' was found at Lower Stoneybrek (it would go on to linger until the end of July) during a light south-west wind and fog. Similar conditions on 2nd saw the Rose-coloured Starling on Lerness joined by another, with Wood Sandpiper and Cuckoo amongst the other migrants found. Although the wind switched to the north-west on 3rd, fog continued to put a lot of the seabird work on hold, but a Rose-coloured Starling trapped at the Plantation was a nice consolation and a Water Rail was a late record. Fog lifted on 4th, with a light north-easterly wind bringing a Hobby, an increase in Marsh Warblers to three, Quail, two Black-tailed Godwits and the confirmation that there were three Rose-coloured Starlings on the island. Signs of the advancing breeding season included the first Shag and Great Black-backed Gull chicks and the first fledged Starlings. There were still a good number of scarcities in a fresh north-east wind on 5th, with a singing Cuckoo and a Grey Wagtail being new migrants. Although the swell was too much for the *Good Shepherd IV* to sail, the Obs boat was able to make the sheltered crossing to Green Holm where the first couple of tiny Puffin chicks were found in what would turn out to be a very good breeding season for this species. The 6th saw a few new common migrants and the first fledged Skylarks, House Sparrows and Rock Pipits. The 7th saw light north-east winds for Susannah's big day and an unexpected birthday bonus arrived in the form of a Black Kite (which arrived via North Ronaldsay, having spent the winter on Orkney), along with Marsh Harrier and a late Woodcock. Continuing light north-easterlies over the next few days saw the Black Kite lingering (until 12th) and a few migrants, including the first Common Tern of the year on 11th. An increasing south-westerly wind on 13th brought some rain later on (the first in a while), along with a Canada Goose, seven Crossbills and the first Eider ducklings. There were two Canada Geese the following day, whilst a seawatch from South Light saw

## June

Species Recorded: **117**

Year List at end of month: **169**

Birds Ringed: **293**

Species Ringed: **33**

two Storm Petrels and 13 Manx Shearwaters (the start of regular sightings of small numbers of this species over the following week). After strong south-west winds on 15th, a pleasant day on 16th saw light south-easterlies and that brought the last big rarity of the spring, with Scotland's tenth Serin at North Light, where Black Redstart and Crossbill were also found. There were three Crossbills the following day, although hopes that they were the vanguard of an invasion turned out to be unfulfilled as there were no more records during the month. The same day saw a Hobby, a typical late spring migrant, along with a large arrival of Silver Y moths. A Marsh Harrier on 18th, Canada Goose and Tufted Duck on 20th and Kestrel and Short-eared Owl on 21st were all new arrivals. As the month progressed, the breeding birds began to dominate, with the first Arctic Skua and Oystercatcher chicks on 22nd and first Arctic Tern chicks the following day, with a mass hatching of Common Guillemots noted on 24th. The 24th also saw the surprise appearance of a female Pintail with seven ducklings on Da Water, the first breeding record of the species for Fair Isle, although the presence of a hybrid Mallard x Pintail later in the season suggested that the breeding record was not of a pure pair. A Long-tailed Skua drifted down the Isle on 25th, with Great Northern Diver (26th), a Red-backed Shrike, singing Sedge Warbler and first Purple Sandpiper of the autumn (27th), Pomarine Skua from the Good Shepherd and Bar-tailed Godwit (30th) bringing to an end an interesting month.

## July

Species Recorded: **102**  
Year List at end of month: **175**  
Birds Ringed: **1062**  
Species Ringed: **30**

July opened with a breezy south-easterly wind, although it was still sunny and warm and an arrival of several hundred Silver Y moths was noted. Although the wind had switched to the south-west the following day, the Silver Y invasion was still very much in evidence, but a Rustic Bunting at the Wirvie was unexpected. The first Razorbills to fledge during a very successful season for the species had left their nests by 3rd and the month continued with seabird work dominating and a variety of insects was noted, with avian migration having largely slowed down, although a Black-tailed Godwit arrived on 8th. A 'Pale-bellied Brent Goose' on 10th was unusual, but more expected were the 181 Storm Petrels trapped overnight, with 216 the following day, when a Leach's Petrel was also seen. A Sooty Shearwater from the NorthLink ferry on 13th was the first of the year, whilst a Stonechat the same day was much more unusual. A Knot on 14th began autumn passage for that species and the following day there were unseasonal Woodcock and Black Redstart, whilst Green Sandpiper, Woodpigeon, Sand Martin, Blackbird and Siskin all appeared for the first time in the month on 16th. Light, drifty winds on 21st saw flocks of Common Gulls, Curlews and Redshanks amongst the birds moving south, with a Honey-buzzard passing low over the Obs, the first Ruff of the year, on Da Water, and another unseasonable Stonechat. An escaped

Saker seen on 22nd was apparently one of two on the Isle (according to signals from the birds' satellite tags); magnificent birds no doubt but an unnecessary threat to the breeding seabirds as one was seen stooping at Puffins and chasing Arctic Terns over Bunes. Waders on the move during fresh southerlies on 25th including 64 Purple Sandpipers, with a Black-tailed Godwit the following day. Fresh south-easterlies with heavy rain at first on 27th brought an early autumnal batch of birds, including the first autumn warbler - a juvenile Willow trapped in the Plantation. It was shortly followed by the second warbler of the autumn with an adult Icterine at the Obs! Other sightings included Greenshank, Ruff, Shelduck and Kestrel. The 28th saw the first fledged Great Skuas and a juvenile Cuckoo present. South-easterly gales on 29th brought more, much-needed, rain after a very dry summer, with good wader counts including 13 Knots, 57 Sanderlings and 82 Purple Sandpipers along with a Common and two Green Sandpipers and Greenshank. There were also two Pied Flycatchers, which were amongst the earliest-ever autumn records for Fair Isle. The 30th brought Wood Sandpiper, three Ruffs, Common Tern, Garden Warbler, at least 808 Common Gulls (with probably more moving south during the day) and insects including Peacock and Hummingbird Hawk-moth. Another interesting month finished with the first Spotted Redshank since 2015, a Shoveler and the only surviving Arctic Skua chick taking to the wing over Taing.



Plate 28. Black Redstart, North Haven, 15th July 2018. © Max Hellicar

## August

Species Recorded: **109**

Year List at end of month: **182**

Birds Ringed: **945**

Species Ringed: **28**

Two Mute Swans heading south over the Isle on 1st were seen independently by the Warden's dad and mum over Bunes then Setter respectively before Kenny Stout saw them departing from Meoness. A Hummingbird Hawk-moth at Lower Stoneybrek began a series of sightings across the Isle in a good year for this migrant moth. Common Rosefinch, Marsh and Reed Warbler and 23 Swifts arrived in light south-west winds on 3rd, with the first Wood Warbler at the Obs on 4th. Four Black-tailed Godwits passed south on 5th and the first Kittiwake chick fledged on 6th. A Lesser Whitethroat was the pick of a few migrants on 8th, although the Minke Whale feeding off Bunes was more popular and an escaped Gyr Falcon that flew through was unexpected. An adult Rose-coloured Starling on 9th continued a good year for the species. South-westerly winds continued, although a very few migrants were getting through and they included Icterine Warbler on 11th. With the wind in the north-east on 12th the first Grasshopper Warbler and Whinchat of the autumn arrived. The 13th saw the first proper easterlies of the month and brought Barred, Marsh and Wood Warbler, two Black Redstarts and 26 Willow Warblers, although continued south-easterlies on 14th failed to deliver more migrants. Although the wind had moved to



Plate 29. Wood Warbler, Kiln o' Skroo, 13th August 2018. © Richard Cope

the south-west, an Arctic Warbler was found in the Gully on 16th but there were few other migrants in stronger south-westerly winds in the following days. Another Barred Warbler made it through on 19th, a Common Rosefinch on 21st was on the move the same day as 887 Meadow Pipits and a second Barred Warbler was seen on 22nd, with three present on 23rd. The westerly winds kept up, which brought lots of Meadow Pipits, peaking at 1,030 on 24th, but only a few other migrants as autumn struggled to get going. The winds finally got round to just east of south on 26th and by 27th a freshening north-easterly finally saw a bit of a fall, with Marsh Warbler, four Barred Warblers, Common Rosefinch and the first Tree Pipit of the autumn the highlights, although there were no big numbers of any of the common migrants. A second Marsh Warbler was present on 28th and with the wind in the south on 29th there was a single Tree Sparrow and Chaffinch. A quiet day of westerlies followed but on 31st, the wind veered to the south-east and started to freshen and brought almost instant results. Although there were again not huge numbers of migrants, the highlights included Greenish Warbler, Wryneck, Corncrake (all three being additions to the year list), two Icterine Warblers, seven Barred Warblers, three Common Rosefinches and a Lapland Bunting.

Conditions were still somewhat marginal for new migrants, with a mild southerly wind and drizzly rain, but new birds included a smart male Red-breasted Flycatcher (which appeared in the same binocular view as the Greenish Warbler that had relocated down the Isle), Red-backed Shrike, Blackcap and Goldcrest. Light south-easterly winds on 2nd saw Common Rosefinches rise to four amongst a small scatter of migrants and a Pink-barred Sallow in the Obs moth trap was a first for the Isle. Common Rosefinches had risen to at least five the next day and the light north-west winds saw the last Storm Petrel ringing session of the season, with 40 trapped in just 80 minutes from 22:00 hrs. Barred Warblers increased to three on 4th when there was also a Hawfinch, Pied Flycatcher, the first Sparrowhawk of the autumn and a Danish-ringed Lesser Whitethroat. A light south-east wind on 5th brought instant dividends, with Lanceolated Warbler, Arctic Warbler, Icterine Warbler, Corncrake and nine Pied Flycatchers. On 6th, a calm start eventually gave way to a freshening north-east wind and new birds included two Arctic Warblers (remarkably, neither was the worn adult seen the previous day), Fair Isle's earliest-ever Yellow-browed Warbler, Oortolan Bunting, Marsh Warbler, Wryneck, Corncrake, 11 Pied Flycatchers and the first two Redstarts of the autumn, whilst there were also four each of Barred Warblers and Common Rosefinches. The day's highlight for many though was the group of over 60 Long-finned Pilot Whales that moved south past the Isle, with a group of Risso's Dolphins also seen from North Light.

## September

Species Recorded: **137**

Year List at end of month: **190**

Birds Ringed: **428**

Species Ringed: **40**

A freshening easterly wind saw a really good day's birding on 7th, with no less than three Arctic Warblers, two Yellow-browed Warblers, seven Barred Warblers, Marsh Warbler, five Common Rosefinches, two Wrynecks, Hobby, Corncrake (unfortunately a raptor kill), Hen Harrier, Cuckoo, Wood Warbler, Crossbill, six Ruffs, Redwing and Brambling (the latter two both firsts of the autumn). Although the wind had switched to a light westerly on 8th there were still new birds, with the highlight being a Pallid Harrier, whilst other new birds included Blyth's Reed Warbler, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Water Rail and Little Stint, with *Convolvulus* Hawk-moth also worthy of note. A day dominated by rain on 9th saw a few new birds including an early Richard's Pipit, a different Blyth's Reed Warbler, Greenshank, two Jack Snipes and an increase in Yellow-browed Warblers to five. Winds switched to the west on 10th and there was little in the way of new arrivals (although there were still plenty of birds around), which made the Lanceolated Warbler found in the Vaadal on 11th all the more remarkable. There were 81 Pink-footed Geese moving through on 12th, with 440 the following day as strong westerly winds continued, although a Grasshopper Warbler (the first of the month despite the two earlier Lanceolated Warblers!) made it in and Meadow Pipits started increasing notably. Transport was again cancelled on 14th in the strong westerly winds and Meadow Pipits increased to an impressive 2,034 whilst 30 Barnacle Geese were the first of the autumn. As the westerly winds eased slightly on 15th there were planes and a *Good Shepherd IV* sailing at last, meaning the Obs food supplies were topped up! Strong winds on 16th saw little new other than 95 Pink-footed Geese, whilst 17th was similar despite the easing in the wind. With winds easing further on 18th, there was some hope of new birds, although rain for a lot of the day didn't help. Despite that, there were a few arrivals including a Blyth's Reed Warbler, a new Barred Warbler, the first Fieldfare of the autumn, ten Blackcaps and two Spotted Flycatchers, whilst six Risso's Dolphins were the forerunners of a few sightings during the month. There was a race against time to get around census on 19th as heavy rain was due from midday, but with strong (but localised) south-south-east winds becoming south-westerly, new arrivals were limited to two Common Rosefinches, Grey Wagtail and 13 Siskins. The strong winds continued throughout most of 20th, although they eased later and a new Barred Warbler, two Ruffs and a Goldfinch arrived. With strong south-west winds on 21st, an arrival of 482 Skylarks was unexpected, with the first Greylag Geese of the month somewhat more typical. A Shoveler arrived on 22nd in similar conditions and as the north-west wind persisted on 23rd an Oortolan Bunting was a surprise arrival, but an Iceland Gull was perhaps more typical of the conditions (albeit an early record). With calmer south-west winds on 24th there were a few arrivals, with a Richard's Pipit, three Black



Plate 30. Little Stint, Da Water, 8th September 2018. © Steve Holliday



Plate 31. Arctic Warbler, School, 6th September 2018. © David Parnaby

Redstarts, seven Chaffinches and 20 Snow Buntings, whilst Common Rosefinches increased to three, along with a rare run-out for the *Good Shepherd IV* whose timetable had been severely disrupted in September due to the regular bouts of strong wind. The fresh westerly wind continued on through 25th and 26th, with a Corncrake battling against the conditions to arrive on the latter date, when there were also 12 Barnacle Geese and a Common Redpoll (of one of the North-western subspecies, which was the first of a scatter of these recorded until the end of the month). There was still little of note on 27th, but 28th saw some wildfowl movement in a moderate south-west wind, with 85 Greylag and 11 Pink-footed Geese and the first Scaup since 2014, along with two Slavonian Grebes. South-westerly gales and heavy, sometimes persistent showers, meant there was no birthday lifer for the Warden on 29th and the month ended with the wind remaining strong and in the westerly quarter. After a bright start there was no doubt that September had ended disappointingly, with many regular visitors struggling to remember a quieter autumn. The forecast for the first part of October wasn't looking much more promising either, but things had to change eventually, surely...

# October

Species Recorded: **115**  
Year List at end of month: **199**  
Birds Ringed: **660**  
Species Ringed: **39**

Moderate westerlies on 1st brought 16 Whooper Swans and stronger winds on 2nd saw even fewer highlights. A calm start with some south-east winds on 3rd brought some birds at last, including Yellow-browed Warbler, three Garden Warblers, 14 Jack Snipes, Woodpigeon, three Grey Wagtails, 72 'Icelandic Redwings', 41 Snow Buntings and wildfowl passage that included 25 Barnacle and 37 Pink-footed Geese along with a record-breaking 27 Red-breasted Mergansers. The excitement continued on 4th, although it was a small group of Killer Whales before breakfast that were the main highlight as, with winds back in the west, the main avian interest was Tree Pipit, Brambling and the first Goldeneye of the autumn. The first Long-tailed Duck of the autumn, along with ten Whooper Swans, Woodcock, Short-eared Owl and 260 Redwings (all Icelandic birds) were the pick of 5th and light north-west winds on 6th saw the final lamb run of the season for the *Good Shepherd IV* along with 168 Greylag Geese, four Great Northern Divers, Rook and Lesser Redpoll. Heavy rain and winds increasing to a southerly gale put paid to any birding on 7th, but light south-westerlies on 8th saw the first of the autumn caas of the hill sheep, along with some wildfowl passage and a few migrants including the first Reed Bunting of the autumn. It was again *Good Shepherd IV* weather on 9th, so the main excitement revolved around new tumble driers, a freezer and beer supplies for the Obs (whilst the last sheep went off to market), although there was also Yellow-browed Warbler and six Risso's Dolphins. Light south-west winds on 10th brought a brief Richard's Pipit, a second Yellow-browed Warbler, Woodcock,



Plate 32. Woodcock with Blackbird (behind), Dronger, 29th October 2018. © David Parnaby



Crossbill, nine Siskins and ten Goldfinches. The wind finally went into the south-east on 11th, although it was strong and brought quite a lot of rain, but despite the conditions, the birding was reasonable (certainly in comparison to the month so far), with two Yellow-browed Warblers, Sparrowhawk, Moorhen, Short-eared Owl, Ring Ouzel, two Woodcocks and increases in thrushes and a few warblers. The wind stayed a strong south-easterly the following day and brought Hawfinch, Hen Harrier, two Long-eared Owls, five Short-eared Owls, 18 Blackcaps, five Goldcrests, eight Ring Ouzels, 108 Blackbirds, 63 Fieldfares, 1,609 Redwings, 164 Song Thrushes, 28 Robins, Stonechat, 23 Chaffinches, 284 Bramblings and a Yellowhammer. With the wind dropping on 13th, conditions were much more manageable and it was the best day's birding of the month so far, with the outstanding highlight being a White's Thrush that was at Wester Lother then the Mast. Other notable birds were an Olive-backed Pipit and Yellow-browed Warbler, a sudden arrival of 26 Jackdaws, an increase in Blackbird (168) and Song Thrush (191) counts, six Dunnocks and four Yellowhammers, along with a constant southerly passage of Common Gulls. A light north-west wind on 14th seemed to have facilitated a bit of a clear out, with rather few new birds, although 20 Whooper Swans moved south. Moderate south-south-west winds on 15th didn't look especially promising, but they delivered five Yellow-browed Warblers, Spotted Flycatcher, Stonechat, Tree Pipit, two 'Mealy Redpolls', Shelduck and a Hummingbird Hawk-moth along with a small increase in Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps. With the wind increasing and switching to the south-south-east on 16th there was a noticeable arrival of thrushes, with 2,935 Redwings, 365 Fieldfares and 145 Blackbirds, which brought with them two Ring Ouzels, three Long-eared Owls, 29 Robins, two Redstarts and the first Waxwing of the year and a pipit that flew out of Easter Lother that was one of the 'tree pipit' pair. Although moderate south-westerly winds and showers saw a general clear-out of birds on 17th, the Log showed a healthy number of interesting birds, with a remarkable double-act of Mediterranean and Little Gulls feeding next to each other off Kroga Geo. An attempted twitch from the north by the Warden for these two Fair Isle rarities was unsuccessful, but did result in a Shore Lark being found, whilst what seems likely to have been the previous day's pipit flew past South Restengo before finally being pinned down at Johnny's Peats and confirmed as an Olive-backed Pipit. Other highlights were limited to Crossbill, 49 Robins and a passage of 54 Whooper Swans and 172 Greylag Geese. With a light north-west wind, it was perfect weather for arrivals from Iceland, and so it proved with 380 Greylag Geese, 51 Whooper Swans and 2,674 Redwings. The latter included 181 ringed, which was over a quarter of the total birds of all species ringed on Fair Isle this month and more Redwings than had been ringed in 44 of the



Plate 33. Hooded Crows, Rippack, 9th October 2018. © Ian Andrews



Plate 34. Long-eared Owl, North Shirva, 12th October 2018. © Ian Andrews

previous years of Observatory operations on the Isle! Bucking the trend in arrival directions were a Red-breasted Flycatcher and three Rooks. A Tufted Duck on 19th, two Yellow-browed Warblers and a Crossbill on 20th and a Stonechat on 21st were the thin pickings from largely south-westerly or southerly winds and the forecast offered little hope for most of the remaining season. Greylag Geese numbered 242 on 22nd and increased to 584 in strong west-north-west winds on 23rd, when there were also 512 Redwings and a Lapland Bunting. Census was cancelled in poor weather on 24th and, although conditions improved on 25th, movement was largely limited to a few ducks and a Glaucous Gull. It then became cold as the wind switched to northerlies, bringing 562 Greylag Geese, Greenfinch and Goldfinch on 27th. With the wind in the north-east and becoming south-easterly on 28th, it felt like last chance saloon for rescuing the autumn. Things started well with a female 'Northern Bullfinch' trapped in the Vaadal before breakfast. Long-eared Owl and Woodpigeon around the Obs hinted at a few more birds around and census started well, with a few common migrants (totals for the day would go on to include 12 Woodcocks, two Blackcaps, eight Goldcrests, 36 Blackbirds, 31 Robins, 18 Chaffinches and 105 Snow Buntings), and two Slavonian Grebes were found in South Haven. A Bluethroat at Quoy was a tad unexpected and, as Susannah tried to relocate it for a guest, she found a male Siberian Rubythroat! The Rubythroat went on to show well around Midway in lovely sunshine and the memories of weeks of westerly winds were burnt away by the dazzling intensity of its beauty. Two 'Siberian Chiffchaffs' were also located later in the

day, as a long day's birding came to an end with a small, but happy crowd at the Obs. With the wind increasing from the south-east on 29th there were still birds arriving, with Waxwing, 48 'Mealy Redpolls', Lesser Redpoll, 34 Woodcocks and Glaucous Gull the highlights. 'Mealy Redpolls' increased to 58 the following day and brought a 'Coues's Arctic Redpoll' with them and there was also a new 'Northern Bullfinch'. A Yellow Wagtail was a surprise on 31st, whilst two Glaucous Gulls were more expected in a busy day that saw the last guests depart the Obs, the doctor visit for the day to dispense flu vaccinations, the kids going back to school, Halloween guising and a caa of the Hill sheep! The Rubythroat rescued October to some degree, although it was generally agreed to have been one of the worst autumns ever for Fair Isle, with regular westerly winds (that didn't bring so much as a Pectoral Sandpiper from America), very few rare or scarce birds in comparison to most autumns and a lack of most common migrants. Thankfully, autumn's like this are surely only a once in a generation event...

A very wet start to the month saw the domestic team and Ranger head off on the *Good Shepherd IV* and not many birds, whilst light southerlies on 2nd brought a late Wheatear. A Waxwing on 3rd and Little Auk and Iceland Gull on 4th were more expected end of season fare. A southerly becoming south-easterly on 5th also brought rain, whilst the plane 'going tech' meant that the remaining staff were unable to leave and, whilst waiting on news from Tingwall, meant there was only an hour or so to bird before dark, which still revealed Barred Warbler, two 'Siberian Chiffchaffs', Black Redstart, Goldfinch, Ring Ouzel, Grey Wagtail, 13 Woodcocks, four Goldcrests, two Blackcaps, Moorhen and a couple of Glaucous Gulls. Full census during a drizzly south-easterly on 6th saw some reasonable counts including 360 Redwings, 278 Fieldfares, 139 Snow Buntings, 135 Snipes, 99 Blackbirds and 50 Woodcocks. A stronger south-easterly with drizzle on 7th brought two each of Tundra Bean and 'European White-fronted Geese', along with three Short-eared Owls. The plane finally made it on 8th, allowing the assistant wardens and Hannah Bell to leave, with sightings of note including Hen Harrier, two Moorhens, two Long-eared Owls, nine Blackcaps, 389 Fieldfares and Black Redstart. Some strong south-east winds over the next couple of days saw more thrushes around, with Goosander, Kestrel, three Blackcaps and Red-throated Diver arriving on 11th. The last full census of the year on 12th (using visiting ex-staff) produced two Common Scoters, two Chiffchaffs, six Goldcrests, 175 Blackbirds and a new Stonechat. A Sparrowhawk moved south on 13th and things became quieter, although an *Actitis* sandpiper on 16th was frustratingly brief, but would have been a good record if it could have been confirmed as either species. Little Auk, Chaffinch and Goldcrest were new

## November

Species Recorded: **95**

Year List at end of month: **203**

Birds Ringed: **91**

Species Ringed: **19**



Plate 35. Waxwing, Obs, 3rd November 2018. © David Parnaby



Plate 36. 'Northern Bullfinch', Obs, 1st November 2018. © David Parnaby

on 18th, with two Little Auks seen from South Light the following day when there was also Long-eared Owl and Woodpigeon seen coming in off the sea and 17 birds in the traps also suggested some late migration. Long-eared Owls became a feature in the Plantation over the next few days, with three ringed and a Finnish-ringed bird also caught. A Slavonian Grebe in South Harbour on 23rd moved to North Haven a few days later and remained until the end of the month and a dribble of migrants until the end of the month included 'Siberian Chiffchaff', two Yellowhammers, Brambling and Siskin (all 24th) and Black Redstart and Blackcap (25th). The year list also received a late boost with Velvet Scoter (25th–26th) and Coot (from 26th), whilst a Little Auk on 30th rounded off an interesting month.

## December

Species Recorded: **68**  
Year List at end of month: **203**  
Birds Ringed: **0**  
Species Ringed: **0**

Strong south-westerly winds at the start of the month were somewhat unproductive, although a switch to north-west winds on 3rd saw Greylags increase to 253, Pink-footed Geese to four and a 1cy Iceland Gull appear. A Sparrowhawk on 5th–6th was late, seven 'blue' Fulmars passed South Light in 20 minutes on 8th and a Dunnock on 10th was unusual. Two Little Auks passed South Light on 11th, with another skittering past there on 12th then storm force south-easterly winds on 15th brought two Glaucous and an Iceland Gull to Bunes, in what was a generally quiet month for white-winged gulls. The aftermath of 'Storm

Deirdre' on 16th revealed a 'Todd's Canada Goose' (which lingered until 23rd) and three Glaucous Gulls. A 'European White-fronted Goose' on 17th was followed by another on 22nd that arrived with a Tundra Bean Goose, as the wintering Greylag flock proved worthy of regular scrutiny. With south-east winds prevailing for a while, there were a few unseasonable occurrences including Short-eared Owl (20th), Ringed Plover and Dunlin (both 22nd), but more wintry were a Great Northern Diver (from 21st) and two Glaucous Gulls (24th). The Christmas period brought the usual festivities and fun on the Isle, although less of the transport worries often associated with this period as generally mild weather with moderate south-westerly winds and showery conditions meant that few planes were cancelled and the *Good Shepherd IV* was able to bring its cargo of Christmas trees (and other more essential items). A Chaffinch on the cliffs on 27th was somewhat unusual, then a strong westerly wind on the last day of the year brought an adult Iceland Gull and 1cy Glaucous Gull.

The final year list of 203 was somewhat lower than recent years, with a number of expected or regular species not recorded (including Gadwall, Grey Plover, Sandwich Tern, Turtle Dove, Great Grey Shrike, Short-toed Lark, Red-throated Pipit, Citrine Wagtail and Little Bunting). Although the spring produced a couple of big rarities and some spells of good birding, the autumn was generally underwhelming, especially the 'peak' birding time of mid-September to mid-October. A number of common migrants were recorded in low numbers with regular strong westerly winds the culprit (and unfortunately, they failed to bring any consolation in the form of American birds). Such autumns are very rare though, so hopefully 2019 will see a return to exciting arrivals from the east!



Plate 37. 'Todd's Canada Goose' (centre) with Greylag Geese, Meadow Burn, 16th December 2018. © David Parnaby

# SYSTEMATIC LIST 2018

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David Parnaby

## Notes

The species order and taxonomy are taken from the 'British List' published by the BOU in December 2018. Species names are from the BOU 'vernacular name' list.

### Status Categories

Vagrant	ten records or fewer in the past 20 years
Rare	11–40 records in the past 20 years
Scarce	averaging ten records or fewer per annum over the past 20 years
Regular	averaging 11–40 records per annum over the past 20 years
Frequent	averaging 41–500 records per annum over the past 20 years
Common	averaging more than 500 records per annum over the past 20 years

### Breeding Categories

Small numbers	on average, less than 100 pairs per annum
Moderate numbers	on average, 101–1,000 pairs per annum
Large numbers	on average, more than 1,000 pairs per annum

### Abbreviations used in the text

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



Plate 38. Barnacle Geese, Utra, 13th October 2018. © Steve Arlow

## Brent Goose

*Branta bernicla*

*Rare visitor; 52 records of 101 individuals in the FIBO period, 29 records in autumn (September to November), 12 in spring (March to June) and 11 winter records (December to February). There are several pre-FIBO records, although there is some confusion with Barnacle Goose in earlier literature.*

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

*There have been 31 records (of 61 individuals) in the FIBO period; 16 in autumn, eight in spring and seven in winter (there are also nine records of 20 individuals that have not been assigned to subspecies)*

The first spring record of Brent Goose since 2015 involved one on Meoness on 23rd–24th April, whilst a more unusual record was of one that flew over Green Holm on 10th July, the first July record.

## Canada Goose

*Branta canadensis*

*Rare visitor; 33 previous records of 85 individuals, mostly spring (predominantly May and June, with three records in April and singles in March and July), four winter records and one in October. Most thought to be of feral European stock, but one arriving with Pink-footed Geese (October 1997) possibly a transatlantic vagrant (a possible Cackling Goose *B.hutchinsii taverneri* was also seen in May 2001 and isn't included in the above statistics)*

One was on Da Water on 13th June and was presumably one of the two that flew north over the Obs the following day. There was then one on Da Water from 20th to 27th June in a typical year for the species.

### **\*'Todd's Canada Goose'** *B.c.interior*

*Vagrant: no previous records*

After 'Storm Deidre' swept across the United Kingdom, a Canada Goose was found amongst the Greylag Geese along the west end of Meadow Burn on 16th December and remained until 23rd. Its relatively small size, darker tones to the mantle and flanks and build (with a comparatively long neck and long thin bill) all suggested that it was this subspecies, which breeds in Canada and Greenland and winters in the eastern USA. If accepted, it would represent the first confirmed transatlantic vagrant Canada Goose for Fair Isle.

## Barnacle Goose

*Branta leucopsis*

*Frequent autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter*

The only winter record was one on 27th February, whilst spring passage began with four from 28th April that were joined by a fifth on 6th May, with the whole group remaining until 10th May. Singles were noted on 18th and 27th May then five were present on 2nd–5th June, being joined by a sixth on 4th, with one lingering until 9th July (the first ever record for this month). A flock of 30 on 14th September was early and, after 12 on 26th September, sightings were virtually daily from 3rd October. There were a number of days of passage, with higher counts including 25 on 3rd, 82 on 8th, 77 on 12th, 210 on 13th, 60 on 14th, 33 on 18th, and 26 on 19th, with three lingering until 27th October after the latter date, which were 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, 2018.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
288	230	139	122	26	7	1	3	85	584	240	266

Large numbers early in the year peaked on 6th January. Good numbers were still present in February, with March seeing a smaller flock remaining and counts dropped below 100 from 16th April. Up to 26 were present in early May, then single figures from 8th–14th May. There were occasional birds passing through during the summer, but none lingered and none were seen between 2nd July and 9th August. Six on 21st September were the first genuine autumn migrants and 85 on 28th September was the first decent arrival. The main passage took place from 6th October with most moving towards the end of the month, including the year's peak of 584 on 23rd. November counts gradually dropped below 200 but more arrived in December from 3rd, with good numbers remaining until the end of the year.

## Pink-footed Goose

*Anser brachyrhynchus*

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

Eight overwintering birds were present at the start of the year, with the flock dwindling to six and remaining until 27th February. Spring passage involved nine from 30th April to 10th May that were joined by a tenth from 8th, with a late individual on 27th May. Autumn began with daily records from 12th–28th September which included arrivals of 81 on 12th, 440 on 13th (the highest count of the year), 95 on 16th (with 89 the following day) and 80 on 20th. Although sightings were regular in October, counts were generally of lingering single-figure groups, although arrivals included 37 on 3rd, 76 on 8th and 32 on 16th. Two remained throughout November and were joined by two more on 3rd December, with one remaining after this until the end of the year.



Plate 39. Pink-footed Geese and Greylag Geese (behind), Hegri Burn area, 8th October 2018. © Ian Andrews



## Tundra Bean Goose

*Anser serrirostris*

*Rare migrant; ten confirmed records of this species involving at least 144 individuals. Three autumn records (October and November), including large influxes in 2011 and 2014, six winter (January and February) arrivals and one March record. In addition, there are 21 records of unidentified Bean Geese, involving 63 individuals, eight in winter, four in spring (mostly March, but one in June) and seven in autumn (September and October)*

The first arrival of this species since February 2017 saw two located alongside two 'European White-fronted Geese' on 7th November and then lingering around Meadow Burn and Stackhoull until 19th November. Another turned up (also alongside a 'European White-fronted Goose') on 22nd December and remained until the end of the year.

## White-fronted Goose

*Anser albifrons*

*Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter*

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

For the second consecutive year there was a January arrival, with five on 14th increasing to seven the following day. Two on 7th November were the first autumn arrivals since 2016, whilst birds on 21st November, 28th November to 2nd December, 17th and 22nd–31st December were all thought to be new individuals.

## Mute Swan

*Cygnus olor*

*Vagrant; 11 previous records (of 15 individuals), three in December, two in July and October and singles in January, March, April and May*

Two flew south over Bunes on 1st August and were also seen as they passed over Setter before being observed heading south out to sea off Meoness. Although the species is occurring with more regularity on Fair Isle, the timing of records is still somewhat random, with this representing the first record for August.

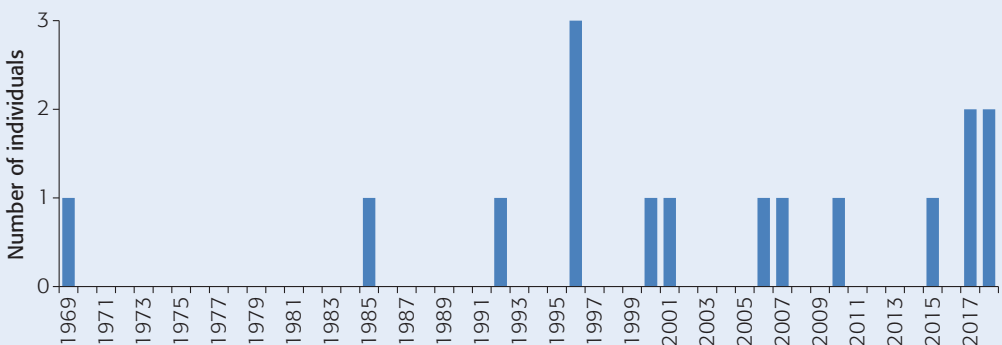


Figure 1. Number of individual Mute Swans seen on Fair Isle by year. In all years, there has been only a single record, although this has sometimes involved more than one individual. Note the increasing frequency of records.



Plate 40. Whooper Swans, Hill Dyke, 1st October 2018. © Ian Andrews

## Whooper Swan

*Cygnus cygnus*

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

The overwintering juvenile was joined by another on 22nd February, with six passing through on 26th March. Both lingering birds remained until 27th June when they were chased by sheep at Burkle and one flew south off South Light! The remaining youngster lingered until 11th September when it was found dead in Hjukni Geo. The first autumn migrant arrived just three days later, but was the only one seen in September. A strong passage in October began with 16 on 1st, with six lingering until 5th when they were joined by four more. Four on 7th increased to seven the following day then 20 arrived on 14th with two more on 16th. An impressive 54 on 17th gathered on South Green, with these later moving south, so the 51 recorded the following day were new arrivals. There were still 46 on 19th, with nine lingering until 26th (with another on six calling through on 22nd), seven until 27th and up to three remaining until 20th November. Two still present after this were joined by two more on 30th November with three (all adults) then lingering until 21st December and one until the end of the year, the fourth consecutive year that overwintering has been attempted.

## Shelduck

*Tadorna tadorna*

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

The earliest record since 2014 involved one on 28th March. A decent autumn saw birds recorded on 27th July, 3rd and 12th–17th August and a late bird lingering from 15th–19th October.

## Shoveler

*Spatula clypeata*

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

After a blank year in 2017, it was a return to a more-expected set of records in 2018; a pair over Hesti Geo on 28th May, one at Utra on 31st July and one lingering from 22nd to 26th September.

## Wigeon

*Mareca penelope*

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

Up to 17 were recorded in the first winter period, with up to 11 in March until the 14th and then none until 16th April when up to three lingered until 4th May. A single on 8th–14th May and three on 6th June were the last of the spring. Summer occurrences involved up to two on Da Water on 2nd–6th July and three off South Light on 16th July. The first of the autumn was on 18th August, with numbers rising in September to a peak of 11. There were almost daily sightings through October, with disappointing peaks of just 32 on 3rd and 33 on 14th. Numbers then dwindled throughout November with only a handful of sightings towards the end of the year and a peak of 15 in December.

## Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*

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

Good numbers were wintering on the Isle, with a peak of 31 in February, before birds dispersed through the spring. The first signs of breeding were predated eggs found in Kirki Mire on 16th April, with the first hatched brood involving 12 ducklings on Da Water on 26th May. Another pair hatched young at Utra, although fledging success was thought to be low. An arrival late in the autumn saw numbers rise to 26 by 28th October and up to 28 were recorded in November, with similar numbers remaining until the end of the year.

## Pintail

*Anas acuta*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

After single females on 28th April and 2nd May and a male on 7th May, a female took up residence from 12th May on Da Water. After being seen daily until 26th May, it reappeared on 7th and 10th June and then surprised everyone by appearing with seven ducklings on 24th. The number of ducklings gradually declined, with just one remaining by 5th July, which was still present on 10th August, when it appeared to be ready to fledge. Pintail has never previously bred on Fair Isle. However, closer views (the bird was also trapped on 2nd September) showed that the youngster had a greenish bill, orangey tones on the legs and a few flecks of green on the head, as well as being slightly larger than would be expected for a pure Pintail; all signs that it was in fact a hybrid between Pintail and Mallard. The hybrid youngster remained on the Isle until at least 16th October and during the autumn, there were also migrant Pintails noted on 14th August (two) and 11th October.

## Teal

*Anas crecca*

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

Up to 12 were recorded from January to March. There were slightly increased numbers in April suggesting spring passage, with a peak of 17 on 15th, after which numbers dwindled with up to four in early June and three seen occasionally throughout the summer, including a female that lingered on Da Water. The first sign of an increase in numbers was noted from mid-August, rising to 24 by the end of the month. Although present daily throughout September, the highest count was just 22 and in October there were under 15, other than 12th–13th when a peak of 30 occurred on the latter date. Generally, only single figures were recorded after mid-November until the end of the year, although there was a peak in December of 11.

## Tufted Duck

*Aythya fuligula*

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

A female on Da Water 6th January was unusual; there were two in January 2016 but the previous January record was back in 1996. A male on Da Water on 15th March was an early migrant and preceded a good spring that again saw birds lingering in potential breeding habitat (although no breeding attempt was thought to have taken place). A male from 27th April until 3rd May was followed by another on 7th, with a pair on 10th May that built to four (three males and a female) on 18th–19th May. Two males then lingered until 28th May, with one being last seen on 4th June as it went over Ward Hill. Sightings of a male on 24th–25th and 29th–30th September were likely to refer to the same bird that was found dead in early October and there were further records on 19th and 26th October.

## Scaup

*Aythya marila*

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

A 1cy off the east of Bunes on 28th September was the first record since autumn 2014. Later that day, it moved into North Haven and then onto the Obs Scrape. It commuted between the latter two sites until 4th October, but was found dead the following day.



Plate 41. Scaup, Obs Scrape, 4th October 2018. © Ian Andrews

## Eider

*Somateria mollissima*

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

A spring count of 130 (62 males and 68 females) on 10th April was two more than the peak spring count in 2017 and the highest in this season since 2013. Although the breeding population is not monitored, the small colony in Steensi Geo held only nine incubating females, a decrease of three from 2017. The first ducklings were recorded on 13th June, nine days earlier than 2017.

## Velvet Scoter

*Melanitta fusca*

*Rare migrant, mostly in autumn; 128 previous records of 180 individuals*

The first record since October 2016 involved an exhausted-looking individual in Muckle Uri Geo on 25th November, which was seen offshore the following day.

## Common Scoter

*Melanitta nigra*

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

The overwintering female that arrived in November 2017 was present until 10th April and was joined by a male on 15th–23rd March. The only other record involved two females on 12th November (one in Furse, one off Dronger) with what was probably one of these then recorded around the Isle occasionally until the end of the year.

## Long-tailed Duck

*Clangula hyemalis*

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

A wintering bird remained around Furse until 24th January. The only spring record involved two males in Mavers Geo on 18th April. There were singles on 5th and 12th October then virtually daily sightings from 16th October until the end of the month that peaked at nine on 26th–27th. At least six were seen occasionally throughout November and two lingered into December.

## Goldeneye

*Bucephala clangula*

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

The first January records since 2015 involved a male on 7th and female on 10th. Spring passage saw a male on Golden Water from 28th–30th March, which also visited the Obs Scrape, and a female on 10th April. After the first of the autumn on 4th October, there were records on six further dates in the month, peaking at four on 27th, with a male on 9th and female on 19th November the last sightings of the year.

## Goosander

*Mergus merganser*

### *Scarce migrant in winter, spring and late autumn; 101 previous records of 138 individuals*

One on 12th January was just the second record for that month since 2006, whilst a male on 8th–9th March was also an unusually early record. A male on 19th May was a more typical occurrence, but four on 30th May was the largest-ever spring count. Continuing the theme of unusual records for the year, three on 25th July was the first record for this month since 1982. A male lingering along the south coast from 11th–26th November was the 11th individual for the year, making it the third best year in FIBO history after 16 in 1968 (all of which arrived in a mid-December influx) and 12 in 1979.

## Red-breasted Merganser

*Mergus serrator*

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

There were two females on 24th January and a male in February, with sightings on three dates in March. Up to two were seen on eight dates in April and five dates in May, with a male and female present on five dates in June up to 22nd. After one on 31st July there were no more until two on 5th–6th September then singles on seven dates later in the month. Birds were present daily during the first 15 days of October; all counts were of up to five, apart from a remarkable 27 on 3rd and nine on 14th. The count on 3rd was a new island record and included a flock of 19 seen heading south down the Isle during the day. After that there were singles on four dates in November and on 13th–14th December.



Plate 42. Red-breasted Mergansers, over Schoolton, 3rd October 2018.  
© David Parnaby

## Quail

*Coturnix coturnix*

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

It was a relatively quiet year for this transient species with three spring sightings: 11th May at North Light, 15th May at Gilsetter and 4th June at Quoy.

## Red-throated Diver

*Gavia stellata*

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

One that went over the Isle on 22nd March was the earliest arrival date since 2014 and a scatter of further spring records involved three singles in April from 4th, two in May and sightings on seven dates from 6th–19th June (all singles apart from two on 9th). After two on 6th July there were two further singles in the month, then two on both 14th and 21st August before the peak autumn passage occurred during 6th–23rd September when eight individuals were seen over five dates, including three on 10th. October saw five on 3rd and singles on 5th and 13th before a late bird was at South Light on 11th–12th November.



Plate 43. Great Northern Diver, North Haven, 17th January 2018. © David Parnaby

## Great Northern Diver

*Gavia immer*

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

The adult that was present in North Haven from 6th December 2017 remained until 18th January, although, despite apparently feeding well on crabs and small flatfish, it appeared to be very poor health towards the end of its stay. Spring passage involved four singles from 5th–30th May, whilst one seen on 26th June from the *Good Shepherd IV* was presumably a non-breeding bird. The first of the autumn was on 21st September, with the bulk of passage occurring from 6th–16th October when there were ten individuals spread over six dates, with four on 6th the peak count. Later sightings were on 6th, 11th and 23rd (two) November then one on 21st–22nd December.

## Storm Petrel

*Hydrobates pelagicus*

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

A visit to the breeding colony at Kirm o' Skroo on 13th June produced the first record of the year and there were two off South Light the following day, the only diurnal land-based sighting of the year. The first ringing session of the year in the Kirm o' Skroo on 25th June produced eight birds (including three ringed in 2017, one in the same place and two in the Haven). A total of 13 petrel-ringing sessions in the Haven between 30th June and 3rd September resulted in a total of 1,325 birds trapped consisting of 1,207 new individuals and 118 that had been ringed in previous years or at other sites. The peak night was 10th/11th July in which 201 were ringed and 15 others were caught. During the summer, birds were also seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 20th and 26th (two) June, 12th and 24th (three) July, 14th August (two) and 18th September (two). The only other record involved two checking out the noise of a beach party in the North Haven in the early hours of 8th July!

## Leach's Petrel

*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

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

There were three typical records in July, with vocal birds seen around the nets at petrel trapping sessions on 11th, 17th and 24th. Despite some productive nights for catching Storm Petrels, and the use of mixed recordings that included Leach's Petrel calls, the only other record was of two on the night of 31st August, one of which was trapped and the other was heard around the nets.

## Fulmar

*Fulmarus glacialis*

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

The population monitoring plots saw numbers drop by 8.3% since 2017, the lowest total since 2015 although in keeping with the general fluctuating numbers in the plots. A predated egg at North Light on 12th May was the first indication of breeding and a chick was noted hatching during a visit to Green Holm on 26th June, with the first fledged bird recorded on 20th August, a typical date. It was a good year for sightings of the colour morph 'blue' Fulmar, which is commoner further north in the species range. There were two on 20th February then spring sightings on 1st, 4th (two) and 13th May. One on 4th July was unseasonal, then after singles on 8th and 21st September, there were daily sightings from 24th–28th September including four on 26th. Records on ten October dates totalled 19 individuals, with a peak of six on 28th and there was one on 19th November. A 20-minute seawatch from South Light on 8th December saw large numbers of Fulmars passing, including seven 'blue' birds and there was a further single on 12th.

## Sooty Shearwater

*Ardenna grisea*

### *Regular autumn migrant*

The first of the year was seen from the NorthLink ferry as it passed close to the Isle on 13th July and the next two sightings were also boat based, with individuals seen in Fair Isle waters from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 24th and 31st July. There were four sightings, totalling five individuals, in August and five singles in September before two off Bunes on 19th September, which were the last of the year.

## Manx Shearwater

*Puffinus puffinus*

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

One on 10th May from the *Good Shepherd IV* was the earliest record since 2009. The next sighting was an impressive 13 past South Light on 14th June, with 11 birds then seen over the following six days and another on 26th June. The only sightings in July were three from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 3rd and one from South Light on 14th. August was also quiet, with just four singles seen from South Light. The final record of the year was one passing Bunes on 24th September, the latest record since 2008.





Plate 44. Slavonian Grebes, Buness, 28th September 2018. © Steve Arlow

## Slavonian Grebe

*Podiceps auritus*

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

One in Furse on 4th January was assumed to be the bird present at the end of 2017. The first spring record since 2016 was a beautiful breeding-plumaged bird off Swarzie Geo on 21st April. Two off Buness on 28th September, with one remaining the following day, were the first of the autumn, with the next not until 28th October, when two were in South Haven. Perhaps one of these was the bird off Hjukni Geo on 30th October. Prior to 2015 there had only been one December record (in 2008), but one in South Harbour on 23rd November that then moved to North Haven on 28th November and lingered until 4th December made it four consecutive years with one and there has to be a chance the same bird is responsible for all these records.

## Grey Heron

*Ardea cinerea*

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

There were scattered sightings throughout the first part of the year from 26th January, with seven on 29th March and five two days later indicating spring passage. The only record in April was on 19th, then in May there were up to two from 5th to 11th May with one on 7th June the last of the spring. There was a slight build up in July from 18th, peaking at seven on 26th. By August, sightings were regular, with up to four recorded. September saw an increase, with a peak of 12 on 8th and there were up to seven in October, with two remaining into November, one of which lingered to 19th. One arrived from the north on 2nd December, which was the last of the year.



Plate 45. Gannets, Matchi Stack, 13th June 2018. © David Parnaby

## Gannet

*Morus bassanus*

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

Present irregularly offshore in January, birds returned to their breeding ledges by 10th February. The first chicks were seen on 17th June at Yellow Head, with fledging recorded from 19th August. It was a good breeding season, with a productivity rate of 0.78 chicks fledged per AON, an increase of 14.7% from 2017 and the highest productivity since 2012. The numbers nesting also increased, with a total of 4,291 AON recorded, an increase of 10.5% since 2017 and the highest-ever recorded breeding population.

## Shag

*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

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

Present all year in good numbers, but the monitoring plots showed a decline of 3.3% to just 29 AON. The first egg was seen on 2nd May and the first chick on 4th June. After a very poor year in 2017, breeding productivity increased by 313% to 0.91 chicks fledged per AON.

## Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

After a 2cy on Landberg on 25th January there were up to two on three dates in February, before the main spring passage saw sightings on 21 days from 23rd March to 20th May, with a maximum of three on 5th April. There were none during the summer, and autumn began with singles on 8th and 12th August before a 1cy lingered in South Harbour from 19th August onwards. Sightings increased from 8th–9th September when there were eight, and up to five remained until the end of the month. After three on 1st–2nd October there were regular sightings of one or two until the end of the month, then three singles in November and a 1cy on 3rd and 9th December.

## Osprey

*Pandion haliaetus*

*Scarce migrant; 132 individuals, with 111 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)*

For the second consecutive year there was just a single record, with one seen circling over the south of the Isle on 23rd May before it gained height and headed north.

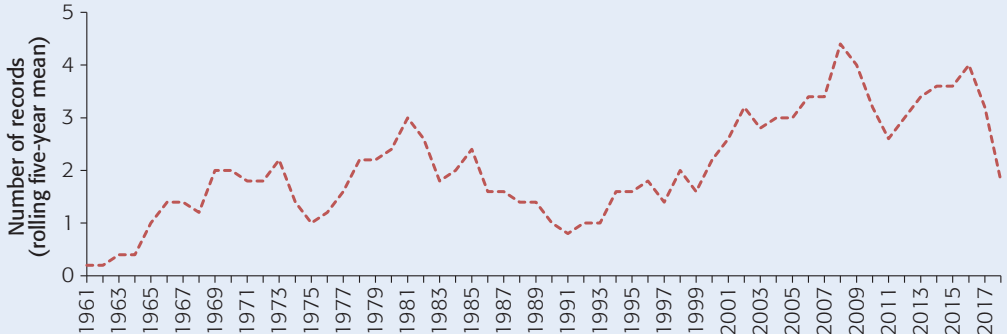


Figure 2. Rolling five-year mean of Osprey records on Fair Isle (hence the value of 1.8 for 2018 is the mean for the five-year period 2014–18 inclusive). Note that after a steady increase since the early 1990s, recent years have seen a tendency for fewer records.

## \*Honey-buzzard

*Pernis apivorus*

*Rare spring and autumn migrant; 58 previous records (61 individuals)*

One went south low over the Obs being pursued by a phalanx of Arctic Terns on 21st July. This was the ninth July record and sixth consecutive year of occurrence.

## Sparrowhawk

*Accipiter nisus*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

A very quiet spring saw a female on 29th–30th March (that ate a Blackbird at the Obs on the latter date), which may have been the same bird seen on 2nd April. Further individuals followed on 15th–18th April, 16th and 31st May and 11th and 14th June. After a female moved south on 4th September there were no further records until sightings on ten dates in the period 11th–23rd October. Although there was a maximum count of two in this period, three individuals ringed during this time showed that there was obviously some turnover. A quiet autumn was brought to an end with one moving south on 13th November and there was then a very late bird on 5th–6th December.



Plate 46. Sparrowhawk, Obs, 13th October 2018.  
© Ian Andrews

## Marsh Harrier

*Circus aeruginosus*

*Rare migrant; 54 previous records, with 42 in spring (mostly April–May but three in both March and June) and 12 in autumn (mostly in August and September, with two in October and one in July)*

Another three records took the total in the last three years to ten, as this species consolidated its position as an expected spring migrant. The first was a female on the typical date of 6th May, whilst a female on 7th June and a 2cy male on 18th–19th June were just the fourth and fifth records for this month.

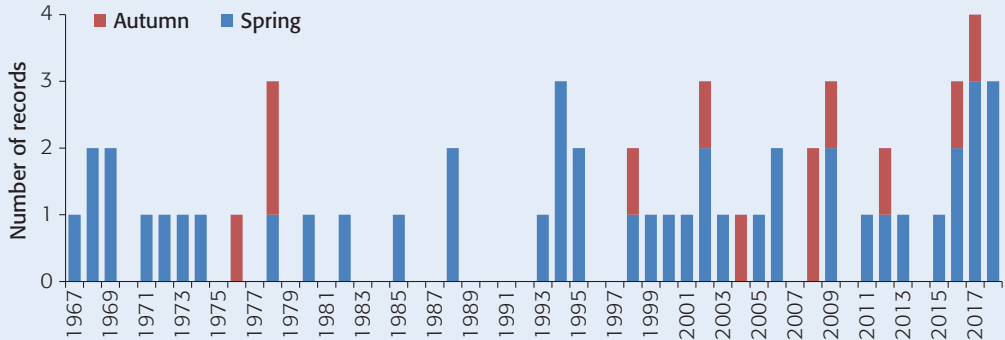


Figure 3. Annual occurrences of Marsh Harrier on Fair Isle by season. Note that the species has become almost annual since the late 1990s, with an increase in autumn records also apparent.



Plate 47. Marsh Harrier, Kirk and Boini Mire, 19th June 2018. © Max Hellicar

## Hen Harrier

*Circus cyaneus*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

A ringtail that moved north on 26th April was the only one of the spring. There was an early autumn migrant on 7th–14th September, with the next records not until 12th–27th October, during which time at least two birds were present. The last record of a decent year was on 8th November.

## \*Pallid Harrier

*Circus macrourus*

### *Vagrant; five previous records (singles in May and August and three in September)*

A 1cy male first seen over Da Water on 8th September went on to linger on the Isle until 12th. As with the recent previous records (two in 2011, and singles in 2014 and 2015) it typically favoured Da Water, Boini Mire and the Walli Burn areas.



Plate 48. Pallid Harrier, Da Water, 8th September 2018. © David Parnaby

## \*Black Kite

*Milvus migrans*

### *Vagrant; one previous record (May 2008)*

One found near the Plantation on 7th June was identified by feather damage as the bird that had left North Ronaldsay earlier in the day and had been present on Orkney since at least March (and probably November 2017). A rather battered-looking 2cy bird, its somewhat tatty plumage had perhaps been exacerbated by wintering in the coastal climes of Orkney. Plumage features suggested it was an intergrade between the nominate and *lineatus* subspecies, a combination known as 'Eastern Black Kite'.

## \*Buzzard

*Buteo buteo*

### *Rare spring and autumn migrant*

One drifted over Bunes and the Obs on 16th May, the first record since an overwintering bird was last seen on 19th March 2015. It was the first triumph for the new WhatsApp news service, as observers in the lounge were alerted to its presence in time to leap to the window and get it on their trip list!

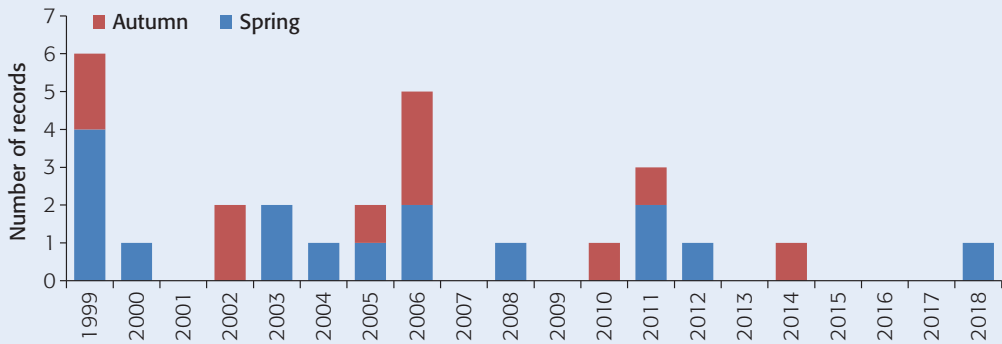


Figure 4. Buzzard records by season on Fair Isle in the last 20 years. Note the decrease in records in recent years.

## Water Rail

*Rallus aquaticus*

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

At least six were present throughout January, with sightings during February and March all probably involving the same wintering birds. The first full census of the year on 31st March produced seven, including birds at Pund, Houll and Chalet, which had not held wintering birds, so this total may have involved some migrants. Seven represents the highest-ever spring count for the Isle and joint highest-ever total (seven were also recorded in autumn 2005). Regular sightings of up to three in April probably involved a mixture of lingering and passage birds. In May, one was at Lower Stoneybrek on 1st, then an intriguing set of sightings around the Vaadal and Gilsetter from 14th to 19th May were followed by one in the Vaadal on 3rd June, although there was no evidence of any breeding attempt. The first autumn migrant was in Field Ditch on 8th September, an early arrival date, with a dead bird then found on 10th. Scattered records of one or two in October from 13th had built to four at the end of the month, with an autumn peak of six on 5th November. By this time, records were largely of birds established in their wintering areas, although one at Wester Lothar on 7th November was presumably a migrant. Daily sightings throughout November and December suggested another good year for wintering birds, with a number of locations in the south-east occupied, one around Lower Stoneybrek and Shirva and another at the Obs, giving a total of at least eight.

## Corncrake

*Crex crex*

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

The previous decade produced spring records in only five years and there were none in 2018. In the autumn, there was one at Pund on 31st August, a single at Meadow Burn on 5th September, another at Pund the following day (with presumably one of these two then found dead at Klingers' Geo on 7th) and the fourth of the year at Quoy then Busta on 26th September, which showed well at times.

## Moorhen

*Gallinula chloropus*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

A very good spring began with one on Bunes on 1st April, with what was assumed to be the same bird in North Haven on 7th April and found dead in the *Good Shepherd IV's* noost on 10th. One was at Da Water on 15th April with numbers increasing to four on 18th, the joint-highest spring

count. Although the peak day count was four, it was thought that five birds were present until the end of the month, with two remaining together at Da Water into May and one until 4th. Autumn passage comprised one on 11th October with two on 13th October and one of these possibly responsible for sightings until 8th November when it was joined by a second. One of these then lingered around Meadow Burn and Burkle into December, appearing set to become the first overwintering record since 2012/13, although it was not seen after mid-month.

## Coot

*Fulica atra*

*Rare visitor; 93 previous records, most in spring, also late autumn and winter, has summered*

One on Da Water from 26th November stayed until the end of the year. It was the first since one that lingered from January to March 2016, the first autumn arrival since 2002 and only the seventh ever to be found in November.

## Oystercatcher

*Haematopus ostralegus*

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

Two overwintering birds remained throughout January, with an occasional third recorded and there were ten by mid-February. April census counts saw around 60 recorded on a daily basis, although northerly passage on 10th saw a total of 102 logged. By May, daily counts were usually around 100 and the spring peak was 132 on 30th. Although only 14 breeding pairs were mapped the actual breeding number will have been somewhat higher and the first chicks were recorded on the very late date of 21st June, with the first fledglings not noted until 6th August. The highest count in the summer was 85, in the south of the Isle only on 26th July, but by August, daily counts were generally around 17–25, although 48 were counted during passage on 29th. Although daily in September, counts were in single figures from 3rd onwards with up to four lingering throughout October and November (although there were six on 12th) and two throughout December.

## Lapwing

*Vanellus vanellus*

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

There were two or three around in the early part of the year with more arriving from mid-January, building to 18 on 24th. Smaller numbers were present throughout February, but an increase in early March saw numbers build to a spring peak on 32 on 13th, with numbers dropping down to just the breeding birds during early April. Displaying was first recorded on 9th March, with an incubating bird seen on 10th April. Four pairs bred (three around the Rippack area and another at Pund), with displaying birds also seen at Suka Mire and Springfield, and two pairs each fledged three chicks. From July through to the end of October there were only occasional sightings of no more than four and the autumn peak came during a late arrival in November, when there were nine on 24th. Up to two stayed into December, then eight arrived on 17th, with at least some of these lingering towards the end of the year.

## Golden Plover

*Pluvialis apricaria*

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

Up to eight in January was a higher than average winter count, although monthly maxima in February and March were just three and five respectively. There were virtually daily records in April, rising to a peak of 42 on 23rd. Early May saw up to 20, but counts were generally in single figures for most of the month. Although there were up to four in June until 17th, and some display had been noted earlier in the spring, there was no evidence of any breeding attempt. Occasional records in July from 2nd had risen to eight by 16th, then, after scattered records early in August, there were daily census records from 8th August until early November. During this time, there were peaks of 37 in August, 53 in September and an autumn high of 68 on 18th October. Up to three remained until 17th November, which were the last of the year.

## Ringed Plover

*Charadrius hiaticula*

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

After one on 3rd–4th February the next was not until 20th February, with sightings becoming more regular after this, with up to eight by the end of the month and an increase to 24 by the end of March. Counts settled at around 18–25 in April, with no real discernible spring passage recorded. A minimum of 20 pairs bred with the first chicks seen at South Light on 30th May and fledged youngsters noted from 17th June. A very quiet autumn saw an August maximum of 30 on 22nd and, although migrants were noted in late September, there were still no more than 29 and just single figures after 4th October. An unusual late autumn presence saw three remaining until 16th, whilst birds on 24th–25th November and 22nd December were the latest records since 1981.

## Dotterel

*Charadrius morinellus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant; 105 previous records of 194 individuals***

One on South Green on 5th April was easily the earliest-ever Fair Isle arrival, with the only previous April records occurring on 25th April 1973, 30th April 1998 (three) and 30th April 2010 (two). The next record was on the more typical date of 7th May, when three were on Meoness. What appeared to be the same birds were relocated on Ward Hill on 10th May, with a female there on 12th, up to six daily from 14th–18th and a male lingering until 23rd May. Although birds were present for a fortnight in suitable breeding habitat, there was no evidence of any nesting attempts. Following the first blank season since 2001 in 2017, this was a good year, including the largest trip since 2008.

## Whimbrel

*Numenius phaeopus*

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

One heading north over Suka Mire on 21st April was the latest arrival date since 2012, with up to three on three more dates later in the month. There were daily sightings in May from 2nd, although there were no more than six, and sightings petered out by mid-June with the last of the month being six on 24th. Autumn was quiet; there were sightings on 11 dates in July from 5th, with a peak of four on 27th, up to two on eight August dates and two on 2nd–3rd September.



## Curlew

*Numenius arquata*

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

There were reasonable numbers in the first winter period, with a high count of 33 in January. Numbers generally dwindled after that, until by April most sightings were probably of summering birds. Displaying was noted from 7th March and, although six pairs were present, only a nest at Pund was thought to have reached chick stage, although none were thought to have fledged (with at least one being taken by a Herring Gull). Flocks were seen moving over the Isle from 30th June, although counts throughout the rest of the summer and the autumn never exceeded 14. Smaller numbers than in recent years appeared to be wintering, with most counts of no more than 15 in the latter part of the year.

## Bar-tailed Godwit

*Limosa lapponica*

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

A very quiet year, although the bird present from 30th June to 6th July that was sporting breeding plumage was a pleasant sight. There was just one further record, a single at South Light on 12th October.

## Black-tailed Godwit

*Limosa limosa*

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

A quiet spring saw one from 22nd–24th April, with a second bird on the latter date and two on 4th June. The first of the autumn was an adult on 8th–12th July, with another on 26th–30th July. There were four south over Bunes on 5th August, then singles on 19th August and 3rd September in a quiet autumn for the species.

## Turnstone

*Arenaria interpres*

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

**Table 2.** Maximum monthly counts of Turnstone on Fair Isle in 2018 compared with the previous ten-year average.

#### **2018 count**

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
172	150	n/c	149	68	14	82	158	323	289	225	238

#### **2008–17 average**

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
147	117	131	131	66	16	46	91	120	198	161	149

Whilst numbers in the early part of the year were similar to the average from the previous decade, autumn counts were rather high, with 323 on 29th September the highest since 1992. Good numbers were again recorded into the winter, with the highest counts often occurring on windier days when large flocks moved up into the parks around the Quoy area.

## Knot

*Calidris canutus*

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

The first four on 13th April were earlier than average then, after a single on 22nd April, there were almost daily sightings of one or two during 3rd–22nd May. The only sighting in June was of three on 7th. Singles on 14th and 18th July signified the start of return passage, with records becoming regular from 26th July and increasing to 13 on 29th. Regular sightings throughout August were largely of single-figure counts, although the peak was 24 on 19th, after which there were smaller numbers until the last on 28th September.

## Ruff

*Calidris pugnax*

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

The first of the year was at Da Water on 21st July, a slightly earlier date than usual. There was another single on 27th and three on 30th July, with two still on 2nd August. There were up to two on six dates from 13th–23rd August, then six on 7th September (the peak count of the year) with smaller numbers daily until 13th September. The final record was of up to two from 20th–23rd September.

## Curlew Sandpiper

*Calidris ferruginea*

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

Although the species is less than annual on Fair Isle, six years with no records prior to 2018 was still very unusual. It was therefore rather unexpected when this unwanted barren spell was brought to an end with the first spring record since 1999, a bird in non-breeding plumage at Utra Scrape on 16th May.

## Sanderling

*Calidris alba*

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

There were sightings on 14 dates between 4th and 31st May and on 15th June. Counts were generally of up to seven, other than a peak of 28 on 16th which was comfortably the highest-ever spring count for Fair Isle. Autumn passage took place from 18th July, with strong south-east winds at the end of the month bringing good numbers of common waders to the Isle (mostly around South Light), including 57 Sanderlings on 29th - the highest-ever Isle count. After 20 on 6th August, counts were usually of less than ten until the last on 16th October.

## Dunlin

*Calidris alpina*

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

Spring passage began early with one on 18th March and regular sightings from 29th March until 24th April, including a peak of 17 on 31st March. Sightings were regular in May with higher numbers later in the month rising to a spring peak of 41 on 22nd. Although singing was noted during May and June, including a bird on Swey, there was no further evidence of breeding. Up to 11 were seen during June, including a couple of inland sightings in the north of the Isle. With birds present throughout

July there was no way of differentiating between the end of spring and the beginning of autumn passage, although the first juvenile on 19th July showed birds were moving south. Counts built up to 27 by the end of July and good numbers in August peaked at 51 on 11th, then, after 1st September just single figures were present for the rest of the month. There were still regular sightings throughout October, although no more than four, and until 8th November. There was a late bird on 22nd December, the first in that month since 2014.

## Purple Sandpiper

*Calidris maritima*

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

The highest count of the first winter period was 25 on 26th January. Numbers increased from mid-March to a peak of 160 on 3rd April, the highest-ever count for Fair Isle. There were then 71 on 12th April, suggesting another wave of migrants. A further peak of 86 occurred on 1st May and there were 56 on 12th, with numbers dropping away until the last of the spring on 3rd June. It was not long until birds were coming back south to Fair Isle, with the first seen on 27th June. Occasional sightings of up to seven in early July rose to 64 on 25th and 82 on 29th (just one short of the highest July count, recorded on 27th in 2017) and sporadic sightings in August peaked at 55 on 14th. Records became more regular in the latter half of September, but peaked at just 12 and there were no more than 17 in October until 61 on 31st. There was a maximum of 64 in November, on 7th, with small numbers then noted until the end of the year.



Plate 49. Purple Sandpiper, South Harbour, 5th October 2018. © David Wege

## Little Stint

*Calidris minuta*

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

A juvenile at Da Water on 8th September was presumably the same bird at Easter Lothar on 9th–12th, making it the quietest year since 2012.

## Woodcock

*Scolopax rusticola*

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

Occasional sightings in January from 16th included birds appearing in gardens, suggesting some arrivals at this time, with a few sightings throughout the rest of the winter and the first sign of spring passage involving six on 15th March. The species was regular from the end of March, with an impressive 49 on 31st. Numbers dwindled slightly through early April, then a large fall saw 82 on 16th, the highest spring count since 1988, with 52 the following day and then just single figures until 23rd April. Later spring records occurred on 4th May and 7th June (the first June record since 2012), whilst one on 15th July was the first in that month since 2009. Autumn passage began slowly, with one on 5th October then up to five from 10th to 19th October. There were daily sightings from 25th October until 12th November, with peaks including 34 on 29th and 50 on 6th (the highest count of the autumn). There were still regular sightings as smaller numbers arrived throughout the rest of the month, with 12 on 19th for example, and scattered records continued in December.



Plate 50. Woodcock, Ward Hill, 31st March 2018. © Richard Cope

## Jack Snipe

*Lymnocyptes minimus*

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

Occasional sightings in January, February and early March suggested small numbers of wintering birds, whilst sightings on ten dates in April reflected light spring passage, peaking at just two on 18th–19th. Autumn passage was also light, with sightings on just ten September dates from 9th, peaking at four on 11th. In October, although the species was recorded daily on census, only three counts reached double figures, with a peak of 14 on 3rd, and there were up to six in November until the last of the year on 12th.

## Snipe

## *Gallinago gallinago*

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

With birds scattered across the island in the winter, the first count of the year was on census on 31st March, when there were 73. Numbers fluctuated in April, rising to a spring peak of 114 on 15th April. During this time, a distinctive bird with normal body plumage but pure white wings was in Gilsetter on 3rd–13th April. Up to 39 throughout May were probably largely breeding birds, with the first fledged chicks seen on 20th June at the Obs. There were no more than 37 in August and although counts in September were generally 25–40 there were peaks of 64 on 7th and 63 on 18th. Higher numbers were noted in October with counts exceeding 100 on four dates, including a peak of 165 on 14th, the third highest count for the Isle. Good numbers were still present in November, including 135 on 6th, and smaller numbers remained throughout the winter.



Plate 51. Snipe, Hjon Dyke trap, 28th May 2018. © Ian Andrews

## Red-necked Phalarope

## *Phalaropus lobatus*

### *Vagrant; 26 previous records of 34 individuals, eleven in spring (May to June), 15 in autumn (July to September, including three fledged juveniles). Has bred once (2017)*

Following 2017's first successful breeding attempt for the Isle, it was another good year. A male on Da Water on 14th May was four weeks earlier than the previous year's arrival date, with two present the following day and three on 19th that included a copulating pair. With birds present throughout the rest of the month and June another breeding attempt was obviously taking place and copulation on 10th June may have involved a second male. Four adults were noted on 14th July and a fledged chick was seen on 20th July. Two fledged chicks on 27th July presumably included the bird seen a week earlier and were both assumed to be from one nest, with an unfledged chick on the same date presumably from a second breeding attempt. The final sighting of the year was an adult and juvenile on 1st August but unfortunately the unfledged juvenile was found freshly predated by a cat on 6th August.

## Common Sandpiper

*Actitis hypoleucos*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Spring passage involved sightings on 16 dates from 25th April until 1st June, with a peak of four on 15th May. A quiet autumn saw two on 29th July, with one the following day, then singles on six dates in August and one from 8th–16th September with two on 13th. An *Actitis* sandpiper in South Harbour on 16th November was thought to have been this species and would have been considerably later than the previous latest recorded date of 2nd November 1908. However, views were too brief to fully rule out the possibility of Spotted Sandpiper *A. macularius* and so the record remained unconfirmed.

## Green Sandpiper

*Tringa ochropus*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

The first of the year was in Field Ditch on 11th April, continuing the recent trend for comparatively early arrivals. There were then up to two regularly from 14th–25th April and the last of the spring was on 2nd May. The first of the autumn on 16th July was the earliest arrival since 2013, and there were then regular sightings from 28th July until 2nd September, with a peak of three on 31st July and 14th August.

## Redshank

*Tringa totanus*

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

There were larger than usual numbers in the first winter period with around 80 at the end of January. Numbers declined through the next few weeks, with less than 30 during March. There were generally similar numbers in April, although northerly passage in mid-month saw counts including 54 on 10th and 70 on 15th. There were just single figures in May and occasional records in June that increased to 12 on 27th as birds started to head south. An increase in July saw a maximum of 45 on 14th with numbers rising in August to 56 on 29th. There were up to 55 in September and generally 30–55 in October, with the autumn peak of 79 on 25th. There were still 59 in early November with counts decreasing during December.

## Wood Sandpiper

*Tringa glareola*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

Another relatively quiet year saw just two in the spring, with singles on 14th May and 2nd June, and the first July record since 2012, on 30th.

## Spotted Redshank

*Tringa erythropus*

### *Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring; 106 records of 120 individuals*

A 1cy flew over Bunes on 31st July, an earlier than average arrival date and the first record since 2015. What was presumably the same bird was then seen occasionally on Da Water before being finally recorded on Bunes again on 6th August.

## Greenshank

*Tringa nebularia*

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

Spring records involved singles on 28th April, 16th and 19th May. It was a quiet autumn, with regular sightings from 29th July to 13th August, including the year's peak of just two on 30th July, and one on 9th September.

## Kittiwake

*Rissa tridactyla*

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

Typically, the only records in the first part of the year were scattered sightings of small numbers, with birds regular around the island from early April. Numbers at the population monitoring plot dropped to their lowest ever, with just 34 active nests recorded in the plots; in 1987 the total was 1,446. All nesting attempts were in the Dog Geo and Holms plot, with the plots at South Gunnawark, Lericum, Da Nizz, Johnny's Peats, Stroms Heelor, Shaldi Cliff, Da Swadin, Trottie Kame and Bergaroo all empty. Breeding success of 0.47 chicks fledged per AON was 135% higher than 2017, with all the chicks fledging from the Holms (Dog Geo completely failing, with predation possibly being the issue). The first chick was seen on 1st July and the first fledged youngster was seen on 6th August. By September, there were just single-figure counts offshore, with a similar pattern of small numbers offshore for the rest of the year, other than 4th November when 60 went south past Bunes.



Plate 52. Kittiwakes, Green Holm, 25th July 2018. © David Parnaby

# Black-headed Gull

*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

## Frequent spring and autumn migrant

There were sporadic sightings in the early winter period, although no more than two until passage in the last week of March brought a peak of 14 on 29th. Sightings were regular in April, although other than 17 on 10th April, all counts were in single figures. The peak in May was 41 on 5th and June also saw regular sightings, although no more than 15. The first juvenile was seen on 8th July, when a total of 17 birds was present and regular sightings through the month rose to 27 on 26th. The maximum in August was 31 and there were no more than 11 in September and 16 in October. There were just occasional sightings in November with no more than four, then two on 1st and a single on 31st December.

# Little Gull

*Hydrocoloeus minutus*

## Vagrant; 33 previous individuals, most in autumn (July to November), with three in winter and four in spring

A 1cy was feeding off Kroga Geo on 17th–18th October, with presumably the same bird off nearby Linni Geo on 22nd October.

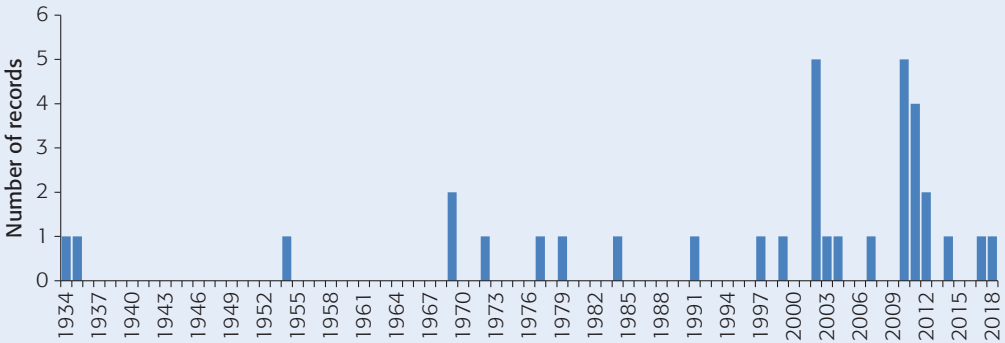


Figure 5. Little Gull occurrences on Fair Isle. Note that the species has occurred with increasing regularity since the turn of the millennium.



Plate 53. Little Gull (left) with Mediterranean Gull, Hjukni Geo, 17th October 2018. © Richard Cope



## \*Mediterranean Gull

*Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

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

After a large gap between the first record (25th October 1995) and the second (2nd July 2016), there was not too long to wait for the third, with a 1cy feeding off Kroga Geo on 17th October. It remained in the area for several hours and, remarkably, was initially found feeding with a Little Gull, itself a Fair Isle rarity. It had been a good year for Mediterranean Gulls in Scotland, so this record was not altogether unexpected and there is surely a chance that this species will start to occur more regularly as it expands its range.



Plate 54. Mediterranean Gull, Hjukni Geo, 17th October 2018.  
© Richard Cope

## Common Gull

*Larus canus*

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

Although present throughout the first winter period, counts were of no more than ten until passage in late March brought 38 on 29th. Higher counts from daily sightings throughout the spring included 77 (the spring peak) on 10th and 65 on 16th April, with no more than 34 in May. By June, most sightings were of the five breeding pairs (four at Goorn and one on Da Water) and two other territorial pairs that were present at Buness and Kirki Mire. The Da Water pair fledged two chicks, but no others were thought to have fledged in a poor season for productivity for this species. A juvenile from outwith the Isle on 5th July indicated autumn passage, with pronounced southerly passage from 21st July and numbers rising rapidly at the end of the month with 266 on 27th, 413 on 28th and 808 on 30th (when the total may have been higher as heavy passage continued all day), the highest count since 2010. Counts in August were generally of 60 or less, although passage in mid-month peaked at 209 on 14th and the high in September was 57. October also saw heaviest passage mid-month, with 421 on 13th but numbers dropped to ten or less for the rest of the year from 21st October.

## Great Black-backed Gull

*Larus marinus*

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

Present all year, but only three breeding pairs were recorded (Goorn, Green Holm and Rippack), with the first chicks seen on 4th June. As usual, there were several days in the autumn with three-figure counts of birds on the island top, usually in windy weather.

## Glaucous Gull

*Larus hyperboreus*

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

Following on from the high numbers at the end of 2017, there were almost daily sightings in January that peaked at four on three dates, although at least seven individuals were involved. Up to three were seen in February and March until 23rd and a 3cy lingered from 1st April to 26th May with a 2cy bird joining it from 18th–20th May. A 1cy was seen on four dates in October from 25th, with an adult also present on the last day of the month. There were sightings on seven dates in November, all single 1cy birds other than two on 5th. December saw records on just six dates peaking at three on 16th and involving at least four individuals.

## Iceland Gull

*Larus glaucooides*

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

A dead 4cy bird in South Haven on 23rd January was followed by a 2cy in the Parks the following day and there were three scattered sightings of a 2cy in February. A small arrival in mid-March saw a 2cy dead on 13th March, with an adult the following day and two (2cy and 3cy) on 15th. There were then two 2cy on 28th March and one on 9th April with passage in late April bringing a 4cy on 18th–19th, an adult on 21st and a separate adult on 22nd–25th before the last of the spring on 13th May. A 1cy on Green Holm on 23rd September was an earlier than average arrival date, but the only other sightings in the latter part of the year were in December, with a 1cy at Upper Stoneybrek on 3rd, a 2cy on Bunes on 15th and an adult off South Light on 31st.

## Herring Gull

*Larus argentatus*

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

Herring Gulls remain a common sight around the Isle, although the number of recorded breeding pairs fell by one from 2017 to 40 pairs (36 on Goorn and singles on Green Holm, Da Burrian, Dronger and Sheena Weetha). The first fledged youngsters were seen on a monitoring trip to Goorn on 16th July. Flocks of several hundred resting on the island top were a regular feature of the late autumn and early winter periods.

## Lesser Black-backed Gull

*Larus fuscus*

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

The first on 14th March was a typical arrival date, with no more than two recorded before the end of the month. Numbers gradually built in April to 28 on 21st, by which time five pairs were around Goorn, with the spring peak of 32 on 4th May. Four pairs again bred on Goorn, with the first fledged young noted on a monitoring visit on 16th July. A few continued to move through the summer and autumn passage was largely unremarkable, with counts of less than 20 other than 17th–18th August, with a peak of 42 on the former date. After 6th September there were just two more later in the month and sightings of singles on four dates in October until 17th.

## Common Tern

*Sterna hirundo*

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

Another quiet year for this former breeding species saw just a single record in the spring: one in North Haven on 11th June. Autumn fared little better, with sightings of single adults at South Light on 30th July and Mid Geo on 8th August, both possibly referring to the same bird.

## Arctic Tern

*Sterna paradisaea*

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

The first on 6th May was a typical arrival date, with 62 on 8th the first larger arrival and numbers increasing to at least 250 by 17th May. The first eggs were seen on 30th May on Bunes, where the



Plate 55. Arctic Tern, Bunness, 27th May 2018. © Ian Andrews

majority of the 190 nests were located (Busta Brecks being the only other location to hold any, with two nesting pairs there), with the breeding total being 41% down from 2017. The first chicks were seen on 23rd June and fledging occurred from 17th July, with a productivity of 0.13 chicks per AON a 116.7% increase from 2017. Predation seemed to be the main issue effecting productivity, with no signs of the starvation noted in 2017. A late summer build-up at South Light saw around 400 on 4th August then numbers dropped quickly, with just scattered singles from 21st August to 2nd September.

## Great Skua

*Stercorarius skua*

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

Singles on 31st March and 1st April preceded daily records from 7th April, with numbers building to over 120 by 25th, a typical arrival pattern. The first eggs were found on Vaasetter on 10th May, a slightly earlier date than usual. The trend for a wildly fluctuating but increasing breeding population continued, with 520 AOTs located, the highest ever for Fair Isle. The first chick was seen on 7th June and fledging was recorded from 28th July, with 0.35 chicks fledged per AOT (the lowest productivity

since 2014). Although the breeding season started well, a lot of birds were found dead before fledging in August, with predation by other Great Skuas probably contributing significantly to the mortality. The number lingering had decreased to around 40 by mid-September, with a maximum of ten recorded in October, including one that was seen to kill a Red-breasted Merganser in Furse on 5th. The last record of the year involved seven heading south off Bunes on 4th November.



Plate 56. Great Skuas with Great Black-backed Gull, Bunes, 2nd June 2018. © Ian Andrews

## Pomarine Skua

*Stercorarius pomarinus*

*Rare spring and autumn migrant; 102 previous records (of 132 individuals), 45 individuals in spring (May–June), 82 in autumn (mostly September–October, with fewer in July–August and November), one in January and four undated*

One from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 30th June kept up the recent run of sightings that has seen the species recorded in seven consecutive years, although the last land-based sightings were back in 2015.

## Arctic Skua

*Stercorarius parasiticus*

*Frequent passage migrant, breeds in small numbers*

The first arrived a day later than 2017, on 20th April, but numbers were slow to build, with just four by the end of month and the main arrival not until 18th May when around 30 were present. Only 28 AOT were recorded, the third-lowest population ever recorded. The first egg was not recorded until 26th May in the Parks and the first chick was seen on 22nd June at Mopul. Sadly, despite a decent breeding season for many of the species that Arctic Skuas kleptoparasitise, it was another disastrous year for 'Skooties' with just one chick fledging (from Taing on 31st July). Birds quickly abandoned the Isle during August and there were just a handful of sightings in September, with the last of the year being a 1cy off South Light on 16th October.

## Long-tailed Skua

*Stercorarius longicaudus*

*Rare migrant; 52 previous records of 108 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 spring record since the epic passage of 2015 involved a fine adult seen from a survey vessel on 12th May, 16 nautical miles south west of Sumburgh (thereby just scraping into Fair Isle territorial waters). There was absolutely no ambiguity about the second of the spring though, another adult that drifted down Gilsetter on 25th June, landing briefly in the Parks before continuing its journey south.

## Little Auk

*Alle alle*

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

For the second consecutive year there were none in the first half of the year and the first of the autumn was off North Light on the late date of 4th November. The only further sightings of a quiet year followed on 18th, 19th (two) and 30th November, 11th (two) and 12th December, all off South Light.

## Common Guillemot

*Uria aalge*

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

Although there were plenty offshore on the first day of the year and birds had returned to the cliffs on 18th January, it was late March before large numbers of birds were regularly present and late April before they settled on the cliffs. The first egg was seen at Dog Geo on 11th May and, in a generally late season, the first chicks were not seen until 20th June, with a mass-hatching taking place four days later. After a very poor year in 2017, numbers in the population monitoring plots showed a 30% increase and the 0.59 chicks fledged per egg laid was a 247% increase from 2017. Birds were still present around the Isle until around mid-August and an unusual record on 21st August involved several adults and juveniles heard from the NorthLink ferry as it passed offshore from Fair Isle at half past three in the morning! Early September saw good numbers seen on *Good Shepherd IV* crossings and smaller numbers from land, with just single figures throughout October and November until the last week of the month when hundreds were again offshore.

## Razorbill

*Alca torda*

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

The first of the year on the cliffs of South Raeva on 13th March was the latest arrival date since 2013. There were lots offshore on 18th March and birds were regular from late March and regularly on the cliffs from the second week of April. The first bird was seen incubating at Meoness on 12th May, with chicks first noted at both North and South Ramnigeo on 10th June. It was a very good breeding season, with an 82% increase in birds in the population monitoring plots (producing the highest count since 2006), whilst the 0.79 chicks fledged per egg laid was the best total since 1998. Encouragingly, chicks were also much better weights than in 2017, which suggested a better food supply, and the first fledged on 3rd July. Most birds had left by the end of July, although one was still coming in to Easter Lothar with fish on 2nd August. There were just a few offshore in August and September and sightings on six dates in October until 29th.

## Black Guillemot

*Cephus grylle*

### *Resident, breeds in moderate numbers*

The species is present all year around the coast of Fair Isle, with counts limited to those of breeding-plumaged adults on the east coast (between North Light and South Light) in the spring. The highest count was 199 individuals on 21st April, a 7% decrease from the count in 2017, although the trend in recent years has still been for a fluctuating increase.

## Puffin

*Fratercula arctica*

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

One on 1st April was the latest arrival date since 2014, although over 100 were present by 6th, with the first birds on land on 10th and birds regular from mid-April. The first chicks were noted on a monitoring visit to Green Holm on 5th June. The total of 0.9 chicks fledged per egg laid in the Green Holm monitoring plot was the highest ever recorded for Fair Isle. Food samples and feeding watches showed that sandeels were the dominant prey, with good-sized samples no doubt contributing to the excellent breeding season. The first fledged youngsters were noted from 19th July, although by 10th August there were still birds in nests and adults were still seen coming in to land with fish on 28th August. After this though, the only sightings were from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 4th and 18th (four) September and Bunes on 3rd October.



Plate 57. Puffins, Copper Geo, 30th May 2018. © Ian Andrews

## Rock Dove

*Columba livia*

### *Resident, breeds in small numbers*

Although not counted on census, the species is present throughout the year, with an estimated breeding population of 15–30 pairs. The first juvenile was seen on the very early date of 10th May and the post-breeding build-up of birds saw 60–70 recorded regularly throughout the autumn. A more systematic count on 16th October produced 107 (including large flocks feeding on Green Holm and at Brecks), the largest recorded count for Fair Isle. During the year a few domestic pigeons (the majority were ringed birds, showing them to be domestic rather than 'wild' Feral Pigeons) wandered to Fair Isle, although they tended not to linger. The breeding population has a few birds that don't have the classic plumage features of 'pure' birds (usually sporting some dark chevrons on the mantle or grey rumps), but there seems little evidence that there is any genetic ingression from feral birds and it is possible that this is merely within the natural range of plumage variation for Rock Dove.

## Stock Dove

*Columba oenas*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

One at Upper Stoneybrek on 7th March was the earliest arrival since 2003. There was then one at Pund on 4th May and another in the same area, which lingered from 17th May until 4th June. Three in a year is the best showing since 2013.

## Woodpigeon

*Columba palumbus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

An arrival date of 11th March was fairly typical and there were then occasional sightings that built up to 14 by the end of the month. Daily sightings in April rose to 21 on 9th–12th then peaked at 28 on 20th. Numbers dropped to single figures in early May before rising again to a spring peak of 29 on 14th. Daily sightings continued in lower numbers throughout the month then, after three on 4th June, there were sightings on five further dates in June and two dates in July that may have related to a summering bird. There were four singles in September from 9th then sightings on seven dates in early October that peaked at four on 14th. The only later sightings of a quiet autumn were one on 28th October, one that came in off the sea at South Light on 19th November, then lingered at the Obs until 22nd, and was joined by a second from 21st, with one on 30th November.

## Collared Dove

*Streptopelia decaocto*

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

A first arrival date of 18th April was the latest since 2006 and preceded regular sightings throughout the spring. Counts were of three or less until 9th May when ten were present, the highest count since 2011. Smaller numbers were present until 19th July, including a pair often seen in the Obs plantation that was occasionally noted displaying, although there was no further breeding activity. A typical set of autumn records involved up to two regularly from 24th August to 4th September and a later individual on 14th September.

## Cuckoo

*Cuculus canorus*

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

Two on 9th May, including a singing bird on Dronger, were typical first records. There was another singing bird on 23rd May then sightings from 29th May to 7th June that involved at least two individuals, with a lingering female and another singing male on the latter date. The final spring sighting was of one on 15th June. Given the decent spring showing, the juvenile that arrived on 28th July and lingered until 6th August could have been a sign that breeding had taken place on the Isle, but late July sightings are quite regular and the arrival of various other migrants around the same time suggest that this bird had come from further afield. A late bird was then present on 7th–8th September.

## Long-eared Owl

*Asio otus*

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

A reasonable spring passage saw singles on 11th–12th and 16th–19th April, with two on 18th, then one on 18th May. In autumn, there were regular records of up to three from 12th–21st October then one on 27th–30th October. Two arrived on 8th November, one in the Gully and one that spent the day sat out in the open at School (and was twitched by the staff and pupils of Fair Isle Primary), with the former remaining until 17th November. After one was seen coming in off the sea at South Light on 19th November there were daily records until 26th. During this time, a roosting flock in the Plantation built to four by 24th, although it was likely that there was some turnover during this period. The final record of a decent late autumn spell was in the Chapel Plantation on 2nd December.



Plate 58. Long-eared Owl, Upper Leogh, 14th October 2018. © Ian Andrews



## Short-eared Owl

*Asio flammeus*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

The earliest record since 2012 arrived on 28th March, with two on 31st March, including one seen coming in off the sea at South Light, and one remaining until the following day. There were then scattered records from 10th April until 22nd May, with a peak of five on 15th April. After this, one lingered in the north until 24th June, with another at the airstrip on 4th June. There were three sightings in the south of the Isle in July then more regular autumn passage saw records on seven dates from 23rd August until 15th September. Scattered records occurred from 5th October until 1st November, with the heaviest passage around the middle of the month, peaking at five. A late arrival brought three on 7th November, with one remaining until 9th, and there were then singles on 23rd November and 20th December, the latest records since 2012.

## Swift

*Apus apus*

### *Frequent migrant, most in summer and early autumn*

There were up to two from 21st to 27th May, a typical time for first arrivals. June records were limited to three on 10th and a single from 27th to the end of the month. After three singles in early July there were then regular sightings from 29th July to 5th September, all of up to five, other than the year's peak of 23 on 3rd August. The final record was one that lingered from 10th to 13th September.

## Wryneck

*Jynx torquilla*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

The first blank spring since 2010 meant that a showy bird at Schoolton on 31st August was the first of the year, with what was presumed to be the same bird seen again on 2nd September. The main autumn arrival was concentrated in early September, with one on 6th and two new individuals on 7th, one of which lingered until 9th.

## Great Spotted Woodpecker

*Dendrocopos major*

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

A 1cy at Springfield on 8th September was the first record since 2015 and the earliest arrival since 1997. It went on to linger in the south of the Isle until 14th September, during which time it did some minor damage to a stile and footbridge on the Meadow Burn!

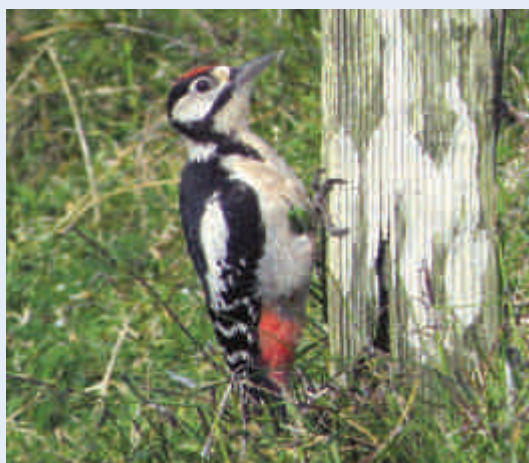


Plate 59. Great Spotted Woodpecker, Meadow Burn, 10th September 2018. © Richard Cope

## Kestrel

*Falco tinnunculus*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

There were sightings on seven April dates from 12th and 12 dates in May, although no more than one was recorded on any date and several of these sightings may relate to lingering individuals. Records on seven dates in June and 5th July could all have involved one bird attempting to summer. One at North Light on 27th–30th July was probably a new arrival and there were sightings on 11th and 16th August before the main autumn passage saw one to four recorded almost daily from 26th August to 1st October. There were sightings on five further days in October before a late bird was seen on 11th and 16th November, which was probably responsible for occasional sightings until the end of the year.

## Merlin

*Falco columbarius*

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

At least one appeared to have wintered successfully on the island, with sightings from early March possibly involving passage birds. There were up to two regularly in April and sightings on three dates in May, including the last of the spring on 23rd. Sightings were very regular from 27th August through to mid-November, with a peak in September of three, with similar numbers recorded throughout much of October. The peak count for the year was four on 15th October, which included three heading out to sea off South Light. At least two remained throughout November and occasional sightings into the last month of the year suggested attempted overwintering was again taking place.

## \*Hobby

*Falco subbuteo*

### *Rare visitor; 62 previous records, 50 in May–June, six in July and six in autumn (August–September)*

A 2cy bird at Houll on 31st May was a typical occurrence and what was thought to be the same bird was seen at Hjukni Geo on 4th June then at Utra Scrape on 5th June. At the latter site, it was seen feeding on the ground, apparently on invertebrates being washed through the outflow of the pool. The second of the spring was perched on a fence at the Obs on the early morning of 17th June before flying north. A 1cy that flew north over Gunnawark on 7th September was the first autumn record since 2000.



Plate 60. Hobby, Hjukni Geo, 4th June 2018. © Ian Andrews

## 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*

The first was not recorded until 21st–22nd February and sightings on 3rd and 6th–7th March likely related to just one individual. Records became more regular during April, with sightings on 14 dates, usually involving a young male, although an adult female was also observed on several occasions. The same young male was probably responsible for sightings to 11th May after which there no further records until 15th, 17th and 22nd August. There were records on just five dates in September and, although sightings were more regular throughout October, the peak count was just two. A female was seen on several occasions during November (including catching a Woodcock over Swey as the assistant wardens boarded the plane to leave Fair Isle) and in December there were singles on 10th, 27th and 29th.

## Red-backed Shrike

*Lanius collurio*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

Two were seen on both 13th and 14th May, involving three birds, and there were then sightings on all but one date from 18th May to 5th June. During this time numbers peaked at eight on 28th May, the highest day count since 2013, with at least 14 individuals seen in this period. A late male from 27th June until 2nd July brought the spring total to 18, the highest since 2014. In contrast, there was just a single autumn individual, at Lower Stoneybrek on 1st September.

## Jackdaw

*Corvus monedula*

*Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

A run of quieter years for the species culminated in no sightings at all in 2017; the first blank year on Fair Isle since 1963. There was something of a return to form in 2018, with spring sightings involving one on 15th, two from 18th to 21st and a single on 26th May. The best autumn passage since 2012 began with 26 on 13th October, increasing to 27 the following day. Numbers then gradually dwindled until the last two on 30th October. Although the flock initially roamed the Isle and often split into smaller groups, towards the end of their stay birds developed the pattern of feeding around Schoolton and apparently heading to Da Burrian or the cliffs of Meones to roost.



Plate 61. Jackdaw, Schoolton, 14th October 2018. © Ian Andrews

## Rook

*Corvus frugilegus*

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

Typical spring passage saw two on 21st and 25th March, singles on 9th–10th April and 3rd May then three on 5th–6th May. The first autumn records since 2016 involved two on 6th and three on 18th October.

## Carrion Crow

*Corvus corone*

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

Three birds present from the end of 2017 remained in situ, with one around Suka Mire and a pair in the South Light area that had been resident since spring 2016. Intriguingly, there was a spell in mid-April when only one bird was noted around Malcolm's Head, suggesting that the other (which reappeared later in the spring) could have been on a nest, although there was no confirmation of a breeding attempt taking place. The first migrant was noted on 15th April and after nine were recorded on 30th April, numbers rose rapidly to a peak of 58 on 4th May, the highest count since 2011. Counts dwindled quickly and by the second week of June there were just the two birds around Malcolm's Head and occasional sightings in the north that may have referred to a lingering bird. These same three were recorded throughout the summer, with numbers rising slightly in late August as a few migrants arrived, with an autumn peak of seven on 2nd September. Three remained to the end of the year including the established pair in the south and another around Hill Dyke that may have had some Hooded Crow genes in its ancestry, although on most views it appeared to closely resemble a pure Carrion Crow.

## Hooded Crow

*Corvus cornix*

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

There were up to ten recorded in the first winter period, with the first signs of migration involving a flock of 18 birds in the south-east of the Isle on 23rd March. There were occasional sightings of up to eight presumed migrants in April, and Carrion Crow passage in early May also brought at least ten Hooded Crows. At least two pairs fledged chicks in the south-east of the island. Early October brought further presumed migrants, with at least eight roaming the north, although it was not always easy to distinguish between possible migrants and post-breeding flocks of Fair Isle birds.



Plate 62. Hooded Crow, Hjukni Geo, 8th October 2018. © Steve Arlow

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

Small numbers are often seen during times of heavy corvid passage, and in 2018 there were up to three in the spring between 24th April and 10th June. In large, mixed-species flocks it is not always possible, however, to be precise as to how many of the individuals may have genetic ingression from another species at some point in their ancestry.

**Raven**

*Corvus corax*

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

Although present all year, occasional birds were also noted passing through and ten on 31st March were thought to involve some migrants. Only one pair was confirmed as breeding, in South Gunnawark and they fledged six chicks on 16th May. The only evidence of passage in the autumn was ten on 6th October, with five birds presumably from this group seen heading south off South Light two days later (although they aborted their attempted sea crossing and returned to Fair Isle).



Plate 63. Ravens, South Harbour, 8th October 2018. © Ian Andrews

**Waxwing**

*Bombycilla garrulus*

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

Records were restricted to the autumn, with one over Field on 16th October, a wandering bird that ended up at the Obs on 29th–30th October and another that showed well in the Obs garden as it fed on rosehips on 3rd November. The last big invasion year for this always-popular, funky visitor was back in 2012.



Plate 64. Blue Tit, Obs, 1st January 2018. © David Parnaby

## Blue Tit

*Cyanistes caeruleus*

***Vagrant: 13 previous records of 23 individuals; two in spring (March and April), 21 from October to December***

Following the record-breaking invasion in autumn 2017, three birds went on to winter on the Isle, the first such occurrence (although there has been a previous record of two birds arriving in late December). Two birds (one ringed) frequented the south-east of the Isle, whilst another ringed bird lingered at the Obs, with all three present until at least 20th February. It seemed likely that one of the birds from the south then left the Isle or perished during a very cold spell, with only two recorded in early March. They clearly started to get itchy feet after this, as both birds were at the Obs on 10th March and were then back down the Isle together on 13th–14th March, with the pair of them chasing each other around Schoolton on the latter date being the final sighting. Remarkably, a flock of three were then recorded at Stackhoull on 30th April. It was not noted whether the flock contained any ringed birds, but given the gap of over six weeks since the previous record, it is safe to assume that they were new arrivals.

## Skylark

*Alauda arvensis*

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

At least one was present in January and an increase was noted from 20th February, with up to 55 by the end of the month. There was a notable arrival in early March with singing noted from 9th and a count of 123 on 13th. Fluctuating counts in April saw between 58 and 188 (the latter count on 13th) and by May the records were presumably mostly of breeding birds, and counts generally ranged between 50 and 70. There was no count of breeding birds, with the first fledged birds noted on 6th June, a relatively early date. August saw up to 80 and counts remained below 100 in September until 15th, then a dramatic arrival later in the month saw a peak of 482 on 21st, the highest autumn count since 1995. This arrival was made all the more interesting by the fact it occurred in strong north-westerly winds with very few other birds on the move. October counts started high, including 321 on 4th but there were then less than 200 from 10th, apart from an arrival of 243 on 14th. By 27th October counts had dropped to less than 100, with up to 48 still in November. Small numbers lingered until late in the year, with at least one present around Leogh well into December.

## **\*Shore Lark**

*Eremophila alpestris*

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

A flighty and vocal individual at the base of Hoini on 17th October provided a record for the third consecutive year.

## **Sand Martin**

*Riparia riparia*

*Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn*

For the third consecutive year, the first record was rather early, with one on 7th–9th April. Further spring sightings occurred on just seven dates from 22nd April to 28th May, all one or two apart from five on 14th May. Autumn saw singles on 16th–18th and 29th–31st July, 27th August and 8th, 14th and 26th September, with the latter the latest record since 2010.

## **Swallow**

*Hirundo rustica*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds (last recorded 2017)*

The first on the typical arrival date of 11th April began a series of increasingly regular sightings throughout the rest of the month. There were daily sightings in May (except 2nd) and several days produced small pulses of passage, with a maximum of 64 on 14th, whilst 15 on 5th June was the last sign of movement. Up to four were seen on and off throughout the summer and, although no breeding was known to have taken place, a regular presence in the Skerryholm/Springfield area suggested as least one territory was held. Sightings became slightly more frequent during August, peaking at ten, with virtually daily sightings in September, but of no more than four after 5th, and one or two lingered until 10th October.

## **\*Crag Martin**

*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

*Vagrant; no previous records*

An unexpected addition to the Fair Isle list involved one of these chunky Mediterranean hirundines hawking the cliffs of Bunes at the north end of the harbour on 14th May. It was relocated in Furse the following day (becoming the sixth species of hirundine to be seen in that location in 2018) where it showed well until 16th May. A write-up of the occurrence can be found on pages 156–157 and in Pellow (2018).

## **House Martin**

*Delichon urbicum*

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

After the first on 5th May, the latest arrival date since 2002, spring passage was largely concentrated in the period up to 29th May. Almost daily sightings during this time were of no more than six, other than ten on 9th and 23rd and there were two later singles in spring on 3rd and 16th June. Singles on 25th July and 17th August started a very quiet autumn passage with the only other records on four dates from 11th to 19th September, which peaked at three on the final date.



Plate 65. Red-rumped Swallow (right) with Swallow, Furse, 3rd May 2018. © Richard Cope

## \*Red-rumped Swallow

*Cecropis daurica*

*Vagrant; 11 previous records, ten in spring, one in autumn*

The joint-second-earliest record for Fair Isle was found on a chilly morning on 3rd May when it was seen over Ditfield before eventually settling in Furse, where it remained the following day.

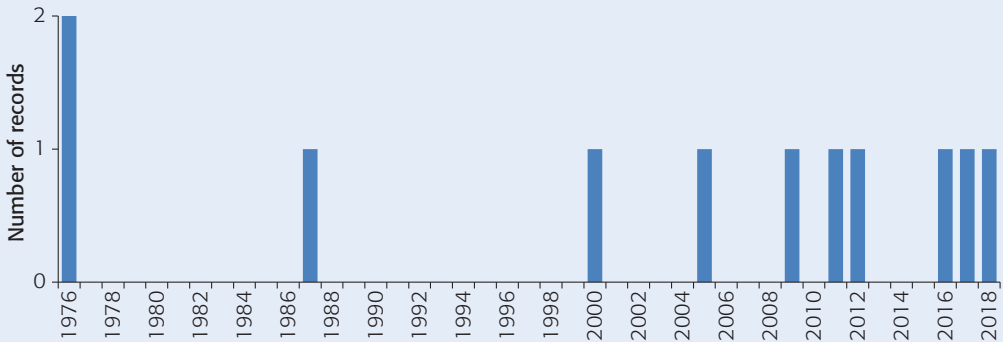


Figure 6. Annual occurrences of Red-rumped Swallow on Fair Isle. Note that there was one earlier occurrence, in 1906. Half of all records on Fair Isle have now occurred in the last decade in line with an increase in British records that saw the species dropped as a BBRC rarity in 2006.

## Wood Warbler

*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant*

The second blank spring since 2010 meant that one at the Obs on 4th August was the first of the year. What was presumably the same bird had relocated to Stackhoull the following day. The second of the year was at Kiln o' Skroo on 13th August with one then present at South Raeva, Hjukni Geo then Skerryholm on 6th–8th September.



## Yellow-browed Warbler

*Phylloscopus inornatus*

### Regular autumn migrant

One at Meadow Burn on 6th September was the earliest-ever Fair Isle record, beating the previous record of 9th September 2015. There were two the next day, three on 8th and numbers peaked at five on 9th, with one or two until 15th. Any hopes of another big year for this increasingly frequently-recorded Sibe were dashed by the onset of westerly winds though, with no more until 3rd October then near-daily records from 9th to 15th October, peaking at five on the latter date. The final records of a disappointing year were two on 20th October, with one remaining the following day. A total of at least 21 individuals is the lowest annual total since 2009.

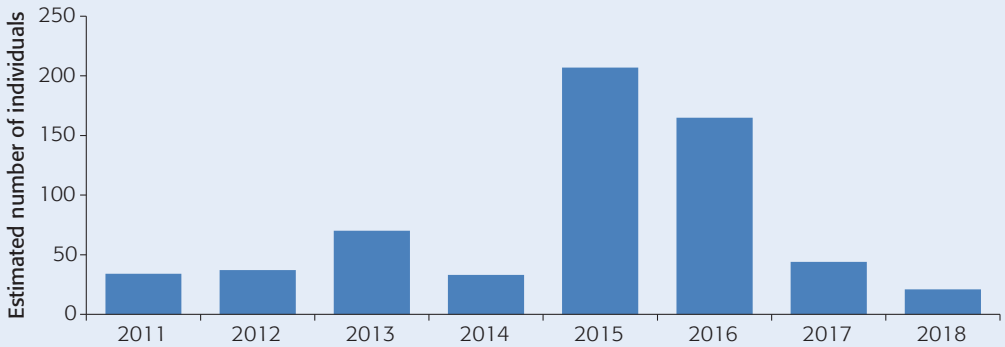


Figure 7. Annual totals of Yellow-browed Warblers (estimated individuals) on Fair Isle, 2011–18.



Plate 66. Yellow-browed Warbler, Field, 3rd October 2018. © David Wege



Plate 67. Willow Warbler, Quoy, 24th September 2018. © Steve Arlow

## Willow Warbler

*Phylloscopus trochilus*

### *Common spring and autumn migrant*

After the first on 7th April, an average arrival date, there were regular sightings of up to three until the end of month. The species was regular in May, mostly in single figures although a mid-month arrival peaked at 26 on 14th and there were 23 on 31st May. Birds resembling the Scandinavian subspecies *P.t. acredula* were noted on 14th and 31st, although the subspecific identification of most of Fair Isle's migrants isn't clear. After the late May fall there were still seven on 1st June with one remaining until 6th and the last of the spring was singing in the Gully on 10th–11th June. An adult at Schoolton on 11th July was the first of the autumn and the first juvenile was seen on 27th July. There were then daily records until 28th September and one or two regularly until 13th October. Autumn passage was generally disappointing, with a peak of just 39, on 23rd August, a September high of 28 (on 8th) and just single figures from 16th September.

## Chiffchaff

*Phylloscopus collybita*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

The arrival date of 30th March was slightly later than average, with six the following day and then daily records throughout the spring. A first larger wave of arrivals saw numbers rise to 56 on 15th April, with counts down to single figures at the end of the month. Early May saw up to 14, including a few singing birds, with a large arrival mid-month seeing a spring peak of 73 on 14th. This is the third-highest-ever spring peak count following 89 in 2016 and 78 in 2017, showing the continued good fortunes of this species. Numbers dropped away rapidly after this, although there were still small numbers of migrants noted moving until 11th June at least. As usual for recent years, a number were noted throughout the summer with at least two at the Obs and one in the south-east of the Isle. Only a couple of migrants were noted in August from 2nd, with five on 11th being the peak count for the autumn; the lowest autumn peak since 1995. At least two of the summering birds lingered until September, with four being the peak count for the month, with a similar picture in October, with records on 21 dates also peaking at four. Up to two were seen on six dates in November, with the last of the year (a 'Siberian Chiffchaff', see below) on 24th.

## 'Scandinavian Chiffchaff'

*P.c.abietinus*

*Status unclear due to difficulties in identification, but probably a scarce or regular migrant, commonest in autumn*

A possible was recorded on 13th May and a bird matching the appearance of this subspecies was seen on 12th November. Another on 20th November, that was thought to resemble this subspecies being identified by DNA analysis as a nominate *P.c.collybita*, showed how tricky this subspecies can be to identify in the field.

## 'Siberian Chiffchaff'

*P.c.tristis*

*Regular autumn and rare spring migrant*

This subspecies is less than annual in the spring, but one seen on 14th May made it two consecutive years of occurrences in this season. It was another eastern bird for which the autumn was desperately quiet though, with the only records involving two on 28th October and singles on 5th and 24th November, with the latter bird, at the Obs, being the last Chiffchaff of the year.

## \*Greenish Warbler

*Phylloscopus trochiloides*

*Rare migrant; 54 previous records with 43 in autumn (August–September) and 11 in spring (eight in June, two in July and a single in May)*

One arrived at Guidicum in the afternoon of 31st August, the first record since 2016. Sightings from 1st to 3rd September at South Raeva, North Raeva and the Kirk respectively were thought by the observers to possibly involve at least one new bird, but with no conclusive plumage differences the chances of one wandering individual being responsible for all the year's sightings was considered the most likely option.

## \*Arctic Warbler

*Phylloscopus borealis*

*Rare migrant; 92 previous records, most in August and September, also recorded in June (two), July (four) and October (seven)*

The first of the year was in the Gully on 16th August, the earliest arrival date since 2011. A remarkable period in early September began with an adult at Stackhoull on 5th September. Two 1cys arrived on 6th September: one at Muckle Jarm's Geo that remained until 7th and the other at the School that was assumed to be the bird that roamed around Leogh, Field and Chalet until 9th. A third was found on 7th September, at Shirva, which then roamed around the area between Leogh, Pund and Field until 18th September. There have been previous multiple daily occurrences, although this was the first since 1994 and three in a day is a new record.



Plate 68. Arctic Warbler, Pund, 8th September 2018.  
© Richard Cope

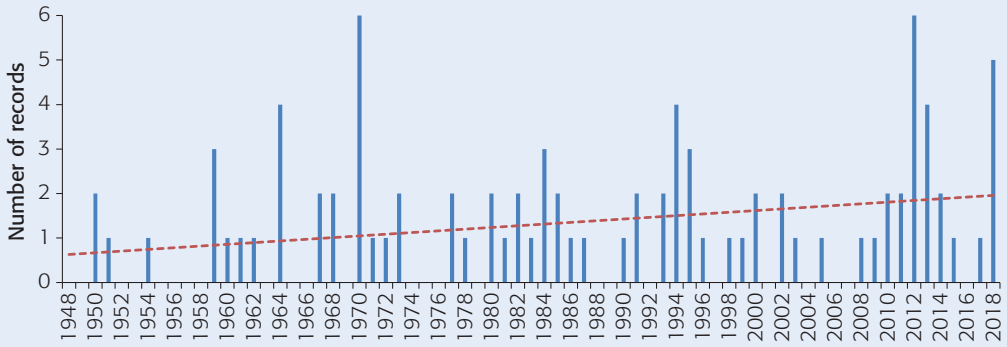


Figure 8. Annual totals of Arctic Warblers on Fair Isle 1948–2018 and trendline (note there are also seven pre-FIBO records). The graph shows clear tendencies for surges of records interspersed with quieter spells, but note the overall increase in records as indicated by the trendline.

## Sedge Warbler

*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

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

One on 22nd–23rd April was the earliest arrival date since 2011 and there were then virtually daily sightings from 3rd to 31st May that peaked at seven on 10th and 13th–14th. After singles on 6th and 11th June a singing bird was at Chalet on 27th–28th June. An early returning migrant was at the Obs on 7th August and there were then regular sightings of up to two from 23rd August until 22nd September.

## \*Blyth's Reed Warbler

*Acrocephalus dumetorum*

### Rare migrant; 47 previous records, 33 in autumn (August–October) and 14 in spring (May–June)

The species has only missed two springs since 2010, so one at Chalet on 27th May was almost expected, although it was slightly earlier than typical. One at Springfield on 8th September was assumed to be the bird found the following day at Schoolton, until both were observed at the same time in their original locations on 10th September. Another was then trapped in the Gully on 18th September and remained at the Obs the following day. The previous nine years have produced a mean of two autumn records per annum, so 2018's autumn crop of three was fairly typical.



Plate 69. Blyth's Reed Warbler, Chalet, 27th May 2018. © Ian Andrews

## Reed Warbler

*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

### *Regular migrant, more common in autumn*

For the second consecutive year, there were just three individuals in the spring. The first was a ringed bird at North Haven on 13th–14th May which then moved to Lower Stoneybrek and remained in the crofts until 20th. A very dull individual at Setter then Chalet on 21st–25th May was trapped to confirm the identity, and the final spring record was in the Walli Burn on 27th May. After one on 5th August, there were regular records from 10th August to 20th September, with a peak of four on 7th September.



Plate 70. Reed Warbler, Setter, 21st May 2018. © Richard Cope

## 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)*

One singing at Schoolton on 19th May was the second earliest-ever arrival date, just a day later than the record set in 2013. It heralded a strong spring showing for the species, with one at Shirva on 23rd May then a daily presence from 27th May to 20th June, including a peak of seven on 31st May, the highest-ever day count for the Isle. There were still at least three present until 13th June, with one lingering at the Obs after that. Singing birds were regularly observed and, given previous occurrences of breeding elsewhere in the Northern Isles, it is a species that could well try to nest on Fair Isle, but there was no suggestion of that in 2018. It was estimated that there was a minimum of 12 individuals involved in the spring sightings, although there may well have been a greater

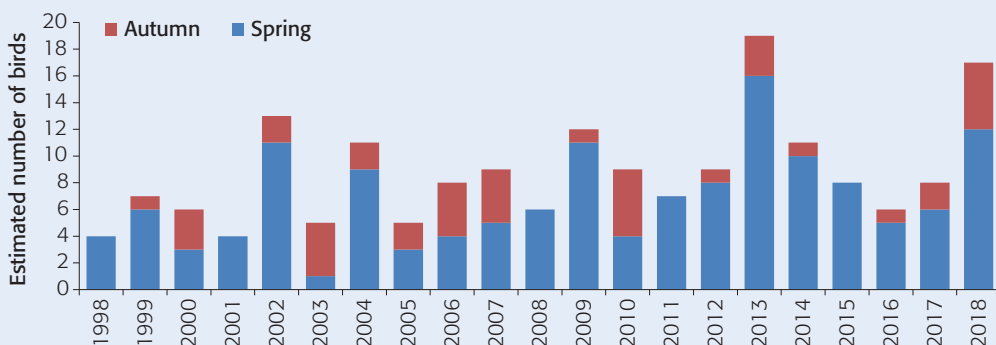


Figure 9. Seasonal occurrences of Marsh Warblers on Fair Isle, 1998–2018.

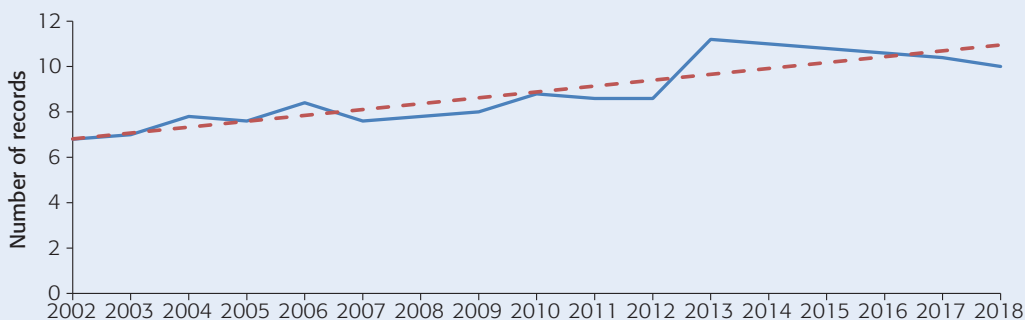


Figure 10. Rolling five-year mean of Marsh Warbler records on Fair Isle, 1998–2018 (hence the value of 8.8 for 2018 is the mean for the five-year period 2014–18 inclusive) and trendline showing the increasing frequency of occurrence.

turnover. In the strongest autumn showing since 2010, there was a total of five birds recorded: singles at the Obs on 3rd–6th August, Wirvie Burn on 13th August, the Obs from 27th August to 1st September, Wirvie Burn on 28th August and Meadow Burn on 6th–8th September.

## Icterine Warbler

*Hippolais icterina*

### Regular spring and autumn migrant

After the first on 17th May at Schoolton there were daily sightings until 5th June. There were new arrivals on 23rd, 28th and 30th May before six were present on 31st, with two remaining until 2nd June. The spring total of nine was the best since 2012. An adult at the Obs on 27th–29th July was the fourth-earliest autumn arrival. It was followed by more typical records of a juvenile in the south-east of the Isle on 11th–13th August, two on 31st August (at Furse and Hoini) and the last of the year, in the Gully on 5th September.

## Grasshopper Warbler

*Locustella naevia*

### Regular spring and autumn migrant

One at Lower Leogh on 12th April was 18 days earlier than the first in 2017 and only five days later than the earliest-ever record, although what was presumably the same bird was found dead at Midway a few days later. There were three singles in May between 8th–13th in a quiet spring for the species. Autumn was the poorest since 2005, with just three records; the Vaadal on 12th August, Da Water on 25th August and Wirvie Burn on 13th September.

## \*Lanceolated Warbler

*Locustella lanceolata*

*Scarce autumn migrant; 95 previous records (between 4th September and 1st November)*

Although an expected autumn migrant, there were none in 2017, just the second blank year since 1995 (the last was 2009). 2018 started well though with the second earliest-ever Fair Isle record on 5th September (the earliest record was 4th September 2009), when a 1cy was caught in the Gully, the first to be found in the traps since 2007. Another early bird (the joint sixth earliest for Fair Isle) was flushed from the Vaadal reservoir on 11th September and dropped into the Vaadal Helgoland, where it was trapped and also found to be a 1cy bird (as have all the other birds that have been aged on Fair Isle). With these two early records, it was hoped to make further progress towards the 100th Lancie for Fair Isle, but the almost constant westerlies throughout the rest of the autumn put paid to that and there were no further records.



Plate 71. Lanceolated Warbler, Obs, 5th September 2018. © David Parnaby

## Blackcap

*Sylvia atricapilla*

*Common spring and autumn migrant*

There were regular spring sightings from 11th April to 1st June, mostly of up to six, with a slight rise in mid-May seeing a peak of 14 on 13th. Late spring records occurred on 7th–8th and 18th (two) June. Although there were almost daily sightings in September from 1st, the peak monthly count was of just ten on 18th. It was a similar picture in October, with regular sightings, but a peak of just 18 on 12th (one of only six days of double-figure counts during the month), the lowest autumn peak since 2012. Light passage continued throughout November until 25th, with a peak of nine on 8th.

## Garden Warbler

*Sylvia borin*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

There were regular sightings from 9th May to 22nd June, all of one or two, other than a spell in late May and early June that peaked with 18 on 31st. A singing bird at the Obs on 11th June was a pleasant addition to the more expected summer sounds of Fair Isle. Autumn passage began early, with one on 30th–31st July at Schoolton, with the bulk of records falling from 7th August to 17th September. The peak count was seven, on 31st August, with six logged on 16th August and 7th–8th September. There was one later sighting in September, then up to three on three dates from 3rd–8th October before a late bird at Pund on 25th October.

## Barred Warbler

*Sylvia nisoria*

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

The first of the year was at Lower Stoneybrek on 13th August, the earliest arrival date since 2014. After one at Burkle on 18th–19th August, then two on 21st August that increased to three the next day (with one remaining until 23rd), there were four on 27th August, which saw the start of daily census sightings until 20th September. During this time, numbers increased to seven by 31st August and, after dropping down to five or less, increased to seven again on 7th September. After the first blank October since 2006, Fair Isle's latest-ever Barred Warbler was at Skerryholm and Haa on 5th November. The autumn produced an impressive total of at least 22 individuals, making it the best year since 2014.



Plate 72. Barred Warbler, Stackhoull, 31st August 2018. © Toby Carter

## Lesser Whitethroat

*Sylvia curruca*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Singles at the Obs and Pund on 13th April were a week earlier than the previous record (20th April 2009), with one then at South Light on 14th. There were then regular records from 19th to 30th April, with a peak of five on 22nd, as the early passage continued. Virtually daily records then followed during the more typical spring passage period from 5th May to 17th June, with one going on to linger until 7th July. Counts in the main passage period were generally of four or less, but peaks included seven on 13th May and nine on 28th May. The first of the autumn were singles on 8th and 12th August and there were then up to two from 21st–23rd August, with the main period of passage from 4th–21st September when there were virtually daily records peaking at five on 7th. There were no October records for the first time since 1980.

## Whitethroat

*Sylvia communis*

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

Spring passage spanned from 5th May (the latest arrival date since 2013) to 4th June, with virtually daily counts during this period, all of which were in single figures other than 13 on 14th May. Autumn passage was uneventful, occurring from 13th August to 19th September and peaking at five on 7th September.



## \*Subalpine Warbler

*Sylvia cantillans*

*Rare migrant; 97 previous records (93 in spring and four in autumn). Most currently unraced, although at least 17 thought to be 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' *S.c.cantillans/albistriata**

### 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' *S.c.cantillans/albistriata*

The scarcer of the two Subalpine Warbler subspecies groups made its first appearance since 2016 when a female was at Lower Stoneybrek on 1st June. As with several previous records of Subalpine Warbler, this was a long-staying bird and lingered around the Burkle and Chapel Plantation area until 31st July. DNA analysis proved it to be *S.c.albistriata*, the more widespread subspecies of 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'.



Plate 73. 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler', Upper Stoneybrek, 1st June 2018. © Ian Andrews

### Unidentified Subalpine Warbler

An elusive female at Lower Leogh on 22nd May was never seen well enough to confirm to subspecies level (or to rule out Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler). Subalpine Warbler has been recorded on Fair Isle annually since 2000.

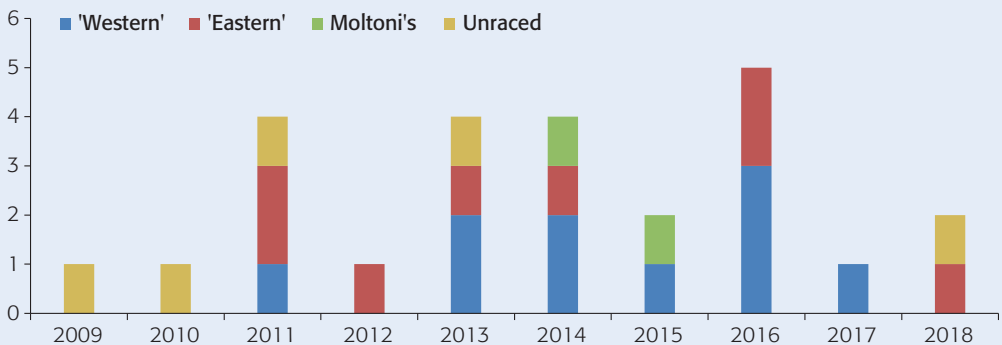


Figure 11. Records of Subalpine Warbler and Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler on Fair Isle over the last decade showing subspecific identification.

## Goldcrest

*Regulus regulus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Despite the easterly winds in late March, passage didn't begin until 6th April, the latest arrival date since 1996. There were regular records to 8th May, with the spring peak being 17 on 13th April. September was desperately quiet, with one on 1st and daily records from 7th–16th that peaked at just two. The next arrivals saw records from 11th–22nd October rising to an autumn high of 27 on 17th, the lowest autumn peak since 1994. Eight arrived on 28th October with up to four then present until 9th November, with the final records involving six on 12th and one on 18th November.

## Wren

*Troglodytes troglodytes*

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

Singing was first heard on 3rd February, although birds had gone quiet again by the end of the month. Mapping singing birds during the spring resulted in a total of 38 occupied territories being identified, a decrease of seven from 2017 (although four higher than 2016). Chicks were known to have fledged from at least 15 territories, with the first fledglings noted on the very late of 20th June in both Furse and South Restengeo.



Plate 74. 'Fair Isle Wren', North Haven, 2nd June 2018. © Ian Andrews

## \*Rose-coloured Starling

*Pastor roseus*

*Rare migrant; 46 previous individuals, with 11 in spring (May–June), 11 in summer and 24 in autumn (August–November)*

In keeping with a large arrival of this species into western Europe, it proved to be a record year on Fair Isle, with four adults recorded. The first was at South Naavergill on 31st May (the first spring record since 2008), with two on Lerness on 2nd June presumed to include the original individual. There was then one trapped in the Plantation on 3rd June, which remained in the area the following day, when the two were again on Lerness; three being a record count for the Isle. The final record involved one around Wirvie on 9th–10th August, which was then seen in a pre-roost flock at North Light on 12th.



Plate 75. Rose-coloured Starling, Obs, 3rd June 2018. © Ian Andrews

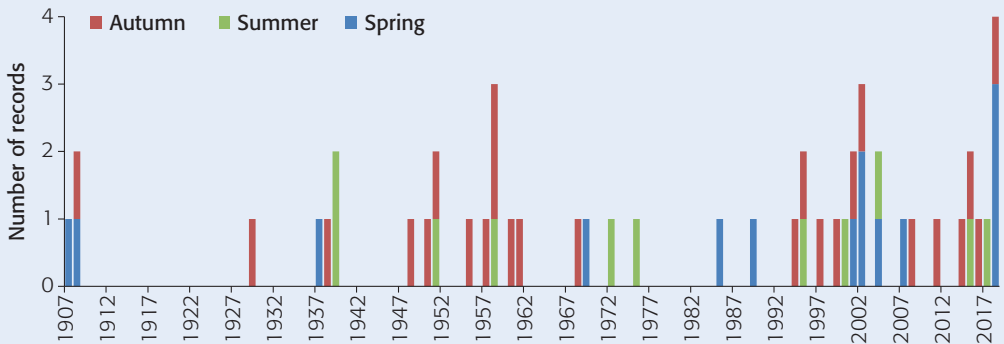


Figure 12. Annual and seasonal distribution of Rose-coloured Starlings on Fair Isle, 1907–2018. After a quieter spell following a peak in the mid-1990s to early 2000s, records appearing to be increasing again, with sightings in the last five years.

## Starling

*Sturnus vulgaris*

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

The first hatched chicks were noticed on 11th May and the first fledged youngsters ventured from the nest on the rather early date of 4th June. The species is present throughout the year and isn't counted as part of census, but migration also takes place through the Isle, for example 77 were seen heading south out to sea on 18th October and small numbers were seen coming in off the sea on 19th and 23rd November.



Plate 76. White's Thrush, Mast, 13th October 2018. © Steve Arlow

## \*White's Thrush

*Zosterorhina aurea*

**Vagrant; 15 previous records, 14 in autumn (September–October), one in February**

One found at Wester Lother on 13th October was then relocated at the Mast, where it showed well as it fed in the open, often giving its distinctive bobbing hip-wiggle. The fourth record in a row of this mighty *Zosterorhina* to appear in the 'North' census area of Fair Isle, it was slightly later than any of the last ten records, which had all occurred between 25th September and 8th October. Interestingly, the first four records for the Isle (between 1929 and 1958) occurred in the second half of October or November.

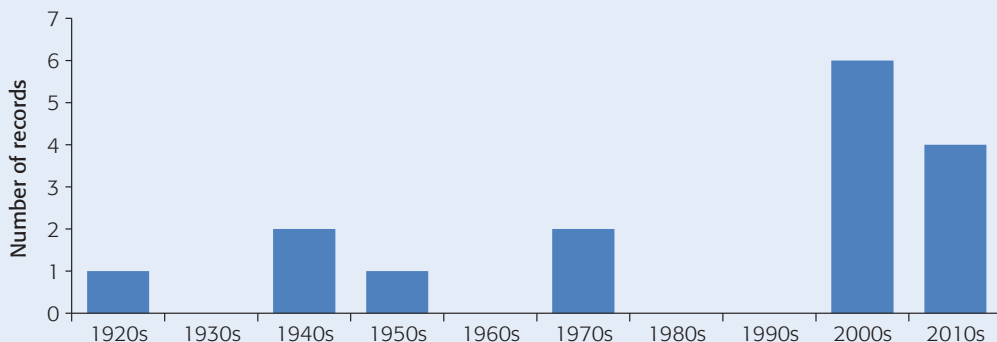


Figure 13. White's Thrush records on Fair Isle by decade. The recent upturn in records is well illustrated.

## Ring Ouzel

*Turdus torquatus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

The first was on the typical date of 8th April and saw the start of regular sightings until 18th May, with counts of up to four, other than during 13th–16th April, when numbers peaked at 22 on the first date, the highest spring count since 2014. After the first of the autumn was on Hoini on 11th October there were eight on 12th–13th October, with numbers dropping to three by 17th and one lingering until 26th before one on 5th–7th November completed a quiet autumn.

## Blackbird

*Turdus merula*

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

Counts of wintering birds never exceeded 11 and by early March just single figures were being recorded. A superb spring passage started in mid-March, with 38 on 12th and further arrivals on 13th, 18th, 23rd and from 29th, with the first census of the season on 31st March producing 894. Numbers rose to 1,057 by 4th April and, after dropping away (although to not less than 481) increased again to 1,115 on 15th April, the highest spring count since 2006. After 727 the following day, numbers dropped away rapidly with less than 100 from 21st April. A maximum of 23 was seen in May with single-figure counts only in the second half of the month and two or three seen during the summer, although there was no hint of any breeding attempt. There were no more than two throughout September and, although a few new arrivals were seen in early October, counts didn't get into double figures until 11th and then rose rapidly to the monthly peak of 168 on 13th. Although numbers fluctuated for the rest of the month there were only four more counts of over 100. Arrivals continued into November and 175 on 12th was the highest count of the autumn, although this represented the lowest autumn peak since 1998. Counts after this were considerably lower, although migration continued through the rest of November, but by December wintering numbers of typically less than 20 were recorded.

## Fieldfare

*Turdus pilaris*

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

There were 35 present at the start of year and this species tendency for winter arrivals given suitable conditions was demonstrated by 84 on 25th January and 152 on 20th February. Spring arrivals saw 118 in the south only on 13th March and 170 on 31st March. Up to 218 were regularly seen in early April then, after numbers dropped to around 100, a mid-month arrival saw the spring peak of 280 on 16th, the highest spring count since 2014. Numbers dropped away rapidly after this, with just single figures from 23rd April to 10th May. One on 6th June was the latest spring record since 2008. There was just one in September, on 18th–19th, but from 3rd October records were daily until the end of the month, although the only three-figure counts were 365 on 16th and 107 on 30th. There were further arrivals in early November, including 389 on 8th, the highest count of the autumn. Although birds were present until the end of the year, single-figure counts were the norm in December.



Plate 77. Fieldfare, Double Dyke, 5th October 2018. © Steve Arlow

## Redwing

*Turdus iliacus*

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

The early winter period was unremarkable, with maximum counts of 24 in January and 50 in February with numbers dropping to single figures by mid-March. A large fall of Scandinavian-bound birds of the subspecies *T.i.iliacus* from 29th March saw numbers increase to 403 by the first census of the year on 31st. There were 461 on 1st April, the highest spring count since 2006, and numbers didn't drop below 376 for the first five days of April. There were around 170 from 7th–16th although further arrivals saw 268 on 9th and 282 on 15th. Counts quickly fell away to 29 by 18th and there were just single figures from 21st until 5th May, with one on 14th–15th and up to two on 19th–20th May. The last of the spring, however, was an individual of the Icelandic subspecies



Plate 78. 'Icelandic Redwing', Obs, 4th October 2018.  
© Ian Andrews

*T.i.coburni* that arrived on 6th June and went on to summer on the Isle, usually in the Gully area. The first migrant arrived on the slightly early date of 7th September but, although the summering bird remained, there were no more until 26th September and just single figures until 72 on 3rd October. Larger numbers were recorded throughout October, including 260 on 5th, then a larger arrival of 1,609 occurred on 12th. After counts fluctuated for the next few days, they reached an annual peak of 2,935 on 16th, dropped to 663 on 17th, then rose again to 2,674 the following day, with these arrivals consisting almost entirely of Icelandic birds. Numbers declined after this, although there were 512 on 23rd then, after 26th, there were less than 85 for the rest of the month. Arrivals in early November included 360 on 6th and 284 on 8th and good numbers lingered for a lot of the month, although by December, counts had fallen away with 20–40 present until the end of the year.

## Song Thrush

*Turdus philomelos*

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

There was a maximum of three in the first winter period, with the first spring arrivals noted from 13th March, with numbers building gradually to the highest spring count since 2006 when 181 were recorded on 4th April. There was then a dip in records until mid-month when numbers rose again to 140 on 15th, although from 21st April there were just scattered single-figure records until 18th May. One at the Restengeos on 20th June was probably the bird that then went on to be recorded throughout July, whilst the suspicion that more than one bird may have been summering were confirmed when two were trapped on 10th and 11th August. The start of the autumn was quiet, with no more than three recorded until 11th October, with numbers then rising to 191 on 13th October. Counts dropped significantly throughout the rest of the month, with only small arrivals of up to 23 noted throughout November and, typically, just low single-figure counts through December.

## Mistle Thrush

*Turdus viscivorus*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

There was a strong spring passage beginning with one on the typical date of 7th March, and then sightings on ten more March dates, including a peak of seven on 15th (although lack of census coverage at this time means the actual number present was likely to be higher). Sightings were daily in April until 23rd, with peaks of 16 on 6th and 15th, the highest spring counts since 2013. In contrast, the only record in the latter half of the year was one at Gunnawark on 14th October, making it the quietest autumn since 1991 (and also meaning that the same number of Mistle and White's Thrushes were recorded this autumn!).

## Spotted Flycatcher

*Muscicapa striata*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

One on Dronger on 13th May was the latest arrival date since 2010 and preceded a small arrival of up to four until 17th May. The main spring passage was then concentrated from 25th May to 10th June, with a peak of 17 on 28th May, the highest count since 2015. For the second consecutive year there was a record on 5th July, when one was at the Obs. Autumn passage was largely restricted to up to four on four dates from 19th to 27th August, then daily records during 6th–12th September, peaking at six on 7th. There were two on 18th September, then a 1cy at Hjukni Geo on 15th–16th October, which was the latest record since 1987.



Plate 79. Spotted Flycatcher, Homisdale, 9th September 2018. © Richard Cope

## Robin

*Erithacus rubecula*

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

Only small numbers wintered, with a maximum count of three, and the first signs of spring passage were noted from mid-March. An impressive fall saw a minimum of five on 29th March increase to 268 on 31st, the highest spring count since 2012. Numbers remained over 100 throughout the first half of the month and rose again to 235 on 15th before dwindling to ten by 22nd. Single figures remained throughout May and one summered at the Obs. The first autumn migrant was on Dronger on 23rd August but numbers didn't increase beyond two through September. Numbers finally increased from 11th October, when there were eight, to an autumn peak of 49 on 17th. Smaller numbers remained throughout the rest of October and migrants were still on the move in November with 27 on 12th and 12 around the traps and north-east cliffs on 19th. One remained at the Obs throughout the winter, with at least two others down the Isle.

## Bluethroat

*Luscinia svecica*

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

A male in Wirvie Burn on 10th May was the first of the year and occurred on the same date as the first arrival in 2017. The next record was an impressive arrival of eight on 13th May, the highest count since 2009. Smaller numbers lingered until 16th, although at least one new bird was present on 15th. Further arrivals involved females on 20th and 22nd, two females on 28th–30th, one of which was still present on 31st when two males also arrived, with two lingering until 1st June. A spring total of 16 individuals was above average for recent years. The autumn, however, was the quietest since 2002 with just one record, a 1cy with a damaged left leg at Quoy on 28th October.



Plate 80. Bluethroat, Quoy, 28th October 2018. © Richard Cope



## \*Thrush Nightingale

*Luscinia luscinia*

*Rare migrant; 63 previous records, 51 in spring (May–June) and 12 in autumn (August–September, with one in October)*

The best spring since 2013 for this species saw two recorded, although remarkably they were both trapped in the Plantation, just a few hours apart on 30th May. Both were still present the following day, with one lingering until 1st June.

## \*Siberian Rubythroat

*Calliope calliope*

*Vagrant; seven previous records (six in October, one in November)*

Although the species has lost its ultra-rarity status in the last couple of decades, its stunningly gorgeous looks, previous mythical status and almost exclusive fixation with Fair Isle and Shetland (which are now responsible respectively for eight and four of the 14 British records) means that any appearance, especially of a male, will be a highlight of a birding year for anyone lucky enough to witness it. Fair Isle's second-latest record, and third male, was found along the Meadow Burn on 28th October and showed well in roadside fields near Midway for several hours, before melting away into the ditches and not being seen again.



Plates 81–82. Siberian Rubythroat, Midway, 28th October 2018. © David Parnaby

## Pied Flycatcher

*Ficedula hypoleuca*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

There were up to two from 4th–6th May, a relatively late arrival date, then sightings were regular from 13th May to 9th June with the largest numbers at the end of May, peaking at nine on 31st. There have only been two previous July records on Fair Isle (22nd July 1963 and 10th July 1991), so two on 29th–30th, with one remaining the following day, were exceptionally early autumn migrants. It did not signal an impressive passage however, with just three singles in August until three arrived on 31st, heralding a series of regular sightings until 15th September, peaking at 11 on 6th. It was the earliest 'last date' in FIBO history.

## Red-breasted Flycatcher

*Ficedula parva*

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

A female-type at Lower Stoneybrek from 18th–20th May means there have been spring records in six of the last seven years. After several productive autumns in recent years, there were only two records in 2018; an adult male in North Raeva on 1st September and a 1cy at Swarzie Geo on 18th October.

## Black Redstart

*Phoenicurus ochruros*

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

There was one on 20th–23rd March around Mavers Geo and the Obs, with spring passage seeing regular sightings from 8th–27th April and 9th–22nd May, with peaks of four in both periods, then late records on 31st May to 2nd June and 16th June. A juvenile around the Obs on 15th July then wandered the Isle until 26th July and autumn passage saw sightings on 14 dates in August from 9th and eight dates in September, with peaks of three in both months. October was unusually quiet, with no sightings after 5th, before later records on 5th, 8th and 25th November.



Plate 83. Black Redstart, School, 31st May 2018. © Ian Andrews

## Redstart

*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Spring passage didn't begin until one was at Burkle on 9th May, the latest arrival date since 2007. There were records on just 11 more dates until the last two of the spring on 2nd June, all of less than five, other than the spring peak of seven on 31st May. A very quiet autumn passage saw daily records from 6th–14th September, peaking at just six on 9th then two on 16th October, with one the following day.

## Whinchat

*Saxicola rubetra*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

A male at North Light on 21st April was the earliest arrival since 1988, with another early bird on Bunness on 26th April. Spring passage was then largely unremarkable though, with up to two recorded on 12 dates in May and three singles in June until the last on 10th. Records on 12th–13th and 17th August preceded daily census records from 31st August to 17th October. The main passage period was in early September, with a peak of eight on 9th, with most of the records from the latter part of September onwards relating to three lingering individuals.



Plate 84. Whinchat, Setter, 24th September 2018. © Steve Arlow

## Stonechat

*Saxicola rubicola*

### *Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

A strong spring passage began with one or two on five dates from 8th–15th March, probably involving five individuals, and then one on 24th March. There were one or two on ten dates from 31st March to 18th April, involving a minimum of six individuals, with a late female on 14th May. Records of a female at Da Water on 13th July and a male at School Brae on 21st July were very unusual, with the only previous records in July in 1965 and 1975 (two). Autumn was quiet, with sightings around the Boini Marsh area from 12th October until 13th November thought to relate to a single lingering individual, with the only other being in Wirvie Burn on 12th November.

## Wheatear

*Oenanthe oenanthe*

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

A female at Utra on 31st March was the first, a typical arrival date, with numbers then rising slowly to 50 by 18th April and 133 by the end of the month. Counts of over 200 occurred during 6th–14th, May, peaking at 254 on the first date, whilst around 60 were generally being counted daily by the end of the month, being largely breeding birds. The first fledged youngsters were seen on 15th June, a few days earlier than recent years. August counts peaked at 171 on 13th but had dropped to around 40 by the end of the month and September counts were very low, with numbers generally around 30 and a peak of just 60 on 3rd. Although sightings were regular in October, they rarely broke into double figures and the last of the year was at Dumlin Sinks on 2nd November.

## \*Dipper

*Cinclus cinclus*

*Vagrant; 37 previous records, 21 in spring (primarily March and April, with one in May) and 14 in autumn (October and November) with two December arrivals. There are currently 11 accepted records of 'Black-bellied Dipper' C.c.cinclus, although all bar three records (May 1946, April 1963 and April 1971) are thought to be this subspecies*

Having waited since April 2011 for a record, one that alighted on the old slip in North Haven on 7th April before careering across South Haven and eventually into Finnequoy, was widely admired. It went on to linger around the Gully area until 19th April. During this time, an apparently newly arrived individual was in the Wirvie Burn on 13th April, with the presence of two being confirmed on 15th (the last date on which two were seen) when the recent arrival was trapped in the Vaadal whilst the first bird was still present in the Gully. Both birds were 'Black-bellied Dippers' in their 2cy and the trapped bird was shown to be a male on biometrics.



Plate 85. 'Black-bellied Dipper', Gully, 11th April 2018. © Richard Cope

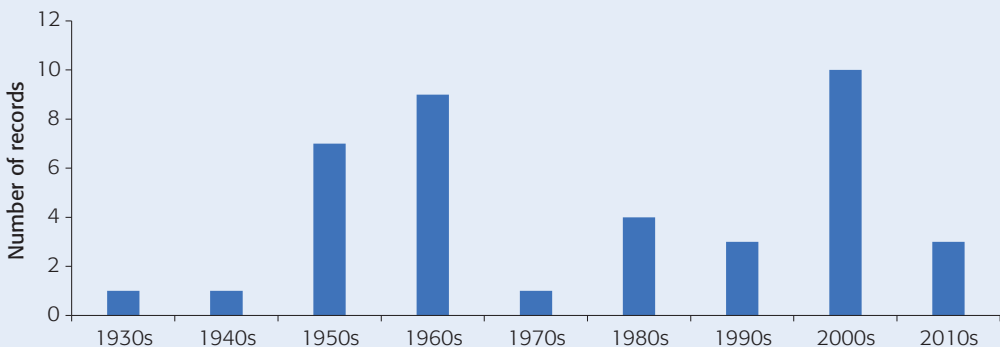


Figure 14. Dipper records on Fair Isle by decade. The boom time for the species was the 1950s–60s (perhaps indicating more birds being forced out of their wintering grounds by harsher winters), although the 2000s also produced an impressive crop.

## House Sparrow

*Passer domesticus*

### *Resident, breeds in small numbers*

Although this species isn't counted daily on census, it appears that the resident population is currently doing quite well, with spring counts indicating 35–55 pairs. The first fledged chicks were noted on 6th June, four days earlier than 2017. It appeared to be a successful breeding season and large flocks, containing a high proportion of juveniles, were often seen at sacrificial oat crops at Quoy and Bull's Park, with 194 on 17th September the largest count since 1992.

## Tree Sparrow

*Passer montanus*

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

Typically an erratic species in its occurrences, this was a good spring after the rather quiet last two years. The first was at the Obs on 1st May with numbers building up to seven at the feeders during the day. There then followed daily sightings until 17th May, with a maximum of ten on 6th. Two on Dronger on 20th May were presumably new arrivals, as were two on 26th May. The first autumn record since 2014 involved one at Field on 29th August.

## Dunnock

*Prunella modularis*

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

The first on 17th March was the earliest arrival date since 2011 and there were then scattered sightings until 28th March. After this, there were daily records throughout April, with numbers rising to 63 on 15th April, the highest spring count since 2012. Although there were records throughout May, they were of no more than five, although they did include two lingering birds at the Obs and a pair on Dronger, including a singing bird, from 15th–20th. A bird was seen throughout June, July and August, the second consecutive year of summering. Unusually, all records in September appeared to refer to the same bird, with migrants not recorded until 13th October when six represented the highest count of a very quiet autumn. There were very few arrivals after this, although one or two were seen until 10th November. Given the very slow autumn for this species, one at Nether Taft on 6th December was a surprise and was the first record in this month since one overwintered in 2011/12.

## Yellow Wagtail

*Motacilla flava*

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

#### **'Yellow Wagtail'** *M.f.flavissima*

An unidentified flava wagtail on 28th April was presumably the Yellow Wagtail at Utra the following day, with the only other record involving one on 8th–9th May.

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

There were four in the spring with a male at Wirvie on 24th April, one in South Harbour on 5th–6th May, a male at North Light on 19th May and a male on Bunes on 31st May.

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

In a quiet year for this subspecies, the only records were a female at Utra on 14th May and a male at the upper Wirvie Burn on 1st June.

### **Unidentified flava wagtail**

One over Gilsetter on 22nd April was the first *flava* wagtail of the year, with most other spring sightings of unidentified *flavas* probably involving birds mentioned above on days when they were not seen well enough to confirm subspecific identification, although two unidentified *flava* wagtails on 19th May were present the same day as a 'Blue-headed Wagtail', with these three representing the highest *flava* count of the year. Autumn was very quiet with just two records (both unidentified to subspecies); one on 9th–11th September and a bird on 31st October which was the latest record since 1957. Perhaps counter intuitively, this latter record was not an Eastern Yellow Wagtail (a recently split species), with plumage and call both being typical of a *flava* subspecies.

## **Grey Wagtail**

*Motacilla cinerea*

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

Spring passage began on the expected date of 21st March, with another on 24th then regular records from 30th March to 6th May that peaked at six on three dates in the second week of April. There was a late migrant on 20th–23rd May and for the third consecutive year there was a male lingering in the Gully in June, being present from 5th–11th. An early autumn migrant on 24th August preceded singles on three dates in September from 19th before sightings on 14 dates in October peaked at three on 3rd and 15th, with the last sightings of the year involving one on 5th and two on 6th–7th November.

## **Pied Wagtail**

*Motacilla alba*

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

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

As usual, this was the first *alba* wagtail subspecies to put in an appearance, with the first on 15th March. Peak passage was slightly earlier than for 'White Wagtail', with a maximum count of 20 on 10th April (when there were also eight unidentified *alba* wagtails and one 'White Wagtail'), after which counts soon settled to less than ten, suggesting they were largely breeding birds. Four pairs were confirmed to have bred, fledging young at Easter Lothar, Furse, Hesti Geo and the Haven (with two broods at the latter site at least). The first fledged birds were seen on 13th June at the Obs, with another fledged brood noted here on 31st July. There were no autumn counts in double figures, with up to two regularly until late October and 5th November then single unidentified *alba* wagtails on the late dates of 10th, 16th and 20th November.

### **'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***

There were early records on 26th and 30th March before spring movement from 10th April to 28th May. The main periods of passage were in mid-April, with a peak of 17 on 15th (when there were 35 *alba* wagtails in total) and early May, when 20 on 6th–7th May were the highest counts (although 35 *alba* wagtails on 4th including 11 'Whites' was the highest *alba* total for the month). An *alba* wagtail

that summered around South Light appeared a shade too dark to be a 'White', but too pale to be a 'Pied', it may perhaps have been a hybrid between the two subspecies or perhaps just a dark 'White Wagtail'. The first autumn migrant was on 1st August and autumn passage saw regular sightings from 9th August until 8th October. The highest counts were in mid- to late August, with a peak *alba* count of 77 (including 47 'Whites' and 24 unidentified that were likely to be also largely 'White Wagtails') on 21st August. Most days in September saw less than 25 *alba* wagtails present, although there were 42 on 4th (including 37 'Whites') and 'White Wagtail' counts in October were never more than three.

## Richard's Pipit

*Anthus richardi*

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

For the second consecutive year there were just three autumn records. The first was in Gilsetter on 9th September (the second-earliest Fair Isle record, just a day later than the record set in 1968) which then lingered between Pund and Ditfield until 14th September. The other two were both brief records, with singles at the Mast on 24th September and near Steensi Geo on 10th October.

## Meadow Pipit

*Anthus pratensis*

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

There was one on 20th January, then regular sightings from 15th March, which were generally of a few dozen, until a sudden increase to 224 on 7th April, 434 on 9th and 737 during a day of heavy northerly passage on 10th. There were counts of 143–303 for the rest of April and similar numbers in early May until counts dropped to less than 100 from 11th. The first fledged youngster was seen on 11th June (one day later than in 2017 and 2016). Mid-August saw around 160 present, with numbers rising rapidly during passage at the end of the month with over 800 on most days from 20th–27th August, including 1,030 on 24th. Counts in early September were mostly in the 400s, then in mid-month a dramatic passage in light westerly winds saw 2,034 on 14th September, the highest-ever count for Fair Isle. There were 1,644 the following day, over 900 until 18th and gradually dwindling counts, although still over 200, until mid-October. After this there were around 40 remaining until mid-November, then just scattered single-figure counts until 3rd December.



Plate 86. Meadow Pipit, Sheep Cru, 10th October 2018. © Steve Arlow

## Tree Pipit

*Anthus trivialis*

### Regular spring and autumn migrant

One on 14th April was the joint-second earliest-ever arrival date and was followed by sightings of up to two on eight further dates in the month. Spring passage was largely unremarkable, with sightings on 20 dates from 3rd May to 1st June peaking at ten on 14th May. One of the quietest autumn passages on record saw sightings on just nine dates from 27th August to 20th September, all singles apart from two on 28th August and 2nd September. There were then singles on 4th and 15th October.

## \*Olive-backed Pipit

*Anthus hodgsoni*

### Scarce migrant; 110 previous records, 108 in autumn and two in spring

It was another relatively quiet year, with just two occurrences. The first was in the field west of Stackhoull on 13th October where it crept around the remains of an old stone cru. There was then one at Johnny's Peats on the afternoon of 17th October, which was probably the same individual that was responsible for sightings of what were either Olive-backed or Tree Pipits at Easter Lothar on 16th October and flying south past South Ramnigeo during the morning of 17th October.

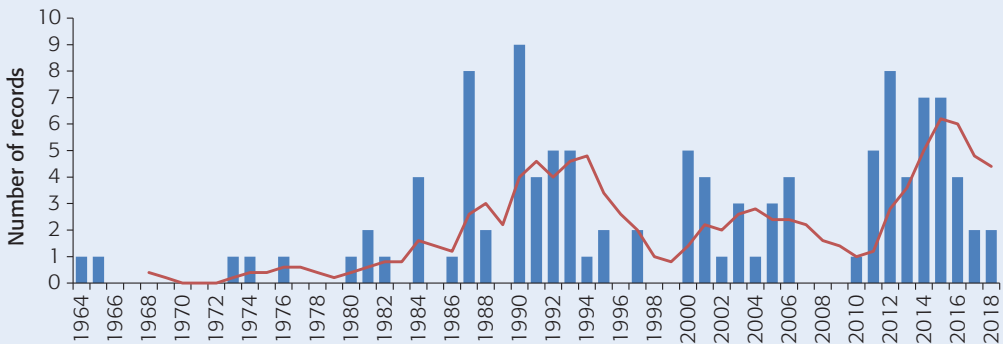


Figure 15. Annual occurrence of Olive-backed Pipits on Fair Isle and trendline showing five-year average of occurrences. Note that the species seems prone to regular waves of higher occurrences (with the latest wave perhaps coming to an end in recent years), although the overall trend is clearly upwards.

## Rock Pipit

*Anthus petrosus*

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

The first singing bird was heard in South Haven on 18th March. Census counts from late March onwards started to give an indication of the number of birds present, with an April peak of 95 on 19th. Numbers in May were variable with a peak of 100 on 10th, a lower count than recent years. The first fledged youngster was noted on 6th June, a typical date. Autumn census typically showed higher numbers following the breeding season, although passage birds will also have contributed to the total of 204 on 19th August. Numbers dwindled after this and, after 110 on 14th September, were generally in the region of 50–70 birds, other than a peak of 121 on 13th October. The highest of four counts in early November was 69 on 10th, which may give an approximation of wintering numbers.



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

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

There were records on 12 dates in April from 3rd, then singles in Gunnawark on 8th May and Tineside on 30th May, the latter at least having potentially been a summering bird, although it was giving no indication of territorial activity. One on Bunes on 20th July was alarm calling in the presence of fledged chicks, so had presumably bred on the Isle (although there were also nominate adults around and at least two broods nearby, so it perhaps can't be certain it had successfully parented any youngsters).

## Chaffinch

*Fringilla coelebs*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

A female from 26th February to 5th March was a rather early arrival, with the main spring passage occurring from 25th March to 5th May when there were almost daily sightings. Numbers rose to ten by the end of March, with the highest counts in mid-April, when there was a peak of 20 on 12th–13th with the last of the spring on 14th May. One on 29th August was unusually early, with the next not until 18th September, with then scattered records of up to seven later in the month. Daily records in October peaked at 31 on 13th, although for most of the month counts were in single figures. There were still up to ten in early November, with smaller numbers then until 5th December and an unusual record of one in Jivvy Geo on 27th December.

## Brambling

*Fringilla montifringilla*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Spring passage began slowly, with single figures from 29th March until a sudden arrival of 138 on 15th April, the highest spring count since 2014. Numbers had dropped to 20 the following day and smaller numbers were present until 14th May. An early bird arrived on 7th September, with two the following day and one until 12th, but there were no more until regular sightings from 4th October until 16th November. During this time, counts were of 20 or less other than during 12th–18th October, with the main influx coming on the first date when 284 were recorded, the highest autumn count since 2012. Finally, a late male was at the Obs on 24th November.



Plate 87. Bramblings, Green Holm, 14th October 2018. © Ian Andrews

## Hawfinch

*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

### Scarce spring and autumn migrant; 127 records of 142 individuals

It was an excellent spring for this species across the Northern Isles, with the south-easterly winds in early spring no doubt influencing the numbers arriving, although the subsequent emigration of the huge arrival of birds recorded in southern and eastern England in autumn 2017 may also have helped. After a female on 29th March, birds were recorded on all except four days until 18th April. During this time, the maximum count was just two, although at least eight individuals were involved (with ringing highlighting the turnover). Further birds followed on 28th April, 10th–11th May and 14th–15th May, taking the spring total to a record 11 individuals (the previous highest spring total was nine in 2012). Autumn was much quieter, with one at Schoolton on 4th September and one over South Naavergill on 12th October.

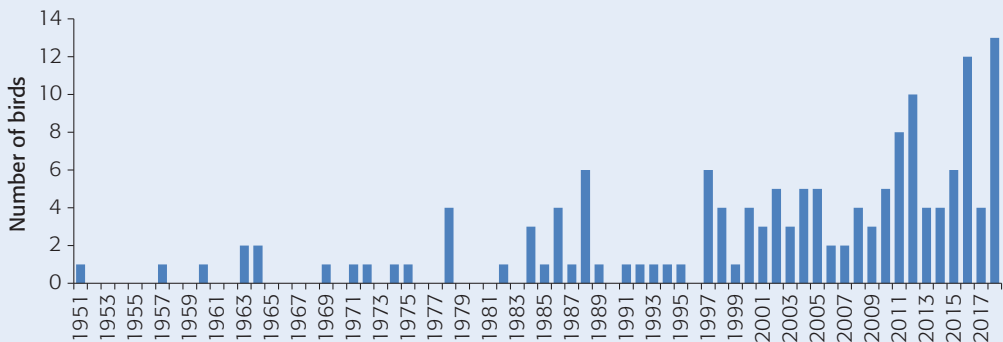


Figure 16. Annual occurrences of Hawfinch during the FIBO period (there were also singles in 1908, 1909 and two in 1938). Note the steady upward trend, with the 13 individuals recorded in 2018 representing the fourth time the annual record total has been beaten since 2011.

## Bullfinch

*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

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

Recorded for the third year in a row, with a female caught in the Vaadal on 28th October, then a new female that roamed between the south of the Island and the Obs from 30th October to 16th November. Both birds belonged to the 'Northern Bullfinch' subspecies, with wing lengths of 91 mm and 94 mm respectively (birds of the subspecies that breeds in the United Kingdom typically have a maximum wing length of 84 mm).

## Common Rosefinch

*Carpodacus erythrinus*

### Regular spring and autumn migrant

A 2cy male at the Obs on 26th May was the earliest arrival date since 2014 and there were three the following day, with two remaining on 28th. A 1cy at the Obs on 3rd–4th August was an early autumn migrant and further singles followed on 21st and 27th August. There were then three on 31st August that began a series of daily records until 14th September that peaked at five on 3rd, 5th and 7th. Two on 19th September were new arrivals, with these birds then recorded regularly until 27th, being joined by a third on 24th–25th, with one remaining until 3rd October. A minimum of

13 were recorded during the autumn, although given the turnover of birds noted by ringing it is likely that the total would have been somewhat higher. Common Rosefinch is one of the species that seems to benefit most from the Obs sacrificial oats, with many of the sightings coming from Bull's Park, Quoy, Schoolton and Skadan crop strips.



Plate 88. Common Rosefinch, Quoy, 27th May 2018. © Paul Wren

## Greenfinch

*Chloris chloris*

### *Regular spring and autumn migrant*

The first spring record almost exactly mirrored the only record of 2017, with a male at the Obs on 29th–31st March. Much more unusual were records of a male on 10th–11th June, 20th June and daily from 28th June to 10th July, which were all assumed to refer to one individual. June records are infrequent and there has been only one previous occurrence in July (a juvenile on 26th July 2011). There was just one autumn record, a single at the Obs on 27th–28th October.

## Twite

*Linaria flavirostris*

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

**Table 3.** Maximum monthly counts of Twite on Fair Isle 2018

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
58	30	18	39	49	27	n/c	194	240	189	21	9

For the third consecutive year there was a winter arrival, with 58 on 25th January then counts throughout February remained largely consistent at around 30. Unusually, there were no real spring peaks, with numbers creeping up in late May. The small breeding population wasn't monitored and the first fledglings were seen on 17th June, a typical date. As expected, counts increased in late August and rose to a peak of 240 on 9th September with no more than 200 after 13th September. Very variable counts in October suggested continued passage and only small numbers were seen in the late winter period.

## Linnet

*Linaria cannabina*

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

After singles on 25th March and 5th April the species was seen virtually daily from 11th April until the end of the month, although numbers peaked at just three. There were sightings of up to three on 11 dates in May and, although both a male and female were seen in the first five days of June and a male on 25th June, there was not thought to have been any repeat of the 2017 breeding attempts. Autumn passage was restricted to up to two on three dates from 24th–29th August, a single on 21st September then sightings on seven dates from 1st–15th October, peaking at three on 3rd.

## Common Redpoll

*Acanthis flammea*

**'Mealy Redpoll'** *A.f.flammea*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Three on 1st January and one the following day were possibly lingering from 2017, although there were no more throughout the winter. The first wave of spring passage saw regular sightings from 7th April until 1st May, with a peak of seven on 25th. There was another arrival from 8th–21st May with daily sightings peaking at nine on 15th. As is often the case, there were a few later sightings with singles on 26th and 30th May, 6th–13th June (joined by a second on 10th) and 21st–24th June. The autumn started very quietly, with none until two on 15th October, with one remaining to 17th then, after singles from 25th–28th a large arrival saw 48 on 29th and 58 on 30th October (when there were also four unidentified redpolls). This arrival consisted almost entirely of large, pale birds, unlike many of the Common Redpolls that pass through Fair Isle, which are often at the smaller, darker end of the species' spectrum. Only five remained by early November and three lingered until 23rd.

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

**Rare autumn migrant, occasional spring sightings**

There were sightings from 26th September until 5th October that peaked at three on 28th and singles on 15th and 27th–29th October. Although this was the best showing of this swarthy, streaky form of redpoll since 2012, given the regular extended bouts of westerly winds during the autumn, more could perhaps have been expected.

## Lesser Redpoll

*Acanthis cabaret*

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

Recorded almost daily from 19th April to 5th May, with a maximum of just two seen (although ringing showed there was some turnover during this time) and there were also regular records of up to two from 14th–27th May. Autumn passage was relatively quiet, with up to two recorded occasionally from 6th October until 2nd November, with a late migrant on 12th November.

Plates 89–92 (opposite). Top left. 'Mealy Redpoll', School Brae, 28th October 2018. © David Parnaby Top right. Lesser Redpoll, Aesterhoull, 9th October 2018. © Ian Andrews Middle. 'North-western Redpoll', School, 4th October 2018. © David Wege Bottom. 'Coues's Arctic Redpoll' (left) with 'Mealy Redpoll', Airstrip, 30th October 2018. © Richard Cope



## \*Arctic Redpoll

*Acanthis hornemanni*

*Rare migrant; 94 previous records, most in autumn (September–November) but ten in spring and has also occurred in July (two) and winter (four). Although historically C.h.exilipes is the commoner of the two Arctic Redpoll subspecies recorded on Fair Isle, many of them have occurred in major influx years; in the last 15 years, 12 of the 18 records have been of C.h.hornemanni*

### 'Coues's Arctic Redpoll' *C.h.exilipes*

*Around 55 of the accepted records of Arctic Redpoll have been assigned to this subspecies (including two records in July)*

One at the airstrip on 30th October was the first record of this subspecies since 2016 and just the fifth 'Coues's Arctic Redpoll' since 2005. Like the previous record, it was found during an arrival of 'Mealy Redpolls' and associated with a small flock of this species.

## Crossbill

*Loxia curvirostra*

*Irregular summer and autumn migrant*

One heading north over Hoini on 18th April was an early spring migrant. There was a scatter of records during the summer, with seven on 13th June followed by one on 16th June and three the following day. There were then records on ten dates between 30th July and 23rd August, all of one or two, other than six on 10th August. Later autumn sightings involved singles on 7th and 8th September and four sightings during 10th–20th October, all singles apart from four on 14th.



Plate 93. Crossbill, Dronger, 10th August 2018. © Richard Cope

## Goldfinch

*Carduelis carduelis*

*Regular spring and autumn migrant, has overwintered*

Typical spring passage began with one on 17th April, with two the next day. Further singles followed on four April dates, with one lingering until 4th May, during which time it was often heard singing. There were further records on 11th–13th May, then daily sightings from 18th–23rd May, peaking at five on 19th. Autumn passage involved a single from 20th–27th September, then a flock of 'about ten' on 10th October, before records on 27th and 31st October (with two on the latter date) and a single on 5th–6th November.

## \*Serin

*Serinus serinus*

### *Vagrant; three previous records (all in May)*

A flighty female at North Light on 16th June was only the tenth record for Scotland. With previous Fair Isle records in 1914, 1957 and 1964 (all falling in the period 22nd–29th May), this major rarity was one of the highlights of the spring, although sadly it was somewhat elusive, being seen by only four observers. A write-up of the occurrence can be found on pages 158–159.

## Siskin

*Spinus spinus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Scattered records in late March from 21st peaked at four on the first date with birds then recorded virtually daily from 7th April to 26th May, mostly up to six but peaks of ten on 20th April and nine on 6th May. The last of a typically protracted spring passage was on 9th–12th June. Mid-summer records are regular, so up to five during 16th–23rd July were not unusual. There were three on 4th August, but the main autumn passage fell into two main waves; 19th–28th September (peaking at 15 on 22nd) and up to nine from 3rd–15th October before a very late bird was over the Obs on 24th November.

## Lapland Bunting

*Calcarius lapponicus*

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

As predicted in the 2017 Annual Report, a quiet autumn in 2017 resulted in a quiet spring passage, with just a single record involving one on Meoness on 15th April. The first autumn bird was on 31st August and there were then sightings on 17 dates in September, peaking at just five on 15th. Despite regular westerly winds, autumn passage failed to pick up and there were sightings of one or two on seven October dates until 13th, with the last of the year in the Wirvie Burn on 23rd October.



Plate 94. Lapland Bunting, Setter, 24th September 2018. © Steve Arlow

## Snow Bunting

*Plectrophenax nivalis*

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

Sporadic winter sightings saw a peak of 15 in January and there were sightings through the spring of up to three occasionally until 21st April. After the first of the autumn on 10th September there were no more until daily records from 21st September until the end of the month, by which time numbers had increased to 20. Although present throughout October, numbers were generally low, with a peak of 47 on 6th until the last few days of the month when 105 were recorded on 28th. Good numbers remained throughout the first half of November, with the year's peak occurring on 6th when 139 were scattered around the Isle. Numbers then gradually declined, with a peak in December of 35 as only small numbers seemed to cling on for the winter.



Plate 95. Snow Bunting, Roskilie, 5th October 2018. © Ian Andrews

## \*Corn Bunting

*Emberiza calandra*

*Former breeding species (last recorded in 1905) and regular visitor, but vagrant since 1980, with only ten records since then, nine in spring (April to June) and a single in October*

One seen briefly at Field on 19th May was then relocated at Leogh on 21st where it lingered until 28th May. It was often heard singing during this time and was the first record since 2012. After two in the 1980s and a single in the 1990s there were five in the 2000s, but any upturn in records seems to have stalled somewhat since then.



## Yellowhammer

*Emberiza citrinella*

### Scarce spring and regular autumn migrant

Sightings on 2nd, 6th, 8th and 13th April probably referred to three individuals, and the fourth of the best spring showing since 2012 lingered in the Quoy area from 5th–14th May. Autumn also produced a decent number of records, with the first on 12th October followed by four the next day, with up to four seen regularly until 23rd October. Two on 29th October were likely to have been new, as were the three on Dronger the following day, with three then recorded in the south until 1st November. Later records of two on 8th and 24th November and one remaining until 4th December, all probably involved lingering birds.

## \*Ortolan Bunting

*Emberiza hortulana*

### Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One at Da Water on 6th September was the earliest autumn record since 2008. There was then one near the Plantation on 22nd September which reappeared around Gilsetter, occasionally wandering as far as Tarryfield, on 25th–27th September. These two birds were the first records since 2016 and represented the best autumn since 2008.

## \*Rustic Bunting

*Emberiza rustica*

*Rare spring and autumn migrant; 136 previous records (71 in spring, mostly in May and June with three in April and 65 in autumn, mostly September and October with one in November)*

A male at Wirvie Geo on 2nd July was an unusually late spring record and the first for that month.

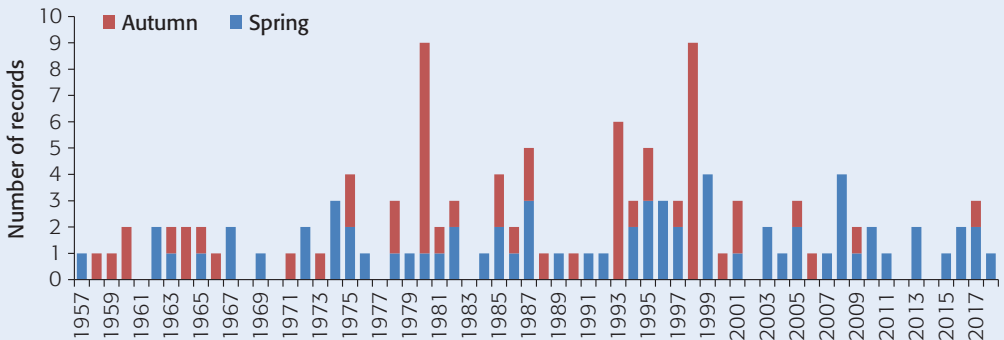


Figure 17. Annual Rustic Bunting occurrences by season during the FIBO recording period (there were also ten pre-FIBO records, three in spring and seven in autumn). Note that the species has become somewhat scarcer since its heyday in the 1990s, and was reinstated as a BBRC species in 2015. It has now been recorded in four consecutive years after two blanks in the early 2010s.

## Reed Bunting

*Emberiza schoeniclus*

### *Frequent spring and autumn migrant*

Spring passage began slightly earlier than usual and saw regular records from 18th March to 24th April, with a peak of six on 15th April. There were then scattered records of up to three from 5th–16th May with a late bird on 22nd June. Autumn passage saw regular records from 8th–26th October, peaking at 11 on 13th, then one or two from 1st–8th November.

## \*Song Sparrow

*Melospiza melodia*

### *Vagrant; three previous records, all in April*

One found in the Plantation on 15th May was trapped and ringed then lingered until 18th May. It generally showed well at the Obs feeders outside the library window, although on the latter date it was more elusive as it moved to the Plantation then Gully before vanishing for good. The bird of the spring (and indeed the year) for many people, it was the first record since 1989 and the latest arrival (and shortest-stayer) of all the Fair Isle records. A write-up of the occurrence can be found on pages 159–161 and in Parnaby (2018).



Plate 96. Song Sparrow, Obs, 15th May 2018. © Richard Cope

## Category E species (Escapes)

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### Saker Falcon

*Falco cherrug*

*One previous record of a known escape (August 2003), with records in October–December 1986, May 2007 and May 2010 either involving this species (which currently resides on Category D of the British List) or falconers' hybrids*

Two, which had escaped from Staffordshire, were first known to be on the island when the signals from their satellite tags revealed their locations on 27th July. One was seen later that day at North Light, its presence revealed by the jingling of the bells on its jesses, with one observed stooping at Puffins and Arctic Terns over Bunes the following day. Thankfully, neither lingered on the island, with one of them being tracked heading off north-east from the Isle.

### Gyr Falcon

*Falco rusticolus*

*Vagrant; 13 previous records, with six in April, two in both February and December and singles in January, September and October, all of which related to wild birds*

The earliest previous record for the Isle was on 16th September 1976 (one of the earliest autumn records in the United Kingdom), so a white morph that flew up the Isle on 8th August after briefly alighting on Malcolm's Head was viewed as being of dubious origin. What was presumably the same bird was relocated on Unst on 10th August, where it was found to be wearing a yellow ribbon and what appeared to be a bell, proving its origins as an escaped falconer's pet.

### Blackcap

*Sylvia atricapilla*

*Common spring and autumn migrant; not previously recorded as an escape*

The first small arrival of Blackcaps on 13th April contained a male bearing a closed ring, showing it to have originated from the cage bird trade. Although its plumage and feet showed no signs of having been in captivity, the tip of its upper mandible was missing. It lingered around the Obs until 15th April.

### References

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Parnaby, D. 2018. Song Sparrow, Fair Isle, 15–18 May 2018 - the fourth record for Scotland. *Scottish Birds* 38(4): 366–367.

Pellow, K. 2018. Crag Martin, Fair Isle, 14–16 May 2018 - the first record for Fair Isle. *Scottish Birds* 38(3): 272–274.

### Corrections to the 2017 report

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**Page 4.** The Directors' photograph (Plate 5) was taken by Hannah Bell.

**White-fronted Goose.** Plate 9 (page 12) also shows a single Pink-footed Goose (third from the right, behind).

**Great Snipe.** The photographs on page 56 were taken on 11th September 2017.

**Herring x Glaucous Gull.** On page 61, the bird at Homisdale was seen on 7th November.

**Green Warbler.** On page 141, the measurements in parentheses for *viridanus* and *nitidus* are taken from Svensson and should be in blue.

# RINGING SUMMARY

## Richard Cope

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Birds ringed	0	2	100	463	219	293	1062	945	428	660	91	0	4273
Species ringed	0	2	13	32	39	33	30	28	40	39	19	0	95

Whilst 2018 was fairly average in terms of total numbers of birds ringed, things started well with a good spring for Blackbirds, Robins and scarce migrants. Unfortunately, the autumn weather left a lot to be desired and, with the exception of 'Icelandic Redwings', didn't do much for the ringing totals, leaving the overall total of birds ringed as the lowest since 2011. The seabirds had reasonable breeding seasons but due to sea state, weather and lack of an experienced team few visits were able to be made into the colonies. Storm Petrels continue to come 'on-demand' to the Haven during suitable weather and are a popular feature of the summer for our guests.

Once again, a number of birds had identification (often to subspecies level) backed up by DNA analysis from Professor Martin Collinson at Aberdeen University. Having this asset at our disposal has proved invaluable on many occasions and the Observatory is extremely grateful for this.

The standardised trap rounds ensured that the Helgoland traps continued to produce most of the passerines caught during the year. The traps were run at least once a day (weather permitting) from late March until early November and the standardised six daily trap rounds were run in the peak migration periods (mid-April until mid-June



Plate 97. David Parnaby processing a Short-eared Owl with Ciaran Hatsell (left) and Chris Dodd (front), Obs, 9th November 2018. © Susannah Parnaby

and mid-August until the end of October). It should however be noted that neither the North Grind or Roadside traps were completely functional until mid-September due to winter damage and work on the new power scheme electricity cables. The Double Dyke trap suffered large amounts of damage in the continued easterly or south-easterly winds in April, as did the Plantation, but a good volunteer team meant that large areas of panels were able to be replaced during the summer and autumn.

Trap	Number of birds in 2018 (Number of species)	Number of birds in 2017 (Number of species)
Plantation	591 (45)	669 (48)
Gully	502 (47)	483 (36)
Vaadal	323 (36)	267 (35)
Hjon Dyke	144 (17)	155 (15)
Double Dyke	123 (18)	146 (23)
North Grind	20 (7)	37 (11)
Single Dyke	42 (12)	26 (11)
Roadside	14 (4)	23 (8)

There were 464 birds of 48 species ringed at the Obs (the corresponding figures in 2017 were 438 birds of 46 species), mostly in mist nets in the garden, but also using spiral traps or being hand caught (e.g. two recently fledged Puffins). Ringing at Burkle (largely using a mist net in the garden) produced 52 new birds of 21 species including three Barred Warblers, Marsh Warbler, Icterine Warbler, Bluethroat and Common Rosefinch. The mist net at Chalet was used less often, resulting in just eight new birds being caught, including a Blyth's Reed Warbler and Barred Warbler.

Unusual species caught during 2018 included the Observatory's third Hen Harrier, fourth Song Sparrow, fourth Rose-coloured Starling, 15th Richard's Pipit, 18th Dipper and 39th and 40th Thrush Nightingales.

A new ringing record was set for Marsh Warbler, with eight ringed, and Hawfinch equalled the previous best year with seven (all of which were caught during an impressive spring passage). The record numbers of breeding Great Skuas resulted in the second highest-ever ringing total of 330, only beaten by 2016's 566. Five Grey Wagtails were the equal fourth best year, with 77 Chiffchaffs represented the fifth best ever year (although the lowest total since 2013). Another good autumn for Redwing (324) and House Sparrow (101) saw these species reach their fifth and sixth best years respectively. Three Hooded Crows caught in the Single Dyke trap in July must surely be the most ever caught in a Helgoland trap at the same time and represented the seventh best year for the species. Other species to enjoy ringing totals in the top ten best years included Sedge Warbler (17 ringed, 8th best year), Tree Sparrow (eight ringed, joint 7th best year), Common Rosefinch (eight ringed, joint 10th best year) and Siskin (25 ringed, 10th best year).

It wasn't all good news though, with the weather, sea conditions and the overall breeding season affecting ringing efforts. Just three Shags ringed represents the joint 65th highest season total, and the lowest total since 2011. Likewise, two Oystercatchers were the joint 68th season, continuing a poor run for this species. The unfavourable conditions for migration took their toll too, with three Sparrowhawks being joint 47th highest, four Yellow-browed Warblers being the lowest total since 2004 and 74 Blackcaps being the lowest since 2010. Goldcrests were almost non-existent with only four ringed, the lowest total since 1964 and overall the 66th ranked season. A number of species performed very poorly, some due to the westerly winds in the autumn and others reflecting long-term declines. In particular Redstart (six ringed, joint 62nd ranked year), Whinchat (one

ringed, joint 64th), Wheatear (78 ringed, joint 66th) and Rock pipit (21 ringed, joint 69th) had poor seasons, whilst Leach's Petrel recorded the first blank year since 2010 (although a control was caught) and Tree Pipit registered the fourth ever blank year (following 1948, 1993 and 2014).

There were three colour-ringing projects in operation during 2018, studying Great Skua, Arctic Skua and Shag. Great Skua chicks were again colour ringed and the first returning birds are eagerly awaited in the coming seasons. Arctic Skuas were once again fitted with orange colour rings as part of ongoing BTO studies on this species. The Shag colour-ringing project is run by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology looking at dispersal, survival, distribution and movement patterns of juvenile and adult Shags. Just three

Shags were colour ringed in 2018, the second successive year with few ringed.

Occasionally, the capture of a healthy bird and examination of it in the hand is crucial for identification and in 2018 four individuals were trapped outwith the standardised trap rounds and mist netting. These were two Reed Warblers (a dull bird at Setter trapped for identification purposes and one caught at Lower Stoneybrek in order to get ring details), a Blyth's Reed Warbler at Chalet and a Subalpine Warbler at Lower Stoneybrek.

Storm Petrel remains the most frequently ringed species on Fair Isle for its eighth consecutive year, albeit at a much-reduced level compared to 2017. This was a reflection of scaled-back effort and a smaller, less-experienced team present through the summer. Both Redwing and Blackbird move up into the top three courtesy of a very good spring for Blackbird and the predominantly westerly winds bringing large numbers of 'Icelandic Redwings' in the autumn. Meadow Pipit enjoyed its best season since 2010 to move into the top ten (another species to benefit from westerly winds in the autumn) and Twite also had an above average autumn. It is particularly good to see Puffin move into the top ten as a result of an excellent breeding season and Arctic Tern remain there. The large reduction in the Starling total is due to the cessation of the breeding studies which resulted in large numbers of chicks being ringed each season.



Plate 98. Water Rail, Obs, 14th October 2018. © Ian Andrews

**Table 1.** Ten most commonly ringed species on Fair Isle in 2018, with species totals (2017 totals in brackets for comparison)

Species	2018	(2017)
Storm Petrel	1,212	(4,089)
Great Skua	330	(225)
Redwing	324	(256)
Blackbird	300	(407)
Meadow Pipit	183	(124)
Starling	176	(475)
Robin	159	(141*)
Twite	131	(104)
Puffin	126	(79)
Arctic Tern	118	(364)

**Table 2.** Ten most commonly ringed species on Fair Isle in 2017, with species totals. \*note the corrected figure for Robin (not 140 as published in the 2017 report), this also results in the 2017 ringing total increasing to 7,599

Species	2017
Storm Petrel	4,089
Starling	475
Blackbird	407
Arctic Tern	364
Redwing	256
Great Skua	225
Fulmar	154
Robin	141*
Meadow Pipit	124
Brambling	121

# RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total										Average/year					Ringed 2018			Highest/Lowest		Year ranking (out of 71)
	1948-2017	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010-2017	Adult	Pullus	Total	Lowest	Since	Year ranking (out of 71)						
Teal	90	0	0.3	2	1	0.5	3.2	1.4	0.8	2	0	2	Highest	2013	Joint 8th						
Storm Petrel	43912	1	3.7	160.5	575.4	446.6	1640	301.5	1579.1	1212	0	1212	Lowest	2015	11th						
Fulmar	18452	13.5	50.7	346.3	363.5	641.3	244.2	99	121.9	12	90	102	Lowest	2015	46th						
Shag	23925	9.5	87.5	579	383.5	674.5	375.9	267.2	28.8	1	2	3	Lowest	2011	Joint 65th						
Sparrowhawk	477	1	3.3	2.9	6	8.7	12.5	6.6	9.4	3	0	3	Lowest	2016	Joint 47th						
Hen Harrier	2	0	0	0	0	0.2	0	0	0.0	1	0	1	Highest	1985	Joint 1st						
Water Rail	359	5	6.6	5.4	7.4	4.6	4.4	4	3.1	3	0	3	Lowest	2015	Joint 42nd						
Moorhen	110	1	1.5	2.5	2.3	1.9	1.3	0.7	0.8	3	0	3	Highest	1998	Joint 7th						
Oystercatcher	1616	18	24.7	27.6	33.1	32	25.8	8.9	7.4	0	2	2	Lowest	2004	Joint 68th						
Lapwing	390	0	8.5	12.7	1	4.5	5.5	4.1	3.4	0	6	6	Highest	2010	Joint 18th						
Ringed Plover	878	0	7.5	14.3	11.7	15.4	16.9	11.9	12.6	0	2	2	Lowest	2002	Joint 61st						
Turnstone	119	0	0.8	3.5	1.8	0.2	1.2	2.4	2.5	4	0	4	Highest	2010	Joint 10th						
Knot	116	1	1.1	2.5	2.8	1.2	2	1.1	0.9	1	0	1	Highest	2016	Joint 28th						
Dunlin	681	0.5	5	16.7	17.3	4.3	10.2	7.1	9.3	3	0	3	Lowest	2011	Joint 47th						
Woodcock	2	2	4.7	6.9	9.2	9.6	8.4	11.1	21.0	10	0	10	Highest	2016	Joint 22nd						
Jack Snipe	164	0	0.8	1.4	8.7	0.7	1.7	1.8	1.6	1	0	1	=	2017	Joint 23rd						
Snipe	627	0	2.8	8.1	14.3	7.8	10.9	10.7	10.1	9	0	9	Highest	2016	Joint 23rd						
Common Sandpiper	77	0.5	0.7	1.7	1.2	1.9	1.2	0.1	1.0	1	0	1	=	2017	Joint 19th						
Common Gull	340	0	0.5	1.3	4.6	8.8	3.9	10.6	5.4	0	2	2	=	2017	Joint 34th						
Herring Gull	4800	8	12.1	64.9	163.6	140.8	34.8	34.6	34.5	0	29	29	Lowest	2013	Joint 46th						
Lesser Black-b Gull	1485	5	10	25.7	49.7	40.4	13.8	5.7	2.8	0	4	4	Highest	2016	Joint 55th						
Arctic Tern	12329	0	0.1	0.4	0	16.4	954.8	216.5	55.9	0	118	118	Lowest	2016	15th						
Great Skua	5454	4	16.9	13	19	51.5	110.8	134	249.3	0	330	330	Highest	2016	2nd						
Arctic Skua	4140	8	71.7	38.2	131.8	61	67.7	27.3	18.4	4	1	5	Lowest	2013	Joint 60th						

# RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total 1948–2017	Average/year								Ringed 2018			Highest/ Lowest	Since	Year ranking (out of 71)
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2017	Adult	Pullus	Total			
Common Guillemot	38343	0	7.9	82.6	468	1268	1314.8	588.8	130.3	0	3	3	Lowest	1958	Joint 60th
Razorbill	12058	0	6.5	60.9	173.5	231.6	412.5	281.8	48.8	5	22	27	Lowest	2013	56th
Black Guillemot	1696	0	11.3	45.6	52.1	25.2	26	6.7	3.4	0	1	1	Highest	2016	Joint 63rd
Puffin	14645	19.5	128.2	277.3	318.8	294.8	216.9	131.7	116.1	47	79	126	Highest	2016	46th
Rock Dove	302	0	0	0.2	0.9	1.1	4.8	7.9	19.1	25	0	25	Lowest	2015	Joint 6th
Woodpigeon	82	0	0.6	1.6	0.5	1.6	2.6	0.5	1.0	2	0	2	Highest	2016	Joint 10th
Collared Dove	432	0	0	1.1	10.5	7.2	10.6	10.8	3.8	7	0	7	Highest	2010	Joint 20th
Long-eared Owl	291	0.5	1.4	3	7.6	5.8	5.7	2.7	3.5	4	0	4	Highest	2015	Joint 23rd
Short-eared Owl	19	0	0.1	0	0.8	0.8	0	0.1	0.1	1	0	1	Highest	2015	Joint 4th
Wryneck	277	0	2.3	4.4	7.1	4.8	2.2	4.2	3.4	1	0	1	Lowest	2010	Joint 54th
Kestrel	57	0	0.9	1.4	0.6	1.4	0.3	0.6	0.6	1	0	1	Highest	2015	Joint 16th
Red-backed Shrike	385	1.5	2	4.4	11.5	7.8	4.2	5.4	3.6	5	0	5	Highest	2013	Joint 24th
Hooded Crow	49	0	0.2	1.6	2.2	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.0	3	0	3	Highest	1997	Joint 7th
Skylark	1456	6.5	16.6	22.4	27.4	7.4	48.4	15.2	8.6	2	0	2	Lowest	2016	Joint 59th
Yellow-b Warbler	341	0	1.1	2.3	3.3	1.9	2.8	5.2	21.9	4	0	4	Lowest	2009	Joint 20th
Willow Warbler	4689	3	44.2	80.9	94.6	66.6	56.3	65.8	74.9	52	0	52	Lowest	2013	43rd
Chiffchaff	2251	0.5	4.9	16.6	24.7	30.9	32.5	44.9	88.1	78	0	78	Lowest	2013	5th
Sedge Warbler	684	5	7	9.5	7.8	11.2	5.5	14.1	15.4	17	0	17	Lowest	2016	8th
Blyth's Reed Warbler	27	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.6	0.6	1.8	2	0	2	Highest	2016	Joint 3rd
Reed Warbler	399	0.5	1	4.9	4.8	4.4	7.5	10.9	7.9	9	0	9	Highest	2015	Joint 13th
Marsh Warbler	180	0	0.8	1.7	2.1	3.2	2.9	4.3	3.8	8	0	8	Highest	ever	1st
Icterine Warbler	154	0	1.5	2.6	1.5	1.7	3	2.9	2.8	3	0	3	Highest	2016	Joint 13th
Grasshopper Warbler	177	0	0.8	2.4	3.6	2.1	2.2	3.5	3.9	1	0	1	Lowest	2003	Joint 45th
Lanceolated Warbler	44	0	0.1	0.2	0.9	1	0.7	0.9	0.8	2	0	2	Highest	2012	Joint 3rd
Blackcap	7251	0.5	15.2	59.8	158.7	149.4	105.1	115.5	151.6	74	0	74	Lowest	2010	40th



# RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total 1948–2017	Average/year										Ringed 2018		Highest/ Lowest	Since	Year ranking (out of 71)
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2017	Adult	Pullus	Total				
Garden Warbler	4062	3.5	30.7	78.1	74.6	88.2	59.2	50.4	30.4	26	0	26	Highest	2015	Joint 56th	
Barred Warbler	501	0	5.3	9.6	12.9	4.8	5.8	6.4	6.6	11	0	11	Highest	2014	Joint 13th	
Lesser Whitethroat	986	3	7.4	11.9	19.7	12.1	13.4	20.3	16.5	18	0	18	Highest	2016	Joint 17th	
Whitethroat	1168	2.5	19.7	28.8	17.7	10	14.7	14.8	13.3	8	0	8	Lowest	2013	Joint 57th	
Subalpine Warbler	44	0	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.6	1.6	1	0	1	=	2017	Joint 10th	
Goldcrest	2189	16	17	28.7	47.9	28.7	33.9	31.4	35.1	4	0	4	Lowest	1964	Joint 66th	
Wren	1165	17.5	20.8	15.7	15.6	8.1	15.6	19	22.8	14	0	14	Lowest	2015	Joint 40th	
Rose-c Starling	3	0	0	0.2	0	0	0.1	0	0.0	1	0	1	Highest	1994	Joint 1st	
Starling	33285	140.5	269.2	337.4	662	746.9	445.8	424.3	518.5	145	31	176	Lowest	2002	65th	
Ring Ouzel	569	0	1.4	16.8	12.7	13.1	4.6	3.6	5.9	4	0	4	Lowest	2016	Joint 41st	
Blackbird	27141	76.5	414.7	591.2	464	384	277.3	306.1	326.9	300	0	300	Lowest	2016	Joint 46th	
Fieldfare	723	2.5	7.9	33.6	12	5.7	2.7	3.7	7.8	2	0	2	Lowest	2011	Joint 55th	
Redwing	11286	34.5	139.1	184.1	231.3	143	144.4	121.8	197.5	324	0	324	Highest	2015	5th	
Song Thrush	3535	7.5	19	76.6	72.1	52	53.1	40.1	48.9	35	0	35	Lowest	2016	45th	
Spotted Flycatcher	923	2.5	7	16.6	15.6	13.2	19.9	10.4	11.4	9	0	9	Highest	2015	Joint 42nd	
Robin	10786	14	64.3	196.1	196.9	199.7	143.8	132.2	178.5	159	0	159	Highest	2016	28th	
Bluetthroat	327	0.5	5.4	4.6	5.3	6.4	4.2	4.5	2.8	3	0	3	Highest	2016	Joint 36th	
Thrush Nightingale	38	0	0.2	0.2	1	0.8	0.9	0.4	0.4	2	0	2	Highest	2012	Joint 7th	
Pied Flycatcher	1062	5	16.2	23.1	24	14.3	12.6	9.1	7.4	12	0	12	Highest	2013	Joint 38th	
Redstart	1962	5	36.6	41.4	51.4	20.4	24.7	14	8.4	6	0	6	Lowest	2016	Joint 62nd	
Whinchat	708	1.5	14.7	14.4	11.5	13.5	7	6.6	3.5	1	0	1	Highest	2015	Joint 64th	
Wheatear	19317	108	505	407.8	284	229.8	142.8	212.8	159.9	70	8	78	Highest	2016	Joint 66th	
Dipper	17	0	0.1	0.7	0	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.0	1	0	1	Highest	2008	Joint 2nd	
House Sparrow	2389	83	46.7	31.4	11.8	22.2	18.3	35.3	70.8	98	3	101	Highest	2016	6th	
Tree Sparrow	145	0	0.1	3.1	5.6	1	0.4	1.8	3.1	8	0	8	Highest	2015	Joint 7th	

# RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total		Average/year										Ringed 2018		Highest/Lowest		Year ranking (out of 71)
	1948-2017	2018	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010-2017	Adult	Pullus	Total	Since	Since		
Duncock	3072		1.5	11.2	50.2	67.8	65.7	41.1	35.3	44.5	58	0	58	Highest	2014	Joint 20th	
Grey Wagtail	75		0	0.4	0.2	0.5	1.3	0.5	2.7	2.4	5	0	5	Lowest	2016	Joint 4th	
Pied/White Wagtail	1107		14	13	15.5	10.7	14.6	18.8	30.8		12	0	12	Lowest	2016	Joint 39th	
Richard's Pipit	14		0	0	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3		1	0	1	Highest	2015	Joint 3rd	
Meadow Pipit	12704		64.5	214	243.3	191.1	162	140.6	183.9	153.3	176	7	183	Highest	2010	29th	
Rock Pipit	10222		69.5	208.6	187.8	221.4	171.6	108	82.6	35.4	21	0	21	Lowest	2011	69th	
Chaffinch	3581		10	26.4	30.4	69.5	103.6	59.1	40.1	33.8	56	0	56	Highest	2006	17th	
Brambling	5162		2	15.1	29.6	139.1	79.5	72.1	63.6	146.0	110	0	110	Lowest	2013	15th	
Hawfinch	43		0	0	0	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.9	2.3	7	0	7	Highest	2016	Joint 1st	
Bullfinch	312		0	0.3	1.2	1.1	1.5	7.2	19.4	0.6	2	0	2	Highest	2016	Joint 11th	
Common Rosefinch	299		0	1	1.2	3.4	5.9	6	6.3	7.6	8	0	8	Highest	2014	Joint 10th	
Greenfinch	557		0	0.2	2.3	4.8	8.2	9.1	28	3.9	2	0	2	Highest	2016	Joint 40th	
Twite	7537		59.5	114.1	69.1	162	96.5	96.6	110.3	116.5	129	2	131	Highest	2014	24th	
Linnet	247		0	0.2	2.7	7.2	2.9	1.9	4.5	6.6	5	0	5	Lowest	2016	Joint 20th	
Common Redpoll	1037		1	7	6.4	34.2	8.2	6.5	17	30.3	14	0	14	Highest	2016	Joint 19th	
Lesser Redpoll	75		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8.1	3	0	3	Lowest	2012	9th	
Crossbill	580		0	12.7	13.7	2.6	0.9	16	10.2	2.4	1	0	1	Lowest	2016	Joint 25th	
Goldfinch	45		0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.6	1	3.0	4	0	4	Lowest	2015	Joint 4th	
Siskin	721		0	3.6	9.4	7.3	7.7	11.4	19.6	16.4	25	0	25	Highest	2012	10th	
Reed Bunting	591		2	3.4	7.8	14.2	8.9	8.4	7.5	10.6	5	0	5	Lowest	2016	Joint 43rd	
Song Sparrow	3		0	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0	1	0	1	Highest	1989	Joint 1st	
<b>Total:</b>			863.0	2856.4	4849.0	6380.4	7060.0	7865.8	4616.3	5226.6	3530	742	4272				

# RINGING SUMMARY

Species ringed on Fair Isle that were later considered to be escapes									
Species	Total 1948-2017	Average/yr							
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010-2017
Daurian Starling	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0
Chestnut Bunting	5	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.0
Pallas's Rosefinch	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0
Red-headed Bunting	2	0	0.1	0.4	0	0	0	0	0.0
Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed in 2018									
Species	Total 1948-2017	Average/yr							
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010-2017
Brent Goose	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1
Barnacle Goose	5	0	0	0.1	0	0.2	0	0.1	0.1
Greylag Goose	104	0	0	0.4	0.7	0.8	2.3	5.8	0.5
Pink-footed Goose	21	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.4
Tundra Bean Goose	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
White-fronted Goose	3	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0
Whooper Swan	53	0	0.3	0.6	1.5	0.6	0.9	1.1	0.4
Shelduck	5	0	0	0	0.1	0.3	0.1	0	0.0
Shoveler	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0
Wigeon	58	0	0.1	0.6	0.3	0.4	4.1	0.2	0.1
Mallard	32	0	0	0.6	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.2	1.9
Pintail	2	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0	0.0
Pochard	3	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0.0
Ring-necked Duck	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0
Tufted Duck	26	0	0	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.7	0.3
Scaup	8	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0.2	0.3
Lesser Scaup	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1

# RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed in 2018									
	Total 1948–2017	Average/yr 1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2017	
Eider	174	0	1.8	3.1	3.2	4.5	3.4	1.2	0.3	
Velvet Scoter	23	0	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Common Scoter	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	
Long-tailed Duck	21	0	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.3	
Goldeneye	23	0	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.0	
Goosander	3	0	0	0.2	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
Red-breasted Merganser	3	0	0.1	0	0	0.2	0	0	0.0	
Quail	8	0	0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	
Red-throated Diver	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0	
Swinhoe's Petrel	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.3	
Leach's Petrel	146	0	0	0.3	1.2	0.5	5.2	2.7	5.9	
Little Grebe	10	0	0	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.1	0	0.0	
Red-necked Grebe	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
Great Crested Grebe	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Slavonian Grebe	3	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0	
Grey Heron	25	0	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4	
Gannet	650	0.5	0.2	1.3	1.2	11.5	20.4	17.4	16.1	
Cormorant	7	0	0.2	0.3	0.2	0	0	0	0.0	
Goshawk	2	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0	0.0	
Marsh Harrier	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0	
Great Bustard	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
Corncrake	45	0.5	0.9	1.3	1.1	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.3	
Little Crane	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
Baillon's Crane	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0	
Spotted Crane	20	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.1	
Coot	18	0	0.1	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.4	
Golden Plover	30	0	0	1.2	0.5	0	0.6	0.4	0.4	
Grey Plover	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0	

# RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed in 2018									
	Total 1948–2017	Average/yr 1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2017	
Little Ringed Plover	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Dotterel	4	0	0	0.2	0.1	0	0.1	0	0	0.0
Whimbrel	18	0	0.2	0.6	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3
Curlew	223	0	0.3	1.6	1.9	5.6	5.4	5.7	2.3	2.3
Bar-tailed Godwit	9	0	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.2	0	0	0.0	0.0
Black-tailed Godwit	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Ruff	42	0	0.3	1.3	1.5	0.1	0.9	0	0.1	0.1
Curlew Sandpiper	6	0	0	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Terminck's Stint	2	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0	0.0
Sanderling	132	0.5	2.7	3.6	1.4	1	0.4	2.9	1.4	1.4
Purple Sandpiper	193	0	2.5	5.6	5.7	0.9	0.7	3.5	0.5	0.5
Baird's Sandpiper	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Little Stint	124	0	0.2	1.2	4.9	0.6	5.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
White-rumped Sandpiper	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Pectoral Sandpiper	5	0	0	0.3	0.2	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Semipalmated Sandpiper	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Great Snipe	2	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0	0.0	0.0
Red-necked Phalarope	5	0	0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0	0	0.0	0.0
Grey Phalarope	3	0	0	0	0.3	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Green Sandpiper	64	0	0.2	1.4	0.8	1.5	1.7	0.3	0.6	0.6
Redshank	29	0	1.3	8.7	10.1	2.7	4.8	1.2	2.0	2.0
Wood Sandpiper	19	0	0	0.9	0.6	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0
Spotted Redshank	3	0	0	0.3	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Greenshank	16	0	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3
Kittiwake	7197	1	8.8	85.9	158	266.7	162.5	33.8	4.8	4.8
Black-headed Gull	52	0	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.4	1.2	0.6	0.1	0.1
Little Gull	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

# RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed in 2018									
	Total 1948–2017	Average/yr	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2017
Great Black-backed Gull	2898	0.5	8.8	39.1	92.2	51	92	2.2	5.5	
Glaucous Gull	40	0	0.4	1	1.3	0.8	0.4	0.1	0.0	
Iceland Gull	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Common Tern	488	0	0.1	1.1	13.2	30.1	3.3	0.7	0.4	
Pomarine Skua	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Little Auk	15	0	0.3	0.2	0	0.1	0.7	0.1	0.1	
Turtle Dove	85	0	0.9	0.6	3.5	2.1	0.8	0.3	0.4	
Cuckoo	115	0	2.1	2.3	2.5	1.9	1.5	0.6	0.8	
Scops Owl	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.2	0.0	
Snowy Owl	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
Nightjar	8	0	0	0.3	0	0	0.1	0.2	0.3	
Swift	19	0	0.1	1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	
Hoopoe	3	0	0	0	0.1	0.2	0	0	0.0	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	34	0	0.3	0.8	0.7	0.2	0.8	0.1	0.6	
Red-footed Falcon	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Merlin	203	1	7	4.2	2.7	2.4	1.4	1.8	0.8	
Peregrine	6	0	0	0.6	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Brown Shrike	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0	
Red-tailed/Daurian Shrike	2	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.1	0	0.0	
Lesser Grey Shrike	7	0	0.3	0.2	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.0	
Great Grey Shrike	128	0.5	0.5	3.3	5.5	1.2	0.6	0.4	1.5	
Woodchat Shrike	13	0	0.1	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.2	0	0.0	
Golden Oriole	9	0	0	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0	0.1	
Jackdaw	16	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.2	0.0	
Rook	13	0	0.2	0.2	0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.6	
Carrion Crow	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	
Raven	29	0	0	0.3	1.4	0.9	0	0.3	0.0	
Waxwing	254	0	0.3	1.1	1.9	0.3	0.1	3.1	23.3	

# RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed in 2018									
	Total 1948–2017	Average/yr 1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2017	
Coal Tit	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0	
Blue Tit	5	0	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0.4	
Great Tit	16	0	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	
Woodlark	3	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.1	0	0.0	
Shore Lark	5	0	0	0.1	0.2	0	0.2	0	0.0	
Short-toed Lark	8	0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0	0.0	
Sand Martin	8	0	0	0.5	0.2	0.1	0	0	0.0	
Swallow	339	1	3.6	9.9	9.9	2.1	1.7	2.1	5.5	
House Martin	150	0	1.5	4.1	7.9	0.9	0.5	0.1	0.0	
Wood Warbler	125	0	0.5	2.3	3	2.3	2	1.2	1.5	
Western Bonelli's Warbler	2	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.1	0.0	
Hume's Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0	
Pallas's Warbler	4	0	0	0	0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	
Radde's Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0	
Dusky Warbler	7	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0	
Green Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	
Greenish Warbler	27	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.8	0.3	0.3	
Arctic Warbler	39	0	0.4	0.9	1	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.8	
Great Reed Warbler	8	0	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0	0.2	0.0	
Aquatic Warbler	25	0	0.2	0.8	1	0.2	0	0.3	0.0	
Paddyfield Warbler	12	0	0.1	0	0	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.3	
Thick-billed Warbler	2	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0	
Booted Warbler	8	0	0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.0	
Sykes's Warbler	2	0	0.1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.0	
Melodious Warbler	13	0	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0	
River Warbler	11	0	0	0.2	0	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	
Savi's Warbler	4	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	

# RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed in 2018									
	Total 1948-2017	Average/yr 1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010-2017	
Pallas's Grass Warbler	14	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.1	
Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.3	
Sardinian Warbler	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Firecrest	3	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	
Treecreeper	1	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	
White's Thrush	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
Grey-cheeked Thrush	2	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Hermit Thrush	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0	
Eye-browed Thrush	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0	
Black-throated Thrush	2	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	
Dusky Thrush	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Mistle Thrush	25	0	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.3	0.1	0	0.4	
Asian Brown Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.0	
Rufous-tailed Robin	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0	
Nightingale	32	0.5	0	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.3	
Siberian Rubythroat	2	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.0	
Red-flanked Bluetail	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.3	
Collared Flycatcher	2	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.1	
Red-breasted Flycatcher	69	1	1.6	1.3	0.5	1.1	0.8	0.7	0.9	
Black Redstart	176	1	1.6	2.5	4.2	3.4	3	1.4	1.6	
Rock Thrush	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Stonechat	53	0	0.6	1.1	2.1	1	0.7	0.6	0.5	
Siberian Stonechat	13	0	0	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0	0.1	
Black-eared Wheatear	3	0	0	0.2	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
Pied Wheatear	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0	
Yellow Wagtail	11	0	0.4	0.5	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
Citrine Wagtail	7	0	0.2	0.1	0.2	0	0	0.1	0.1	
Blyth's Pipit	2	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.0	



# RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed in 2018									
	Total 1948–2017	Average/yr 1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–2017	
Tawny Pipit	3	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0	
Tree Pipit	687	4.5	9.2	14.2	20.2	12.3	6	4.4	1.9	
Olive-backed Pipit	12	0	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0	0.4	
Pechora Pipit	10	0	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.0	
Red-throated Pipit	9	0	0	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	
Arctic Redpoll	27	0	0	0.3	0.3	1.1	0.2	0.4	0.5	
Parrot Crossbill	37	0	0	3.5	0	0.1	0.1	0	0.0	
Two-barred Crossbill	7	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.6	0.0	
Citril Finch	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0	
Lapland Bunting	106	0.5	1.4	2.2	0	0.5	0.6	1.2	5.8	
Snow Bunting	681	5	8.9	8.7	31	1.6	11.6	4.8	0.6	
Corn Bunting	4	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.0	
Yellowhammer	81	0.5	0.4	1.8	1.4	1.5	0.7	1.2	1.3	
Pine Bunting	3	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	
Ortolan Bunting	21	0	0.2	1.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	
Cretzschmar's Bunting	1	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.0	
Chestnut-eared Bunting	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0	
Little Bunting	49	0	0.4	0.8	0.4	1	0.8	0.4	1.4	
Yellow-browed Bunting	1	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.0	
Rustic Bunting	17	0	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.4	0	0.0	
Yellow-breasted Bunting	6	0	0.1	0.3	0.2	0	0	0	0.0	
Black-headed Bunting	4	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0	0.1	0.0	
Pallas's Reed Bunting	2	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0.0	
White-crowned Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
White-throated Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0.0	
Savannah Sparrow	2	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.0	
Tennessee Warbler	2	0	0	0	0.2	0	0	0	0.0	
Blackpoll Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.0	



**Order of data for each record:**

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

**Ages of birds:** The numbers given are EURING age codes and do not represent years. Definitions are as follows:

- 1 = pullus (nestling or chick)
- 2 = fully grown, but year of hatching quite unknown
- 3 = definitely hatched during calendar year of ringing
- 4 = hatched before calendar year of ringing, but exact year unknown
- 5 = definitely hatched during calendar year previous to year of ringing
- 6 = hatched before calendar year previous to year of ringing, but exact year unknown
- 7 = definitely hatched in the calendar year two years previous to the year of ringing
- 8 = hatched three or more calendar years previous to year of ringing, but exact year unknown

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

**Condition at recovery:**

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

Statistics given are taken from the BTO online ringing report (Robinson, R.A., Leech, D.I. & Clark, J.A. 2018. The Online Demography Report: Bird ringing and nest recording in Britain & Ireland in 2017. BTO, Thetford [www.bto.org/ringing-report, created on 2-October-2018]).

**Barnacle Goose**

White 'VJ'	4	30 Jul 2015	<b>NORWAY:</b> Nordenskioldkysten, Spitsbergen	
		VW 14 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	3y 2m 14d
White 'VX'	4	30 Jul 2015	<b>NORWAY:</b> Nordenskioldkysten, Spitsbergen	
		VW 14 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	3y 2m 14d
Orange 'CJI'	4F	20 Dec 2015	Caerlaverock WWT, Dumfries & Galloway	
		VW 14 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	2y 9m 24d
Yellow 'BBC'	4F	25 Jun 2016	<b>NORWAY:</b> Ny Aelsund, Spitsbergen	
		VW 13 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	2y 3m 18d
Yellow 'ABJ'	4F	31 Jul 2009	<b>NORWAY:</b> Ny Aelsund, Spitsbergen	
		VW 13 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	9y 2m 13d
Green 'YHY'	4M	23 Jul 2008	<b>NORWAY:</b> Nordenskioldkysten, Spitsbergen	
		VW 13 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	10y 2m 20d

*Barnacle Goose is a common autumn passage migrant through Fair Isle, but it is only when flocks are grounded on the Isle (usually by bad weather) that there is a chance to check for darvic rings that individually identify birds. This year's birds were all photographed by regular Fair Isle visitor Steve Arlow as large flocks were grounded on the Skadan.*

## Greylag Goose

142709	3M	21 Jul 2017	ICELAND: Blondous, North Iceland	
Orange 'LUA'	W	13 Jan 2018	Fair Isle	5m 23d
	W	25 Apr 2018	Fair Isle	9m 4d
Orange 'ACV'	4F	30 Nov 2003	Lintrathen Loch, Tayside	
	W	16 Feb 2004	Loch Greenan, Isle of Bute	2m 17d
	W	4 Mar 2006	Kildavanan, Isle of Bute	2y 3m 4d
	W	2 Apr 2006	Ettrick, Isle of Bute	2y 4m 3d
	W	28 Sep 2006	ICELAND: Sigridarstadavatn, Hunafjordur	2y 9m 29d
	W	5 Feb 2007	East Chevington Pool, Northumberland	3y 2m 6d
	W	17 Feb 2007	Newton Pool, Northumberland	3y 2m 18d
	W	22 Nov 2009	Yinstay, Orkney	5y 11m 23d
	W	12 Nov 2017	Fair Isle	13y 11m 13d
5201559	3	20 Oct 2008	Fair Isle	
	X	31 Oct 2009	ICELAND: Daðastaðir, Núpasveit, Nordur-Thingeyjar, Norður-Þingeyjarsýsla	1y 11d, 1053 km, NW (315°)

*A report of an old movement of a bird back to its breeding grounds and two others that confirm the origin of the wintering flock on the Isle (there have been seven Fair Isle-ringed birds previously found in Iceland). The movements of 'ACV' make for an interesting story, especially the lengthy gap in sightings before it was seen in Fair Isle.*

## Whooper Swan

Z663873	6F	23 Nov 1999	Martin Mere WWT, Lancashire	
Orange 'XJH'	W	23 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	18y 11m, 662 km, N (7°)
		24 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	18y 11m 1d, 662 km, N (7°)

*This bird, which is a decent age, breeds in Iceland (having been seen there in 2007 and 2015) and has been seen virtually every winter in Lancashire since it was first caught there. The only sighting away from these areas was on the Isle of Lewis on 18th–19th October 2007. An arrival in the Outer Hebrides may well be the regular route this bird takes to its wintering grounds, with near gale force north-west winds at the time of its arrival presumably responsible for its appearance further east than usual this year.*

## Storm Petrel

*Following the record number of Storm Petrels trapped in 2017, the overall number caught in 2018 was considerably lower. This resulted in a lower number of controls, with 43 in 2018 compared to 177 in 2017. The origin of the majority of controls was from a range of familiar sites, including Sumburgh Head (15) and North Ronaldsay (10), with elsewhere in Orkney accounting for a further seven. As expected, the majority of the controls were birds ringed since 2016, with the only exceptions being singles from 2015, 2012 and 2000.*

*Storm Petrels tend not to breed until they are four years old, and it is the non-breeding immatures that are lured into the trapping area in the Haven for ringing. This means that birds caught on Fair Isle in 2018 were likely to have been hatched from 2015 onwards. Those that hatched in 2015 would have fledged too late to be caught that year, and would have been likely to have spent most of 2016 summering further south than the UK. After spending the summers of 2017 and 2018 investigating potential breeding colonies, they should start breeding in 2019. This is reflected well in the chart overleaf, with only a few older birds, which are either taking longer to settle down into a colony somewhere, or were perhaps failed breeders. It is also noticeable that two of the records of older Fair Isle-ringed birds caught elsewhere involved birds that had gone to the large colony on Mousa, where there were presumably now breeding.*



## Gannet

1393229	1	1 Aug 2005	Fair Isle	
	R	18 Jul 2018	Sule Skerry, Orkney	12y 11m 17d, 165 km, WSW (253°)

*One of three species of seabird ringed as chicks on Fair Isle and found presumably breeding on Sule Skerry in 2018.*

## Shag

1493827	1	12 Jul 2018	Isle of May, Fife	
White 'DFX'	X	25 Nov 2018	Fair Isle	4m 13d, 377 km, N (9°)
1319056	8F	24 Jun 1994	Fair Isle	
	X	30 May 2018	Flotta, Shetland	23y 11m 6d, 76 km, NNE (13°) [ring only]
1427127	1	26 Jul 2014	Fair Isle	
Red 'HFW'	VV	17 Jun 2018	Mousa, Shetland	3y 10m 22d
14271278	1	26 Jul 2014	Fair Isle	
Red 'HPW'	X	22 Dec 2018	Burrae, Shetland	4y 4m 26d, 96 km, N (9°)
1427146	1	31 Jul 2014	Fair Isle	
Green 'FRN'	VV	4 May 2018	Gue Park, North Ronaldsay	3y 9m 4d

There were sightings of birds fitted with darvic rings that had been ringed on the Isle in: 2016 (six), 2015 (three), 2014 (ten), 2013, 2012 and 1997 (the latter being 1339319, Green 'HFR', originally ringed as an adult male in Easter Lothar on 24th June 1997 as an adult male and seen on several occasions until 17th October [21y 3m 23d]).

*Nine Fair Isle-ringed birds have previously been seen on the Isle of May, but this is the first to move in the other direction. The other sightings are all typical of the local movements often undertaken by this species. These included chicks from adjacent nests in South Feltsigeo ringed on the same date in 2014 that both moved to Shetland. Interestingly, of these, red 'HPW' had been seen on the Isle again on 5th July 2017, but decided to move away from Fair Isle to Shetland where it unfortunately perished. 1339319 becomes the oldest known Fair Isle-ringed Shag (1319056 was a 'ring only' record therefore there is no way of knowing when it had died, a similar situation applied to a previous 'older' bird found on Yell). Many of the darvic-ringed birds were ones that had been seen regularly around the Isle, but one (green 'FRW') was seen back on Fair Isle after going wandering in its 4cy and a few others had not been seen for a year or two. It was pleasing to see three of the 21 chicks darvic-ringed in 2016 being seen for the first time since then (only one of the rest of the 2016 cohort have been seen since ringing, green 'HIE' which was still present in spring 2017, although not since). Shags are long-lived birds, so it is hoped that more of the Fair Isle-ringed individuals return to the Isle to breed as they mature.*

## Water Rail

EW47897 was ringed in the Plantation on 22nd Oct 2017 and was recaptured there on 28th Mar (5m 6d)  
EZ04010 was ringed in the Obs on 29th Oct 2017 and had its ring read as it fed in the garden there on 19th Mar (4m 19d)

*Two interesting records that show how birds establish wintering areas on the Isle that they remain faithful to, although none have yet been recorded returning to the Isle in subsequent years. The bird at the Obs was regularly observed through the winter where it could be seen to be ringed as it fed on kitchen scraps and bird seed on the lawn.*

## Oystercatcher

FP17319 was ringed as a chick on Eas Brecks on 5th Jul 2000 and had its ring read at North Light on 3rd Jul 2018 (17y 11m 28d)  
FC99525 was ringed as a chick at the Mast on 9th Jun 2005 and found dead at Golden Water on 9th Apr 2018 (12y 10m)  
FC99563 was ringed as chick at Bullock Holes on 17th Jul 2006 and found dead at Meadow Burn on 26th May 2018 (11y 10m 9d)  
FP18246 was ringed as a chick at Pund on 2nd Jul 2010 and was caught at the airstrip on 11th Sep 2018 (8y 2m 9d)

Oystercatchers regularly live to over 20 years (the oldest UK ringed bird was over 40), so these records are not unusual. They do show a high level of site fidelity for this species, which largely leaves the Isle in the winter. FP17319 is almost certainly a regular territory holder at North Light, having also had its ring read there in 2016. FP18246 was caught during a dazzling session.

### Ringed Plover

NW62653 was ringed in North Haven during a dazzling session on 29th Jul 2014 and had its ring read at Easter Lothar Water, where it appeared to be breeding, on 2nd July (3y 11m 3d).

*It might be assumed that birds in the Haven in the autumn are passage birds moving through the Isle, but this record would suggest that at least some of them are local breeding birds.*

### Black-tailed Godwit

FS100534	4M	13 Dec 2017	FRANCE: Moeze, Lagune nord	
	WV	8 Jul 2018	Fair Isle	6m 25d

FS100534, which was present on the Isle until 12th July (6m 29d), is the first ringing movement of Black-tailed Godwit recorded for Fair Isle.

### Sanderling

NB00694	4	21 May 2016	Sanday, Orkney	
Y/Y/L(f) B/MWV		12 May 2018	Fair Isle	1y 11m 21d, 61 km, ENE (64°)

NB00694 was also seen on Sanday on 28 Apr 2018.

### Snipe

LJ43351 was ringed as an adult in the Vaadal on 31st May 2016 and recaptured there on 25th May 2018 (1y 11m 25d)

*This is presumably a bird that breeds on Fair Isle. Relatively few Snipe are ringed on Fair Isle and so there is still much to be learnt about the movements of the breeding population.*

### Woodcock

EX79995	3	16 Nov 2015	Fair Isle	
	X	17 Nov 2018	Quintfall Forest, Lyth, Highland	3y 1d, 143 km, SW (219°)

*This bird was caught as part of a late fall that saw ten Woodcocks ringed in three days on Fair Isle (one of which was shot five days later in Denmark). The similarity of dates and the location not far from the coast, would suggest that this bird had recently arrived in the UK for its fourth winter before meeting an untimely end.*

### Great Black-backed Gull

Black 'JC808'	5	13 Aug 2016	NORWAY: Brennevinsmyra, Veit-Agder	
	WV	12 Sep 2016	DENMARK: Nordjyllands	
	WV	26 May 2018	Fair Isle	1y 9m 13d
MA27332	10	6 Nov 2014	Fair Isle	
	X	25 Aug 2018	RUSSIA: Zapolyarny, Murmansk Oblast	3y 9m 19d, 1887 km, NE (55°)

HT55154 was ringed as a chick on 30th Jun 1994 and seen at the Obs on 10th & 19th Aug 2018 (24y 1m 20d)

*Two interesting foreign movements, with JC808 being the third Norwegian-ringed Great Black-backed Gull to make it to Fair Isle (although 17 have gone in the opposite direction). MA27332 was ringed at Wirvie and was one of 12 Great Black-backed Gulls to be dazzled during that evening. It is the second Fair Isle-ringed Great Black-backed Gull to move to Russia, with two Russian birds having been found on the Isle. All of these have involved birds moving between their breeding grounds in the Murmansk Oblast region to Fair Isle in the winter. HT55154 became the oldest known Fair*

*Isle-ringed Great Black-backed Gull when it was seen at the Obs in 2015 and its latest sighting moves it to within less than three years of the BTO record. It presumably breeds on the Isle, having also had its ring read in 2001, 2013, 2015 and 2016, although with all sightings being between April and August, its wintering grounds are unknown.*

### Herring Gull

GR11055	1	26 Jun 2017	Fair Isle	
	X	14 Jun 2018	Westray, Orkney	11m 19d, 80 km, WSW (253°)
GR11294	1	12 Jul 2016	Fair Isle	
	WV	13 Mar 2018	NORWAY: Tveitevannet, Bergen	1y 8m 1d, 400 km, ENE (77°)
	WV	4 Apr 2018	NORWAY: Tveitevannet, Bergen	1y 8m 23d, 400 km, ENE (77°)
	WV	9 Apr 2018	NORWAY: Byparken, Bergen, Hordaland	1y 8m 28d, 498 km, ENE (77°)

GA22154 was ringed as a chick on Bunes on 9th Jul 2000 and seen at the Obs on 19th Aug (18y 1m 10d)

GA22228 was ringed as an adult near the Obs on 14th Jul 2003 and was seen at the Obs on 3rd May 2018 (14y 9m 19d)

GR11019 was ringed as an adult near the Obs on 20th Jul 2010 and was seen at the Obs on 3rd May 2018 (7y 9m 13d) and 20th Dec 2018 (8y 5m 2d)

GR11077 was ringed as a chick on Goorn on 16th Jul 2013 and was seen at the Obs on 14th Sep 2018 (5y 1m 29d)

GA22001 was ringed as a chick on Green Holm on 20th Jun 1998 and the ring was found there on 26th Jun

*Two movements that show the wanderings of immature birds, both to locations that are regular destinations for Fair Isle-ringed birds; the 18th movement to Orkney and 16th to Norway (the only other areas to have double-figure totals for recoveries of Fair Isle birds are North-east Scotland with 16 and The Netherlands with 11). An interesting selection of sightings of Fair Isle-ringed birds on the Isle included GA22154, which is just a year shy of the oldest known Fair Isle-ringed bird (although GA22001 had been ringed 20 years previously, it is not known when it died). GR11019 is a regular visitor to the Obs garden and appears to be resident on the Isle year-round.*

### Lesser Black-backed Gull

GH08787 was ringed as an adult at Chalet on 28th July 2009 and found dead near Da Water on 18th July 2018 (8y 11m 20d)

GH08728 was ringed as a chick on Goorn on 16th July 2012 and seen at the Obs on 6th Aug 2018 (6y 21d)

*'Blue 687' a Lesser Black-backed Gull, whose ring was read on Fair Isle on 26th July 2016, was sighted in the Faeroe Islands on 1st July 2017. It had initially been ringed as an adult in Gloucestershire in March 2005 and had been seen several times there and Leicestershire in intervening years (usually in early spring) and in Spain on 1st March 2013; a fascinating set of sightings that give an idea of the movements of some of the passage birds seen on Fair Isle. GH08787 became fourth-oldest Fair Isle-ringed Lesser Black-backed Gull and GH08728 made a reappearance having been seen twice at the Obs in July 2016 (and presumably breeds on the Isle).*

### Arctic Tern

SV16821 was ringed as a chick on Bunes on 29th Jul 1999 and was found dead on 13th Jun 2018 (18y 10m 15d)

SX33450 was ringed as a chick on 30th Jun 1992 and was found dead on 10th Jun 2018 (25y 11m 11d)

*SX33450 becomes the oldest record of a Fair Isle-ringed Arctic Tern. Unusually, both these recoveries involve rings found in Bonxie pellets on Swey.*

### Great Skua

HT92220	1	15 Jul 2003	Foula, Shetland	
	X	19 May 2018	Fair Isle	14y 10m 4d, 71 km, SSE (161°)
White 'BF'	1	2014	Handa	
	WV	7 May 2018	Fair Isle	
	WV	12 Jul 2018	Fair Isle	



HT12176	1	27 Jun 1992	Fair Isle		
	X	16 Mar 2018	<b>FRANCE:</b> Plage de Sauveterre, Vendée	25y 8m 17d, 1447 km, S (181°)	
HT78314	1	3 Aug 2002	Fair Isle		
(fresh)	X	2 Aug 2018	<b>DENMARK:</b> Rubjerg Knude, Vendsyssel	15y 11m 30d, 702 km, ESE (110°)	
HT78479	1	20 Jul 2006	Fair Isle		
	W	8 Jul 2018	Sule Skerry, Orkney	11y 11m 18d, 165 km, WSW (253°)	
MA27700	1	5 Jul 2012	Fair Isle		
	R	3 Jul 2018	<b>THE NETHERLANDS:</b> Schiermonnikoog	5y 11m 28d, 826 km, SE (145°)	
MA38247	1	13 Jul 2016	Fair Isle		
	R	19 Aug 2018	<b>DENMARK:</b> Anholt, Århus	2y 1m 6d, 835 km, ESE (113°)	
MA40227	1	23 Jul 2017	Fair Isle		
White '2A18'	W	15 Sep 2018	<b>IRELAND:</b> at sea, County Cork		1y 1m 23d
MA42259	1	31 Jul 2017	Fair Isle		
White '2A56'	W	11 Aug 2018	<b>SPAIN:</b> at sea, Isla Cristina, Huelva		1y 11d
MA42371	1	13 Jul 2018	Fair Isle		
White '2E83'	W	29 Dec 2018	<b>SPAIN:</b> at sea, Lequeitio		5m 16d
MA40323	1	31 Jul 2018	Fair Isle		
White '2D64'	W	30 Dec 2018	<b>SPAIN:</b> at sea, Ondarroa harbour, Bizkaia		4m 30d
MA40341	1	12 Aug 2018	Fair Isle		
White '2D85'	W	23 Sep 2018	<b>SWEDEN:</b> Hamlstad		1y 1m 11d
MA40359	1	13 Aug 2018	Fair Isle		
	X	19 Sep 2018	<b>DENMARK:</b> Fanoe Bad, Ribe	1m 36d, 751 km, SE (128°)	

In addition, there were two ringed in 2017 that were found dead on the Isle and a ring put on a bird in 2016 was also found, all presumably relating to chicks that died before fledging. MA38063 ringed at the Obs as an adult on 4th May 2016 was retrapped there on 2nd May 2018 (1y 11m 28d), both times having got entangled in the Obs fence after scavenging scraps in the garden. Other birds ringed previously on Fair Isle and recorded in 2018 were: HT78511 ringed as a chick on Swey on 20th Jul 2006 was found dead on Swey on 1st Aug (12y 1m 12d) HT78615 ringed as a chick on Vaasetter on 11th Jul 2007 was at South Green on 21st Apr and South Light on 11th May (10y 10m)

MA22422 ringed as a chick on Swey on 14th Jul 2010 was on Bunes on 31st May (7y 10m 17d)

MA27352 ringed as a chick on Swey on 2nd Aug 2014 was found dead on 31st Aug 2018 (4y 29d)

*A fantastic set of movements, helped massively by the darvic-ringing project started in 2017. A Foula-ringed bird found dead in May could just have been passing through, but white 'BF' (ringed as a chick on Handa) appears to have been integrated into the Fair Isle population, holding territory throughout the summer. A nearly 12-year-old bird seen on Sule Skerry may well have been a breeding bird there, giving an indication of the movement between colonies. The records from Fair Isle included a bird that was probably breeding on High Holm (HT78615) and one whose feeding territory encompasses the North Gavel of Bunes (MA22422, which was also recorded there in July 2016). HT12176 becomes the oldest Fair Isle-ringed Great Skua, presumably it was on its way back north to its breeding grounds when it died. There have been several previous records from Denmark and The Netherlands, MA40359 was typical - a 1cy bird that sadly failed to make its first migration south safely. HT78314 and MA27700 were found rather early in the season though, suggested failed or non-breeders, whilst MA38247 was presumably a non-breeding immature.*

*There are four previous records of Fair Isle birds found in Spain, although all were dead (or dying) in the winter. Therefore white '2A56' was especially interesting, as it showed the location of a bird in its first summer after fledging (the first such record of a Fair Isle bird). White '2A18' was the second record of a bird in its first summer, although was a good deal further north; whether it had summered further north, had wandered there later in the season or*

had been pushed further up the Atlantic by strong winds at the time isn't known. White '2D85' became just our second movement to Sweden and occurred just after a record-breaking movement of the species in the country following strong westerly winds. The year ended with two records on consecutive days of chicks from this year photographed off the Spanish coast from pelagic trips; hopefully there will be many more records of this nature.

### Arctic Skua

EL62623	1	18 Jul 2015	Quendal, Rousay, Orkney	
White 'B4'	WV	8 Jun 2018	Fair Isle	2y 10m 21d
ES60872	1	28 Jun 2000	Foula, Shetland	
	R	8 Jun 2018	Fair Isle	17y 11m 11d, 71 km, SSE (161°)

There were ten birds ringed on Fair Isle in previous years that were recorded on the Isle in 2018. These included eight ringed in 2017, ET84328 which was ringed as a chick at Bullock Holes on 26th Jun 2006 and found dead in the Parks on 13th Sep 2018 (12y 2m 18d) and ET83551 (orange AAN) ringed on 27th Jun 2002 as a chick and retrapped on 12 Jun 2017 (when it had a darvic ring fitted), which was seen at the airstrip between 1st May and 4th Aug (16y 1m 8d).

*Arctic Skuas are long-lived birds (two Fair Isle-ringed individuals have survived over 25 years), so these records are not particularly unusual. Wanderings between colonies (as with ES60872) are fairly frequent occurrences, so it seems unusual that EL62623 was the first Orkney-ringed bird to be recorded on the Isle.*

### Common Guillemot

T72737	8	19 Jun 1994	Fair Isle	
	X	26 Jan 2018	Oxna, Shetland	23y 7m 7d, 68 km, N (11°)
X86951	1	22 Jun 1998	Fair Isle	
	R	9 Jul 2018	Sule Skerry, Orkney	20y 16d, 165 km, WSW (253°)
R37739	6	1 Jul 2004	Fair Isle	
	R	28 Jun 2018	Garbh Eilan, Shiants, Western Isles	13y 11m 27d, 328 km, WSW (237°)
R50189	1	24 Jun 2007	Fair Isle	
	R	17 Jun 2018	Ceann Ousdale, Highland	10y 11m 20d, 192 km, SW (216°)

A number of birds were retrapped or resighted having been ringed on the Isle in previous years:

R37546 ringed on 7th Jul 2003 as a chick at Kuthin was found dead on Green Holm on 26th June (14y 11m 19d)  
 R37942 ringed on 15th Jul 2005 as an adult was present on 10th Jun and 10th Jul at Easter Lothar (12y 11m 25d)  
 R59551 ringed on 17th May 2011 as an adult was seen on 13th Jul at Easter Lothar (7y 1m 26d)  
 R59565 ringed on 25th Jun 2012 as an adult and was present on 24th May at Easter Lothar (5y 10m 29d)  
 R59444 ringed on 26th May 2013 as an adult was present on 10th Jun at Easter Lothar (5y 15d)  
 R63035 ringed on 21st Jun 2017 as an adult and was present on 10th Jul at Easter Lothar (1y 19d)

*R37546 had probably been predated by a Great Black-backed Gull. T72737 had been re-ringed in South Gunnawark (as R59656) on 9th July 2014 and becomes the 33rd bird to move to Shetland. R37739 is unusual, there have not been many movements to the west coast of Scotland and this appears to have involved a bird that has switched breeding colonies. Two Fair Isle-raised chicks were recaptured in other Scottish breeding colonies, showing an interesting pattern of dispersal.*

### Razorbill

A number of birds were trapped or seen that had been ringed in previous years (all as adults, unless stated otherwise), including birds from: 2016, 2015, 2014 (four, one as a chick), 2013, 2012, 2011, 2008, 2005, 2004, 2003 and 2002. In addition, two older birds ringed as chicks were recorded in 2018:

K12006 ringed (originally as M81476) on 23rd Jun 1994 was retrapped on 7th Jul (24y 14d)  
 K18608 ringed (originally as M94409) on 24th Jun 1998 was retrapped on 7th Jul (20y 13d)



### Reed Warbler

AZA1009	3	19 Sep 2017	Icklesham, Sussex	
	R	17 May 2018	Fair Isle	7m 28d, 971 km, N (352°)

*The first English-ringed Reed Warbler to be trapped on Fair Isle, what was presumably the same ringed individual was seen on 13th–14th May, was retrapped on 19th May and last seen on 20th (8m 1d).*

### Blackcap

AXB9030	5F	9 May 2018	Holland, North Ronaldsay	
	R	10 May 2018	Fair Isle	1d, 49 km, NNE (68°)
Z663873	5F	21 May 2016	Fair Isle	
	R	25 Oct 2017	SPAIN: Manecorro, Donana, Huelva	1y 5m 4d, 2520 km, S (189°)

*AXB9030 was a typical northbound migrant, which was retrapped on 11th May (2d). Z663873 was just the second Fair Isle-ringed Blackcap to move to Spain (with one Spanish-ringed bird having been caught on Fair Isle) and was trapped just up the road from where the current FIBO Warden and Administrator first met!*

### Garden Warbler

EF44431	4	17 May 2017	NORWAY: Lista Fyr, Farsund, Vest-Agder	
	X	8 Jun 2018	Fair Isle	1y 22d, 498 km, WNW (289°)

*Just the seventh Garden Warbler control for Fair Isle and the first from Norway, this unfortunate individual's ring was found in a Bonxie pellet.*

### Lesser Whitethroat

9CC9199	3	7 Aug 2018	DENMARK: Sonderho Strand, Fano, Vandehavsoerne, Ribe	
	R	4 Sep 2018	Fair Isle	28d, 760 km, NW (308°)

*Although the 18 ringed in 2018 took the all time total of Lesser Whitethroats ringed on Fair Isle to over 1,000, none have been caught elsewhere and 9CC9199 is just the second control, following a bird ringed at Virkie, Shetland on 30th Aug 2014 that was on Fair Isle the following day. It is the first Danish-ringed Lesser Whitethroat to be found in the UK and was heading in precisely the wrong direction for an autumn migrant; it is interesting to wonder what it had been up to in the month between being ringed and arriving on Fair Isle.*

### Starling

LJ43259	3J	5 Sep 2016	Fair Isle	
	WV	2 Jun 2018	Holm, North Ronaldsay	1y 8m 28d

There were a number of retraps and sightings from previous years, including records from: 2017 (ten), 2016 (eight), 2015 (seven), 2014 (seven), 2013 (four), 2012 (three) and 2011, with one older bird: LC43008 ringed as chick on 3rd Jun 2010 and seen at the Obs on 22nd Sep (8y 3m 19d)

*LJ43259 is presumably now breeding on North Ronaldsay, it is possible that it may have been ringed on Fair Isle having dispersed from breeding grounds on Orkney, rather than being a dispersing Fair Isle youngster.*

### Rose-coloured Starling

LK35095	4	3 Jun 2018	Fair Isle	
	x	15 Jun 2018	ICELAND: Borg, Myrar, Austur-Skaftafellssýsla	12d, 892 km, NW (306°)

*This is only the fourth Rose-coloured Starling to be ringed on Fair Isle, so it is remarkable that it was refound (albeit, sadly, dead) in a country where it is a vagrant. The powerful instinctive drive that caused a large arrival of this species into north-west Europe in spring 2018 was obviously enough to keep this individual moving on the same trajectory.*

## Blackbird

L79681, a 6F was ringed on 12th Mar 2018 (and retrapped on 19th Mar) and was caught again on 28th Oct (7m 16d)

*This is an interesting record as it was not thought to be a summering bird and was therefore was a migrant caught using Fair Isle as a stopover in both spring and autumn.*

## Redwing

8116613	3	25 Sep 2018	ICELAND: Langhús, Fljót, Skagafjarðar, Skagafjarðarsýsla
	R	23 Oct 2018	Fair Isle 28d, 1145 km, SE (130°)

RL94093 was ringed on 12th Oct 2017 in the Gully and was retrapped at the Obs on 19th Mar (5m 7d)

*RL94093, an 'Icelandic Redwing', was presumably a bird that had overwintered on the Isle. 8116613 is the fifth Icelandic-ringed Redwing to be caught on Fair Isle (with eight having moved in the opposite direction).*

## Robin

Although there were no movements recorded to or from the Isle, there were a number of interesting records of birds that lingered on the Isle, including:

APB1209 ringed on 28th Jun and still present on 6th Oct (3m 8)  
APB1564 ringed on 13th Oct and still present on 20th Nov (1m 7d)  
APB1612 ringed on 21st Oct and still present on 17th Nov (27d)  
S465393 ringed on 7th Nov 2017 and still present on 9th Mar 2018 (4m 2d)  
S465394 ringed 7th Nov 2017 and still present on 9th Mar 2018 (4m 2d)  
S465516 ringed 11th Oct 2017 and still present on 9th Mar 2018 (4m 26d)

*A typical set of records involving some wintering birds and a summering individual, along with a couple of long-stayers in the autumn which may well have gone on to winter on the Isle. Although Robins can be seen in every month on Fair Isle, no individuals have yet been recorded remaining year-round on the Isle.*

## Wheatear

L274573 was ringed as a 4M on 2nd May 2012 and seen on 21st and 22nd Apr 2018 (5y 11m 20d)

*The second-oldest known Fair Isle-ringed Wheatear, it is a colour-ringed individual that was also recorded on the Isle in 2015, 2016 and 2017 as a breeding bird. The lack of records later in the season perhaps suggests it did not survive the year however.*

## House Sparrow

There were a number of birds ringed on the Isle in previous years that were retrapped in 2018, these involved birds from 2017 (eight), 2016 (four), 2015 and TS52237, which was ringed as a 4F on 21st Jun 2014 and retrapped on 19th Mar (3y 8m 26d).

*A typical set of records; the oldest ever Fair Isle-ringed bird was just shy of seven years old.*

## Duncock

VZ47658 was ringed 16th Jun and retrapped on 28th Sep (3m 12d)

*An unusual record of a summering bird, it was retrapped on several occasions, but could go missing for lengthy periods, so ringing was a useful way of proving it to be the same lingering individual.*

### Pied Wagtail

Z830649	3J	2 Sep 2015	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay	
	WV	6 Aug 2018	Fair Isle	2y 11m 4d, 51 km, NNE (67°)
	WV	14 Sep 2018	Fair Isle	3y 12d, 51 km, NNE (67°)

*This was a breeding female of a pair around the Haven and Obs area that had its ring read as it fed in the Obs garden (it was present from the spring until later in the autumn).*

### Meadow Pipit

A number of birds that had been ringed in previous years on the Isle were retrapped in 2018:

S016131	ringed as a 3J on 17th Jul 2016 and retrapped on 19th Aug 2018 (2y 2m 2d)
S016147	ringed as a 3J on 2nd Aug 2016 and retrapped on 1st May 2018 (1y 8m 29d)
S016236	ringed as a 3 on 26th Aug 2016 and retrapped on 23rd Aug, 2nd Sep and 12th Sep 2018 (2y 17d)
S465162	ringed as a 3J on 5th Jul 2017 and retrapped on 4th Aug 2018 (1y 30d)

### Rock Pipit

2606395	was ringed in the Obs garden on 28th Feb 2016 and had its ring read there on 23rd Nov 2018 (2y 8m 26d)
2721787	was ringed in the Obs garden on 28th Mar 2017 and had its ring read there on 26th Nov 2018 (1y 7m 29d)

*Both of these birds appear to have regular wintering areas at the Obs. It is known that some Fair Isle breeding birds winter on the Scottish mainland, but it is not clear where these individuals, which have been ringed in winter on Fair Isle, spend the summer.*

### Chaffinch

APB1537	3F	6 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	
	R	31 Oct 2018	Quinia, Orkney	25d, 102 km, WSW (236°)

*Only the third Fair Isle ringed Chaffinch to make it to Orkney, but a seemingly typical leisurely southerly autumn movement.*

### Brambling

EM59102	3F	3 Oct 2018	<b>NORWAY:</b> Bomyra, Randaberg, Rogaland	
	R	14 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	11d, 414 km, W (279°)

*The ninth Norwegian-ringed Brambling to be caught on Fair Isle (only Orkney has provided the same amount) and was caught during a spell of strong passage of this species.*

### Twite

APB1238	3	24 Aug 2018	Fair Isle	
	R (3M)	5 Nov 2018	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay	2m 12d, 51 km, WSW (247°)
APB1509	3	26 Sep 2018	Fair Isle	
	R (3F)	5 Nov 2018	Twinyess, North Ronaldsay	1m 10d, 51 km, WSW (247°)
S465090	4F	9 May 2017	Fair Isle	
	R	13 Mar 2018	Dale, Costa, Evie, Orkney	10m 4d, 101 km, WSW (243°)
APB1523	3	30 Sep 2018	Fair Isle	
	R (3M)	26 Nov 2018	North Ronaldsay	1m 27d, 49 km, WSW (248°)

In addition, there were a number of birds caught on the Isle that had been ringed here in recent years, from: 2017 (four), 2016 (six), 2015 (two) and 2014 (two).

A typical set of records documenting movements to and from the Isle. Orkney is by far the commonest ringing movement recorded by Twite involving Fair Isle, with 67 ringed there coming to the Isle and 73 of 'our' birds moving south. The only other areas to have ringing movements involving Fair Isle are North-east Scotland (0/1), Shetland (0/1), Sutherland (3/1) and 'at Sea' (0/1). The paucity of records involving Shetland remains unexpected, even allowing for them not frequenting the same habitats as many of the ringers there.

### Linnet

Y123067	3J	2 Aug 2012	Fair Isle	
	6F	5 Apr 2014	Holland, North Ronaldsay	1y 8m 3d, 49 km, WSW (248°)
	6F	14 Oct 2018	Holland, North Ronaldsay	6y 2m 12d, 49 km, WSW (248°)

Y123067 was ringed along with two other juveniles and a moulting adult female within a few days of each other in 2012 and were thought to have possibly been raised on Fair Isle. This group have provided some fascinating information, as one of Y123067's presumed siblings (Y123068) has also been trapped on North Ronaldsay (in September 2013) having been caught in Highland in its first autumn. Y123067 is presumably also migrating between the Northern Isles and the Scottish mainland and so has done well to reach over six years old; the oldest known BTO-ringed Linnet was just under eight years and four months old.

### Common Redpoll

AXB9209	5M	9 Jun 2018	Holland, North Ronaldsay	
	R	11 Jun 2018	Fair Isle	2d, 49 km, NNE (68°)

This appears to be a rather late spring migrant moving north, however, the status and movements of redpolls around the Northern Isles often raise more questions than answers.

### Lesser Redpoll

S338023	3	16 Sep 2016	Deer Park Forest Croft, Highland	
	R	24 Apr 2018	Fair Isle	1y 7m 8d, 264 km, NE (34°)

This is potentially a bird that winters in the UK and was heading back to its breeding grounds.

### Siskin

876122H	6M	25 Apr 2017	<b>FINLAND:</b> Kakskerta, Varsinais-Suomi, Turku-Pori	
	W	17 Apr 2018	Fair Isle	11m 23d, 1331 km, W (267°)
S465038	5M	2 May 2017	Fair Isle	
	R	4 Apr 2018	Kildary, Highland	11m 2d, 243 km, SW (216°)

The popularity of this species at feeders across the country has no doubt helped in a wide scatter of ringing movements involving Fair Isle, and Highland becomes the 13th British recording area to feature. The only previous foreign movement was a bird found in Portugal in Dec 1977, so the Finnish record featured here was an exciting one. It originally had its ring read as it fed in the Obs garden and was trapped there the following day. It is the fifth Finnish-ringed Siskin to be recorded in the UK, although what it was doing over 1,000 km to the west almost exactly a year after being ringed isn't clear. Another foreign-ringed bird was seen at the Obs feeders later in the spring, but sadly the details could not be made out and the bird evaded capture.

### Reed Bunting

S371035	4F	9 Oct 2016	Middleton Nature Reserve, Lancashire	
	R	24 Apr 2018	Fair Isle	1y 6m 15d, 618 km, N (8°)

Just the fourth movement between Fair Isle and England (the others have been caught in Northumberland, Shropshire and Suffolk). The only winter recoveries have been two birds in France, so there is a chance this bird was still moving south when it was caught.

## FAIR ISLE'S SEABIRDS IN 2018

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Richard Cope

There were a lot of positives to take from the 2018 seabird season on Fair Isle. In particular the breeding success for many species was very good, although unfortunately from very low breeding populations (given a few exceptions).

Gannets were perhaps the biggest success story of the season with the population reaching a new high at 4,291 AON and productivity at 0.78 being the highest for six years. That was seemingly unaffected by the Great Skua population also reaching a record high at 520 AOT, although that was counteracted by their productivity falling for the fourth successive year to 0.35 chicks per AOT. There was good news for the auks with Puffins recording their highest-ever productivity at 0.90 chicks fledged per egg laid. Razorbills had a brilliant year, breeding in the highest numbers since 2006 and fledging 0.79 chicks per egg laid, the best fledging success since 1998. Guillemots did well too, with the highest population since 2016, and the best breeding success since 2015 at 0.59 fledged chicks per egg laid, their second-best year in the last 12.

Seeing auk colonies with large chicks or watching adults bringing in large fish was a real highlight of the summer. Finding large healthy chicks in the Easter Lothar colony being defended by adults sitting about, having caught sufficient fish to allow them to do so, made for entertaining visits.

Unfortunately, it wasn't all good news, with Kittiwakes dropping to an all-time low in terms of population in the study plots. They did at least fledge 0.47 chicks per AON which was an improvement on 2017 and their third best year in the last 16. Lack of suitable weather through the summer once again prevented a whole-island population count to reveal just how low the population is. Arctic Skua continued its poor run of late with 28 AOT the lowest since 2013 and just 0.04 chicks fledged per AOT. The populations of Fulmar, Shag, Arctic Tern and Black Guillemot showed slight decreases on recent years although fledging success was slightly up on recent years too. The only exception is for Black Guillemot for which there are no suitable sites to monitor breeding productivity.

**Fulmar:** A decrease of 8.3% was recorded at the population monitoring plots in 2018 (363 AOS) in comparison with 2017 (396 AOS). Although this is the lowest count since 2015, it fits with the general trend for a gradual fluctuating increase in the monitoring plots since the early 2000s, which reversed a previous gradual decline.



Mean breeding success on the monitoring plots increased by 3.8% to 0.54 chicks fledged per AOS in 2018, in comparison to 0.52 chicks fledged per AOS in 2017. The long-term trend in breeding success is neither one of consistent increase or decrease, but rather is of relatively short-term fluctuations.

**Gannet:** An increase of 10.5% was noted in the island population in 2018 (4,291 AON) in comparison to 2017 (3,882 AON). Gannets colonised Fair Isle in 1975 after which a gradual increase followed, with rapid expansion in the population noted from 2008 to 2010. Since then, there has been a slow fluctuating decrease in numbers, although the 2018 count represented the third consecutive year of increase and highest ever total.

Productivity in 2018 was 0.78 chicks fledged per AON, representing an increase of 14.7% from 2017 (0.68 chicks fledged per AON). The 2018 figure maintains the high productivity values seen over the last 18 years; above 0.6 in all years with data from 2001 to 2018. The sample size of nests monitored in 2018 was 251.

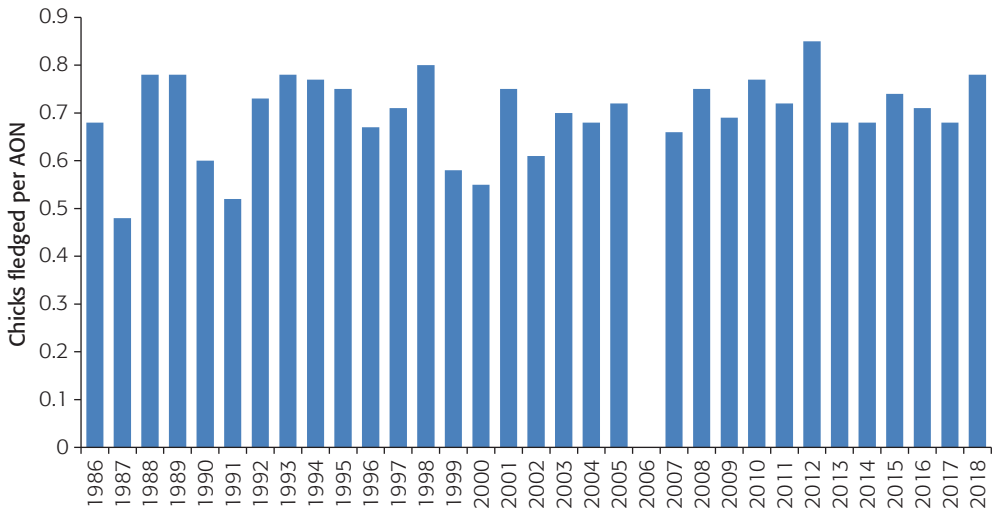


Figure 1. Breeding success of Gannet on Fair Isle, 1986–2018 (sample size of monitored nests has ranged between 107 and 269). Data for the annual series was not collected in 2006.

**Shag:** A decrease of 3.3% was recorded at the population monitoring plots in 2018 (29 AON) in comparison to 2017 (30 AON). Shags have shown considerable long-term decline in numbers on Fair Isle since 1969, although since 2011 counts appear to have stabilised slightly.

Productivity was 313.2% higher in 2018 (0.91 fledged per AON) than in 2017 (0.22 chicks per fledged AON). The long-term trend since 1986 has been a gradual decline in productivity, with particular poor breeding success recorded recently in 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2017. The breeding population on Fair Isle has declined severely and the total number of occupied nests in the productivity monitoring plots is now very low: 11 in 2018 compared with 68 in 1986.

**Arctic Skua:** A decrease of 6.7% was recorded in the island population in 2018 (28 AOT) compared to 2017 (30 AOT), the second consecutive year of decline (Figure 2). 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 2018 total was the third-lowest ever recorded.

Productivity in 2018 increased by 33.3% to 0.04 chicks fledged per AOT in comparison to 2017 (0.03 chicks fledged per AOT). This figure is somewhat misleading however, as for the second consecutive year, just one chick fledged, with the increase in productivity caused by a decrease in the number of pairs breeding. Productivity between 2011 and 2013 was very poor (with just one chick fledged in total during the three years), but had been better from 2014 to 2016, so just single chicks fledging in both 2017 and 2018 is disappointing.

**Great Skua:** A count of 520 AOT was the highest-ever recorded for Fair Isle and represented a 75.1% increase from the 2017 population of 297 AOT, although very similar to the 2016 population of 516 AOT. The overall trend for Great Skua has been a long-term increase, which was slow and steady, until 2004 when numbers increased rapidly until 2008, before apparently stabilising until 2013, after which numbers have fluctuated markedly, although still with an overall upward trend (Figure 2).

Breeding success was 28.6% lower in 2018 (0.35 chicks fledged per AOT) than in 2017 (0.49 chicks fledged per AOT). Prior to 2000, productivity was generally high (usually 0.7 chicks or higher fledged per AOT), but since then it has been more mixed. As the population of Great Skua grows larger, accurate counting of fledged birds gets more difficult, particularly given the protracted breeding season.

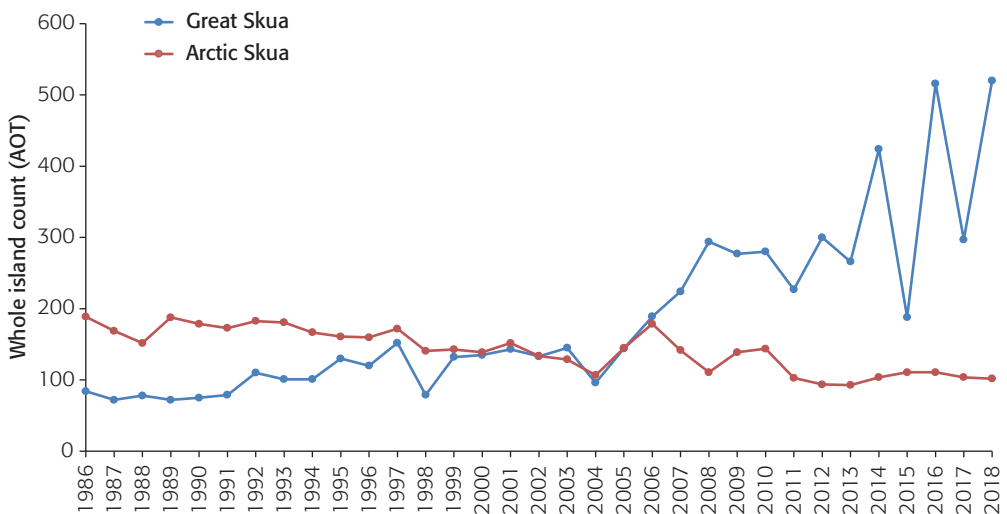


Figure 2. Population change of Arctic Skuas and Great Skuas on Fair Isle, 1986–2018 (whole-island counts of apparently occupied territories - AOT).

Attempts by the National Trust for Scotland at discouraging Great Skuas from nesting in the vicinity of the north end of the airstrip were unsuccessful, but may have had a slight impact on breeding productivity in this area.

**Kittiwake:** Plot counts in 2018 produced 34 AON, a decrease of 30.6% in comparison to 2017 (49 AON) and the lowest-ever population recorded from the monitoring plots, with only the Green Holm and Dog Geo plot having any nesting attempts. For the third consecutive year, there was no whole-island count due to unsuitable weather and sea state conditions during the monitoring period.

Productivity increased by 135.0% in 2018 to 0.47 chicks fledged per AON in comparison to the 0.2 chicks fledged per AON in 2017. The recent trend has been for poor productivity for this species, although 2018 was the fourth consecutive year to see chicks fledged from the productivity plots after none at all from 2011 to 2013. All of the nesting attempts came from just one plot (Holms and Dog Geo), with the other nine all empty. Interestingly, no chicks fledged from Dog Geo, with all successful nests being on the Holms, although the reasons for this weren't clear. There was some suggestion that corvid predation may have been an issue in Dog Geo.

**Arctic Tern:** The whole-island count showed a decrease of 41.0% in 2018 (190 AON) in comparison with 2017 (322 AON).

Productivity increased in 2018 by 116.7% to 0.13 chicks fledged per AON, compared to the 0.06 chicks per AON recorded in 2017. Unlike 2017, very few, if any, chicks appeared to starve in the colonies, with predation (by Hooded Crows, gulls and skuas) apparently having more of an impact.

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

**Common Guillemot:** Plot counts increased by 30.2% in 2018 to 1,224 individuals compared to 940 individuals in 2017. Since 1999, the overall pattern has been of a decline in numbers, although this appears to have stabilised somewhat since 2008.

Productivity increased by 247.1% in 2018 to 0.59 chicks fledged per AIA in comparison to 2017 (0.17 chicks fledged per AIA). From 1988 to 2002, Common Guillemot productivity remained relatively high, fluctuating between 0.67 and 0.85. However, from 2002 to 2013, the general trend has been for productivity to be lower (typically less than 0.5 chicks fledged per AIA), with zero productivity recorded in 2004, 2008, 2011 and 2013. From 2014, there have been signs of productivity improving slightly, with 0.45 chicks fledged per AIA or higher recorded in four of those five years.

The number of occasions when fish were observed being brought back during a 24-hour watch was 318.5% higher in 2018 (339 return flights with

fish) than 2017 (81 return flights with fish). Sandeels were the most common prey type seen in 2018 (54.3% of fish brought back were from this group), followed by clupeids (11.5%) and gadiods (8.8%), whilst 25.1% of flights involved fish that were not identified, either due to being too small or the flight being too quick.

**Razorbill:** Numbers at the Lericum monitoring plot increased by 82% in 2018 (42 individuals) compared with 2017 (23 individuals) (Figure 3). The 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.

Productivity in 2018 was 0.79 chicks fledged per egg laid, a 58.0% increase from the 0.50 chicks fledged per egg laid recorded in 2017. From 1990 to 2002, productivity fluctuated but remained relatively high at between 0.47 and 0.8, but from 2003 to 2013 productivity was consistently low (<0.5) or, in four years, zero. From 2014 productivity has again been generally higher (between 0.5 and 0.79), with the 2018 figure the second highest ever. Repeat biometrics showed that chicks were in much better condition in 2018 than 2017.

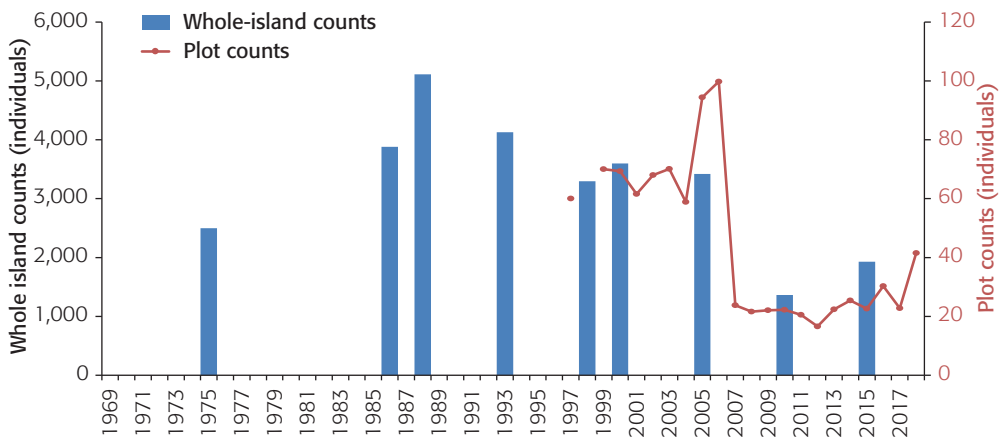


Figure 3. Population change of Razorbills on Fair Isle, 1969–2018 (whole-island counts and plot counts of individuals). Plot counts for each year are from the Lericum plot only. Plot data for the annual series was not collected in 1998.

**Black Guillemot:** The number of Black Guillemots in breeding plumage counted along the east coast of Fair Isle (North Lighthouse to South Lighthouse) in 2018 was 199 individuals, representing a 7.0% decrease compared to 2017 (214 individuals). There were three counts carried out (10th, 20th and 21st April), with the highest figure occurring on the latter date.

**Puffin:** Poor weather conditions in the early spring period prevented a whole-island count from taking place. The most recent count remains the 6,666 individuals recorded in 2015.

Productivity was found to be 0.90 chicks fledged per egg laid, which was an increase of 87.5% compared to 2017 (0.48 chicks fledged per egg laid). Productivity was above 0.5 chicks fledged per egg laid every year from 1987 to 2000 and, although it has fluctuated more since then, it has remained relatively high (especially compared to the other auks), with no years of zero productivity. Productivity in 2018 was the highest ever recorded from the monitoring plot. It has been reassuring to note the minimal impact the Great Skua pair nesting on High Holm has had in the last two seasons after their impact on the Green Holm colony in 2016.

The total number of occasions when fish were observed being brought back to burrows by Puffins during a 24-hour feeding watch was 1.5% lower in 2018 (198 return flights with fish) than in 2017 (201 return flights with fish). The majority of the fish being brought in were recorded as too fast to positively identify (52.0%), the same as 2017 (64.7%). The prey types that were actually identified in 2018 consisted of small sandeels (35.9%) followed by rockling (6.1%), gadoids (3.5%) and clupeids (0.5%).

In 2018, the majority of food samples collected from adult Puffins at the Tor o' Da Ward Hill colony on 4th and 6th July were identified as small sandeels (86.5%), followed by gadoids (11.2%), rockling (1.5%) and clupeids (1.0%).

On average, the prey types of the longest length in Puffin food samples collected in 2018 were small sandeels (mean = 67.4 mm), followed by clupeids (mean = 50.0 mm), gadoids (mean = 48.7 mm), and rockling (mean = 32.1 mm).

The mean mass of food samples collected in 2018 (mean mass of one 'beak-full' in 2018 = 11.5 g, SE = 0.62) was 360.0% higher than in 2017 (mean mass = 2.5 g, SE = 0.33). Since 2001, the mean mass of Puffin food samples collected annually on Fair Isle had only once exceeded 6 g (mean = 6.1 in 2003) prior to 2018, whereas prior to this period (between 1986 and 2000) the mean mass frequently exceeded 7 g. The mean mass recorded in 2018 was the highest ever (Figure 4).

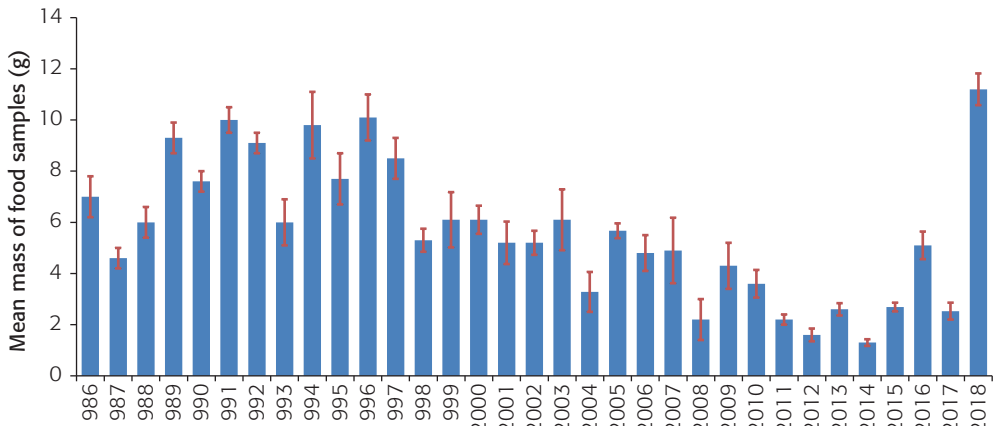


Figure 4. Mean mass of Puffin food samples collected on Fair Isle, 1986–2018 (± Standard Error. 1 food sample = 1 'beak-full').

# A STUDY OF THE PLASTIC INGESTION AND ASSOCIATED DIET OF GREAT SKUAS BREEDING ON FAIR ISLE THROUGH THE DISSECTION OF PELLETS

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Elizabeth Holmes

In early 2018, I developed a project proposal for my final year dissertation as part of my Ecology BSc degree. As a lover of birds (particularly those of the sea) and a regular volunteer at the Obs, it didn't take me long to come up with an idea for my project.

With the issue of marine plastic pollution coming into the forefront of many global scientific and public discussions I thought this would be an important focus for my project. Previous work as a volunteer at the Obs saw me collecting Great Skua pellets in order to study their diets. I distinctly remember being shocked to find a plastic bottle cap in the centre of one of the pellets. Somehow, the bird had swallowed this big chunk of plastic. Thankfully for the skua, its biology had allowed it to remove the plastic from its body, through the regurgitation of a pellet. This got me thinking. Where had this bottle top come from? How did it end up in the line of fire for a skua to gobble up? Did the skua eat it or was it something the skua's prey had eaten before it was eaten by the skua?

These questions led me to form a project idea to look at the pellets produced by these skuas in more detail. A study on the Faroes by Hammer *et al.* (2016) found a significant positive association between Fulmar remains in pellets and the prevalence of plastic debris, reflecting the high ingestion rates of plastic in Fulmars, and highlighting the movement of plastics through the food chain.

Being a unique study, I decided it would be interesting to replicate it within a different Great Skua colony, on the island of Fair Isle.

Using Hammer *et al.* (2016) as a model, I set off on the epic journey to Fair Isle. Choosing three main areas on the island, I located and GPS-marked Great Skua nests, which I visited every few days to monitor the development of chicks and collect pellets from each territory. Through the dissection of these pellets, I have built up a picture of the skuas' diets as well as the frequency and prevalence of plastic ingestion of Great Skuas.

Of the 613 pellets I dissected, 3.1% contained plastic debris, with 59% of those pellets consisting predominantly of bird remains, half of which were Fulmar (Figure 1). Results reflect those of Hammer *et al.* (2016), with pellets

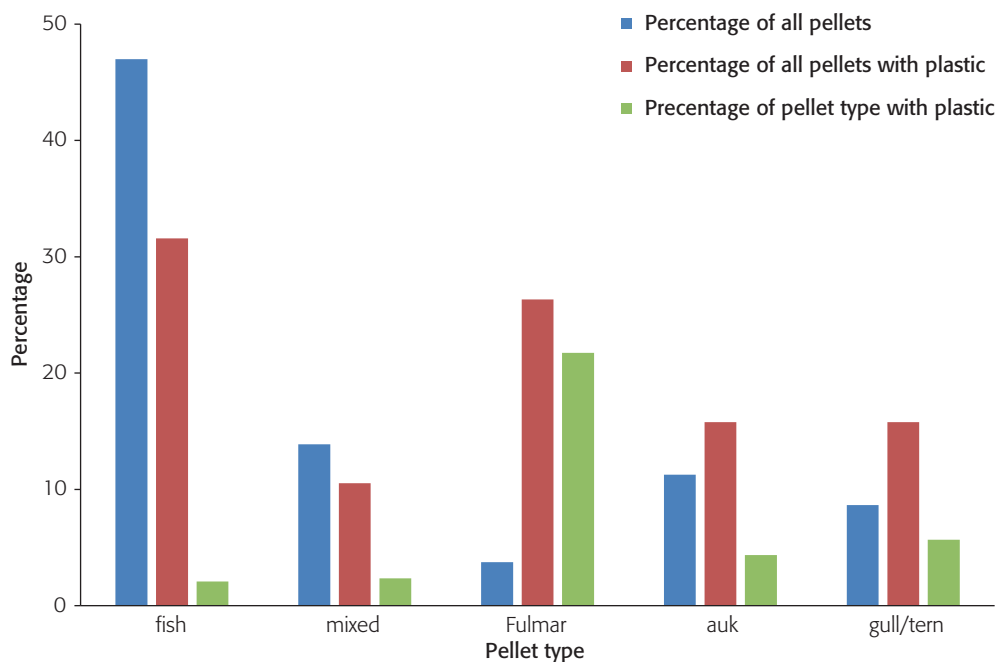


Figure 1. Percentage contribution of pellets from each pellet type. Percentage of pellets with plastic from each pellet type out of the whole pellet sample and out of each pellet type sample.

containing Fulmar remains contributing proportionally more pellets with plastic than pellets containing just fish remains. The results suggest a reflection of the pattern of plastic ingestion rates in different bird groups, with surface-feeding Fulmars associated with the greatest proportion of pellets with plastic (Figure 1). A higher proportion of plastic was found in all pellet types from the Faroes, suggesting variability in the magnitude of plastic pollution in marine ecosystems across the North Atlantic. Through infrared spectroscopy, analysis of the plastic fragments discovered, user fragments of polyethylene were found to be the most common type of plastic, reflecting the increase in the magnitude of marine plastic pollution from domestic sources. This study aims to provide a baseline knowledge of the plastic ingestion of this Great Skua colony to inform future monitoring of the plastic pollution in this marine ecosystem.

Without the kindness and support from everyone at the Obs (including giving me somewhere to stay), none of this would have been possible, allowing me to carry out extensive field work (collecting lots of pellets), as well as gaining more valuable experience in practical seabird ecology through voluntary work with the wardens. The grant has opened up the world of seabird ecology research to me, and I can't wait to do more!

## Reference

Hammer, S., Nager, R.G., Johnson, P.C.D., Furness, R.W. & Provencher, J.F. 2016. Plastic debris in great skua (*Stercorarius skua*) pellets corresponds to seabird prey species. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 103: 206–210.

## TRACKING GUILLEMOTS AND RAZORBILLS USING GEOLOCATORS

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Bob Furness and Lila Buckingham

Guillemots and Razorbills can be displaced from offshore wind farms, as they avoid the structures and associated maintenance boat traffic. This could result in a loss of foraging habitat for non-breeding Guillemots and Razorbills. To learn and understand more about the non-breeding movements of birds from different colonies, Vattenfall's European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre (EOWDC), in Aberdeen Bay, has funded geolocator tagging of Guillemots and Razorbills breeding at Fair Isle, and at other locations across the UK. This research will take place over three years and is part of Vattenfall's €3m award-winning scientific research and monitoring programme. A key aim is to find out which populations are most likely to be at risk of displacement from offshore wind farms in the North Sea.

In June 2017, with substantial help from David Parnaby, Ciaran Hatsell and Richard Cope, we tagged 25 Guillemots and 21 Razorbills with geolocators at Easter Lothar and South Ramnigeo. These very small tags are attached by a cable tie to a colour ring. They use measurement of ambient light to estimate times of sunrise, sunset and local noon, providing two location estimates per day if the tags can be recovered and downloaded. This is a very cost-effective way to collect data on distribution across an entire year or more, but the method does have a low accuracy, which can lead to individual fixes appearing to be on land - which they would not normally be aside from at the breeding colony.

In June 2018, tags were recovered from ten Guillemots and nine Razorbills, with eight Guillemots and five Razorbills fully processed so far. Our preliminary results for this subset of birds show that the tagged Guillemots travelled north from the colony to moult (July–August) and south for the core winter (November–January), but mostly remained in the northern North Sea throughout the non-breeding season (Figure 1). Razorbill distributions were rather distinct between these two periods, with 50% of locations close to the colony during moult, with the winter period mostly spent in the southern North Sea (Figure 2). Based on this first year of data, it seems that Fair Isle's Razorbills are much more likely than Guillemots to encounter offshore wind farms, as the southern North Sea already has a number of offshore wind farms and has been highlighted for further development in the near future.

Our results have also identified some unexpected individual movements. One of the Fair Isle Razorbills travelled to waters between Greenland and north Iceland in mid-July, then travelled south to the north-west coast of



France for the core winter period, so appears to have gone north to moult. According to the *Migration Atlas*, there are no ringing recoveries of Scottish Razorbills in Greenland or north Iceland, so this movement is a surprise. Guillemots showed less variation in non-breeding movements among individuals. However, one bird moved to the Barents Sea, apparently to moult, as it then returned to spend the winter in the northern North Sea. The round trip of about 4,000 km would take around 50 hours of flight, which is an astonishing behaviour for a species notorious for its high wing loading and energetically costly flight. Despite decades of ringing, there are no recoveries of British Guillemots in the Barents Sea, but it turns out from our tag deployments at other colonies that Fair Isle Guillemots are not the only ones to go there in late summer. We hope that tags recovered in summer 2019 from birds not recaptured in 2018 will indicate how much these distributions and individual movements vary or are consistent from year to year.

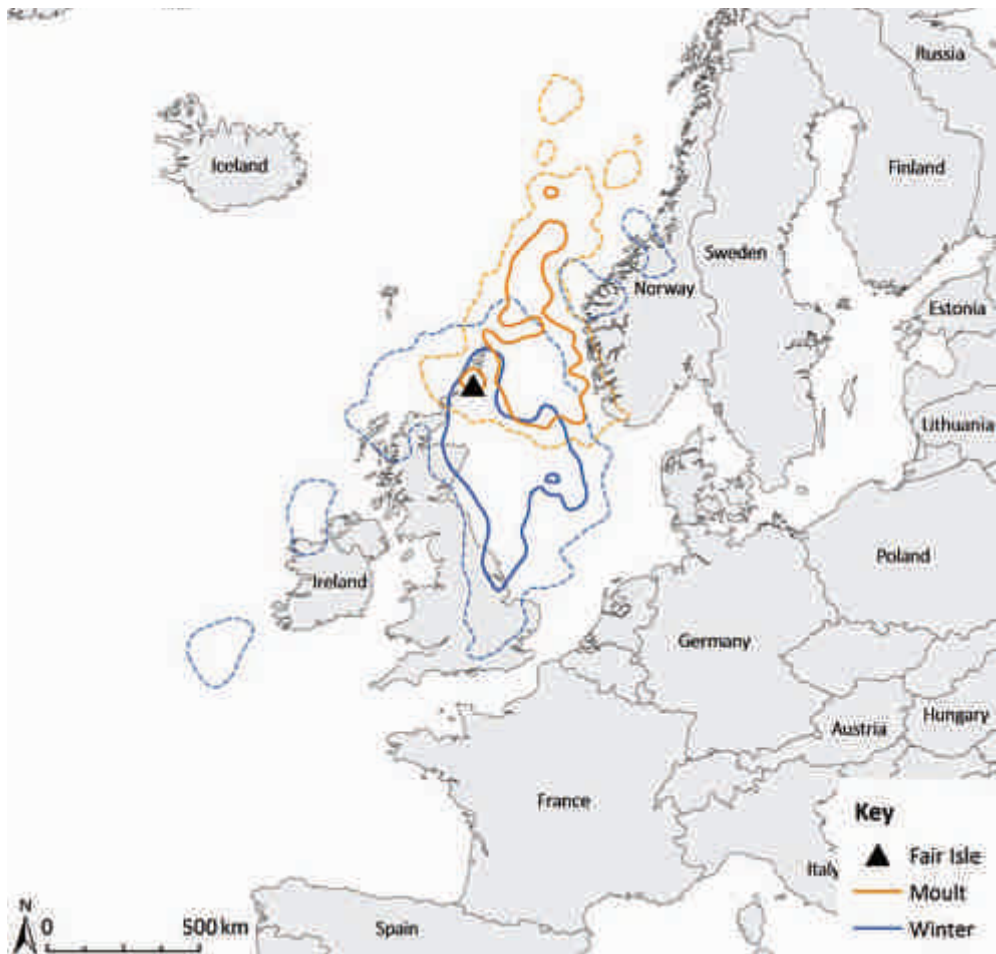


Figure 1. Kernel densities for eight of the ten Guillemots during the moult (July–August; yellow) and core winter (November–January; blue) periods of the non-breeding season. 50% kernels are shown by a solid line and 90% by a dashed line.



Figure 2. Kernel densities for five of the nine Razorbills during the moult (July–August; yellow) and core winter (November–January; blue) periods of the non-breeding season. 50% kernels are shown by a solid line and 90% by a dashed line.

We will be comparing data from the Fair Isle birds with data from other colonies (in total, over 170 tags were recovered in 2018 from nine different colonies). Less of a surprise than the interesting individual movements, given the poor state of the sandeel stock at Shetland, is the observation that Guillemots from Fair Isle (and Foula) appear to show much longer movements than birds from most of our other study colonies. We also plan to compare the tag distribution data with ring recovery data, and to use feather isotopes and sea surface temperature data to refine the location estimates.

The Fair Isle data form a part of the broader project, supported not only by EOWDC but also by Marine Scotland Science, Hywind and Seatrack, and involving many ringing groups and individual ringers. Lila Buckingham is using these data for her PhD thesis, supervised by Francis Daunt and Maria Bogdanova (CEH), Jon Green (University of Liverpool) and Bob Furness (MacArthur Green). A report on the project will be submitted to Vattenfall and we anticipate a number of collaborative scientific papers arising from aspects of this work.



Plate 99. Razorbills, Easter Lothar, 3rd July 2018. © Richard Cope



Plate 100. Razorbills and Common Guillemot (middle right), Easter Lothar, 13th July 2018. © David Parnaby

# FIRST AND LAST MIGRANT DATES

David Parnaby

Species	Earliest-ever	Earliest 2018	Latest-ever	Latest 2018
Quail	30.04.61	11th May	13.10.89	4th June
Osprey	25.04.66	23rd May	04.11.35	23rd May
Corncrake	10.04.66	31st August	03.11.77	26th September
Dotterel	25.04.73	5th April*	03.12.86	23rd May
Whimbrel	09.04.13	21st April	12.12.1907	3rd September
Common Sandpiper	05.04.83	25th April	02.11.1908	16th September^^
Green Sandpiper	01.04.17	11th April	12.11.70	2nd September
Arctic Skua	04.04.88	20th April	25.10.	16th October
Great Skua	14.03.16	31st March	25.11.14 ^	4th November
Sandwich Tern	23.04.07	n/a	18.09.77	n/a
Common Tern	25.04.83	11th June	18.10.75	8th August
Arctic Tern	No data	6th May	30.10	2nd September
Lesser Black-backed Gull	02.02.11	14th March	12.12.57	17th October
Turtle Dove	23.04.71	n/a	01.11.82	n/a
Cuckoo	17.04.87	9th May	08.10.77	8th September
Swift	16.04.13	21st May	26.10.75#	13th September
Wryneck	18.04.81	31st August	17.10.74	9th September
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.84	13th May	08.11.93	1st September
Goldcrest	27.02.	6th April	19.12.03	18th November
Sand Martin	02.04.89 and 16	7th April	19.10.78	26th September
Swallow	31.03.02	11th April	02.11.84	10th October
House Martin	04.04.16	5th May	02.11.11	19th September
Wood Warbler	14.04.81	4th August	08.10.17	8th September
Willow Warbler	25.03.10	7th April	23.11.27	13th October
Chiffchaff	12.03.73 and 08	30th March	no data	24th November
Blackcap	27.03.12	11th April	21.12.17	25th November
Garden Warbler	21.04.68	9th May	20.11.76	29th October
Lesser Whitethroat	20.04.68 and 09	13th April*	08.11.	21st September
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.00	22nd May	29.10.07	31st July
Whitethroat	10.04.16	5th May	21.10.78	19th September
Grasshopper Warbler	07.04.02	12th April	25.10.14	13th September
Icterine Warbler	08.05.13	17th May	20.10.16	5th September
Sedge Warbler	19.04.87	22nd April	11.11.75	22nd September
Marsh Warbler	18.05.13	19th May	06.10. Pre 63	8th September
Reed Warbler	28.04.01	13th May	31.10.80	20th September
Ring Ouzel	16.03.88	8th April	18.12.1909	7th November
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.49	13th May	26.10.85	16th October
Bluethroat	22.03.1908	10th May	13.11.83	28th October
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.83	4th May	29.10.85	15th September
Black Redstart	09.02.1989	20th March	22.12.86x	25th November
Redstart	10.04.16	9th May	11.11.81	17th October

## FIRST AND LAST MIGRANT DATES

Species	Earliest-ever	Earliest 2018	Latest-ever	Latest 2018
Whinchat	14.04.81	21st April	26.11.90	17th October
Wheatear	13.03. Pre 59	31st March	19.11.59	2nd November
Yellow ( <i>flava</i> ) Wagtail	25.03.54	22nd April	20.11.57	31st October
Pied ( <i>alba</i> ) Wagtail	25.01.16	15th March	30.11.17	20th November
Tree Pipit	10.04.16	14th April	09.11.1908	4th October
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.36	n/a	01.11.1908	n/a
Common Rosefinch	08.05.77	26th May	30.11.91	3rd October
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.64	6th September	07.11.15	27th September
Little Bunting	04.04.58	n/a	19.11.75	n/a
Rustic Bunting	25.04.80	2nd July	08.11.75	2nd July

\* new record                      \*\* equal to record                      x arrival date (went on to winter)  
 ^ an injured, flightless bird survived on the island until 19th December 2016  
 ^^ an unidentified *Actitis* sandpiper was seen on 16th November 2018  
 # note: a swift sp. was seen on 7th November 2011

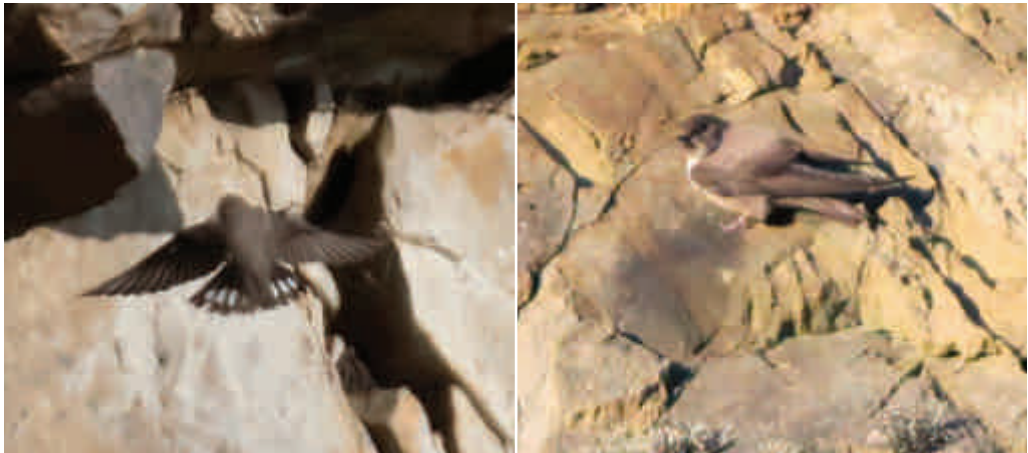


Plate 101. Icterine Warbler, Schoolton, 4th June 2018. © Ian Andrews

## CRAG MARTIN, 14TH–16TH MAY 2018; THE FIRST FOR FAIR ISLE

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Keith Pellow



Plates 102–103. (Left) Crag Martin, Furse, 16th May 2018. © Roger Riddington. (Right) Crag Martin, North Haven, 14th May 2018. © David Parnaby

2018 was my fifth successive spring visit to the magical Fair Isle. During the previous four visits, I had seen a number of quality birds and had been fortunate in finding some of them myself. This year I had returned on 12th May and with a favourable weather forecast, was feeling quite optimistic.

Overnight 13th/14th May there was a period of rain with the resulting increase in migrants, obvious by the morning of the 14th. I decided to spend the whole day covering the island, being rewarded with several Bluethroats, Red-backed Shrike and 'Grey-headed Wagtail' amongst the more common species. On returning to the Observatory for dinner, it was a little disappointing to hear that two 'megs' had been found earlier on mainland Shetland with Fair Isle missing out (so far).

The weather had been glorious all day and following dinner, I just had to go out and enjoy what remained of the day. My options were an evening slog up to Ward Hill for a 'trip' of Dotterel or a more relaxed amble across to Bunes. Having spent all day on my feet, the latter option seemed the obvious choice.

On the way to Bunes, I decided to check the cliff alongside the quay in North Haven. At 19:50 hrs, I had almost reached the far end when I had very brief views of a brown martin make an abortive attempt to land on the cliff face and then disappear over the cliff top. From the views I had I was almost certain the bird had not been a Sand Martin, appearing to be larger and more compact, so I waited expectantly for it to return.

With no sign of the bird over the next 20 minutes, I was considering that it must have been just a Sand Martin and was about to leave when I saw the martin returning along the cliff top. Almost immediately, I saw the white tail spots and plain breast and shouted to a few other visitors from the Obs who were in the area to "get on this bird - look at the tail spots!"

There were a few minutes of panic before realising that the bird may have settled in the area and I set about contacting the Obs but without success. Even more panic was overcome by a quick sprint back up the road and being able to contact Susannah who was with the warden David Parnaby in the south of the island where they had gone hoping to connect with a rarity!

Eventually, everyone from the Obs was able to see the bird as it remained in the area over the next 30 minutes before it again disappeared over the cliff top.



Plate 104. Crag Martin, Furse, 16th May 2018.  
© Steve D. Keightley

It obviously went to roost as it was refound the next day at Furse, where it spent its time hawking over the beach, but regularly returned and perched on the nearby cliff face where it spent long periods preening. The general impression was of a quite robust bird, larger and slightly paler than a Sand Martin. Its flight was slower and more graceful than accompanying Swallows. The uniform upperparts were dusky-brown with wings and tail appearing darker. The underparts were a paler buff-brown, being darker towards the undertail, and the underwing was pale brown but with black contrasting coverts. The breast was plain lacking any band. The tail had a row of four white spots on either side which were easily visible from below, but they also showed from above when the tail was spread. When perched on the cliff face the wings appeared quite swift-like, being long and pointed and extending well beyond the tail.

The bird remained in Furse until it was last seen during the afternoon of the 16th May.

The find showed just what a memorable place Fair Isle is and this was emphasised even more when a Song Sparrow was found the next morning by Assistant Warden Richard Cope during the early morning trap round!

This sighting represents the second record for Scotland (following one on Orkney in 1999) and only the 11th for Britain.

## SERIN, 16TH JUNE 2018; THE FOURTH FOR FAIR ISLE

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Richard Cope



Plates 105–106. Serin, North Light, 16th June 2018. © David Parnaby

After an excellent spring of rarities and record numbers of some scarcities, seabird monitoring was taking priority and occupying most of our time. After an early start counting my Guillemot plot at Kristal Kame (in the region of 800 birds), I was walking back to the car and thinking about breakfast when I heard a call I didn't immediately recognise. It was reminiscent of a Waxwing but wasn't quite right.

As it called a second time, I searched around for the bird and picked up three finches flying towards me - two were Twites and the third was smaller. At this point, my brain caught up with my eyes and ears as I realised it was a Serin. I phoned David Parnaby and a few minutes later he arrived with David Roche.

During this time, the bird had remained mobile and was only giving flight views. A frustrating few minutes followed until we saw it again as it flew out towards the Fog station by North Light where DP was able to get a couple of 'record shots' as it flew over. Deryk Shaw and Nick Riddiford arrived and we split up to search for the bird. I relocated it on the ground near Bergaroo, with two Twites, just 12 m in front of me. In a brief moment of panic, I was undecided whether to go for my phone to call people or my camera to get a photo of it. Unfortunately, as I reached for my camera the Twites spooked and they all flew off. This was followed by shouts from David Parnaby as it flew past him and David Roche. This was just after 09:20 hrs, 40 mins after I initially found it. Despite a crowd searching the area, it wasn't relocated until John Calladine saw the bird feeding on the ground with Twite at Easter Lothar at 10:25 hrs when again it flew towards North Light. Despite several people searching for several hours during the afternoon and the following morning the bird wasn't seen again. Conditions were good and, with the bird's general flighty behaviour, it is likely that it headed off to mainland Shetland.



In flight, the bird was a small compact finch with a fast, undulating and often erratic flight, frequently changing direction. The tail was all dark and this contrasted sharply with the yellow rump. The dark greenish of the mantle (appearing just dark at a distance in flight) meant the yellow rump patch stood out very clearly particularly against a dark background. The head had a pale yellowish wash to it with fine dark streaks running over the crown and down onto the nape, and a pale yellowish supercillium. The throat and upper breast had the same yellowish wash which became paler and whitish across the underparts and flanks.

The call was often the easiest way of locating the bird and was given very frequently while in flight. It was a rapid series of notes that were quite high pitched with a metallic quality. When initially heard, the call was thought to be reminiscent of a Waxwing.

This was the fourth record of Serin for Fair Isle, the first since 1964 and just the tenth for Scotland. Previous Fair Isle records were a female shot by William Eagle Clarke on 22nd May 1914, a male at South Harbour on 25th May 1957 and a male at South Raeva on 29th May 1964. So, this bird was comparatively late for a spring migrant.

## **SONG SPARROW, 15TH–18TH MAY 2018; THE FOURTH FOR FAIR ISLE**

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Richard Cope

May is always an eagerly anticipated month on Fair Isle, a time when just about anything is possible, often accompanied by a host of scarcities in their fresh spring plumage. Things started to become very interesting on 13th with no fewer than eight Bluethroats and two Red-backed Shrikes amongst a good mix of migrants. Excitement continued to build through 14th with Red-necked Phalarope and Wood Sandpiper found in quick succession on Da Water, and with news filtering through of both Marmora's Warbler and Black-faced Bunting on Shetland, hopes and expectations were high. Keith Pellow duly obliged with a Crag Martin around North Haven. An absolutely incredible sight as it darted around the cliff face. The Observatory lounge was positively buzzing that evening with happy satisfied birders, the birds on Shetland almost forgotten.

I was leading the morning trap round on 15th and with some thin high cloud and a light south-easterly things were looking promising. Thanks to a fortunate



Plate 107. Song Sparrow, Obs, 15th May 2018. © Richard Cope

run of luck on my previous trap rounds, resulting in Red-rumped Swallow and Marsh Harrier being encountered, a few folk were joking about what I could produce this time round.

Having passed the Gully, Hjon and Single Dyke traps, things weren't looking great with just a fly-over Black-headed Gull the best bird we'd managed to see. As I entered the Plantation trap, a Hawfinch flew ahead of me, followed by two other passerines. One particular bird caught my attention as it flew up and held on to the side netting of the trap. The combination of pale grey and rich brown on the head struck me immediately as a Song Sparrow! I'd encountered them almost daily whilst volunteering at Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario, Canada so was very familiar with them.

I drew the guests' attention to the bird and asked them to enter the trap behind me in case the bird managed to evade my efforts to direct it into the catching box of the trap. Luckily, it went almost straight into the box and was soon in a bird bag. After a brief explanation about my excitement, shock and the context of the bird to some of the guests, we headed back to the Observatory to process the bird. The bird was released shortly after and remained around the Observatory garden for three days.

This had all happened pretty quickly and the enormity of the moment only really sunk in when I was stood in the Warden's kitchen chatting to Susannah about impending charter flights coming to see the bird as I glanced out the window to see it feeding happily in the weeds in their garden. There ACTUALLY was a Song Sparrow here and it was barely 3 m outside the window. Any birder who says they don't dream of finding a North American passerine either doesn't dream or hasn't looked longingly at some of the ridiculously colourful plates in field guides!

Whilst not the most colourful bird it certainly made up for it in other aspects of its plumage. The pale grey and rich brown stripes on the head, combined with the pale sub-moustachial stripe and the dark brown moustachial stripe bordering the pale grey ear coverts, crucially running round the lower edge of the ear coverts, were diagnostic. The breast was whitish with dark streaks forming a central dot and the wings and tail were a chestnut brown. The mantle was greyish with prominent reddish streaks with dark centres.

Five charter flights made the trip north to see the bird and all left happy, although by the 18th it had wandered further afield, being seen in the Gully bushes and near the Plantation. A unique twist was folk arriving from Shetland dashed past the Song Sparrow in order to see the Crag Martin (a first for Shetland) and others from England had their attentions firmly set on seeing the sparrow first. It was the first record for Britain since 1994, allowing a lot of the younger generation of listers their first chance to catch up with the species. Fair Isle is no stranger to Song Sparrows, having hosted half of the British records since the first for the Western Palearctic occurred here in April–May 1959, with subsequent birds in April–May 1979 and April 1989. This record was both the latest and the shortest staying of the Fair Isle records. It was the eighth record for Britain.



Plate 108. Song Sparrow, Obs, 15th May 2018. © Richard Cope

## COMMITTEE DECISIONS ON RARITIES FROM 2017

The following 2017 records were accepted:

Species	Date, Location, Observers	Committee
Taiga Bean Goose (3)	7 Feb, At sea, satellite-tag data	SBCRC
Mandarin	20 Apr, South Harbour and Mid Geo, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Swinhoe's Petrel	13–14 Jul, Skadan, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Honey-buzzard	11 Jun, west coast, L. Batchelor, H. Bell & M. Wood	SBCRC
Honey-buzzard	5 Sep, South Light, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Little Ringed Plover	2–3 May, Da Water, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	3–7 Sep, Bunes, T. Gale, M. Hellicar <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	5 Sep, Chatham's Land and Hoini, T. Gale, C. Round <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	21 Sep, Bunes, D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Pectoral Sandpiper	28 Aug, Hoini, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Great Snipe	11 Sep, School Brae and Da Water, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Collared Pratincole	14–18 May, Wirvie Burn and Utra, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Glaucous-winged Gull	2 Mar, Ditfield and Jonny's Peats, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
White-winged Black Tern	21 Jul, Bunes, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Nightjar	15 May, Hjukni Geo, J.L. & M. Swallow	SBCRC
Hobby	12 May, Houll, M. Evans, C.R. Hatsell, P. Walsh <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Hobby	23 May, North Haven, R. Cope, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Woodchat Shrike	16 Jun, Mire o' Vatnagaard, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Woodchat Shrike	19 Aug, Pund, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Shore Lark	11–13 May, Ward Hill, C.R. Hatsell & D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Shore Lark	22–25 Oct, Gunnawark, K. Kelly <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Shore Lark (2)	24 Oct, Vaasetter, J. Ginnever & K. Kelly	SBCRC
Red-rumped Swallow	23 May, Hesswalls and Vaasetter, N.J. Riddiford	SBRC
Western Bonelli's Warbler	17 Sep, Upper and Lower Stoneybrek, T. Gale <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Dusky Warbler	2 May, Dronger, D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Dusky Warbler	19–22 Oct, Meadow Burn, A. Close <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Green Warbler	4–7 July, Obs, R. Cope, S.J. Harris, C.R. Hatsell, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Arctic Warbler	26–27 Aug, Chalet, P.M. Ellis <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	9 Jun, Hesti Geo, I.J. Andrews & I. Cowgill	SBCRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	25 Sep, Steensi Geo and Linni Geo, C. Fulcher, C.R. Hatsell & R. Hughes	SBCRC
Melodious Warbler	17 Sep, Schoolton and Houll, N.J. Riddiford, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	22 Sep, Lower Stoneybrek, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Western Subalpine Warbler'	30–31 May, Chalet then Lower Leogh, W. Carter, C.R. Hatsell, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Firecrest	20–23 Oct, Obs then Hjukni Geo, G. Gardiner <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
'Northern Treecreeper'	24 Oct, Troila Geo, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Rose-coloured Starling	23 Jul–5 Aug, Quoy and Shirva, I. Best <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
White's Thrush	7 Oct, Bunes, S. Sankey <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Black-throated Thrush	23 Oct, Pund and Hoini, K. Kelly	BBRC
Thrush Nightingale	16 May, Utra, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Nightingale	2 May, Furse, D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Red-flanked Bluetail	18–19 Oct, School and Hall, A. Carroll, H. Fearn, B. Minshull <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Siberian Stonechat	9 Oct, Pund, D. Pullan <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Siberian Stonechat	16 Oct, Pund, C.R. Hatsell <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Citrine Wagtail	17 Sep, South Harbour, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBRC

Olive-backed Pipit	27–29 Sep, Ward Hill, C.R. Hatsell & D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Olive-backed Pipit	26–27 Oct, Vaadal and Obs, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Red-throated Pipit	17–18 May, Meadow Burn, S. Keightley, M. Lowther <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-throated Pipit	25–26 May, Meadow Burn, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-throated Pipit	27 Sep–19 Oct, Easter Lothar then Shirva, C. Bridge, I. Cowgill, R. Duncan <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Arctic Redpoll*	23 Oct, Quoy, R. Nason	SBCRC
'Homemann's Arctic Redpoll'	23–30 Oct, Pund and School Brae, R. Cope, C.J. Dodd, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Two-barred Crossbill	22 Jul, Hoini, S. Binnie & C.R. Hatsell	BBRC
Rustic Bunting	26–27 May, Kroga Geo then roaming, S. Arlow <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Rustic Bunting	14 Jun, North Light, M. Neuman <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Rustic Bunting	17 Sep, Hesti Geo, T. Gale <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Black-headed Bunting	10–19 Oct, Quoy, D. Pullan, N.J. Riddiford & K.D. Shaw <i>et al.</i>	BBRC

**Recently accepted records from previous years:**

'Black-bellied Dipper'	22–23 Mar 1996, Gilly Burn, M. Newell, R. Riddington & M. Stout	BBRC
'Central Asian Lesser Whitethroat' <i>S.c. halimodendri</i>	24 Oct 2012, Barkland, D. & S. Parnaby	BBRC

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

Red-throated Pipit	24 Oct, Double Dyke	BBRC
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**Key to abbreviations:**

**BBRC** - British Birds Rarities Committee

**SBRC** - Scottish Birds Records Committee

**SBCRC** - Shetland Bird Club Records Committee

\* found 'not proven' as 'Homemann's Arctic Redpoll' by BBRC, but accepted as an Arctic Redpoll by SBCRC



Plate 109. 'Central Asian Lesser Whitethroat', Obs, 24th October 2012. © David Parnaby

# CETACEANS AND OTHER MARINE WILDLIFE

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David Parnaby

For recording purposes, Fair Isle cetacean sightings include all those in 'Fair Isle waters' (i.e. half way from Fair Isle to Shetland, usually made from the *Good Shepherd IV*) as well as those from land. For the sake of completeness all sightings made from the *Good Shepherd IV* in 'Shetland waters' are also included here, although they are identified as being outside of the Fair Isle recording area.

## Cetaceans

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### **Minke Whale**

*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

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

Singles off Easter Lothar and South Light on 25th and 30th April respectively were early and were followed by singles from the *Good Shepherd IV* in Fair Isle waters on 14th May and 20th June. A small individual was feeding close in to Bunes on 8th August, with possibly the same animal off Meoness on 12th. Two were seen six miles north of the Isle on 21st August, with another from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 1st September, before the last sighting of a reasonable year was off Bunes on 18th October.

There were also four sightings, of five individuals, from the *Good Shepherd IV* in Shetland waters between 26th June and 19th August.



Plate 110. Minke Whale, Bunes, 8th August 2018. © Richard Cope

## **Risso's Dolphin**

*Grampus griseus*

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

In recent years, this has become the most frequently observed dolphin species, a phenomenon that continued in 2018. As usual, records were concentrated in the autumn, with up to eight observed on 6th, 18th, 23rd and 24th September and 6th, 9th and 29th October, with the latter sighting including two calves. Presumably at least some of these sightings involved lingering animals.

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

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

There were no records in Fair Isle waters, with the only sighting involving a group of at least four seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* five miles south of Sumburgh Head on 28th June. There were no records at all of White-sided Dolphin *L. acutus*.

## **Unidentified cetacean species**

Singles dolphins were seen on 11th July, 15th August, 8th and 11th September, with an unidentified cetacean on 22nd September.

## **Killer Whale**

*Orcinus orca*

*Annual visitor, often with several sightings of individuals or small groups during the year. Can occur in any month, but most regular between March and September*

Four showy animals (three adults and a calf) on 25th April passed North Light and Bunes before being seen moving south off Bunes again in the afternoon. They included at least one animal that had also visited Fair Isle in 2017. A group of six off Landberg (including two bulls and a calf) on 28th April appeared to be a different group. The next sighting was of four (again of three adults and a calf) off North Light on 5th May, which were seen from the *Good Shepherd IV*. The most exciting sighting of the season was on 28th May when a group of six, including a large bull, were off Wester Lother. During the twenty minutes or so of observation, they were seen to kill two Grey Seals, including one that was dragged away from the beach and tail-slapped by several individuals before being despatched by the bull. Despite the regular presence of animals in Shetland throughout the summer, the next Fair Isle sighting was not until 4th October, when five or six were seen off Bunes before breakfast, enabling a successful twitch as they steamed north then west past North Light.

In addition, the *Good Shepherd IV* encountered a group of at least ten animals in Shetland waters, half a mile south of Sumburgh Head on 3rd July.

Plate 111 (overleaf). Killer Whale, South Haven below the Obs, 25th April 2018. © David Parnaby







Plate 112. Long-finned Pilot Whale, North Light, 6th September 2018. © David Parnaby

### **Long-finned Pilot Whale** *Globicephala melas*

*Very rare visitor (recorded in only six years in the last 30) from May to November, with a slight peak in August–September*

Arguably the cetacean event of the year was the passage of at least 60 'Caain' Whales' south past the east of the Isle on 6th September. Having been alerted to their presence passing south off Sumburgh Head by the crew of the *Good Shepherd IV*, a watch was set up at North Light, which proved successful an hour and three quarters later. The group then passed steadily south on a broad front over the next two hours, allowing a large (by Fair Isle standards) twitch to take place. Although many remained distantly off Bunness, some came by much closer, allowing good views and the presence of some large bulls and small calves was noted. The last land-based observation of this species from Fair Isle was in 1999, whilst the last group of more than four were 20 in November 1987.

### **Harbour Porpoise** *Phocoena phocoena*

*Recorded in small numbers from May to October*

A very quiet year for the most regular cetacean seen from Fair Isle began with one off Dronger on 1st April, but there were no more until sightings on 12 dates from 25th June until 28th September. There were only seven sightings from land during this time, with a peak count of just four, whilst the *Good Shepherd IV* recorded sightings on six dates including a peak of 12 on 10th July.

The *Good Shepherd IV* also recorded animals in Shetland waters on seven dates between 26th June and 4th September.

## Other Marine Wildlife

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Plate 113. Grey Seals, Wirvie Geo, 4th October 2018. © Ian Andrews

### **Grey Seal**

*Halichoerus grypus*

The first pup was recorded in the typical location of Gunnawark on the rather late date of 14th October. Numbers rose rapidly and pupping continued until mid-November, with a total of 12 beaches used (one more than 2017), from South Raeva clockwise to Jivy Geo (unusually, there were none recorded at Wirvie). A total of 45 pups was recorded, one less than in 2017.

### **Common Seal**

*Phoca vitulina*

There were no confirmed records of this species, which has become scarcer on Fair Isle in recent years.

### **Spotted Ray**

*Raja montagui*

Egg cases were recorded washed up on 26th February, 11th April and 1st July.

### **Cuckoo Ray**

*Leucoraja naevus*

An egg case was washed up in South Harbour on 19th March.

### **Eel**

*Anguilla Anguilla*

A very similar spread of records to last year saw one in the spring (27th April) and two in the autumn (23rd August and 14th September).

# BUTTERFLIES, INSECTS AND OTHER WILDLIFE

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David Parnaby

## Butterflies

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### Red Admiral

*Vanessa atalanta*

After a single on 14th May there were sightings on ten dates between 30th May and 29th June, totaling 25 'insect-days' with a peak of seven on 31st May. In autumn, sightings on 32 dates between 29th July and 8th September saw a total of 94 'insect-days', with a maximum of nine on 17th and 19th August.

### Painted Lady

*Vanessa cardui*

A strong spring passage began with ten on 31st May and there were up to nine on ten dates in June and up to six on eight dates in July until 12th. Autumn passage was more sporadic, with sightings on 24 dates between 28th July and 7th September, with records mostly of one or two, although larger numbers at the end of August saw a peak of seven on 31st.



Plate 114. Painted Lady, Dronger, 31st May 2018. © Richard Cope

### Peacock

*Aglais io*

The first sightings since May 2016 saw singles on 30th July, 13th, 20th and 31st August.

### Small Tortoiseshell

*Aglais urticae*

After a blank 2017, it turned out to be a much better year, with sightings on 19th July then 1st August followed by two daily from 11th–13th August and five further singles until 30th August.

# Moths

Table 1. Summary of moths trapped at FIBO in 2018

Scientific name	English name	First date	Last date	No. of nights trapped	Max catch	Max catch date	Total individuals
<i>Hepialus fusconebulosa</i>	Map-winged Swift	8th Jun	13th Jul	16	16	15th Jun	66
<i>Plutella xylostella</i>	Diamond-back Moth	28th May	26th Jul	10	23	30th May	37
<i>Hofmannophila pseudospretella</i>	Brown House-moth	2nd Aug	2nd Aug	1	1		1
<i>Endrosis sarcitrella</i>	White-shouldered House-moth	25th Jun	9th Jul	2	1		2
<i>Caryocolum vicinella</i>		2nd Aug	2nd Aug	1	2		2
<i>Aphelia vibumana</i>	Bilberry Tortrix	26th Jun	12th Jul	5	5	3rd Jul & 9th Jul	16
<i>Eana osseana</i>		5th Jul	11th Sep	12	9	2nd Aug	44
<i>Eana penziana</i>		9th Jul	11th Sep	12	9	7th Aug	38
<i>Acleris asparsana</i>		3rd Aug	20th Aug	6	5	12th & 13th Aug	16
<i>Lobesia littoralis</i>		3rd Jul	3rd Jul	1	1		1
<i>Bactra lancealana</i>		8th Jul	9th Jul	2	2	9th Jul	3
<i>Crambus lathoniellus</i>		30th May	30th May	1	1		1
<i>Agriphila straminella</i>		9th Jul	13th Aug	5	15	2nd Aug	19
<i>Platypilia isodactylus</i>	Hoary Plume	12th Jul	12th Jul	1	1		1
<i>Xanthorhoe decoloraria</i>	Red Carpet	11th Jul	2nd Aug	2	2	2nd Aug	3
<i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i>	Silver-ground Carpet	15th Jun	13th Jul	17	7	26th Jun & 3rd Jul	58
<i>Xanthorhoe fluctuata</i>	Garden Carpet	10th May	1st Sep	2	2	1st Sep	3
<i>Camptogramma bilineata</i>	Yellow Shell	13th Aug	13th Aug	1	1		1
<i>Abraxas grossulariata</i>	Magpie	6th Jul	13th Jul	7	4	7th Jul	15
<i>Agrotis ipsilon</i>	Dark Sword-grass	3rd Jul	3rd Jul	1	1		1
<i>Standfussiana lucerneae</i>	Northern Rustic	7th Jul	11th Sep	16	7	2nd Aug	37
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	3rd Jul	1st Sep	8	6	2nd Aug & 1st Sep	24
<i>Noctua janthe</i>	Les. B-b Yellow Underwing	11th Sep	11th Sep	1	1		1
<i>Eugnorisma glareosa</i>	Autumnal Rustic	7th Aug	11th Sep	7	25	11th Sep	104
<i>Lycophotia porphyrea</i>	True Lover's Knot	25th Jun	12th Aug	16	10	28th Jun	60
<i>Diarsia mendica</i>	Ingrailed Clay	28th Jun	11th Sep	21	26	20th Aug	130
<i>Diarsia rubi</i>	Small Square-spot	26th Jun	11th Sep	20	7	8th Jul	53
<i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>	Setaceous Hebrew Character	7th Aug	7th Aug	1	2		2
<i>Xestia baja</i>	Dotted Clay	2nd Aug	2nd Aug	1	1		1
<i>Xestia xanthographa</i>	Square-spot Rustic	2nd Aug	11th Sep	10	27	2nd Aug	144
<i>Hada plebeja</i>	Shears	18th May	3rd Jun	5	2	28th & 31st May	7
<i>Hadena confusa</i>	Marbled Coronet	30th May	27th Jun	7	5	30th May	16
<i>Cerapteryx graminis</i>	Antler Moth	8th Jul	11th Sep	17	29	2nd & 3rd Aug	187
<i>Mythimna impura</i>	Smoky Wainscot	3rd Aug	3rd Aug	1	1		1
<i>Xanthia togata</i>	Pink-barred Sallow	1st Sep	1st Sep	1	1		1
<i>Phlogophora meticulosa</i>	Angle Shades	15th May	20th Sep	2	1		2
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	Dark Arches	30th Jun	11th Sep	17	14	7th Aug	95
<i>Apamea crenata</i>	Clouded-bordered Brindle	26th Jun	26th Jun	1	1		1
<i>Apamea furva</i>	Confused	10th Aug	10th Aug	1	1		1
<i>Oligia fasciuncula</i>	Middle-barred Minor	2nd Aug	2nd Aug	1	1		1
<i>Hydraecia micacea</i>	Rosy Rustic	2nd Aug	11th Sep	9	20	20th Aug	60
<i>Plusia festucae</i>	Gold Spot	2nd Aug	2nd Aug	1	1		1
<i>Autographa gamma</i>	Silver Y	31st May	30th Jun	5	2		6

A summary of the moth trapping carried out at the Obs in 2018 is shown above, the most notable record being the Pink-barred Sallow, a first for Fair Isle.

In addition, there were a number of field records made of moths during the season, with some of the more notable being:

**Diamond-back Moth** *Plutella xylostella*

There were at least 30 on 28th May, with numbers building to a minimum of 57 by 31st May, although they quickly moved on; the only spring records after 2nd June were on 6th and 16th (three) June and 2nd July. A very light autumn passage saw sightings on 3rd, 7th (seven) and 9th (three) September.

**Twenty-plume Moth** *Alucita hexadactyla*

One at the Obs on 14th August fitted the established pattern for the few records of this species which is potentially an overlooked resident but perhaps more likely to be a migrant.

**Nettle Tap** *Anthophila fabriciana*

For a number of years, this species has been restricted to Pund due to the lack of availability of its host plant over much of the rest of the Isle, so the presence of several individuals at Quoy on 3rd August was a welcome extension of its range.

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

A record-breaking year for this exciting migrant began with one attracted to the orange socks of the Isle's youngest resident as he sat in his buggy at South Light on 30th May! It was still present the following day when there was also one at Schoolton. A concentrated arrival in early autumn saw singles on five dates between 30th July and 7th August, with a further single on 19th August and one at Easter Lothar on 15th October, the latest-ever Fair Isle record.

**Autumn Green Carpet** *Chloroclysta miata*

One at the Obs on 20th September was four days earlier than the previous first date of this species that is either an overlooked resident or infrequent migrant.

**Narrow-winged Pug** *Eupithecia nanata*

This scarce, under-recorded resident was noted on 7th June by the Roadside trap.

**Magpie Moth** *Abraxas grossulariata*

There were regular field sightings of this diurnal species from 5th–18th July, with a maximum of just four.

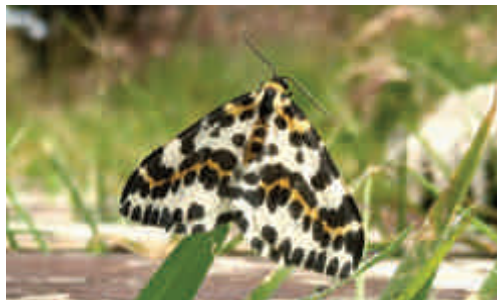


Plate 115. Magpie Moth, Obs, 8th July 2018. © Max Hellicar



Plate 116. Silver Y, Guidicum, 30th May 2018. © Ian Andrews

### Silver Y

### *Autographa gamma*

An arrival from 13th–19th May peaked at 52 on 14th, then six on 23rd May saw the start of a massive arrival, rising to a minimum of 365 on 31st May (the actual total across the Isle will have been many hundreds more than the census total shown). There were small numbers noted occasionally throughout June, including an arrival mid-month that saw at least 50 on 17th, with just single-figure counts by the end of the month. July began with another large arrival, the 350 counted on 1st no doubt being an underestimate of the actual numbers present, although numbers dropped off rapidly after 2nd. A further pulse of arrivals from 26th July peaked at 32 on 27th and 50 were present on 2nd August. Autumn was much quieter though, with up to ten regularly throughout August, up to three on just seven dates in the first half of September and the only later records involving singles on 13th October and 11th and 12th November.

Plate 117. Large Wainscot, Obs, 14th October 2018.  
© David Parnaby



### Large Wainscot

### *Rhizedra lutosa*

Singles were attracted to the lights of the Obs building on 8th and 14th October. The only previous records were in 1992 (three), 2006 (five or six) and 2013, with a date range of 18th September until 8th October.

### Large Yellow Underwing

### *Noctua pronuba*

Although a common resident, an individual on Dronger on 30th May was almost three weeks earlier than the typical emergence date and was likely to have been a migrant.

## Other insects

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### **'Shetland Bee'** *Bombus muscorum agricolae*

Sightings ranged from an early one on 30th April until two rather late individuals on 10th October.

### **Northern White-tailed Bumblebee** *Bombus magnus*

With widespread sightings on 13th, 14th and 30th May, 3rd June, 27th July, 7th September and 6th October it appears that this species may well have now colonised Fair Isle.

### **Green Lacewing** *Chrysoperla carnea* agg.

Some interesting autumn records included one on 2nd September, with at least six seen moving south over Gilsetter on 7th September and a late one at the Obs on 30th October.

## Other Wildlife

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### **Pipistrelle sp.** *Pipistrellus* sp?

A remarkable record involved a small bat seen circling low over a large puddle in the road at Busta during the afternoon of 10th January. It landed on a shed at Koolin and crawled up under the eaves, where it remained until at least 12th January. It was presumed to be a Nathusius's Pipistrelle *P. nathusii* although views were not good enough to permit specific identification and it didn't call. It turned up during a period of strong south-easterly winds, so may have been a very early migrant, but there is a possibility it may have been disturbed from attempted hibernation on the Isle. Intriguingly, an unidentified bat was then seen at Koolin on 8th April.

### **Common Frog** *Rana temporaria*

Spawn was first noted (in the Obs scrape) on 13th March, two days later than in 2017.

### **Bioluminescence** (presumed *Noctiluca scintillans*)

An impressive display was noted in the Haven on 11th September.

## SOME NON-AVIAN HIGHLIGHTS

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Nick Riddiford

### Flora

The Fair Isle flora is very well known yet there are still surprises and 2018 had more than its fair share. The biggest surprise of the year was undoubtedly the substantial Dog Rose *Rosa canina* shrub rediscovered half way down the cliff at Shieldi Geo. It was last reported by a 14-year-old island girl, Elizabeth Stout, in 1917. It had numerous flowers and it is possible that its flowering is restricted to exceptionally dry summers. This, combined with its location tucked in well down the cliff, may explain how it had gone unnoticed for 101 years.

The shingle beach at Muckle Uri Geo has long been known as a hot spot for flora. It is the northernmost site in the UK for Spear-leaved Orache *Atriplex prostrata*, supports a major colony of the rare coastal Oysterplant *Mertensia maritima* as well as regular flowering Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima*. Two more special plants were added in 2018. One, Sea Sandwort *Honckenya peploides*, was a welcome re-colonisation, 37 years after Fair Isle's only population — at North Haven — was lost to construction work in 1981. Alongside it was a band of very small orache, distinctively tinged bright pink. Resort to national expert Dr John Akeroyd confirmed the species as Early Orache *Atriplex praecox*, a Scandinavian species only recently detected in Britain and new to the Isle. Despite its dominance low on the shore it does appear to be a recent addition to the Muckle Uri Geo site. Dr Akeroyd also considered there to be a high level of hybridisation across the shingle beach amongst the abundant populations of the Spear-leaved and Babington's Orache *Atriplex glabriuscula*. The other star plant of the shingle, Oysterplant, continues to prosper as it recovers from the big storm of 2013, the 2018 count of 1,015 denoting a 40% increase from the year before.

Other population changes included a weather-affected 'no show' (zero plants) of sundews *Drosera rotundifolia* in an atypically dry Dumlin's Sink where 565 were counted in 2017. The Prostrate Juniper population has been gradually expanding its range on the hill but also in the south where a small scattered population has established across the Rippack close to the new turbines.

There has been debate for some years about the occurrence of Male Fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* on the Isle. This has now been resolved. A cluster was found growing in a hole sunk into the bank of the Gilsetter burn just above the Finnequoy mills by visiting fern expert Hazel Metherell. Its characters were all on show apart from the spore cases.

A phenomenon in recent years has been the number of adventives - non-natives arriving on the Isle by assisted means. These generally do not persist for more than a year or so but are recorded in case they establish



themselves. The two commonest sources are spilt seed at bird feeding stations and unregulated distribution of 'wild flower seed' derived from conservation bodies.

The winter bird feeding station at FIBO produced a number of exotics in 2018 including Cultivated Oat *Avena sativa*, Bread Wheat *Triticum aestivum* and Canary Grass *Phalaris canariensis* — the usual fare — plus several firsts for Fair Isle: Oil-seed Rape *Brassica napus oleifera*, Hairy Rocket *Erucastrum gallicum*, Barren Brome *Bromus (Anisanthe) sterilis* and French Oat-grass *Gaudinia fragilis*. Persistence was demonstrated by a curious narrow-leaved form of Common Orache *Atriplex patula*, previously detected there in 1999. Soil disturbance from the burying of an electricity cable may have favoured its reappearance.

A wild flower seed packet at Brecks was the source for Fair Isle's first records of Perennial Flax *Linum perenne* and Chicory *Cichorium intybus*. Alongside were several of a pale rose-coloured variety of Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*, plus Field Forget-me-nots *Myosotis arvensis* and Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, all known from the Isle but probably different genetic strands.

The source is less clear for a row of Perennial Wall Rocket *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* and Nettle-leaved Goosefoot *Chenopodium murale* in the Brecks vegetable patch, both second Fair Isle records. These were not the only garden surprises. Three strange plants popped up against the Lower Stoneybrek roadside back wall in a small patch of soil earlier cleared of vegetation. One was an extraordinarily robust Redshank *Persicaria maculosa*, the others were Fat Hen *Chenopodium album* and Many-seeded Goosefoot *Chenopodium polyspermum*, the last being new to Fair Isle and Shetland. Lower Stoneybrek was the place to be for goosefoots as a polytunnel proved ideal conditions for *Chenopodium ambrosioides*, known variously as Mexican Tea and American Wormseed, growing vigorously in an unseeded flower pot.

Whereas this host of new flora is unlikely to persist, greater concern must be allocated to two newcomers in the environs of the Bird Observatory: two plants of Common Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* and ten of Rosebay Willow-herb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*. Both are new, but appear to have been there for some time. The willow-herb, particularly, may have drifted as seeds on the wind but there is every possibility that both arrived with construction materials associated with the Bird Observatory build. Rosebay Willow-herb is an invasive alien in the UK. Common Ragwort is far more toxic to livestock than the Fair Isle native, Marsh Ragwort *Senecio aquaticus*.

Other flora highlights included, for the second year running, Eel-grass *Zostera marina* washed up on South Haven. The nearest known population is in Orkney. On its fronds was *Rhodophysemma georgii*, a diminutive crustose red alga, an epiphyte specific to *Zostera*. Soil turned over after years without disturbance can throw up plants considered to be lost. This was the case with a new tattie crop at Busta, home to several flowering red clovers. This species occurs only intermittently on the Isle. It struggles to cope with Fair

Isle conditions but seeds may lie dormant until the soil is disturbed, e.g. by opening up the field for tatties.

Work has been begun to decipher the range of eyebright *Euphrasia* taxa across the Isle. A *Euphrasia* study group from Edinburgh University brought with them UK eyebright specialist (and President of the Botanical Society of the British Isles) Chris Metherell. The study is ongoing and will hopefully shed greater light on this major component of Fair Isle summer vegetation.

### **Moths, and a passenger**

An outstanding feature of 2018 was the unprecedented run of nine Hummingbird Hawk-moths *Macroglossum stellatarum*. All were field observations and, apart from one on 15th October, all occurred in the 30th May to early August period.

An otherwise unremarkable early summer gave way to an exciting August to early September period which included two firsts for Fair Isle and a stream of other scarce migrants. Amongst the 'macros', a Pink-barred Sallow *Xanthia togata* on 1st September was a 'first'. A Dotted Clay *Xestia baja* on 2nd August was a second Fair Isle record - 16 years after the last, Gold Spot *Plusia festucae* was a third and there were fourth and fifth records for Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing *Noctua janthe*. There were unprecedented numbers of Setaceous Hebrew Character *Xestia c-nigrum* with 12, shared between the three traps operating across the Isle. The previous highest year total was six in 1993. Large Wainscot *Rhizedra lutosa* was recorded for only the fourth year. The species appears prone to small multiple arrivals, with two in 2018, the previous being in 2013. Certain moth species, known to be in decline elsewhere in Britain, have become much less frequent as migrants to the Isle. A classic case is the Mouse Moth *Amphipyra tragopoginis*. Recorded in half of the years 1991–2006, 12 years elapsed before the wait ended on 28th August 2018, with a further individual six days later. A not-dissimilar pattern emerges for Small Wainscot *Denticucullus pygmina*, one on 8th September was the first since 2011, and Herald *Scoliopterix libatrix* was the first for five years.

Other migrants included two Convolvulus Hawk-moths *Agrius convolvuli* in September; and an unprecedented series of ear moths *Amphipoea*, all males, between 30th July and 18th August. The ears are a complex group requiring expert opinion to differentiate between four species. The opinion which came back added to that complexity. Four were determined as Large Ear *Amphipoea lucens*. The other four were considered to be possible hybrids between *A. lucens* and Saltern Ear *Amphipoea fucosa*.

Turning to the micros, *Agonopterix scopariella* was a 'first'. Its food plant, Broom *Cytisus scoparius*, does not occur on the Isle. It was part of a small influx in early August which included three *Agonopterix nervosa*, with just one previous record (August 2009). It also breeds on wild shrubs of the pea family, absent from Fair Isle, although the capture of three in a week at Schoolton could have been the progeny of a previous undetected migrant laying on adjacent garden lupins.

Finally, Fair Isle's Dotted Clay did not come alone. Attached to the right forewing was a dead ant. It was clinging on by its jaws and may have died during what was presumably an unintended journey. The passenger was a worker Common Garden Ant *Lasius niger*. The only species native to the Isle is the Northern Red Ant *Myrmica ruginodis*.

### **Other insects**

A small number of Sheep Keds *Melophagus ovinus* were found on a couple of hill sheep. This aberrant parasitic fly has not been seen for about 30 years. Clearly there is a small residual population which survived the potent sheep dips of the past, no longer utilised because of threats to human health. Measures are in place to manage the problem.

The recent spate of immigrant bumblebees continued. In July, there were up to five worker white-tailed bumblebees foraging on Angelica flowers at Stoneybrek and shop roadsides. One was taken and tentatively identified as the Northern White-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus magnus*. The simultaneous appearance of several individuals in the same general area points strongly to successful breeding on the Isle.

There were a couple of major hoverfly movements in late July and August involving a few *Episyrphus balteatus* and *Eupeodes corollae*, several *Scaeva pyrastris* and numerous *Syrphus torvus*. Another migrant was the Green Lacewing *Chrysoperla carnea*.

There was also an addition to the Fair Isle list: *Sericomyia silentis*, a very flighty individual flitting from block to block of the rubble on the top of Ward Hill. It may have been another migrant but this very large hoverfly occurs in Shetland and as it is a moorland and montane species it could be a scarce overlooked resident.

A male Long-horned Caddis *Oecetis ochracea* was a surprise capture in the Schoolton actinic in August. Yet another first Fair Isle record, it could be an overlooked resident but this species is distinctive and known to disperse so is likely to have been a migrant from elsewhere.

### **Fungi**

August was astonishing for its mushrooms. The first rains after one of the driest summers in recent memory brought out carpets everywhere. In early August, several fields were full of Field Mushrooms *Agaricus campestris*, several hundred per field - unprecedented numbers. After mid month it was the turn of the Horse Mushroom *Agaricus arvensis* to appear in number. Just south of Burkle, there were considerable clusters of a brown-capped mushroom which proved to be *Agaricus cupreobrunneus*, a species not previously reported from the Isle. It was playing host to the endophytic microfungus *Calcarisporium arbusculum*, also a first Fair Isle record. The atypical weather conditions did not suit all. The commonly encountered Large-spored Mushroom *Agaricus macrosporus* was absent from some regular sites as were waxcaps *Hygrophoraceae* in September and the Wood Blewit *Lepista nuda* at the end of the autumn.



**Plate 118.** Many-ribbed Jellyfishes with a single Blue Jellyfish *Cyanea lamarckii* (upper centre), South Haven, 8th August 2018. © David Parnaby

### **Marine biota**

Moderate numbers of Many-ribbed Jellyfish *Aequorea forskaelli* were recorded in July and August. This is the second year running for this pelagic subtropical species, first recorded in 2011. Another vagrant from afar was Buoy Barnacle *Lepas fasciculatus*, clumps of which washed up on South Haven beach. There have only been two previous Isle records. Cast on to the same beach were several *Codium fragile* var. *fragile*, an alien seaweed originally from Japan, and Fair Isle's third record of Eel-grass.

Interesting fish intercepted this year were a Topknot *Zeugopterus puctatus* found by Henry Hyndman on the pontoon alongside the quay at North Haven and an Atlantic Horse-mackerel *Trachurus trachurus* caught by Stewart Thomson in August, the first he recalls since the 1970s.

*Dr Alex Twyford, Dr Mark Young, Roy Leverton, Colin Hart, Tony Vials, Max Brown, Neil & Pat Thomson, Richard Cope & Prof Roy Watling along with all personages mentioned in the text are warmly acknowledged for their expert contributions and advice.*

**Plate 119 (opposite).** Bunes, the Havens and the Obs, 15th October 2018. © Ian Andrews



# ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION AT FIBO

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David Parnaby

## **John Harrison Memorial Fund (JHMF) and Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund (SABF)**

Are you (or do you know) a keen birdwatcher aged between 15 and 24 - if so, please read on as the JHMF and SABF funds provide brilliant opportunities for young birdwatchers to stay at the world-famous Fair Isle Bird Observatory at minimal cost. Indeed, in cases of genuine financial hardship, the JHMF will not only pay for your travel to and from Fair Isle but also pay the special low JHMF accommodation charge. Please make the Administrator aware if you believe you are entitled to this assistance.

The John Harrison Memorial Fund provides financial assistance in the form of grants to young birdwatchers to enable them to visit Fair Isle and take part in the daily work schedule of the Observatory. It was established in 1968 by Richard Richardson in memory of John Harrison who visited Fair Isle three times before he died at the early age of 19. The Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund honours the memory of Simon Aspinall who visited FIBO several times from 1987 onwards before his early death in 2011. Grants from the JHMF and SABF normally cover the cost of travel by the most economical means possible to the Observatory and back home. Full travel costs will normally only be given for visits of two full weeks or longer.

Whilst at the Observatory awardees are required to pay a small sum per day (with exceptions as above) to cover the cost of three substantial daily meals, bed linen and towels, laundry costs and to offset energy costs. Awardees are expected to take part in the regular work routine undertaken by Observatory staff. Work hours are normally 0900–1800 but may be longer in the seabird breeding season. Work varies depending on the time of year so please discuss with the warden any particular interest you may have in ringing, migration or seabird work so you can arrange your visit at the appropriate time. Duties may involve some data entry on the Observatory computers, migration census work, ringing, trap repairs, maintenance and environmental work, assistance with visitors and the general daily operation of the Observatory. Please ring Susannah or David on 01595-760258 to find out more about this fantastic opportunity that will give you experiences you will treasure for the rest of your life.

It is possible there may not be room for JHMF/SABF awardees between mid-September and early October because of pressure on accommodation during this period, but awardees are welcome throughout the rest of the season.

Application forms can be obtained from the Administrator at Fair Isle Bird Observatory (01595-760258 or [fiboadministrator@btconnect.com](mailto:fiboadministrator@btconnect.com)). Completed application forms should then be returned to the Administrator along with your

detailed CV, your phone number, your email and the names, addresses and phone numbers of two suitable referees.

We will then notify you if your application is successful and you should then check the availability of accommodation with the Administrator at the Observatory and make a definite booking. Please provide the Administrator with details of your travel arrangements, save all your travel receipts and present them to the Administrator when you arrive. The costs of your travel will then be offset against your final bill.

## **MY FAIR ISLE EXPERIENCE**

### **30TH JUNE TO 14TH JULY 2018**

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## Euan Furness - recipient of SABF grant

Fair Isle is a unique place. I had visited once before - I stayed at the Obs for a few days one summer a couple of years ago. That was a great experience, but volunteering there was so much better. The staff were very friendly and I and the other volunteer (we arrived at the same time, both for two weeks) quickly felt welcomed into the life and the routines of the place.

Our work was fulfilling, with a great deal of variety to keep it interesting. We might be tidying up the Obs garden one morning, then going out in the inflatable in the afternoon to ring Razorbills (David Parnaby's sea shanties trailing behind us as we went). All of this was a fascinating insight into the operation of the Obs, and potentially valuable experience for me in the future.

For all its remoteness, the Obs was a lovely place to stay: comfortable, friendly and well-catered: my compliments to the kitchen staff, who somehow managed to produce a different delicious meal on every day of my visit! I had fun leafing through the library's collection of books too, particularly the geology section. Apparently, Fair Isle isn't just good for birds, but rocks, culture and history too!

It felt good to be able to contribute to what I knew would be meaningful scientific data through both the Puffin and Guillemot feed watches (fieldwork where members of the Obs team take shifts recording feeding rates at seabird colonies), as well as through ringing.

I'm a trainee ringer, and it was on my visit that I finally got the chance to ring the species which I had wanted to ring for almost three years - Storm Petrel. In four nights of catching, we managed to ring over 400 birds, and the supervising ringers were kind enough to give me the chance to ring a few of my own. It

wasn't just Storm Petrel that I added to my list though: Arctic Tern, Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Puffin and Hooded Crow (a rare treat, as they are typically too smart to fly into mist nets) were all new to me and I hope that the experience will go some way towards earning me my full ringing licence.

The weather was glorious. I was sad to leave and, poetically, I didn't get rained on at all for the entire two weeks until I was on the *Good Shepherd* back to Shetland Mainland. My thanks to all of the staff at the Obs for their unwavering enthusiasm and good-naturedness throughout my stay. I hope they catch that Leach's Petrel that they were after.

## MY FAIR ISLE EXPERIENCE

### 21ST AUGUST TO 1ST SEPTEMBER 2018

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#### Toby Carter - recipient of JHMF grant

To a young birder like myself Fair Isle has been a place of pilgrimage for those rare vagrant species be it from Asia or North America. The one memory that stood out for me, when I was a kid, was back in October 2013 and reading Rare Bird Alert's weekly round-up, seeing pictures of the stunning male Siberian Rubythroat and from that day forward promising myself that I'd visit there one day.

It was Christmas of 2017 when Ben Moyes and myself decided that, after collecting our A-level results, we'd spend 11 days on Fair Isle, as our little holiday. Time flew rapidly from December 2017 to August 2018 where Ben and I found ourselves waiting outside Leicester bus station awaiting to start our 750-mile journey on public transport up to Fair Isle. After many sleepless hours had passed, we arrived at Grutness harbour where the well-known *Good Shepherd* was fortunately still waiting, as we had almost missed the bus from Lerwick to Grutness due to dipping a female Hooded Merganser. We'd heard many stories of the *Good Shepherd*, but despite what had been told to us the crossing was very calm to the point where I fell asleep for at least half of the journey. As the cliffs of Fair Isle grew closer through the gloomy fog, I was awoken by an excited Ben. From out of nowhere the water was covered in Fulmars gracefully flying around the boat, along with the eerily noise of calling Black Guillemots through the gloom. Once docked, we were greeted by some of the FIBO staff members. As we walked down the quayside, there was an unusual bird singing that I slightly recognised but I couldn't register what it was until from behind the rocks a 'Fair Isle Wren' skulked between the boulders; it isn't till you see this species for yourself that you see how different these are to their mainland cousins.



The next day I woke up early with anticipation to explore this island for the first time. All toggled up I waited to help with the daily check of the traps dotted around the island. When walking around we were being told stories of some species they'd caught in the traps, from Long-eared Owls to the Song Sparrow caught earlier in 2018, which subsequently spent the next few days feeding inside the Obs garden. Looking up in the sky, it was clear there was loads of what I thought were corvids, but it wasn't until I started to scan the skies with my binoculars that I realised they were all Great Skuas, a species before being on Fair Isle I'd see only a handful of per year, but here the skies were full of them. Truly an experience I'll never forget seeing for the first time. After the trap round and catching a few Meadow Pipits and Twite, it was time for breakfast. I learnt very quickly that the food here was amazing, going up for seconds and receiving more than you got on the first round. Compliments to the chef as I must have put on weight despite doing 25,000 plus steps each day that I was there.

Each morning after breakfast was the daily bird census which takes place in both the spring and autumn to get a daily idea as to what species were present and the numbers they are present in. Over the time I was there we saw a variety of species during the census walk including Hooded Crows, a single Short-eared Owl, a regular hunting Merlin and numerous Barred Warblers. Something that stood out for me during the census data collecting was the vast number of birds that would be moving through each day - this



Plate 120. Toby Carter (left) and Ben Moyes, Good Shepherd, 1st September 2018. © Toby Carter

was clearly visible with Meadow Pipits especially. Over the course of the 11 days on the island the winds were predominately coming from the north-west, from the direction of Iceland, so each day we were seeing vast flocks of Meadow Pipits moving through but also Wheatears were noticeably moving through but in smaller numbers. To think all this information that I was helping to contribute goes towards a data set from the census work going back 60 years, which has been used to help show and detect movements of birds over the decades.

After every enormous lunch I'd help getting stuck in with the practical work for the Obs; this varied from clearing rose bushes and digging scrapes around Chalet to repairing the Helgoland traps which had been damaged by the previous winter storms. With the other volunteers and assistant wardens (Tom, Ben, Elliot, David and Richard), we had a big enough team to finish most of the traps over the course of my time on the island. Elliot and I were also given the task of creating a new fence near the entrance of the Obs to protect to young willow trees that will be battered by the howling winds come the winter. During our visit, these willows had both Barred and Marsh Warblers in them foraging for food. We also constructed a new pond in the Obs garden which will hopefully in the future be graced by many mega-rare birds.

Over the whole course of the trip I was amazed by how close the Twite were showing, a species I'd only see distantly on the North Norfolk coast. Here they show down just to a couple of metres, giving time to truly appreciate this species, which may appear dull but they have a lot of character when observing them for a long period of time. I have my trainee ringing licence which allowed me to ring species that back at home I'd never get the opportunity to ring. These included species such as Twite, 'White Wagtail', 'Greenland Wheatear', Snipe, Meadow Pipit and my favourite Barred Warbler. I also ringed half a dozen Fulmar chicks which were on the verge of fledging, a species that only a month previously I'd been ringing on Sule Skerry. It wasn't just ringing during the day that I helped with, as Fair Isle is known for its Storm Petrels and I helped with two ringing sessions. Over these sessions I got to process and ring 126 Storm Petrels and see the first Leach's Petrel of the year in the hand, which was a retrap and turned out to have been ringed on Sule Skerry just a few months previously, where I'd also been. Retrapping ringed birds helps to give an idea as to these birds movements and their longevity along with many other factors.

The one day that stood out above the rest had to be my final day on the island. It started out with ringing my first ever 'Greenland Wheatear' after the morning trap round, then continuing to build the new fences around the Obs with the help of Ben, whilst a Barred and Marsh Warbler gorged themselves on the rose berries in the Obs garden. Susannah Parnaby came running out to us saying that a Wryneck had been found near Schoolton. We were about to jump in the car and head down but David said he'd caught a special bird in the Helgoland traps that I could ring. Putting my hand in the bag, I pulled out a juvenile Barred Warbler. After ringing the Barred Warbler we watched it feeding on berries after being released. We then headed down for the

Wryneck, which after some patience showed extremely well basking out on some rocks. After watching this bird we got a call that Tom had found a juvenile Common Rosefinch at Bull's Park, so we dashed straight over there. Whilst trying to re-find the Rosefinch a Lapland Bunting called as it flew over the island. It was the first of the autumn in the UK. The Rosefinch eventually showed and I'd bagged my first lifer of the trip, so we made it back to the Obs for lunch still buzzing over what a morning we'd all had. Richard, one of the assistant wardens, had found an Icterine Warbler feeding on the cliffs at Furse. Ben, Tom and I ditched lunch as we ran all the way from the Obs to watch the Icterine Warbler, my second lifer of the day. We headed back to the Obs to finish our lunch and were given the afternoon to go birding, as it was our last day on the island. I grabbed my camera and 'scope and made my way back to Bull's Park to try and photograph the Rosefinch. After some time the bird showed superbly amongst the flock of House Sparrows. We spent the rest of the afternoon wandering round the southern end of the island and seeing four separate Barred Warblers; over the course of our trip I must have seen up to ten individuals.

None of this would have been possible without the assistance of the John Harrison Memorial Fund (JHMF), and without this fund in place neither Ben or I would have been able to visit this amazing island. This fund grants young people the opportunity to volunteer and help on the island whilst enjoying the amazing migration spectacle. For anyone who is considering applying for this fund I thoroughly encourage you to do so, as this is an amazing experience to gain valuable knowledge into bird identification, learn how one of the top UK bird observatories works and meeting people who've got years of experience in the field able to pass their knowledge onto you. I cannot wait to go and visit Fair Isle again in the future.



**Plate 121.** Common Rosefinch, Bull's Park, 31st August 2018. © Toby Carter

# FIBOT FINANCIAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2018

Mike Wood

FIBOT's income in 2018 at £220,888 was similar to 2016 and 2017, however we made a significant loss of £14,091 as a result of Living Wage increases, food inflation and several other increases in our costs. We plan to recover this situation in 2019 and 2020 through a combination of moderate price increases and greater internal efficiency.

	2007	2008	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Bed-nights	3,047	2,977	2,972	2,905	3,147	3,277	3,247	3,188	3,165	3,339
Income (£)	119,400	111,897	146,977	164,011	181,262	191,467	192,102	218,763	218,280	220,888

Our target is to maintain the number of revenue-earning bed-nights at around 3,100 per year and we have now achieved that for six consecutive years. Key to achieving this target is the enjoyment, value, comfort and hospitality enjoyed by our guests. Many guests have commented favourably on the quiet, warm and comfortable bedrooms, excellent food including meeting (whenever possible) special dietary requirements, brilliant scenic views, well-stocked bar, helpful staff and the unique, friendly ambience of the Observatory. More than that, they have enjoyed a range of different experiences within a few days that is arguably unique.

With scheduled flights to and from the Shetland mainland every day except Sunday during the summer, together with three days on which the Good Shepherd sails between Fair Isle and Shetland, getting to and from the island is much easier and more predictable than in past years. We understand there will be flights to and from Orkney on Mondays and Fridays from June to August in 2019 and also (hopefully) 2020.

We have continued to receive valuable grant income from the JNCC and Scottish National Heritage for Seabird Monitoring work and the provision of a Fair Isle Ranger Service respectively. This income is important for the continued financial health of FIBO and we are working hard to ensure we continue to fulfil their requirements.

Please be aware of the grants available from FIBO through the John Harrison Memorial Fund and the Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund and we ask you to encourage any young (under 25 years old) birdwatchers to apply for one or other of these grants.

My personal thanks go to David, Susannah and our seasonal staff for their hard work and skill in making the Observatory such a brilliant place to stay. It is not just the comfort of the new building and the excellent food that determines that a guest has an enjoyable stay at the Observatory, it is the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff that contribute massively to the high levels of visitor satisfaction.

Whilst our finances continue to be in a satisfactory state, any readers wishing to make a specific or non-specific donation to support the Observatory can be assured it would be gratefully received and effectively used. A summary of FIBOT's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2018 appears on the following page. The full statutory accounts can be seen at the Observatory on Fair Isle.

**Mike Wood**  
Finance Director

## Income and Expenditure Report for the year ended 31st October 2018

<b>Sales Income</b>	<b>2018 (£)</b>	2017 (£)	<b>Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2018</b>	
Accommodation & Meals	185,690	182,085	<b>Fixed Assets</b>	<b>31/10/18 (£)</b> 31/10/17 (£)
Shop Sales	12,277	11,824	Buildings	253,000 264,000
Bar Sales	22,921	24,371	Other Fixed Assets	53,901 68,154
	<u>220,888</u>	<u>218,280</u>		<u>306,901</u> <u>332,154</u>
<b>Cost of Sales</b>			<b>Current Assets</b>	
Purchases	82,747	76,421	Stocks	27,846 25,115
Wages & Salaries	82,700	79,287	Debtors	19,438 23,860
	<u>165,447</u>	<u>155,708</u>	Cash at bank and in hand	73,283 44,123
<b>Trading Profit</b>	<u>55,441</u>	<u>62,572</u>		<u>120,567</u> <u>93,098</u>
<b>Other Income</b>			<b>Creditors: amounts falling due</b>	
Interest Received	6,008	6,346	<b>within one year</b>	(56,347) (30,998)
FOFI Subscriptions	7,744	6,958	<b>Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)</b>	64,220 62,100
Donations	3,956	3,463	Total Assets less	
Grants Received	19,069	19,662	Current Liabilities	371,121 394,254
Other Income	0	0	<b>Creditors: amounts falling due</b>	
	<u>36,777</u>	<u>36,429</u>	<b>after more than one year</b>	( 0) ( 0)
				<u>371,121</u> <u>394,254</u>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<u>92,218</u>	<u>99,001</u>	<b>Representing:</b>	
<b>Other Expenses</b>			<b>Accumulated Surplus</b>	371,121 394,254
Administration	9,730	10,191	<b>Appeal Reserve</b>	0 0
Energy	17,742	12,417		<u>371,121</u> <u>394,254</u>
Establishment	36,597	35,405		
Insurance	21,299	19,406		
Sales & Marketing	1,397	3,042		
Financial & Legal	6,544	7,629		
Depreciation	13,000	13,000		
	<u>106,309</u>	<u>101,090</u>		
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>(14,091)</b>	<b>(2,089)</b>		

## WATER FEATURES

BM Boini Mire  
DW Da Water  
ELW Easter Lother Water  
FD Field Ditch  
G Giletter  
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 Ultra 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

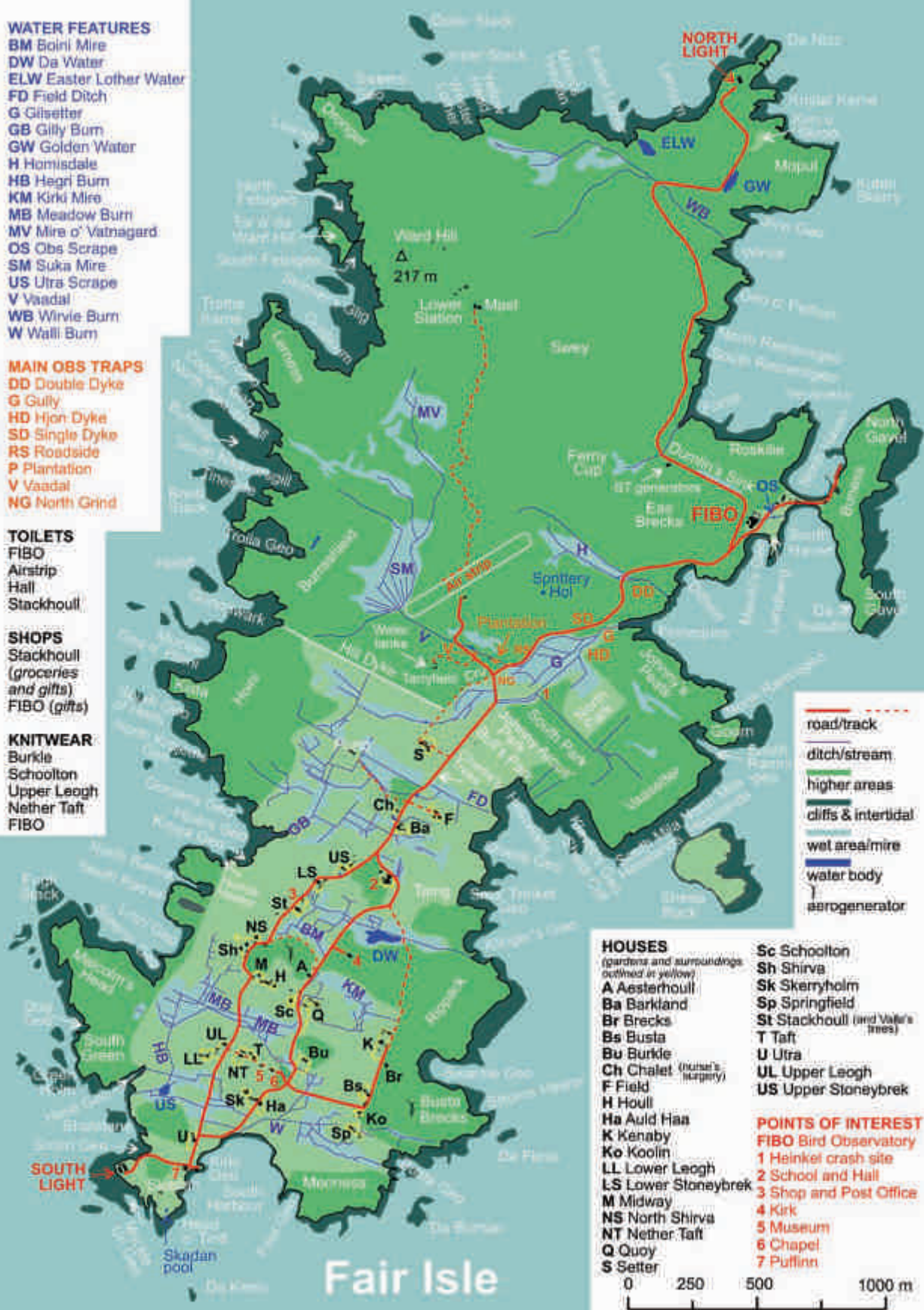
FIBO  
Airstrip  
Hall  
Stackhoull

## SHOPS

Stackhoull  
(groceries  
and gifts)  
FIBO (gifts)

## KNITWEAR

Burkle  
Schoolton  
Upper Leogh  
Nether Taft  
FIBO



- road/track
- ditch/stream
- higher areas
- cliffs & intertidal
- wet area/mire
- water body
- aerogenerator

## HOUSES

(gardens and surroundings  
outlined in yellow)  
A Aesterhoull  
Ba Barkland  
Br Brecks  
Bs Busta  
Bu Burkle  
Ch Chalet (nurse's  
surgey)  
F Field  
H Houll  
Ha Auld Haas  
K Kenaby  
Ko Koolin  
LL Lower Leogh  
LS Lower Stoneybrek  
M Midway  
NS North Shirva  
NT Nether Taft  
Q Quoy  
S Setter

Sc Schoolton  
Sh Shirva  
SK Skerryholm  
Sp Springfield  
St Stackhoull (and Valler's  
Ines)  
T Taft  
U Ultra  
UL Upper Leogh  
US Upper Stoneybrek

## POINTS OF INTEREST

FIBO Bird Observatory  
1 Heinkel crash site  
2 School and Hall  
3 Shop and Post Office  
4 Kirk  
5 Museum  
6 Chapel  
7 Puffinn

# 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 2018. All decisions follow those of the BBRC and BOURC (although note that the totals include all 2018 records, which may remain subject to ratification by the relevant committee), with the main list comprising all species on Categories A–C, with those species on Category D (uncertain origin) and E (presumed escapes), along with one extinct species included at the end of the list for completeness.

With the addition of Crag Martin, the Fair Isle list stands at 391 at the end of 2018 (not including Daurian/Turkestan Shrike, none of the records of which are currently accepted to species level).

## Status Categories:

Vagrant	V (no. of records)	ten records or less in the past 20 years
Rare	R (no. of records)	11–40 records in the past 20 years
Scarce	S	averaging 10 records or less per annum
Regular Migrant	RM	averaging 11–40 records per annum
Frequent Migrant	FM	averaging 41–500 records per annum
Common Migrant	CM	averaging more than 500 records per annum

## Breeding Categories:

Small Numbers	BS	on average less than 100 pairs per annum
Moderate Numbers	BM	on average 101–1,000 pairs per annum
Large Numbers	BL	on average more than 1,000 pairs per annum

No.	Species	Status	Records (individuals)				
1	Brent Goose	R	54 (103) a	30	King Eider	V	14
2	Canada Goose	R	36 (89)	31	Eider	FM	
3	Barnacle Goose	FM		32	Harlequin Duck	V	2 (3)
4	Greylag Goose	CM		33	Surf Scoter	V	2
5	Taiga Bean Goose	V	9 (15) b	34	Velvet Scoter	R	129 (181)
6	Pink-footed Goose	CM		35	Common Scoter	RM	
7	Tundra Bean Goose	R	12 (146) b	36	Long-tailed Duck	RM	
8	White-fronted Goose	S		37	Goldeneye	RM	
9	Mute Swan	V	12 (17)	38	Smew	V	7
10	Bewick's Swan	V	6 (17)	39	Goosander	R	107 (149)
11	Whooper Swan	FM		40	Red-breasted Merganser	RM	
12	Shelduck	S		41	Quail	S	
13	Mandarin Duck	V	3	42	Red-throated Diver	RM	
14	Garganey	V	13 (23)	43	Black-throated Diver	V	5
15	Shoveler	S		44	Great Northern Diver	S	
16	Gadwall	R	54 (83)	45	White-billed Diver	V	4
17	Wigeon	FM		46	Black-browed Albatross	V	1 c
18	American Wigeon	V	1	47	Storm Petrel	CM	
19	Mallard	RM		48	Swinhoe's Petrel	V	2
20	Black Duck	V	1	49	Leach's Petrel	S	
21	Pintail	S		50	Fulmar	CM	
22	Teal	FM		51	Cory's Shearwater	V	3 (90)
23	Green-winged Teal	V	3	52	Sooty Shearwater	RM	
24	Pochard	R	58 (74)	53	Great Shearwater	V	16 (140)
25	Ring-necked Duck	V	2	54	Manx Shearwater	S	
26	Tufted Duck	RM		55	Little Grebe	R	42
27	Scaup	S	105 (139)	56	Red-necked Grebe	V	22 (25)
28	Lesser Scaup	V	1	57	Great Crested Grebe	V	14 (15)
29	Steller's Eider	V	1	58	Slavonian Grebe	S	
				59	White Stork	V	4

60	Glossy Ibis	V	2 (6)	125	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	V	18 (19)
61	Little Bittern	V	1	126	Pectoral Sandpiper	R	35
62	Night-heron	V	2	127	Semipalmated Sandpiper	V	3
63	Grey Heron	FM		128	Long-billed Dowitcher	V	2
64	Purple Heron	V	3	129	Woodcock	FM	
65	Great White Egret	V	1	130	Jack Snipe	FM	
66	Little Egret	V	2	131	Great Snipe	R	46
67	Gannet	CM		132	Snipe	CM	
68	Shag	CM		133	Terek Sandpiper	V	1
69	Cormorant	RM		134	Red-necked Phalarope	V	32 (40) e
70	Osprey	S	133	135	Grey Phalarope	R	48
71	Honey-buzzard	R	59 (62)	136	Common Sandpiper	FM	
72	Golden Eagle	V	1	137	Spotted Sandpiper	V	1
73	Sparrowhawk	RM		138	Green Sandpiper	RM	
74	Goshawk	V	6	139	Solitary Sandpiper	V	1
75	Marsh Harrier	R	57	140	Lesser Yellowlegs	V	3
76	Hen Harrier	S		141	Redshank	CM	
77	Pallid Harrier	V	6	142	Wood Sandpiper	S	
78	Montagu's Harrier	V	4 d	143	Spotted Redshank	R	106 (120)
79	Red Kite	V	8	144	Greenshank	RM	
80	Black Kite	V	1	145	Collared Pratincole	V	2
81	White-tailed Eagle	V	11	146	Black-winged Pratincole	V	1
82	Rough-legged Buzzard	V	46 (49)	147	Kittiwake	CM	
83	Buzzard	R		148	Ivory Gull	V	2
84	Great Bustard	V	1	149	Sabine's Gull	V	5
85	Little Bustard	V	1	150	Black-headed Gull	FM	
86	Water Rail	RM		151	Little Gull	R	34
87	Corncrake	S		152	Laughing Gull	V	2
88	Little Crake	V	1	153	Mediterranean Gull	V	3
89	Baillon's Crake	V	2	154	Common Gull	CM	
90	Spotted Crake	R	51	155	Ring-billed Gull	V	4
91	Moorhen	S		156	Great Black-backed Gull	CM	
92	Coot	R	94	157	Glaucous-winged Gull	V	1
93	Sandhill Crane	V	1	158	Glaucous Gull	RM	
94	Crane	R	29 (39)	159	Iceland Gull	S	
95	Stone-curlew	V	8	160	Herring Gull	CM	
96	Oystercatcher	FM		161	Lesser Black-backed Gull	FM	
97	Avocet	V	1	162	Gull-billed Tern	V	1
98	Lapwing	FM		163	Caspian Tern	V	2
99	Golden Plover	FM		164	Sandwich Tern	S	
100	Pacific Golden Plover	V	2	165	Bridled Tern	V	1
101	American Golden Plover	V	11	166	Roseate Tern	V	4 (5)
102	Grey Plover	R		167	Common Tern	RM	
103	Ringed Plover	FM		168	Arctic Tern	FM	
104	Little Ringed Plover	V	6	169	White-winged Black Tern	V	4
105	Kentish Plover	V	1	170	Black Tern	V	2
106	Caspian Plover	V	1	171	Great Skua	FM	
107	Dotterel	S	107 (201)	172	Pomarine Skua	R	103 (133)
108	Upland Sandpiper	V	2	173	Arctic Skua	FM	
109	Whimbrel	FM		174	Long-tailed Skua	R	54 (110)
110	Curlew	FM		175	Little Auk	RM	
111	Bar-tailed Godwit	S		176	Brünnich's Guillemot	V	1
112	Black-tailed Godwit	S		177	Common Guillemot	CM	
113	Turnstone	CM		178	Razorbill	CM	
114	Knot	RM		179	Black Guillemot	FM	
115	Ruff	RM		180	Puffin	CM	
116	Curlew Sandpiper	R	62 (145)	181	Pallas's Sandgrouse	V	1 (40)
117	Temminck's Stint	V	19	182	Rock Dove	FM	
118	Red-necked Stint	V	1	183	Stock Dove	S	
119	Sanderling	FM		184	Woodpigeon	FM	
120	Dunlin	FM		185	Turtle Dove	S	
121	Purple Sandpiper	FM		186	Oriental Turtle Dove	V	1
122	Baird's Sandpiper	V	4	187	Collared Dove	FM	
123	Little Stint	S		188	Cuckoo	S	
124	White-rumped Sandpiper	V	5	189	Barn Owl	V	6



190	Scops Owl	V	2	255	Great Reed Warbler	V	14
191	Snowy Owl	V	23 (24)	256	Aquatic Warbler	V	38
192	Long-eared Owl	RM		257	Sedge Warbler	FM	
193	Short-eared Owl	RM		258	Paddyfield Warbler	R	25
194	Nightjar	V	30	259	Blyth's Reed Warbler	R	51
195	Alpine Swift	V	5	260	Reed Warbler	RM	
196	Swift	FM		261	Marsh Warbler	S	
197	Pallid Swift	V	1	262	Thick-billed Warbler	V	2
198	Little Swift	V	1	263	Booted Warbler	V	15
199	Roller	V	1	264	Sykes's Warbler	V	3
200	Kingfisher	V	1	265	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	V	3
201	Bee-eater	V	8 (10)	266	Melodious Warbler	V	19
202	Hoopoe	R	41	267	Icterine Warbler	RM	
203	Wryneck	RM		268	Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	R	25
204	Great Spotted Woodpecker	S		269	Grasshopper Warbler	RM	
205	Lesser Kestrel	V	1	270	River Warbler	V	17
206	Kestrel	RM		271	Savi's Warbler	V	7
207	American Kestrel	V	1	272	Lanceolated Warbler	S	97
208	Red-footed Falcon	V	5	273	Blackcap	CM	
209	Merlin	RM		274	Garden Warbler	FM	
210	Hobby	R	65	275	Barred Warbler	RM	
211	Gyr Falcon	V	13	276	Lesser Whitethroat	FM	
212	Peregrine	RM		277	Whitethroat	FM	
213	Brown Shrike	V	1	278	Dartford Warbler	V	1
214	Red-backed Shrike	RM		279	Subalpine Warbler	R	99 g
215	Lesser Grey Shrike	V	20 (21)	280	Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler	V	2
216	Great Grey Shrike	S		281	Sardinian Warbler	V	2
217	Steppe Grey Shrike	V	2	282	Firecrest	V	9
218	Woodchat Shrike	V	32	283	Goldcrest	FM	
219	Red-eyed Vireo	V	1	284	Wren	RM	
220	Golden Oriole	R	48	285	Treecreeper	V	10
221	Magpie	V	1	286	Rose-coloured Starling	R	50
222	Jackdaw	S		287	Starling	CM	
223	Rook	RM		288	Siberian Thrush	V	2
224	Carrion Crow	FM		289	White's Thrush	V	16
225	Hooded Crow	RM		290	Grey-cheeked Thrush	V	5
226	Raven	RM		291	Swainson's Thrush	V	2
227	Waxwing	S		292	Hermit Thrush	V	3
228	Coal Tit	V	7	293	Ring Ouzel	FM	
229	Blue Tit	V	14 (26)	294	Blackbird	CM	
230	Great Tit	R	41 (55)	295	Eyebrowed Thrush	V	2
231	Woodlark	V	53 (70) a	296	Black-throated Thrush	V	14
232	Skylark	CM		297	Dusky Thrush	V	1
233	Crested Lark	V	1	298	Fieldfare	CM	
234	Shore Lark	R		299	Redwing	CM	
235	Short-toed Lark	S	164 (179)	300	Song Thrush	CM	
236	Bimaculated Lark	V	1	301	Mistle Thrush	RM	
237	Calandra Lark	V	6	302	Spotted Flycatcher	FM	
238	Sand Martin	RM		303	Asian Brown Flycatcher	V	2
239	Swallow	FM		304	Robin	CM	
240	Crag Martin	V	1	305	Rufous-tailed Robin	V	1
241	House Martin	FM		306	Bluethroat	RM	
242	Red-rumped Swallow	V	12	307	Thrush Nightingale	R	65
243	Wood Warbler	RM		308	Nightingale	R	56
244	Western Bonelli's Warbler	V	4 f	309	Siberian Rubythroat	V	8
245	Hume's Warbler	V	3	310	Red-flanked Bluetail	V	17
246	Yellow-browed Warbler	RM		311	Pied Flycatcher	FM	
247	Pallas's Warbler	V	24 (40)	312	Collared Flycatcher	V	7
248	Radde's Warbler	V	8	313	Red-breasted Flycatcher	S	
249	Dusky Warbler	V	18	314	Black Redstart	RM	
250	Willow Warbler	CM		315	Redstart	FM	
251	Chiffchaff	FM		316	Rock Thrush	V	3
252	Green Warbler	V	1	317	Whinchat	FM	
253	Greenish Warbler	R	55	318	Stonechat	S	
254	Arctic Warbler	R	97	319	Siberian Stonechat	V	2 h

320	Wheatear	CM	
321	Isabelline Wheatear	V	1
322	Desert Wheatear	V	5
323	Black-eared Wheatear	V	5
324	Pied Wheatear	V	1
325	Dipper	R	39
326	House Sparrow		
327	Tree Sparrow	S	
328	Alpine Accentor	V	2
329	Siberian Accentor	V	2
330	Dunnock	FM	
331	Yellow Wagtail	RM	
332	Eastern Yellow Wagtail	V	1
333	Citrine Wagtail	S	77
334	Grey Wagtail	S	
335	Pied Wagtail	FM	
336	Richard's Pipit	S	
337	Blyth's Pipit	V	4
338	Tawny Pipit	V	18
339	Meadow Pipit	CM	
340	Tree Pipit	RM	
341	Olive-backed Pipit	S	112
342	Pechora Pipit	R	44
343	Red-throated Pipit	R	91
344	Buff-bellied Pipit	V	4
345	Rock Pipit	FM	
346	Chaffinch	FM	
347	Brambling	FM	
348	Hawfinch	S	140 (155)
349	Bullfinch	S	
350	Common Rosefinch	RM	
351	Greenfinch	RM	
352	Twite	FM	
353	Linnet	RM	
354	Common Redpoll	FM	
355	Lesser Redpoll	S	
356	Arctic Redpoll	R	95
357	Parrot Crossbill	V	6 (68)
358	Crossbill	RM	
359	Two-barred Crossbill	R	28 (59)
360	Goldfinch	S	
361	Citrel Finch	V	1
362	Serin	V	4
363	Siskin	FM	
364	Lapland Bunting	FM	
365	Snow Bunting	FM	
366	Corn Bunting	R	
367	Yellowhammer	RM	
368	Pine Bunting	V	13
369	Ortolan Bunting	S	
370	Cretzschmar's Bunting	V	3
371	Chestnut-eared Bunting	V	1
372	Little Bunting	S	
373	Yellow-browed Bunting	V	1
374	Rustic Bunting	R	137
375	Yellow-breasted Bunting	R	103
376	Black-headed Bunting	V	26
377	Black-faced Bunting	V	1
378	Pallas's Reed Bunting	V	2
379	Reed Bunting	FM	
380	Song Sparrow	V	4
381	White-crowned Sparrow	V	1
382	White-throated Sparrow	V	5
383	Savannah Sparrow	V	2
384	Bobolink	V	1

385	Baltimore Oriole	V	1
386	Brown-headed Cowbird	V	1
387	Tennessee Warbler	V	2
388	Magnolia Warbler	V	1
389	Blackburnian Warbler	V	1
390	Blackpoll Warbler	V	2
391	Yellow-rumped Warbler	V	2

**Not identified to species:**

Daurian/Turkestan Shrike	V	4
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**Category D:**

Daurian Starling		1
Red-headed Bunting		1

**Category E:**

Red-breasted Goose		1
Bar-headed Goose		4 (9)
Black Swan		1
Wood Duck		1
Lanner Falcon		1
Saker Falcon		1 i
Gyr Falcon		1
Waxwing		1
Blackcap		1
White-shouldered Starling		1
Chinese Grosbeak		1
Long-tailed Rosefinch		1
Pallas's Rosefinch		1
Chestnut Bunting		2
Black-headed Bunting		5
Red-headed Bunting		c.48
Yellow-headed Blackbird		1
Black-headed Grosbeak		1
Indigo Bunting		2
Lazuli Bunting		2
Varied Bunting		1
Painted Bunting		1

**Other records:**

Turtle Dove x Barbary Dove		1
House Finch		2 j

**Extinct:**

Great Auk		1
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**Notes**

- Since 1948 only
- Plus another 21 records of 63 unidentified Bean Geese
- Plus an unidentified albatross in 1949
- One not submitted
- Including five fledged juveniles
- Also a bonelli's warbler sp. in 1992
- Includes Subalpine/Moltoni's group
- Plus another 44 records of Siberian/Stejneger's Stonechat
- Three other records are thought to be this species or hybrid falcons
- Both records refer to probable *Carpodacus* finches, but neither accepted as this species

**Plate 122.** David Parnaby with Richard Cope and Grace Parnaby, North Light, 4th October 2018. © Ian Andrews



**Plate 123 (Inset).** Dave Okill (left) with Pete Ellis, Jane Outram, David Roche and a Rose-coloured Starling, Obs, 3rd June 2018. © Ian Andrews

**Plate 124.** 'Men at work' (left to right): David Parnaby, Ben Moyes, Toby Carter and Elliot Montieth, Obs, 22nd August 2018. © Richard Cope



