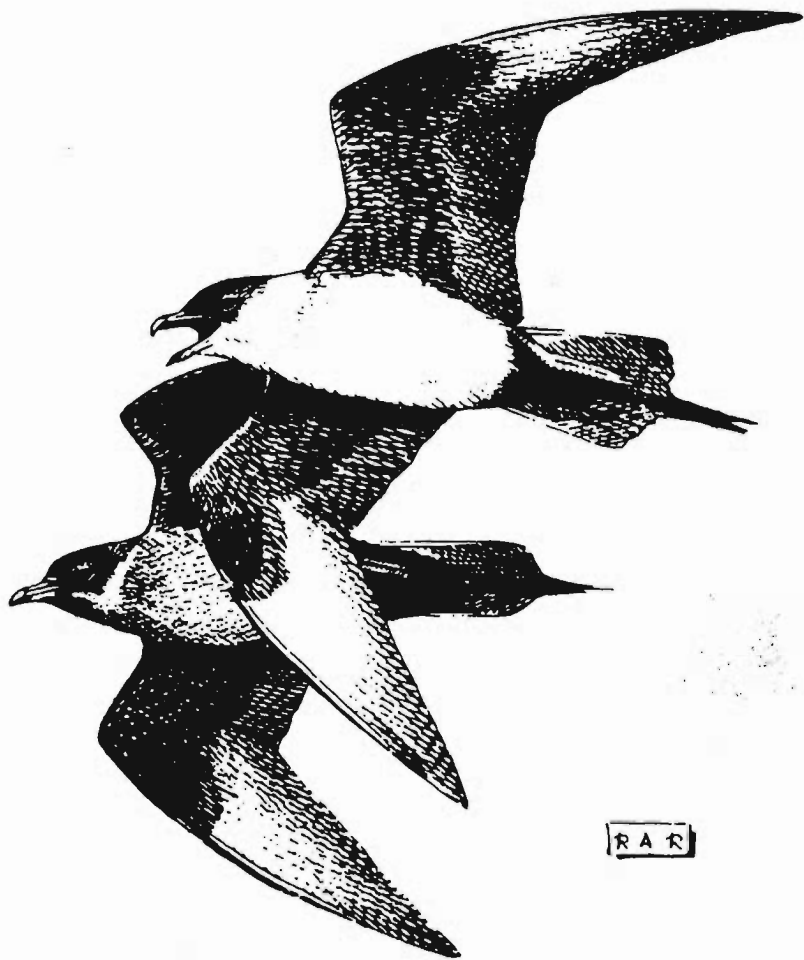
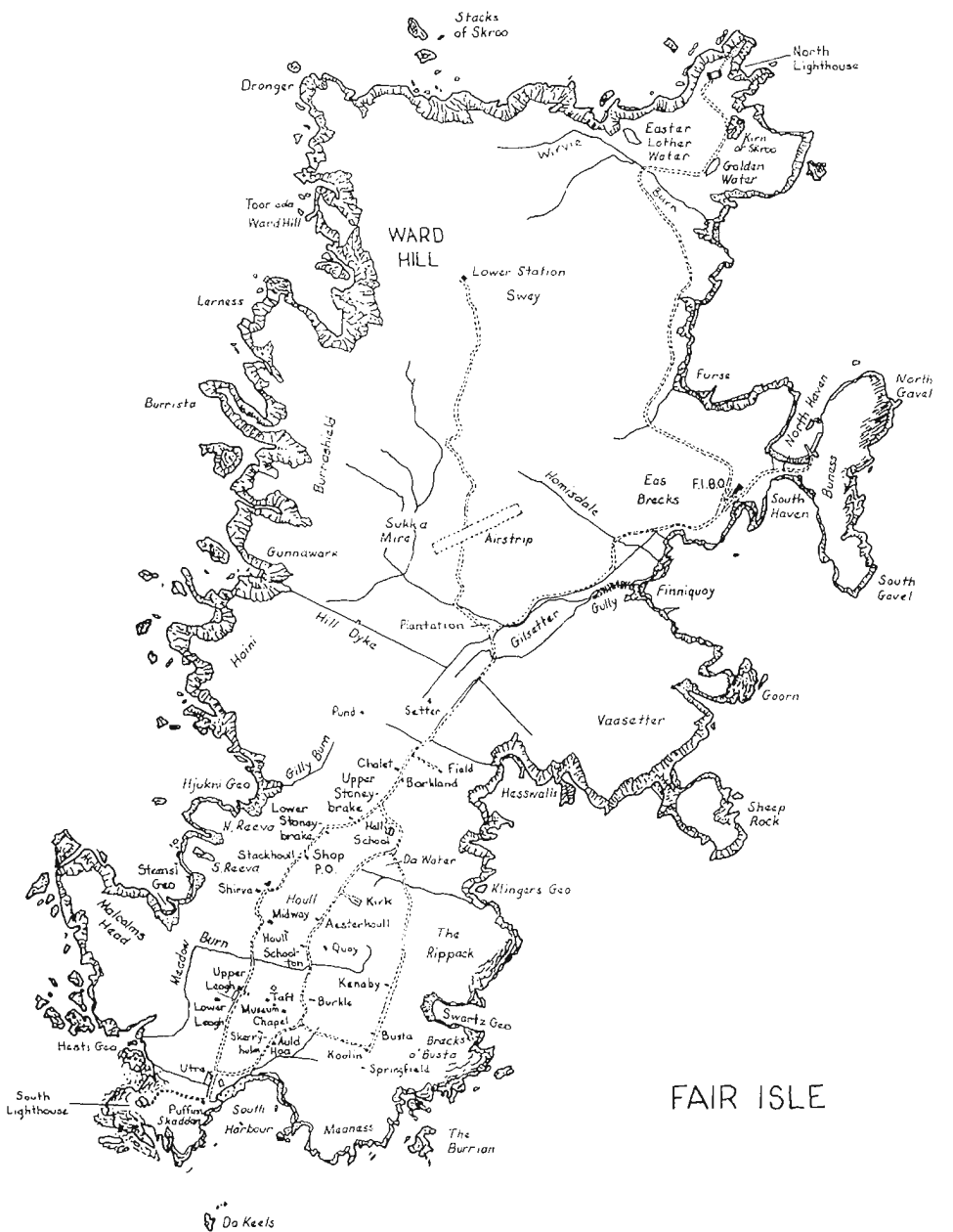


# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

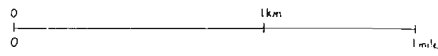
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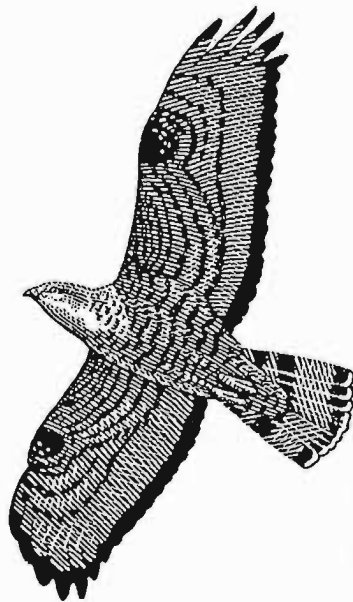
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# Fair Isle Bird Observatory

Report no. 58

2005

*Edited by Deryk Shaw*

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## Chairman's Report

*Roy Dennis.*

The Bird Observatory had another successful season with another record number of guests and as ever Fair Isle proved a most enjoyable and exciting destination. The Trustees held their AGM on the island in May and once again we were all struck by the happy and efficient management by Deryk and Hollie. We thank them and all the other staff as well as the many others who helped and supported the Observatory.

After last year's bumper autumn for very rare migrants we had many birders looking for exciting birds, but alas both spring and autumn did not live up to recent seasons, with no new species recorded. Nevertheless there were great birds to see with Gyr falcon and Snowy owl before the visitor season, and then spring rarities like Red-rumped swallow and Blyth's reed warbler. In autumn the best bird was a Siberian rubythroat but there were also two Black-throated thrushes. Birding visitors appreciated the 'wildlife crop scheme' and these patches are proving to be enticing to bird migrants. Another new feature was the beginnings of a wetland scrape at Utra which is already proving a magnet for wildfowl and waders – we are very grateful to John Best for helping make Fair Isle even better for birdwatching.

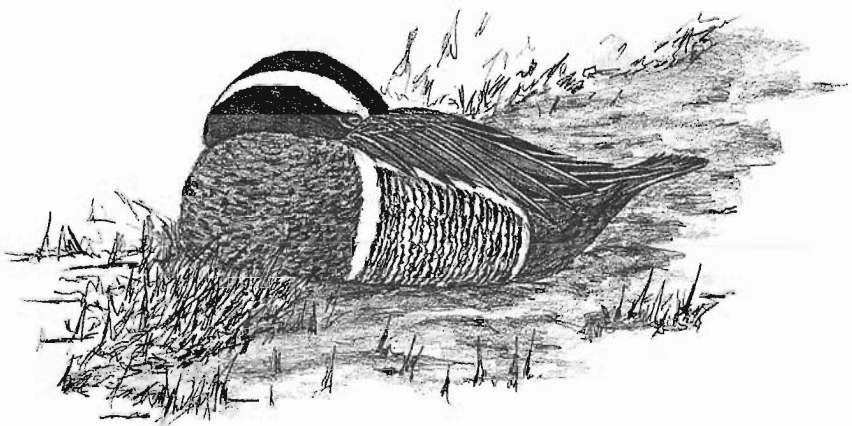
Seabirds had a slightly better year than in 2004 but it is still a sad story for them, made worse in my view by the failure to secure Protected Marine Status for the seas around Fair Isle. This remains an urgent goal for the islanders and ourselves. Gannets as usual fared well and Fulmars improved, while Razorbill numbers were the highest ever, but both Skuas again had disastrous breeding, with hardly any young reared. There were only 40 pairs of Arctic terns and they had no success, but I suppose we do need to remember that when I was the warden in the early 1960s there were no Arctic terns and no Gannets.

There was one great sadness amongst the island community. Jerry Stout of Leogh died on 16th September at the grand age of 97 years. Jerry was one of the great stalwarts of the island and had a special influence on the island, especially during the difficult times in the 1950s and 1960s; he will be greatly missed. He was always a strong supporter of the Observatory in its formative years and I remember him fondly, from my years as warden, as a great friend.

At our AGM in May, we started to explore the possibility of building a new Bird Observatory; an efficient, eco-friendly and attractive building for the future. In January we decided to take the project forward and have commissioned an expert appraisal of funding possibilities and designs. We would love to have it ready for

our 60th birthday in 2008 and sometime this year we will launch an appeal to raise funds. It's a challenging and exciting project and demonstrates our commitment to an island that has given so many of us such enjoyable and interesting visits.

I hope you enjoy reading the latest annual report and that you soon have another chance to visit the Observatory or encourage others to do so. It's certainly an island worth visiting again and again.



*Garganey (Mark Warren)*



## Warden & Administrator's Report

*Deryk & Hollie Shaw*

Our seventh season and our busiest yet for visitors – the bed night record was broken for the third year in a row! The migration periods provided some quality birds and kept Fair Isle top of the ‘birding localities league’ whilst a slightly improved seabird breeding season gave us a glimmer of hope that the disaster of 2004 was the bottom of a trough. The seeds for a new observatory were planted and we hope for rapid growth in the coming months.

Suitable Assistant Wardens are getting harder to find each year and it was not until late February, following appeals to various bodies and contacts, that I finally managed to secure Mark Warren from Cornwall and Rael Butcher from Yorkshire. Rory Tallack made the short hop from Mainland Shetland to take up the post of Ranger. On the domestic front we had Lois Smallwood and Becki Rosser returning with Rachel Eunson and Kathy Spatcher as new members of the team. Lois had to leave in August and was replaced by another returnee – Liz Burnett. Childminding of the Shaw brood was shared in turn by Janet Gibson, Maria De La Mar and Suella Brown. The atmosphere in the Observatory this season was on the whole excellent and many visitors commented on the friendly, relaxed ambience of the place. We thank all the staff for their contributions and hard work towards the smooth running of the Observatory, to ensure that our guests have a very pleasant holiday.

We had two JHMF volunteers in 2005; Ashley Powell from Kent from May-July and Philip Knott for five weeks in early autumn. Both had a fantastic time, learnt a lot and helped out considerably and Philip will return as the Ranger in 2006.

On the birding side, a white Gyr Falcon bridging the Old and New years was a good start and was followed by another white raptor – a Snowy Owl in early April. Only our 12th Great-crested Grebe and 5th Corn Bunting in 30 years were also seen before we had even opened to guests. Spring passage was very poor (eg just 6 Pied Flycatcher) but included unusual spring highlights such as Citrine Wagtail (2nd record) and both Richard's Pipit (3rd record) and Tawny Pipit (first since 1993). Also were; two Red-necked Phalarope, Red-rumped Swallow, Great Reed Warbler, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Arctic Warbler (3rd record), Subalpine Warbler and two Rustic Buntings.

Autumn passage was equally poor but September turned up Cory's Shearwater, American Golden Plover, Olive-backed Pipit, Thrush Nightingale, Booted Warbler and Western Bonelli's Warbler. However, October now appears to be the best month for rarities (as well as large numbers of common birds) with another two

Olive-backed Pipits, two Lanceolated Warblers, two Black-throated Thrushes (including a superb male), Arctic Redpoll and culminating with a Siberian Rubythroat – on the same date as last year's Rufous-tailed Robin (23rd October). The year ended the way it had started, with a rare raptor; a Goshawk reported in December was (if accepted) only our 7th record and first since 1996. The final year list, a potential 210 species, is a respectable total.

Although most seabird species had a vastly improved breeding season, compared to 2004 (when there was almost complete failure by all species to fledge any chicks), the 2005 season was still very poor. A summary appears elsewhere in this publication.

We continued with our crop-planting initiative to provide food and shelter for birds and a focus for visiting bird watchers. Six areas were planted in 2004 and the same six were planted again in 2005, plus an additional two. These are proving to be excellent habitat for migrants and insects and are appreciated by visiting birders too.

A new wader scrape was initiated at Utra and it has already proved attractive to numbers of geese, ducks and waders. It is hoped it will be completed in 2006 and become a popular site for migrating waders, wildfowl and those wishing to view them.

Life at the Observatory was as busy as ever, with nearly 550 guests (including 7 organised groups from Shetland Wildlife, Travelling Naturalists, Island Holidays and Celtic Bird Tours), 12 visiting cruiseships, 50+ day trippers and an ever increasing number of visitors from yachts harboured in North Haven. The Observatory also continued to be a popular venue for certain island events including the once fortnightly slideshow and music event 'Fair Isle Thursday' as well as one-off events such as a fund raising night for a project in Kenya and a poetry reading evening. The breadth of talent among the Fair Isle population is impressive and was enhanced further this year with regular visits from Malachy Tallack (brother to Rory, the Observatory Ranger), who is a singer songwriter from Shetland and played at most Fair Isle Thursdays. It is encouraging to see the Observatory catering for so many events and the needs of such a diverse group of visitors, from workmen to non-birder holidaymakers to keen ornithologists. It is thanks to the hard work of the catering and bird staff and the activities provided by the Ranger Service that each of these groups of visitors could enjoy their stay on the isle. The August reduced-rate offer again attracted large numbers of visitors, in what used to be an extremely quiet month and some visitors have made a trip to Fair Isle an annual event because of this offer. Repeat visitors are very important as they demonstrate that the service provided is of a good standard and it is pleasing

to note that they are on the increase. Equally new visitors are also important and we continued to advertise in a variety of magazines and update the website on a regular basis in order to attract new visitors. One couple even booked a 6-week stay to mark their retirements. Sarah and Mike Gee came to stay in early September and became very much part of the team by the time they left in mid October. The FIBOT AGM was held on the island in early June with a good turnout of Directors. The main topic of discussion was the future of FIBOT and it was heartening to see so much enthusiasm and dedication to the long-term future of the Observatory. Within the current Observatory building, all guest bedrooms are now Tourist Board 2-star standard. A new carpet was laid in the Observatory lounge and a number of dining room chairs were replaced. The internal fabric of the building is on the whole of a good standard, making the most of the facilities we have available to us. To improve the standards further would involve a major refurbishment. However, the future of the Observatory building has been discussed for a number of years now. The current building is showing its age, not only in its design but also the roof, plumbing, windows, electrics etc and will be 40 years old in a few years time. Following the June meeting, a survey was carried out in the summer of 2005 and it was recommended that, rather than a refurbishment, a complete new rebuild was required. It was decided at the January 2006 Directors meeting that this needs to be pushed forward and it is hoped that the new Observatory will open in the autumn of 2008 – FIBOT's 60th anniversary year! The new Observatory will incorporate many eco-friendly features and improved facilities for both visitors and staff. The exact location has not yet been finalised but it will be within 100m of the current building. It will be an exciting but very expensive project (not least because of our geographically remote location) and a fund has been set up for anyone wishing to contribute. Further details can be obtained from the Observatory or our website.

Other events this season included the grand celebration of Neil and Pat Thomson's 30th wedding anniversary on 6th August. This event alone doubled the island population as friends and family arrived to celebrate with them. At the very end of the season Tete à Tete, an Opera company, visited the island and after working with the school children performed part of the an opera based on the story of *Odysseus* but with strong elements of knitting incorporated into the story and props. It was very much still 'work in progress' when they visited but allowed a remote community to sample a form of culture most of us would never get the chance to see otherwise. The island population always fluctuates to a lesser or greater degree almost every year and this season saw the departure of June and Stanley Ross-Smith, who moved to mainland Shetland to be with their son Patrick, who left the island in 2004. However, we also welcomed the arrival of three new 'households'. Peter Harrison moved into the East South Lighthouse flat in July, to be near his son Mark who lives at Schoolhouse. Paul Baxter and Shonagh MacMaster moved into Barkland a few days later. Paul has been visiting the

Observatory for many years, is a very keen ornithologist and bird ringer and helped us out for a month in the autumn of 2003, when we were short staffed. Shonagh had visited the island on holiday with Paul a couple of times and she brought two horses with her to begin riding lessons for the island children. Finally, soon after the season ended, Rachel Eunson and Malachy Tallack, who had met during this season at the Observatory, moved into Taft. Rachel is qualified to work on the *Good Shepherd* and her engineering skills will be a boost to the Aero Generator maintenance team. It is also hoped that the new tenants will provide extra knitters for the Fair Isle Crafts Co-operative. The other change in the Fair Isle population was the sad death of Jerome 'Jerry' Stout, who died in his home at Lower Leogh, as he had wished, on 16th September, aged 97. Jerry was a well respected and influential member of the Fair Isle Community who, in his time, ran the shop, skippered the *Good Shepherd* for many years and was the first person to own a lorry and run haulage on the isle. He was laid to rest in the island cemetery on 21st September following a service in the Kirk, attended by the whole island community.

We must now thank all those individuals and organisations, that we have not already mentioned above, who help to ensure the continued existence and smooth running of Fair Isle Bird Observatory and all that it stands for. As ever top of the list are Kenny Stout and Brian Wilson who again put in many hours of hard work on the building and its internal workings (usually with very little notice) to ensure the continued safety and comfort of our guests. We also need to thank Malcolm Adamson for his continued care of our diesel generators and help and advice with our power supply and Kenny Stout (again) for help with vehicle repairs. The crew of *The Good Shepherd IV* must be thanked for the lifeline service, delivering freight and passengers. Robert and Fiona Mitchell of Stackhoull Stores ensure the kitchen never goes without a good supply of ingredients to produce tasty, nourishing meals and the bar is well stocked and we thank them for their efforts. Dave Wheeler supplies us with the all-important daily weather forecast and also maintains our increasingly popular website and we thank him for both. Iain Stout is one of the hardest working men on the isle, yet he still manages to find time to carry out all of the machinery work associated with our cropping project and also our new wader scrape. He is also on hand to give advice and help with fencing matters and we are extremely grateful to him for this. All those islanders who have contributed to these projects must be thanked again but all Fair Islanders who allow Observatory staff and visiting birdwatchers to walk all over their land must receive heartfelt thanks, for without this permission visiting Fair Isle would be a much-reduced experience. The FIBOT vice-chair, Dave Okill, once again supplied numerous cuttings towards our efforts to create patches of bird habitat. Pat and Alistair Craib (Hollie's parents) and their friends Howard and Anne Wallace-Simms are to be thanked for their pre-season efforts in helping prepare the Observatory for

opening during their “holiday time”! We thank Loganair for maintaining the vital air link between Fair Isle and Mainland Shetland and doing their utmost to ensure our guests travel safely and on time. Tim and Irene are our stalwarts at the biggest national bird watching event of the year – the Birdwatching Fair – and their efforts in promoting FIBOT there do not go unappreciated.

A number of organisations must be thanked for their vital financial assistance towards our work. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) both give monies, which allows us to carry out the Seabird monitoring and Ranger Service respectively. British trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG) also give small grants towards our work and we thank them also but all sources of funding, be it contracts, grants or personal donations are much appreciated. On a personal note we would like to thank all the FIBO staff, Fair Islanders and the FIBOT Directors for their continued support.

Finally, all those who have contributed articles, vignettes and photographs to this report must be thanked – we hope you enjoy it and please do come and visit us.



*Eider Ducks (Will Miles)*



## The National Trust for Scotland

*Angus Jack  
Regional Building Surveyor*

Another year of highs and lows but I suppose that is true of most years. I keep thinking next year is going to be less busy but it never is. Such is life in the National Trust for Scotland where the workload far exceeds the staff resources to deal with it but the consolation for us is the outstanding properties we have to work on and the wonderful people who live on these properties. No matter what difficult questions we get at an island meeting it is always refreshing to be out of the office for a week.

This year started with a real (meteorological) low on January 11 with one of the worst storms in living memory. The surveyors spent the next few weeks 'fire fighting', arranging contractors to undertake emergency repair works on St Kilda, Canna, Torrison, Balmacara, Kintail and Inverewe and on some of these properties the work has still to be completed – such was the scale of the damage. To my surprise Fair Isle escaped lightly, or is it simply that everything on Fair Isle is built to withstand the worst of the weather.

The NTS Fair Isle Management Plan had expired in 1998 but was extended to cover 10 years instead of the original 5, as it had been too optimistic. A common problem with Trust Management Plans! The Process began in 2005 with the setting up of a Fair Isle working group, locally known as the 'gang of five', to liaise between the isle and the Trust and to collate the island's hopes and aspirations. A Trust management planner will be allocated to the project in 2006 with the purpose of completing the new 10-year plan by the end of that year. Preliminary meetings were held with various Shetland Island Council and Enterprise Departments and these have been very encouraging and supportive towards Fair Isle, as always.

The one issue which continues to frustrate the Isle and the Trust is our failure to establish a marine conservation area for the seas around Fair Isle and this will be our priority in the new plan. Such a development has the potential to greatly enhance the visitor attraction, economy and sustainability of the Isle.

Three properties became vacant this year, Taft, Burkle and the Auld Haa and thanks to a most enlightening interview on National Public Radio in the US enquiries from Knitters in the States came pouring in – we stopped counting at just over 1700 – the approximate number of information packs which were sent out. This process is

still ongoing and is quite a contrast to the previous house advertising but is very encouraging for the future of Fair Isle. It is always sad to see families leave the island for various reasons but I am confident that Fair Isle will maintain its very active, hard working and vibrant community.

The lowest point of the year was the death of Jerry Stout in his home at Lower Leogh. We had become good friends and I will miss him dearly. It was always a 'mistake' to visit Jerry and Jimmy on the same afternoon and then be coherent for a meeting at night, but a mistake I enjoyed. We have so much to learn from that generation and their encouragement of the younger generations.



*Leach's Storm-petrel (Will Miles)*

## Jerome (Jerry) Stout 1909–2005

*James W. Stout*

The Isle's oldest inhabitant, Jerome Stout of Leogh, died peacefully in his own home, as he wished, on Friday 16th September. Known always as Jerry, he was born



in Taft where he lived until he married Agnes (Aggie) Wilson of Springfield in 1942. They set up home in Lower Leogh taking over the shop previously run by his late uncle, Tom Wilson. They lived there until the sad death of Aggie in the spring of 1993. He was a crew member of the Good Shepherd from 1938 and later was skipper till his retirement in 1974.

Like his contemporaries, Jerry was keen on all crafting, hunting and fishing activities. A good shot with the 12 bore – no woodcock was safe within range, neither was a young selkie safe, no matter how precarious the location. A pioneer of the lobster fishing here, he fished first with his brother Sandy in the 1920s and '30s, and then in the '60s and '70s with

Tommy Stout and finally with Midway Jimmy as keen retired gentlemen! On the croft front, theirs was a tidy, well-run unit – always vying for top price of their stock, at the same time Jerry ran the haulage on Fair Isle from the war time until the mid 1960s.

Although his beliefs were private to himself, his contributions to the Kirk remain for others to see – for sacrament, for music and for beauty and memory of his wife.

So has ended a long life; a life not without controversy and a life not without great sadness as well, and at the end, fully dependent on the care and love of his carers and the nurse. However, all in all, his was the life of the optimist – the cup half full rather than half empty – a life lived to the full and run to the fullness of time.



## One hundred years of the ‘British Heligoland’

Mike Pennington

On 2nd September 1905, William Eagle Clarke, accompanied by Norman Boyd Kinnear, first set foot on Fair Isle. They were taken ashore by flit boats as the Aberdeen steamer passed Fair Isle on the way to Lerwick and they were the first ornithologists ever to visit the island. They began a sequence of observations that has continued, almost unbroken, to the current day.



Clarke, was a Yorkshire man who had worked at Leeds Museum, but he visited Shetland in 1890, along with John Harvie-Brown, the doyen of late 19th century Scottish ornithology. Clarke and Harvie-Brown were both fascinated by migration and, soon after the Shetland visit, Harvie-Brown encouraged Clarke to move to the Royal Scottish Museum (now the National Museums of Scotland). Clarke used his annual leave to visit remote locations, including lighthouses and lightships, but what he was really hoping to find was a ‘British Heligoland’ because, like all other

students of bird migration, he had been inspired by Heinrich Gatke’s account of the birds of the tiny German island in the North Sea. Indeed, Clarke and Harvie-Brown had organised the publication of the English translation in 1895.

Clarke’s, colleague Norman Kinnear, was another museum worker. He eventually became curator of the British Museum (Natural History) (now the Natural History Museum), and he was knighted for his services to the institution.

Clarke published his initial findings in Harvie-Brown’s journal *The Annals of Scottish Natural History* in 1906. His account starts with a lengthy description of the island, and much of this, as well as the four black and white photographs that accompany the text, are remarkably familiar. One notable difference was the 200 to 300 acres under cultivation, with oats, bere, turnips, potatoes and cabbages being grown, while there were also no trees at all on the island, with thistles and bracken described as ‘the giants of the native flora.’

Migrants mainly frequented crops, especially potatoes and turnips, and they were ‘loth to quit these hiding and resting places, and usually only did so on being

closely pressed, when they took a very short rapid flight and dived, as it were, into the thick vegetation a few yards ahead.' Tatties and neeps always were the best places to find migrants on Fair Isle and anyone who remembers the days when crops held all the migrants will find the frustration described familiar, even if we might have been trying to get bins on the bird and Clarke was complaining of the difficulty of getting a good shot with a gun. Hopefully, the crops will soon be returning to Fair Isle, as the frustrations described are nothing to that of seeing the tail of a rare bird as it disappears into an inaccessible geo!

Another frustration that Clarke described which we might welcome back was the problem of the 'ubiquitous Twite' which 'formed vast flocks; and these were joined by the immigrant Finches of various kinds, rendering the latter very difficult to detect among hordes of the native bird.'

Nowadays, we might not be too impressed with the birds found on Clarke's first visit but they were enough to convince him that he had, indeed, found his 'British Heligoland'. The highlights of their trip were several specimens of Arctic Redpolls which were the first for Scotland; a Yellow-browed Warbler which was the second Scottish specimen after one obtained at Sumburgh; the first Bluethroat, Tree Pipit and Green Sandpiper for Shetland; a sighting of Little Bunting which was only the second for Scotland; and a passage of Lapland Buntings, at the time thought to be just a rare visitor to Britain.

Clarke began annual visits to Fair Isle, which only ceased with the outbreak of World War One. He also trained an islander, George Wilson Stout of Busta, instructing him in the preparation of specimens as well as encouraging him to keep meticulous records of his sightings. Stout left to pursue a career in taxidermy in Glasgow but was killed during the First World War. By that time, other knowledgeable islanders were carrying out ornithological work on the isle, of whom we must mention Jerome Wilson and his son Jimmy Wilson, and George 'Fieldy' Stout and his son James A. Stout. This coverage means that there are very few 'blank' years in the Fair Isle record, even before the establishment of the bird observatory in 1948. But, as FIBO's diamond jubilee approaches, that is, as they say, another story.

## John Harrison Memorial Fund Report

*Philip Knott (August 4th–September 6th 2005)*

After two summers of RSPB volunteering in Shetland and Orkney, I felt it was the right time to visit Fair Isle, a place I had heard so many good things about. I thought August would be perfect for a “gentle” introduction into observatory life, what with the seabird season over and the autumn migration barely starting – I was proven wrong on both counts!

I arrived on Thursday 4th August, which coincidentally was a “Fair Isle Thursday” when the island musicians play at the observatory. It was the perfect occasion to meet the staff and islanders, and I knew very quickly that I would fit right in. I thought my first full day would be a quiet one, but trap rounds led to census, while the afternoon was filled with Fulmar processing and my first passerine ringing. The day ended with football at the South Light and a few hours Storm Petrel ringing. Saturday morning and we went out on the zodiac looking for Black Guillemots, followed by preparation for Pat and Neil Thompson’s 30th wedding anniversary at the hall, the biggest party on Fair Isle for many years! What a first few days!

After a week of accompanying Deryk on census, he told me I was to do the SW census alone! After that I was privileged enough to undertake over 20 censuses alone. My first real “find” was Deryk’s camera that he had left at the Raevas the day before! In the afternoons I split my time between ditch digging with Mark and Rael and working on an individual project, to build a new trap box for the Plantation.

At the end of the first week we had yet another get together – this time for the departing Thistle Camp volunteers at the Puffinn. After a great barbeque and party we enjoyed the tail end of the Perseids meteor shower in one of the clearest skies I had ever seen.

Meanwhile, autumn was finally taking shape around us. Every day new birds piled onto the island, and I gained valuable experience on census, enjoying the sheer number and variety in unfamiliar surroundings. Excitement arrived on August 19th, as I headed out to Pund on SW census. As I checked around the buildings a large grey warbler crashed out of the nettles. After chasing it around various buildings and nettle patches it finally sat out on a fence – a Barred Warbler! – a new species for me. The next day I was to add two more “ticks” as a Red-backed Shrike and two Common Rosefinches joined the now SEVEN Barred Warblers.

To add to this excitement I was now added onto the trap round rota, and took great pleasure in escorting guests and demonstrating the Heligoland traps. Censuses were starting to improve day by day, and many memories will stick with me forever. It was often the simple things that I will remember most, like seeing over 50 White Wagtails working their way up the cliffs at Furse and seeing normally elusive birds like Garden Warbler flitting about in the open.

Personally though, it was the ringing that I learned the most from, and Deryk and Mark were incredibly helpful and supportive as I learnt the ropes. Highlights included Lesser Whitethroat and Red-backed Shrike, while the rarest bird I ringed in Fair Isle terms was a Grey Wagtail that I trapped in the Vaadal. Looking back through the records I noticed that more Lanceolated Warblers had been trapped since the Observatory opened in 1948!

As September arrived, so did a renewed sense of optimism amongst the guests and staff about the weeks ahead. These thoughts were realised sooner than expected just as my stay was coming to an end. On September 2nd while at Lower Leogh, Rael phoned me to report two Honey Buzzards over Meoness. Just as I was about to run over, a bright warbler popped up on the wall, allowing only the briefest glimpse of its open face and bluish legs. An Icterine Warbler! As the bird disappeared I was torn between which direction to turn, but thankfully I was able to see the Honey Buzzards drift over South Harbour, while Deryk found and confirmed the warbler later in the afternoon. On my second last day, Mark found a Booted Warbler at Setter, which showed beautifully down to twelve foot, and on my last day Rael found a “Fair Isle special” a Thrush Nightingale at Skerryholm. Again this showed extremely well to everyone, allowing some excellent photographs to be taken. Whilst the bird posed admirably, it should have been paying more attention to the cat that so nearly ended its short stay. My thoughts of a “quiet” stay at the observatory had evaporated!

Overall I had a superb time at Fair Isle Bird Observatory, and was sad to leave. I had made some excellent friends amongst the staff and many islanders, learnt an awful lot and all whilst having fun. The final flurry of rare birds before my departure only added to my desire to return to the island. I know I will be coming here for many years to come.

I would like to thank Deryk and Hollie and all the staff for making my stay comfortable, fulfilling and great fun. Thanks are also extended to the lovely people of Fair Isle, who were always helpful and friendly.

*Phil enjoyed his time so much that he has returned for the 2006 season, employed as Ranger.*

## Fair Isle's Seabirds in 2005

### An annual monitoring programme funded by Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)

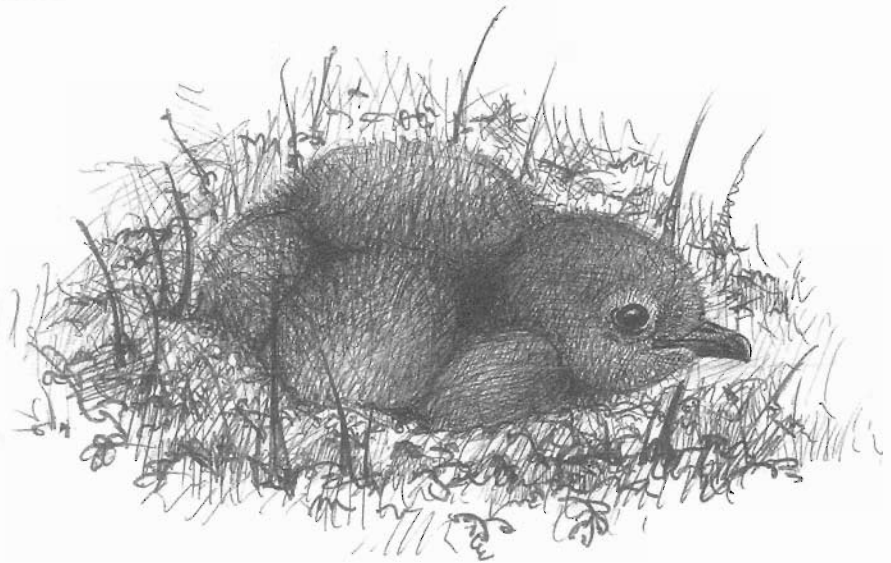
**Overview:** A better season than the previous year (when Arctic Skuas, Kittiwakes, Arctic Terns, Guillemots and Razorbills all completely failed to fledge any young and Great Skuas fledged just one) but on the whole it was still a very poor breeding season. Birds were very late to nest but numbers were greatly improved compared to 2004 (except Shags) and most species did manage to fledge some chicks. Overall productivity for most was still well below average – the second worst on record for many species. As usual it appears to be a shortage of Lesser Sandeels that is the immediate problem.

Whole island **Gannet** numbers continue to very slowly rise and breeding success was typically high. Gannets are not restricted to feeding on Sandeels and also have much larger foraging ranges than most species and can therefore still thrive when others are suffering.

Breeding **Fulmar** numbers were greatly improved (+66%) compared to 2004 and productivity (0.49) was the best since 1995. As with gannets, fulmars have huge foraging ranges and are not reliant on Sandeels for food – preferring to eat squid and discards from fishing boats. Overall numbers are still much reduced compared to 20 years ago though, mainly due to changes in the fishing industry with less discards and an overall smaller fleet.

**Shags** had another poor season. Numbers of AON (Apparently Occupied Nests) on the plots were 20% less than in 2004 but they had a similarly very poor breeding success – less than half the long-term mean. **Great Skuas** increased by 50% compared to 2004 (to 144 AOT), but only 56% laid eggs. As last year, most failed at the egg or very small chick stage and just one chick was raised to fledging. It's smaller cousin, the **Arctic Skuas** however more than doubled in number to 71 AOT (an increase of 115%). The vast majority (91.5%) of these laid eggs, but only managed to fledge five chicks – doubling the number of the previous two seasons. **Kittiwakes** are probably the species most in trouble with plummeting numbers and poor breeding success for the past four years (none fledged in the past two years), so it was encouraging to see that breeding numbers had increased by 42% compared to last year. Productivity was also much improved but still only 50% of the long-term mean. A whole island count however showed that the dramatic slide in overall breeding numbers continues – a total of 5,399 AON is 34.2% less than in 2001 (8,204 AON). The Fair Isle **Arctic Tern** population has fluctuated greatly over the years, in response to the preceding

year's breeding success with a peak of 2836 AIA as recently as 2001. However, just four chicks fledged that year and the population plummeted to 115 AIA in 2002 but with no chicks fledged, the population had dropped to 11 AIA in 2004. A total of 40 pairs nested this year but again nothing even came close to fledging – for the fifth consecutive year! Following last year's abysmal numbers and complete failure to fledge any chicks, **Common Guillemots** (eventually) increased this year, by 35.7% to similar numbers noted in 2003. Attendance at the plots was however, very poor right up to the last week of May. The first egg was not laid on the study plots until 16th May – three weeks later than normal!! A productivity figure of 0.28, whilst an improvement, is a long way short of the long-term mean (0.74). **Razorbill** numbers were particularly high and the largest number of eggs on record was laid at the study plot but overall fledging success, although better than the previous two seasons, was poor – a productivity figure of 0.44 is 30% below the average. Finally, **Puffins** had a relatively successful year compared to most species and a productivity of 0.67 is equal to the long-term mean and slightly improved on the previous year (0.63)! Perhaps a slower growth rate and later fledging compared to other auks may benefit Puffin chicks. Analysis of food samples and feeding watches suggested that what Sandeels were available were very small and small Sprats appeared to be the most abundant food item. Several Snake Pipefish were observed being brought in and many were found discarded in the colonies, as chicks find them hard to swallow – a sure sign that preferred food is scarce.



*Arctic Skua (Will Miles)*

## Fair Isle Seabirds in 2005

Species	% change @ population monitoring plots 2004-2005	Long-term population change	Productivity in 2005	Productivity in 2004	% change 2004-2005	Long-term average productivity	% change 2005 compared to long-term mean	Comment
Gannet	-6.5% to 216 AON	Slowing down of growth	0.72	0.68	+ 5.9	0.70	+ 2.9%	Another typically successful season
Fulmar	+ 66.3%	41.8% < 1986	0.49	0.41	+ 19	0.43	+ 14%	Best since 1995
Shag	-20%	50% < 1986	0.7	0.7	0	1.43	-51%	Same final productivity as in 2004 but 19% less nests on the plot
Great Skua	+ 50% to 144 AOT	Equal to 2003 high figure	0.007 (1 fledged)	0.01 (1 fledged)	0	0.84	-99%	Just 8 fledged in last 3 years (normally c100)
Arctic Skua	+ 115% to 71 AOT	Back to pre-2002 level	0.07 (5 fledged)	0	+100	0.56	-85.7%	Just 10 fledged in last 3 years
Kittiwake	+42% to 388 AON	73% < 1987	0.40	0	+100	0.86	-50%	Some success following 2 failed years
Arctic Tern	From 11A1A to 40A1A	Peak of 2836 in 2001	0	0	0			No fledging for 5th year in a row
Guillemot	+35.7%	Back to 2003 level	0.28	0	+100	0.74	-62%	2nd worst year on record
Razorbill	+60.3%	Highest number	0.44	0	+100	0.63	-30%	Only 2003 & 2004 were worse
Puffin	NA	NA	0.67	0.63	+6.3%	0.67	0%	An average year but food samples small

## Fair Isle Weather in 2005

*Dave Wheeler*

Across northern Scotland as a whole 2005 was milder than normal with a mean temperature of 7.8° (+1.1°). Sunshine, at 1057.6 hrs (97%), was a little reduced while rainfall, at 1813.8 mm (112%), was well above average.

Fair Isle, with a mean annual temperature of 8.3° (+0.7°), was also milder than normal. However this positive anomaly is the smallest of the last five years and a mean annual sea surface temperature around Fair Isle of 9.9° (+0.7°) is the lowest for the past four years. As with the rest of northern Scotland it was a slightly wetter and cloudier year than normal with rainfall 983.9 mm (106%) and sunshine 1183.5 hrs (96.7%).

### January

Mild, wet and windy, very changeable first three weeks. During the first 12 days a succession of deep depressions moved east from Iceland to the Norwegian Sea, bringing very wet and stormy weather to Scotland. Gusts exceeding 70 mph were recorded somewhere in Scotland on all but two of these days. Daily rainfall exceeded 25 mm at some station on all but three days. The culmination of this period was the vigorous low running quickly northeast past Scotland on the night of 11th/12th, when five people on South Uist were killed, with gusts of 106 m.p.h. at Barra, 101 mph at Stornoway and 94 mph. at Lerwick. The unsettled weather continued to affect Shetland during much of the month with further lows running northeast between Scotland and Iceland. However, the last 10 days were a complete contrast as a large anticyclone to the west brought more settled – albeit over Shetland cool, cloudy and drizzly – conditions.

January	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	113.7	115	25.0	92	5.6	+1.1
Scotland	240.3	155	32.9	95	4.4	+2.3
England & Wales	67.6	75	56.4	116	5.7	+2.3

### February

A Month of Two Halves. The first half of February, with winds often of Atlantic origin, was generally mild, mostly cloudy and sometimes wet. This was followed by a colder though brighter and relatively drier second half, with NW or N'y winds bringing outbreaks of arctic air and some snow down across Shetland.

February	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	70.0	99	77.1	133	4.6	+0.4
Scotland	109.9	104	64.0	100	3.0	+1.0
England & Wales	50.3	78	72.0	110	4.0	+0.6



### *Winter (December–February)*

Fair Isle fared well compared to mainland northern Scotland. While mild, the temperature on Fair Isle was not quite so mild compared with the long-term average. It was also sunny with near-average rainfall, comparing favourably with a wet and dull mainland. Here it was a little less windy than normal, with SW through W to N'ly winds more frequent and fewer winds from a SE'ly direction.

Fair Isle: Rain 274.1 mm (99%), sun 125.3 hrs (122%), mean temperature 5.6° (+1.0°), sea temperature 8.6° (+1.2°).

North Scotland: Rainfall 682.6 mm (148%), sun 90.6 hrs (80%), mean temperature 3.8° (+1.6°).

### **March**

Overall a little milder than average with rainfall and sunshine both near normal. As is often the case, the statistics hide the detail. March saw the Icelandic low displaced well to the SSW of its normal position, with pressure relatively high over Greenland as well as continental Europe. With N'ly winds persisting for most of the first two weeks, the first half of the month was mainly cold and wintry with some significant snowfall and sharp overnight frosts. Turning milder with some heavy rain during the second half of the month with notably warm temperatures during the third week.

March	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	79.6	94	92.1	96	5.3	+0.8
Scotland	112.9	88	85.2	92	5.5	+2.0
England & Wales	52.0	71	79.5	76	6.8	+1.6

### **April**

A changeable month with near-average rainfall and sunshine but above-average temperatures. Beginning with warm southerly winds, deep depressions moving east between Iceland and Norway soon brought cooler conditions with showers turning wintry as winds veered N'ly. A milder interlude followed as an Atlantic anticyclone carried warm and humid air across Shetland for a few days, with a return to colder conditions mid-month as a depression moved east over Iceland and E'ly winds followed as the centre of low pressure transferred south-east. For a good part of the second half of the month an anticyclone in the Norwegian Sea resulted in a settled period of weather with light east to south-easterly winds, before mid-Atlantic depressions moving into the Norwegian Sea brought a wet and windy end to the month.

April	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	41.1	82	135.6	91	6.6	+1.0
Scotland	121.8	151	149.7	109	6.7	+1.2
England & Wales	74.5	124	146.9	102	8.6	+1.3

## May

Cool and changeable. During May, pressure was above average in the Iceland/Greenland region and below average over northern Norway. As a result winds with a N'yly component were far more common than usual across Shetland, with a mean temperature for the month almost a degree below average, making this the coolest May since 1996. Though a cyclonic weather type prevailed during the first few days, weather patterns until the middle of the third week were generally anti-cyclonic, with the driest and sunniest conditions in this period. The remainder of the month, with the return of a more disturbed cyclonic airflow, tended to be wetter, cloudier and windier. Overall sunshine amounts were close to average, but a wet day on the 1st and another later in the month resulted in a statistically wetter than normal May.

May	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	% 1961-90	Actual	diff 1961-90
Fair Isle	58.6	141	200.6	101	7.5	-0.1
Scotland	115.2	133	186.1	112	8.3	-0.1
England & Wales	47.6	75	216.6	116	11.0	+0.5

### *Spring (March-May)*

A reasonably 'average' spring. Again Fair Isle was drier and sunnier than northern Scotland as a whole. Sea surface temperatures, after being about a degree warmer than usual, showed signs of cooling. This may have been associated with an increase in the frequency of NW'yly and a reduction in that of S to SW'yly winds.

Fair Isle: Rain 179.3 mm (102%), sun 428.3 hrs (97%), mean temperature 6.5° (+0.6°), sea temperature 8.0° (+0.3°).

Northern Scotland Rain 381.5 mm (118%), sun 394.5 hrs (104%), mean temperature 6.5° (+1.0°)

## June

Cool, dull and wet. Periods of unsettled and cyclonic weather alternated with spells when high pressure brought brief respites with some dry and sunny conditions. While mean temperatures were about 1°C above average for much of the UK, Shetland was cooler with near-average temperatures. As a result, during June 2005 the UK's lowest daytime maximum temperature was recorded at either Lerwick or Fair Isle (more often Fair Isle) on 27 out of 30 days! However this is not unusual at this time of the year, as sea temperatures – only just recovering from the winter minimum – have a profound impact on the air temperature. It requires winds having a warm S'yly origin to reach Shetland to make it otherwise, a feature not much in evidence this month. Cool sea temperatures resulted in frequent foggy conditions – although official statistics often hide the detail, as it has to be foggy at 0900 to count as a 'fog day'. This gave 3 fog days at Lerwick and 4 at Fair Isle – although at the latter place fog was actually reported at some time during the 24 hours on 14 days!

June	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	70.7	157	145.4	86	10.2	+0.5
Scotland	104.1	121	135.1	85	12.4	+1.3
England & Wales	56.6	89	190.7	103	15.1	+1.5

## July

Cloudy with near-average temperatures and rainfall. Much of Scotland saw settled weather prevailing throughout July, resulting in dry conditions, near-average sunshine and mean temperatures almost a degree above average. During the first ten days of July, Shetland – with a complex, cyclonic weather pattern across the Isles - experienced changeable conditions. For the next week, with an anticyclone established over the UK, a maritime SW to W'ly airflow covered the area – Shetland affected by fronts moving round the northern limits of the high. As the high declined, low pressure then moved east over Shetland into Scandinavia, with a cool and cloudy N'ly during the last ten days, resulting in the probable overall impression held by many that July in Shetland was a dull, cool and miserable month – not at all like summer! The actual figures show that, though indeed cloudy, rainfall was average and mean temperatures were also near-normal. What were missing – because of the generally cloudy conditions – were any high temperatures. If (by Shetland standards) we consider a warm day is one where the temperature reaches or exceeds 16°C (just 60°F) then July saw just one warm day in Lerwick – the 10th.

July	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	52.3	102	114.7	84	12.0	+0.3
Scotland	48.9	51	144.2	102	13.4	+0.9
England & Wales	66.3	106	178.4	97	16.3	+0.9

## August

A dull, wet and windy month with no real warmth. A mixture of cyclonic and anticyclonic westerlies brought generally cloudy conditions with near-average temperatures, but lacking in warm days. Vigorous depressions, tracking close to Shetland, brought windy conditions at times with gales or severe gales more frequent than usual. With otherwise near-average precipitation, a few heavy rainfall events resulted in August being wetter than normal.

August	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	95.3	156	124	84	12.1	+0.1
Scotland	133.8	115	143.4	106	13.1	+0.7
England & Wales	59.5	78	210.6	122	15.8	+0.6

### *Summer (June–August)*

Northern Scotland was dull and wet, Fair Isle was even duller and wetter and, though mean temperatures were a little above average, there was no real warmth. An increased frequency of S to SW'ly winds and N'ly winds probably reflected the cyclonic nature of the summer.

Fair Isle: Rain 218.3 mm (139%), sun 384.1 hrs (85%), mean temperature 11.4° (+0.4°), sea temperature 11.6° (+0.5°).

Northern Scotland Rain 345.6 mm (118%), sun 367.4 hrs (92%), mean temperature 12.4° (+0.8°)

### **September**

The end of 'summer' and the start of autumn. Shetland, like Scotland as a whole, was – once a thundery trough had cleared the area – able to enjoy the warmth of a late summer 'heatwave' during the first five days of the month. Warm S'ly winds, generated by an anticyclone over the North Sea, brought the year's top temperature of 17.4°C on the 4th, topping the previous highest of 16.4°C recorded way back in June, when summer still looked a possibility! Pressure falling close to Shetland on the 6th–7th brought cooler temperatures and disturbed conditions, before a new anticyclone developing over Shetland gave another short settled period. This lasted until the 11th when the high drifted east, putting an end to a rather dull and wet summer and bringing autumn to Shetland, as a series of depressions, tracking northeast between Scotland and Iceland, resulted in an ongoing mixture of rain or showers and strong winds during the remainder of the month.

September	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	110.8	125	118.0	101	11.4	+0.8
Scotland	139.9	97	101.9	104	12.0	+1.5
England & Wales	68.4	87	150.6	114	14.8	+1.7

### **October**

Mild, wet – though much of the rain fell overnight – and sunny. Mild southerly winds dominated the weather of October with only two cooler periods. While there were several reasonably fine, dry anticyclonic spells, these were separated by episodes of heavy rain – with almost half the month's rainfall falling on just three days.

October	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	102.7	94	85.1	119	10.4	+1.5
Scotland	183.9	115	59.8	81	9.8	+1.7
England & Wales	121.9	141	81.1	84	12.7	+2.5

## November

Mild, snowy and sunny – at least rainfall was normal! A month of contrasts or perhaps a month of two halves! Despite being warmer than average, November managed to end up more wintry than usual. Rainfall was near normal with sunshine well above average. Mild, unsettled and often windy weather from the Atlantic dominated the first part of November. After a cool, anticyclonic period, the rest of the month saw colder northerly conditions with some snow during the last few days.

November	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	110.6	95	45.7	125	7.3	+0.6
Scotland	160.5	102	61.0	127	4.7	+0.5
England & Wales	87.5	95	97.0	152	6.0	-0.1

### *Autumn (September–November)*

With a marked increase in the frequency of S'yly winds and a reduction in the frequency of W'yly and E'yly winds the autumn was mild and sunnier than normal with near-average rainfall.

Fair Isle: Rain 324.1 mm (103%), sun 248.8 hrs (111%), mean temperature 9.7° (+0.9°), sea temperature 11.4° (+0.7°).

Northern Scotland Rain 548.7 mm (106%), sun 203.7 hrs (104%), mean temperature 8.6° (+1.3°)

## December

A dry, mild month with average sunshine and fewer gales. After the first week a large anticyclone was never far from Scotland, giving a dry month to much of the country. However Shetland – often on the very edge of the high – did not always enjoy its full benefit, with mild weather from the Atlantic predominating. As the high pulled back into the Atlantic midmonth, a brief outbreak of Arctic air brought some snow. Another change in its position as it moved over the Northern Isles brought a further spell of cold weather to give a calm and frosty Christmas, with cold SE'yly winds for the last week of the month as the high moved away into Scandinavia.

December	Rainfall mm		Sunshine hours for month		Mean Temperature °C	
	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	% 1961–90	Actual	diff 1961–90
Fair Isle	78.5	74	20.2	115	6.5	+1.3
Scotland	97.1	62	33.1	111	3.7	+0.9
England & Wales	69.3	72	63.5	142	4.2	+0.0

# Meteorological Data, Fair Isle 2005

*D. Wheeler*

Temp. (°C)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR
Mean	5.6	4.6	5.3	6.6	7.5	10.2	12.0	12.1	11.4	10.4	7.3	6.5	8.3 (7.6)
Maximum	11.0	8.6	9.9	11.0	13.9	15.9	16.0	14.9	15.8	13.7	12.1	11.7	
Minimum	-0.4	-0.5	-0.9	-3.0	1.0	3.8	8.4	8.1	6.5	2.6	-1.0	-1.6	
Sea	8.6	7.7	7.5	7.8	8.6	10.1	12.2	12.5	12.0	11.5	10.8	9.8	9.9 (9.2)
<b>Rainfall (mm)</b>													
Monthly	113.7	70.0	79.6	41.1	58.6	70.7	52.3	95.3	110.8	102.7	110.6	78.5	983.9
Maximum Daily Fall	12.5	14.4	25.2	8.2	10.5	19.0	16.5	26.6	22.3	19.5	24.2	15.6	(924.4)
<b>Sunshine (hours)</b>													
Total	25.0	77.1	92.1	135.6	200.6	145.4	114.7	124.0	118.0	85.1	45.7	20.2	1183.5
Maximum Daily	3.1	7.4	10.1	11.8	15.9	14.6	14.0	11.7	11.8	7.7	6.8	4.4	(1223.5)
<b>Wind speed (knots)</b>													
Mean	22.4	15.3	13.4	15.0	13.8	9.0	8.9	10.2	13.5	14.9	16.8	15.6	14.1 (16.0)
Maximum Gust	80	59	57	52	40	33	32	51	44	52	70	59	
<b>Number of days</b>													
Hail	13	13	8	3	6	0	0	1	0	4	13	7	68
Snow/sleet	9	11	8	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	11	4	52
Rain, >0.1mm	27	23	19	16	23	16	18	20	21	19	24	26	251
Wet, >0.9mm	21	14	12	8	13	9	10	13	18	15	20	16	169
Ground Frost	7	13	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	6	42
Air Frost	3	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	11
Gale	15	3	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	4	7	2	37
<b>Wind direction at 09h</b>													
North	10	10	4	2	4	4	7	6	1	2	9	3	62
North East	0	2	3	4	0	2	1	1	1	2	0	1	17
East	0	2	3	4	5	5	1	0	1	2	0	3	26
South East	1	0	7	5	2	2	4	1	3	5	4	7	41
South	4	3	2	4	1	5	5	10	9	12	4	3	62
South West	2	3	0	4	2	5	4	5	7	1	5	5	43
West	11	6	4	2	8	4	4	4	5	3	5	3	59
North West	3	2	7	2	8	3	4	4	2	4	3	3	45
Calm	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	6

*(Figures in brackets are the average for the period 1974-2000)*

# MONTHLY SUMMARY

Mark Warren

The monthly totals of species were;

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
53	48	88	121	140	117	78	90	138	149	82	51

## January

The year started in style with the superb white morph Gyr Falcon from 2004 still present on New Year's Day (until 11th). Less spectacular leftovers included a 1st winter Iceland Gull, single Water Rail and two Moorhens at the Chalet, while 25 Purple Sandpipers were also counted on the first day of 2005. Gull interest was maintained throughout the month with irregular sightings of up to four each of Iceland and Glaucous Gulls. An unseasonal influx of waders on 15th produced singles of Knot and Bar-tailed Godwit while Lapwing increasing to 44 next day as small gulls began to move with 50 Common and four Black-headed recorded. Wildfowl were well represented with 15 Barnacle Geese on 16th, joining the Greylags which were to peak at 184 on 27th. A single Goldeneye was occasionally seen from 21st and two Long-tailed Ducks spent the 26th in the Havens. A single Chaffinch all month and peaks of 25 Snow Bunting (3rd) and 65 Redwing (26th) were the highlights during a month of few passerines.

## February

Seven Whooper Swans didn't hang around, but were a welcome addition to the year list on 3rd, and a second Water Rail skulked around Burkle from 6th. The Greylag Goose flock was the main source of interest throughout the month. Peaking at 208 on 11th, the herd also hosted a single Barnacle Goose on 13th, single European White-fronted Goose from 15th and a lone Pink-footed Goose from 24th. Wader numbers built up with the 14 Oystercatchers counted on 6th increasing to 51 by 18th. Turnstone reached a winter peak of 180 on 11th and Lapwing remained at around 40 until the third week. The only 'white-winged' Gull during the month was a single 1st winter Iceland on 13th. Like the previous month, notable passerine sightings were limited, with a second male Chaffinch at the Obs from 12th, and an increase in Robins to 6 on 15th. Thrush numbers remained fairly steady with the 15th producing the best counts of all three species present: Blackbird (33), Song Thrush (12) and Redwing (30) respectively.

## March

Wildfowl continued to dominate during the early part of the month, there now being two Pink-footed Geese with the Greylag flock from 1st and four from 29th.

Three Wigeon were present next day and the Iceland Gull was seen again, with two other individuals seen a week later; an adult on 7th and a 1st summer on 8th. Displaying Lapwing were a sure sign that spring wasn't far away. The first two Pied Wagtail arrived on 6th, a drake Red-breasted Merganser was in the Havens for two days from 7th, and Golden Plovers increased to 22 on 8th. A quiet spell followed until the first Woodcock on 14th. Winter was still evident with three different Glaucous Gulls moving through, the first unusually a 1st summer on 16th, a 2nd winter on 20th and finally a 1st winter on 21st. Gannets were occupying Kirk Stack and Skylarks singing from 16th when the first Stonechat of the year was found, increasing to three the following day. On 17th, 146 Oystercatcher and 35 Ringed Plovers were counted and a single Grey Plover and the first Meadow Pipit were seen. A Woodpigeon, two Mistle Thrush on 18th, and female Siskin on 19th were the forerunners to the first heavier arrival on 20th; a Shelduck, 74 Lapwing, 32 Curlew, 400 Skylark, 130 Blackbird, the first two Goldcrest, 18 Chaffinch, four Siskin and a male Yellowhammer all made for an impressive day's tally. Returning seabirds were noted the same day with Guillemot, Razorbill and Kittiwake all seen back on the ledges in numbers and the first two Puffins on land at Furse.

Year ticks were daily from now on with a Short-eared Owl on 21st, followed by the first Wheatear and Dunnock next day. A summer plumaged Red-throated Diver passed over and passerine numbers began to build from 23rd with 150 Blackbird, 15 Fieldfare, 24 Robin, 25 Goldcrest, 63 Snow Bunting, a '*littoralis*' Rock Pipit, the first three Reed Buntings and a Great Tit was at the Obs!! Further migrants next day featured a Black Redstart at Quoy, male Northern Bullfinch at Utra, an increase in Meadow Pipits and Goldcrest up to 37. A Lapland Longspur on 25th, female Northern Bullfinch and the first three Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 26th, preceded two Hawfinch at the Plantation the following morning. A further wave of migrants arrived on 28th with impressive totals of; 450 Skylark, seven Mistle Thrush, eight Dunnock, 74 Robin, the first three Rook of the year and a count of 980 Starling. A Ring Ouzel next day was another first for the year, as was a Grey Wagtail on 30th.

## **April**

The month started with a bang, when a fine 1st summer male Snowy Owl was found at the airstrip on 2nd as it flew in front of the incoming plane. A frantic search followed and the bird was eventually (to the warden's relief) relocated and gave good views on Vaasetter after lunch. The first Long-eared Owl of the year the same day continued the theme and the first couple of Bonxies arrived back on the island. Next day saw 59 Golden Plovers, a Goldfinch and the first Chiffchaff of the year plus another Island rarity, this time in the form of a Great Crested Grebe in the Havens, which was to remain for over two weeks. A quieter time



followed with the only notable sightings being the first two Stock Doves on 4th and three Shelduck on 5th. Two European White-fronted Geese joined the dwindling Greylag flock on 13th, remaining until 22nd, and another Iceland Gull was seen. The 14th delivered a couple of decent passerines in the form of another Great Tit at the Obs and a Yellowhammer. The first Arctic Skua of the season arrived on 15th, and 41 Ringed Plovers represented the highest count of the spring, as did 370 Skylarks. A Pintail on 16th was a good record, but not quite as smart as a male Lapland Longspur which spent five days outside the Obs from 17th.

The 19th was a good day with Green Sandpiper, Wryneck, Swallow, Tree Pipit, 2 Waxwing, Blackcap and Willow Warbler all firsts for the year. Some good counts were also made with monthly peaks of 124 Turnstone and 184 Common Gull. Thrushes were on the move on 20th with 19 Ring Ouzel, 400 Fieldfare and 170 Song Thrush. On the same day the first Redstart and Grasshopper Warbler of the spring were found, Wrynecks increased to three and the first of three sightings of a 'blue' Fulmar were made. Raptor movement was also more evident that day with two Peregrines and three Merlin, to be followed by peaks of three Sparrowhawks the following day and two Kestrels on 22nd, when 21 Ravens also passed over. Single Lesser Redpoll and drake Common Scoter were found on 23rd, the latter remaining until the months end. The first Greenshank appeared on 24th, with Robins peaking at 55 the same day, as did Brambling at 60 and Reed Buntings were up to 15. The third Hawfinch of the spring was unfortunately found dead.

A Corn Bunting found at Busta on 25th was only the fifth Island record in the last 30 years. The first two Whimbrel of the spring were more expected, with Curlew peaking next day at 25, when two Mealy Redpolls began a prolonged stay near Golden Water. Warblers continued to trickle through with firsts of Lesser Whitethroat and Common Whitethroat on 25th & 27th respectively. More birds were found on 28th with Shoveler (by no means a regular bird on Fair Isle), Common Sandpiper, House Martin, Wood Warbler and 2 Pied Flycatcher all being year ticks, and good counts of 200 Wheatear, 30 Chiffchaff, 6 Grasshopper Warbler and 18 Wood Pigeon. The 29th was a good day with the easterly winds over the previous few days dropping in a superb male Citrine Wagtail in the ditches at Barkland, just before lunch. This bird, a more expected autumn sight on Fair Isle, although highly mobile remained until the first few days of May and represented only the second spring record for the Isle. A male Marsh Harrier flew south over those photographing the Wagtail, only to continue out to sea, bound for Orkney. Two different 1st summer Iceland Gulls were noted on 29th & 30th and the month ended with increased Corvid passage; 9 Rook, 18 Carrion and 35 Hooded Crow on the final day being monthly maximums.

## May

Easterly wind: What's that? The question everyone was asking during the majority of May. A strange month with westerly winds dominating right up to the 19th, with only a few days of easterly thereafter before northerlies kicked in during the last week. Migrant numbers were especially low but a fair bit of quality made up for the lack of quantity.

It didn't take long for the first good bird to arrive when on 2nd a Richard's Pipit was found at Roskillie. Often strutting its stuff outside the Obs lounge window it was only the third spring record for Shetland and remained until the 8th. Other birds on 2nd included the first Arctic Tern, Swift and Whinchat of the spring. Six Common Sandpipers were also found and an influx of Wheatears bolstered numbers to 380 whilst the Citrine Wagtail enjoyed its last day in the south of the isle. The first Common Tern was fishing in the Havens on the morning of the 3rd and four Tree Sparrows were at Setter, two of which chose to remain all month. Census on the 4th produced a Shorelark on Meoness and, even better, a drake Garganey at Hegri Burn, as well as single Iceland Gull and Greenshank. The Corn Bunting was last seen on the 5th. A quiet few days until 'Fair Isle Magic' produced a male Rustic Bunting near the plantation on the 8th, during a north-westerly gale! A female Red-necked Phalarope in North Haven first seen by the *Good Shepherd* crew on 9th stayed for two days, and continued the trend for good birds but few common migrants. A brief sea-watch that evening logged a single Manx Shearwater, but failed to produce a much hoped for Pomarine Skua, despite impressive numbers being seen from mainland Shetland.

A peak count of 28 Whimbrel was made on 10th, with Black-headed Gulls reaching 40 the next day, when a Red-throated Diver flew over, and a drake Tufted Duck was found on Golden Water. Nearby a third Mealy Redpoll joined the two birds from April on the 12th. A Sedge Warbler in Field Ditch was added to the year list, as were the two Ospreys which passed over and a fine male Yellowhammer spent the day outside the Observatory. The 13th was a red-letter day for the island with a Great Reed Warbler trapped mid-morning at North Grind. Upon release the bird moved swiftly down to the beach at South Haven, but flew around Bunes never to be seen again. Disbelief followed just before lunch as a Rough-legged Buzzard flew over the Obs, later to be seen coming in at Sumburgh Head. Five Sparrowhawks were seen and a new Shorelark was found at the Kirk during the afternoon, relocating to Vaasetter the next day in the company of a male Dotterel, when a Wryneck was found at Barkland.

A quiet few days followed although up to five Short eared Owls were seen mid-month and a female Black Redstart lingered. A '*littoralis*' Rock Pipit was seen twice in the Wirvie area around the same time. Two Great Northern Divers and a

female Long-tailed Duck were located on 16th, a Quail flushed on 17th and Wheatears once more reached high numbers with 380 counted (mostly '*leucorhoa*'), the majority of which (200) were on Meoness. Easterly winds brought immediate results on 19th when the first Bluethroat was trapped at the Observatory, and two Spotted Flycatchers were found in the afternoon. A female Golden Oriole stood out briefly in the thick fog at Gilsetter early on 20th. The 21st brought a Common Buzzard, which stayed for a week and the third Osprey of the year passed over, as did 48 Barnacle Geese. Swallows reached 50 and the first Garden Warbler was seen. Two Shelduck on 22nd were brief, as were two ringtail Hen Harriers and yet another Osprey. A Reed Warbler, the first of four during the month, was found at Leogh, although a Mistle Thrush in the north was more unusual for the time of year. A Long-eared Owl was at the Sheep Cru on 23rd and then a real Shetland rarity was found that evening - a Tawny Pipit on Bunes. It couldn't be re-found next day but amazingly re-appeared in the same spot on 31st!!!

The first fledgling Ravens were noted on 24th, when a male Golden Oriole showed briefly at South Raeva and the first two Common Rosefinch of the year and three Quail were noted. The 25th saw a small fall of migrants, highlights being two new Bluethroats, four Icterine and nine Sedge Warblers, 11 Lesser Whitethroat, seven Spotted Flycatchers, 32 House Martins and a Lesser Redpoll. Further migrants were noted on 27th with highlights of a 'red' male Rosefinch at North Shirva, a male Hen Harrier on Ward Hill and increased wader passage with 49 Dunlin and six Sanderling. A late Waxwing was at South Harbour on 28th and another Yellowhammer was at Shirva. A Dotterel was near the School next day with a new male Hen Harrier on the Rippack and 36 Lesser-black backed Gulls counted. Three Quail performed well on 30th and a third Yellowhammer appeared. The last day of the month produced some good birds with three female Bluethroats, Long-eared Owl, an Icterine Warbler, two Rosefinch and (at last) a female Red-backed Shrike. Best of the lot however was the Great Spotted Woodpecker found late in the day at the Plantation.

## June

Leftovers from May included the Icterine Warbler (to 6th), Red-backed Shrike (to 3rd), one of the Rosefinches (to 2nd), female Yellowhammer (to 4th) and the Woodpecker (until 2nd) whilst up to two Short-eared Owls were seen throughout. A female Subalpine Warbler at the Chalet just before lunch on 1st started the month off well. The supporting cast being a male Grey-headed Wagtail, male Siskin, four Song Thrush and a late Goldcrest. A Black-tailed Godwit commenced a three-day stay on 2nd and a Bluethroat in Gilsetter was the final spring sighting, whilst the first Turtle Dove of the year did a grand tour of the island. Two Marsh Warblers were the main attraction on 3rd with four Spotted Flycatchers and a Green

Sandpiper also seen. Single Red-throated Divers flew over on 4th and 5th and on the latter date a Red-rumped Swallow flashed past one lucky observer at South Harbour and a 1st summer Iceland Gull was on Meoness. Two Redwings on 6th were late and the Red-rumped Swallow was relocated in the Pund/Hjukni area but remained elusive, only showing to the fortunate few.

A male Black Redstart frequented the Gully for a couple of days from 8th when Collared Doves peaked at 14. Twelve Greylag Geese flew over the following day, with the first Storm Petrels of the year seen from the *Good Shepherd* and the final Rosefinch of the spring was at Shirva in the evening. A superb male Rustic Bunting was found at the same location during an evening stroll on 13th. The following day more late spring migrants arrived with singles of Red-backed Shrike, Marsh, Icterine and Wood Warblers located, although one lucky observer really hit the jackpot with a brief Red-necked Phalarope on the Mire O' Vatnagard. Finches were the order of the day on 15th with a Common Crossbill on the cliffs near North Light (the first of 12 during the month) and a cracking summer plumage Meally Redpoll at Schoolton, when a second female Red-backed Shrike was found at Troila Geo. The 16th brought a mobile Grey-headed Wagtail and two Redstarts although the days headline was unfolding at the Chalet, where a Reed Warbler reported in the morning caused much suspicion in the afternoon and, when duly trapped, its identity was confirmed as a Blyth's Reed. The bird remained next day but was not seen until the afternoon re-appearing at Double Dyke. Almost as rare (but only on Fair Isle) were the 6 Canada Geese that resided at Leogh for three days from 17th. A late female Ring Ouzel was also caught on the morning trap round. A Cuckoo near the School, found by the Administrator, on 19th was a year tick and resulted in a bizarre celebratory dance at the side of the road. Another Ring Ouzel was seen, this time a male near North Light.

There was an early morning wake up call for all at the Obs on 22nd when Fair Isle's third ever spring Arctic Warbler was trapped in the Vaadal on the early trap round. It promptly disappeared towards the Havens upon release. The fifth Osprey of the year lingered over Bunes the same afternoon, and two more Crossbills on the cliffs hinted at an influx. The Arctic Warbler obviously preferred the Vaadal to the new Obs plantation as it was relocated there next day when a male Red-backed Shrike was found at Wirvie. The summering Rook was last seen on 23rd and a flyby Goosander on 24th was an unusual sight. With seabird work starting to dominate, the final week saw few notable sightings although signs of return passage included Lapwing (peaking at 24 on 27th) plus five Wigeon, two Red-breasted Merganser and 15 Curlew on the 29th.

## **July**

Traditionally one of the quieter months on the Isle, although two Sandwich Terns

in the Havens on 1st got things off to a good start being one of only two additions to the year list during the month. A flock of 31 Curlew headed south during an evening football match the same day, with ten Whimbrel following their larger cousins lead and doing the same next day. Up to three Grey Herons were recorded daily throughout the first week and Sandwich Terns continued to be intermittently seen, with a maximum of 4 on 4th. The first Leach's Petrel of the year was seen from the *Good Shepherd* on 5th, with a Song Thrush on land and a Cuckoo started an eight-day stay, with a further individual later in the month. The 7th brought a summer plumaged Black-tailed Godwit and two Greenshank, a Red throated Diver flew over and two Tree Sparrow arrived. These two birds, mobile and often elusive stuck around into September and were perhaps the same individuals that lingered in the spring. Single Reed Warbler and Whitethroat were trapped on 8th. An escaped Red-breasted Goose added a splash of colour, joining the resident 'quacks' at the Chalet pond on 11th and was calmly twitched by the Obs crew in the afternoon. An albino Puffin was photographed at Wirvie on 11th.

Lesser Black-backed Gulls peaked at 41 on the 12th and with 'Stormie' sessions now in full swing 24 were trapped, as well as the first of five Leach's Petrels. Three Chiffchaffs were present all month, although when trapped throughout the summer the two in the Obs garden were revealed not to have undergone any moult! Crossbills began to feature more prominently with 12 on 14th and ten next day. A steady build up of Arctic Terns at South Light saw numbers increase to 130 by 15th, while a Skua sweep same day revealed it had been another poor year with only five Arctic Skua and seven Great Skua chicks found. A total of 39 Curlew was noted on 17th and another Leach's Petrel was trapped on 18th, alongside 35 Storm Petrels. The 19th saw a fledged family party of five Hooded Crows at Busta Geo and a Green Sandpiper on the new scrape at Hegri. Thirty Crossbill were counted the same day although an interesting 'wing-barred' individual within a large flock on the cliffs at Sma Trinket Geo caused an eyebrow to be raised!

Wader passage continued to disappoint with little until a Greenshank on 22nd. Purple Sandpipers had increased to five by 24th, when an albino Starling appeared near the Obs. The 25th saw the mass of Arctic Terns at South Light peak at 400, and an unseasonal Black Redstart was found during Storm Petrel ringing on 26th, trying to roost in the garages at The Havens! The much hoped for Crossbill influx never really happened with numbers having dwindled to eight by 28th. The month ended with a high count of 164 Oystercatchers on the final day.

## **August**

An uneventful first week with few notable sightings despite a brief blast of south-easterly winds on the 2nd. Highlights were restricted to the third Leach's Petrel of the season trapped overnight on 1st alongside 61 Storm Petrels. Purple

Sandpiper numbers reached 23, and 6 Crossbills were logged on 3rd. The first Ruff of the year was found on 7th with two the next day on the new scrape. Census on 8th produced some new arrivals with 28 Lapwing, Greenshank, two Common Sandpipers, Short-eared Owl and the first Willow Warbler of the autumn. Although bird of the day went to the extremely skulking un-streaked '*Acro*' at the bottom of South Raeva, which when (eventually) trapped turned out to be an adult Marsh Warbler. The best '*Stormie*' session of the year was held on 13th with 127 ringed plus two more Leach's Petrels. Daylight sightings on 13th included an increase in Ruff to six, singles of Peregrine, Fieldfare, Sedge Warbler and two Garden Warblers. The first Pied Flycatcher and Barred Warbler on 14th, gave a bit of (false) hope that the autumn was truly underway. More notable were the 20-strong flock of Bar-tailed Godwits disturbed from South Light - the largest group for twenty years. A Greenshank on 15th and Common Sandpiper on 16th were improved on 17th with a sprinkling of migrants, the best of which were five Sedge and three Garden, and another Pied Flycatcher.

The 18th was a better day with two Common Rosefinches, 13 Knot, single Black and Bar tailed Godwits, Green Sandpiper and two each of Wigeon and Shoveler. Two Barred Warblers kept each other company in the Pund nettles on 19th and a Whinchat was in Boini Mire. Glorious sunshine and a light south-easterly wind on 20th produced a significant arrival of birds, with Red-backed Shrike, seven Barred Warblers and two Common Rosefinches being the pick of the bunch, with support from two Kestrel, 88 Snipe, 34 Golden Plover, 170 Wheatear and six Common Swift. Another unstreaked '*Acro*', present in the Vaadal stream, caused much debate even once coaxed into the trap on 21st. Being tentatively identified as a Marsh Warbler, this individual proved that the species pairing of Marsh and Reed Warblers is still not a straightforward identification in autumn. On a simpler note 261 Common Gulls were on the recently cut silage fields and Barred Warblers decreased to five with numbers fluctuating between two and five daily for the remainder of the month, with at least ten birds involved in total.

Gale-force south-westerlies on the 24th gave us a chance to dust off our telescopes and seawatching produced 12 Sooty and three Manx Shearwaters off South Light. Waders also featured when an island record 17 Black-tailed Godwits were near the scrape. In addition, high counts of 18 Sanderling, 80 Dunlin, 150 Redshank were made plus 400 Meadow Pipits and 45 White Wagtails. Three more Manx Shearwaters were seen the next day, Black-tailed Godwits dropped to ten and passerine highlights were singles of Tree Pipit, Grey Wagtail and Whinchat. 54 Ringed Plover, 66 Dunlin and 15 Knot on 26th were eclipsed by a 'blue' Fulmar and 192 Wheatears on 27th. More seawatching on 29th recorded four Sooty Sheawaters and a Sparrowhawk took to roosting in the Plantation. A rarity-free month, although the best day was definitely the last with the prayed for easterlies

dropping in five Garden and 11 Willow Warblers, single Lesser Whitethroat, six Pied Flycatchers, 725 Meadow Pipits, the first Goldcrest of the autumn and a new Common Rosefinch. Non-passerines included 14 Teal, 2 Green Sandpipers and 155 Turnstone. With the easterly winds set to continue hopes were high as September dawned.

## September

The first day of the new month was largely uneventful, but the 2nd certainly wasn't with raptors evidently on the move from mid-morning. Three Sparrowhawk and five Kestrel passed over during the day, the highlight however was two Honey Buzzards seen flying out to sea low over Meoness. This was the first multiple record of the species for the isle so, it was a little surprising when a *third* bird was amazingly picked up coming over Ward Hill. On the ground an Icterine Warbler was found at Leogh and peak counts of 138 Wheatears (mostly '*leucorhoa*') and six Barred Warblers contributed to a good days birding. A small flurry of migrants next day included five Garden and 20 Willow Warbler, five Pied Flycatcher and the first Red-backed Shrike for a while plus a new Common Rosefinch. Icterine Warblers increased to three on 4th, a second Red-backed Shrike was found and the first of only two Wrynecks all autumn was seen briefly at Barkland whilst Pied Flycatchers were up to eight, Ringed Plovers to a peak of 63 and the first Merlin of the autumn flashed through. The first BBRC since the spring, a Booted Warbler found late in the day along Field Ditch, kept all except the finder waiting until the following morning. Re-located at Setter before breakfast, the Booted Warbler performed reasonably well in dense fog before promptly disappearing for the rest of the day. The red flag finally got an airing when a confiding Thrush Nightingale was found at Skerryholm in the afternoon, this and the Booted Warbler both remaining until 6th. Also on the 6th, a Grey Phalarope was seen by the fortunate few from the *Good Shepherd* while three Reed Warblers were the pick of the rest of the birds on land. Westerly winds kicked in and to good effect with an American Golden Plover discovered on Buness just before lunch on 8th, unusually in the company of a Dotterel. Even rarer, a Cory's Shearwater was reported resting on the sea off North Light, but a mad dash northwards left all but the two observers disappointed as it flew off shortly thereafter. Counts of 66 Golden Plover, 14 Knot and 67 Dunlin, were eclipsed by the Moorhen seen on the late trap-round. Bird of the month was the Western Bonelli's Warbler discovered at Quoy on 10th. It was found among a small fall, which also included a Corncrake at Burkle, nine Grey Heron, a Wryneck, 45 Wheatear, the only '*Locustella*' of the month (a Grasshopper Warbler), 60 Willow Warblers, two new Common Rosefinch, and a small sprinkling of the usual common Warblers. Highlights on the 11th were three mobile Goosander, a second Dotterel on Buness, 40 Common Gulls and the first Dunnock of the autumn. Skylarks were on the increase with 120 counted on 12th,

when an Ortolan was found near Auld Haa. A quiet week followed although occasional new migrants were recorded such as singles of Peregrine and 46 Greylag Goose on 14th, a Turtle Dove on 15th, Red-breasted Flycatcher on 16th and the first three Jack Snipe of the autumn on 19th.

The 20th was an interesting day with a mixture of Redpolls appearing around the crop at Bulls Park. A few more arrived over the coming week causing a headache for many observers. Lesser and Mealy, were certainly involved as well as a couple of birds showing characteristics of Greenland and Icelandic races. A Corn Crake by the Hill Dyke the same day was less taxing, unusually showing well to its assembled crowd. Movements of geese from 21st made for an eventful time at log, with at least 250 Pink-footed and 80 Greylag heading south. 300 'Pinkies' were counted next day, six Red-breasted Mergansers were in the Havens and a late Swift was seen. A Wood Warbler trapped on 23rd was the only autumn record, singles of Reed Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher were seen and the first flurry of Song Thrushes arrived with 16 counted, typically most were in the North. By 24th Lapland Longspurs had increased to eight and the first Yellow-browed Warbler was at Furse, as a rare easterly wind set in for 36 hours.

Early on 25th it was evident birds were arriving and migrants were turning up throughout the day. An impressive total of 15 Yellow-browed Warblers were recorded only bettered by the Olive-backed Pipit found early afternoon on the cliff-top at North Naversgil. The supporting cast included a Richard's Pipit, Bluethroat and Little Bunting, with day totals of 32 Barnacle Geese, 112 Common Snipe, four Common Sandpiper, 170 Turnstone, Tree Pipit, 11 Redstart, ten Whinchat, 53 Wheatear, 34 Blackcap, six Chiffchaff, seven Willow Warbler and a single Pied Flycatcher. After a clear night it wasn't unexpected that most migrants had moved on by 26th, although a second Little Bunting was in the Havens with presumably the previous days bird seen at Lerness. Only four Yellow-browed Warblers could be found but a Long-eared Owl at the Plantation was definitely new. A brief Grey Phalarope in South Harbour scooped the 'bird of the day' prize on 27th, with three Pintail and another Richard's Pipit fighting it out for second place. Golden Plover reached a monthly high of 94 with the only Curlew Sandpiper of the year tagging on to the flock. More passage on 28th included four south-bound Whooper Swans, three Short-eared Owls and a peak of 180 Twite. A Greenland White-fronted Goose joined the ever-increasing Greylag flock on 29th with both Lapland and Snow Buntings increasing, to 13 and 39 respectively. A hint of south-easterly wind on the final day of the month dropped in a few birds. An elusive juvenile Spotted Crake in Schoolton Ditch was added to the year list, as was the Brent Goose which flew over the west cliffs with a flock of Greylags. A second Bluethroat was in the Gully and perhaps a new Little Bunting was at Field Ditch. There were four Sparrowhawks on the island



and 54 Common Gulls were counted while a single Collared Dove was seen almost everywhere and 67 Wheatears represented a significant increase.

## **October**

No October on Fair Isle can ever be the same and this year followed suit with plenty of surprises along the way. The first of which was the significant lack of any rarities during the first ten days! There was however plenty to keep people occupied, such as the two Bluethroats trapped on the 1st and 2nd. Leftovers from September seen in the first week included a Richard's Pipit (until 6th), up to three Common Rosefinches, the Ortolan (until 3rd), a Little Bunting and several Yellow-browed Warblers. A late House Martin lingered at North Light (2nd-15th) while on 4th, new arrivals were a single Long-eared Owl, five Swallows, Barred Warbler and another Little Bunting, plus a small movement of finches which included 13 Siskin and five Linnets. The first signs of thrush movement were evident from 5th with 2000 Redwing and the first two Ring Ouzels of the autumn a sign of things to come. A Red-breasted Flycatcher in Hjukni from 5th-9th was joined by a second at Stensi Geo next day when the first of many Woodcock was flushed and two Pale-bellied Brent Geese began a lengthy stay in the Havens. Strong southeasterlies on 7th surprisingly brought little but an un-seasonal Iceland Gull with the Greater Black-backed Gull flock on Bunes. The wind increased to gale force overnight and an exhausted Storm Petrel was found at South Light the next morning, among several Redwing fatalities. A Slavonian Grebe sheltered in South Harbour and a Corncrake posed briefly on a wall at Double Dyke. Some good counts were also made with 34 Jack Snipe, 120 Common Snipe, 100 Blackbird, 3000 Redwing and 50 Brambling all recorded.

Another Greenland White-fronted Goose was with the Greylags and Pink-feet from 9th, with singles of Goldeneye and Long-tailed Duck emphasising the wildfowl theme. Sea-watching the same day produced a rare Black throated Diver, along with a Great Northern and a single Sooty Shearwater, all off Bunes. A mobile Great Grey Shrike was the pick of the birds on land. A Stonechat arrived on 10th and single Arctic Terns were at either end of the island. Eyes were on the skies on 11th, as wildfowl continued to move with 30 Whooper Swan, 53 Pink-footed, 300 Greylag and 83 Barnacle Geese plus 107 Wigeon, 52 Teal and six Pintail all counted. A Common Buzzard headed north overhead and three Goldfinches arrived, increasing to four by next day. More of the same on 12th as wildfowl dominated, the clear, bright conditions encouraging 41 Whooper Swan and at least 850 Greylag Geese to head South. Impressive counts from the ground included 21 Red-breasted Mergansers in various bays, 300 Golden Plover, 205 Turnstone, 240 Skylark and 75 Snow Bunting. A late Common Sandpiper was in the Havens and the second Slavonian Grebe of the year drifted all around the isle.

The annual autumn round up of all the lambs off the Hill on 13th, meant census was put back to the afternoon, but a Hawfinch was trapped mid-morning in the Plantation. Even so, with light westerlies the afternoon madness was a little unexpected. A '*locustella*', initially flushed from long grass at Bulls Park gave everyone the run around once it entered the crop, until it was trapped and confirmed as a Lanceolated Warbler. Once census resumed, an Olive-backed Pipit was found and then disappeared quickly on the East cliffs at Sma' Trinket, while an unidentified '*Acro*', at the Chalet once trapped turned out to be a Reed Warbler. Forty Blackcaps were also new in and with hardly any coverage of the south of the isle who knows what else was never found. The 'Lancy' was still present at the Obs early morning on 14th and a Barred Warbler was new. Fresh easterlies on 15th grounded plenty of thrushes with Redwing numbering 12,000, Song Thrush 500 and Blackbird 300. On the warbler front there were 45 Blackcap, seven Willow and at least 12 Yellow-browed Warbler plus 300 Goldcrest. Scarcities included the only Short-toed Lark of the year on Malcolm's Head, a very late Red-backed Shrike, Richard's Pipit, a second Hawfinch and a Pallas' Warbler was a good find on the cliffs at Dronger. Ten Grey Heron flew out to sea at South Light, 120 Common Gull were counted on 16th and there was a Little Bunting at Easter Lother.

A second Lanceolated Warbler, found in long grass between The Kirk and Kenneby on 17th, was much more of a classic performer. There were now two Pallas' Warblers at Dronger and Yellow browed Warblers were back up to nine, the majority in North. A late Whimbrel and three Richard's Pipits were in the south, plus whole island totals of 61 Robin, 120 Blackcap, 360 Goldcrest and the first significant arrival of Woodcock with 100 counted. Sea-watching on 18th produced 27 Long-tailed Duck, 5 Goldeneye, a Great Northern Diver and 14 Kittiwake past South Light. Highlight however was the superb Red Kite which, after giving everyone the run around, settled down and patrolled the skies for just under a week. Sea-watchers were rewarded with three Little Auks and a typically confiding Grey Phalarope, which settled in South Harbour from 19th. A new Little Bunting was at Hesti Geo and the first of only three Northern Bullfinches, compared to last years huge influx, was near the Obs. Nine Crossbills in the North were unusual in October and a total of 19 Chiffchaff was the best count of the autumn. After a couple of brief sightings over the previous few days of 'white-rumped' Redpolls, it was a relief when a cracking first winter male '*exilipes*' Arctic Redpoll was trapped at Barkland on 20th. A late Barred Warbler was also seen and a Common Buzzard joined the Red Kite for a few days. More impressive however was the build up of the Barnacle Goose flock over the past week, with a new record of 985 smashing the previous best by nearly 400 birds. The 23 Short-eared Owls flushed from Da Water were just as good to see.



*Snowy Owl (2nd April).*

*Deryk Shaw*



*Red-necked Phalarope (9th-10th May).*

*Deryk Shaw*



*Blyth's Reed  
Warbler (16th-  
17th June)  
Deryk Shaw*



*Richard's Pipit  
(2nd-9th May)  
Deryk Shaw*



*Red-spotted Bluethroat  
(19th May) Becki Rosser*



*Great Reed Warbler (13th May) Deryk Shaw*



*Subalpine Warbler (1st-5th June).*  
Rebecca Nason



*Arctic Warbler (22nd-23rd June).*  
Deryk Shaw



*Icterine Warbler (8th September).*  
Paul Baxter



*Thrush Nightingale (5th-6th September).*  
Paul Baxter



*American Golden Plover (8th-14th September).* Deryk Shaw



*Western Bonelli's Warbler (10th September).*

Deryk Shaw



*Eurasian Dotterel (8th-14th September).* Paul Baxter



*Olive-backed Pipit (25th September).*

Rebecca Nason

A clear night saw most of the Geese, Owls and other migrants move on by 21st, but the first two Waxwings of the autumn and a late Swallow were found during the morning's census. A late afternoon stroll onto Hoini had everybody else running up there when a first-winter female Black-throated Thrush was found right on the top, accompanying the few remaining Redwings and Blackbirds. A quieter day followed on 22nd although a new Pallas' Warbler was found near Malcolm's Head and the Black-throated Thrush continued to show well in calm conditions. Glorious weather on 23rd with a light northerly wind heralded the start of the best birding day of the year! Remarkably, a second Black-throated Thrush was located mid-morning, but this time it was a stunning adult male! It commuted mainly between Klingers and Sma Trinket Geo's on the East cliffs. While photographing the thrush the Warden was lucky to have an Olive-backed Pipit land next to him on the Rippack. Then the chaos really began!! News of a possible female Siberian Rubythroat at Midway began to echo through mobile phones and everybody was soon running for the centre of the isle. The identification of this 'dream bird' was quickly confirmed and it showed well for a short while on the road before being lost at Leogh. It was re-found at the Haa, where it showed brilliantly and eventually settled in the Burkle/Quoy area. In a day full of highlights, a very late Osprey over head and a drake Velvet Scoter past South light barely got a look in!

The final week of October was much quieter, although the Rubythroat was to remain until the 27th. A Great Northern Diver flew past South Light on 24th and a notable movement of large Gulls on 25th included 1200 Herring and 550 Greater Black-backed. The flock of 'Mealy' Redpolls in the North had increased to 81 birds by the 25th and there was a new Pallas' Warbler briefly at the School. A singing Black-bellied Dipper at Wirvie from 26th put on a good show, with a very late Tree Pipit in the same area and five new Short-eared Owls logged. Snow Buntings had increased dramatically to 210 by the 27th, when a male Hen Harrier was also seen. Presumably the same Pallas' Warbler was seen again on 28th, this time at Quoy. Two more Yellow-browed Warblers were on the cliffs and an exceptionally late Bluethroat in Sma' Trinket Geo on 31st finished the month off nicely.

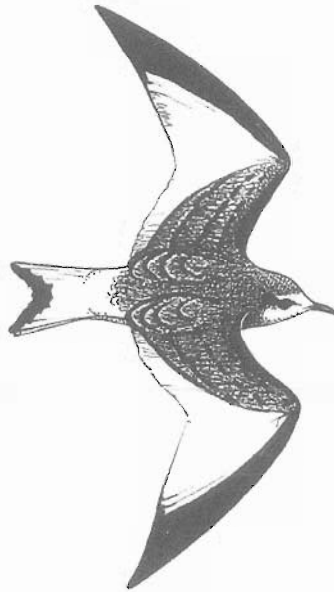
## **November**

Despite the exodus of staff on the 1st, continued coverage throughout the rest of the year by the Warden produced some good sightings especially during the first half of the month. Waxwings dominated the first week with 11 on 3rd increasing to 40 next day. A few scarcities included a Richard's Pipit at Barkland on 4th. The latter had re-located to Bunes next day when the Black-bellied Dipper was in the Vaadal. A late Little Bunting lingered in the Bull's Park crop for a week from 6th. A few geese hung on early in the month with up to 100 Greylag, nine Pink-feet, 21 Barnacles and a single Greenland White-fronted noted during the first week, while four Whooper Swans remained. A first winter Glaucous Gull in the roost on

Vaasetter 11th was eclipsed by the much rarer juvenile Sabine's Gull at South Light the next day. Also on 12th, three Little Auks passed by, a very late Wheatear and a Buzzard were also seen, while 2 Sanderling were unusual. 200 Snow Buntings on 13th was the highest count of the month. The 18th produced a ringtail Hen Harrier alongside two Mealy Redpoll and a Black Redstart. A Goldfinch appeared on 22nd, with rough weather bringing in three Glaucous and a single Iceland Gull a few days later. A Long-eared Owl trapped in the Gully 25th had presumably recently arrived. Four Lapwing on 27th and two Long-tailed Duck on 28th were the most notable sightings of the final few days of the month.

## December

One of the quietest months although a Scaup in South Harbour with a couple of Little Auks passing offshore started things off well. Whooper Swans had increased to seven with the arrival of a family party of five on 2nd. A Long-eared Owl was at Shirva on 5th, but the highlight of the month was undoubtedly the Goshawk, reported briefly at Quoy on 7th before being pursued off the island by an unimpressed Raven. Calm weather on 8th produced a little thrush movement with 200 each of Fieldfare and Redwing along with two Black Redstarts. A first winter Glaucous Gull was seen on 10th, with a Jack Snipe flushed and 30 Lapwing and a Goldeneye also present. The final few weeks of 2005 were largely uneventful with the occasional Merlin and Peregrine seen and an increase in Water Rails, to three on the last day of the year.



*Sabine's Gull (Will Miles)*



# First and Last Dates for Summer Migrants 2005

*Mark Warren*

The species in the table below occur as both spring and autumn migrants to Fair Isle. Where available, the year of the particular sighting has also been included.

Species	Earliest	Earliest in 2005	Latest	Latest in 2005
Quail	30.04.61	17.05	13.10.89	24.06
Osprey	25.04.66	12.05	04.11.35	22.06
Cornerake	10.04.66	10.09	03.11.77	08.10
Dotterel	25.04.73	14.05	06.11.76	15.09
Whimbrel	15.04.72	25.04	12.12. pre FIBO	17.10
Green Sandpiper	08.04.79	19.04	12.11.70	31.08
Common Sandpiper	05.04.83	28.04	02.11. pre FIBO	13.10
Arctic Skua	04.04.88	11.04	25.10.	28.09
Great Skua	17.03. pre 80	02.04	16.11.	27.10
LBB Gull	06.03.85	26.03	12.12.57	09.10
Sandwich Tern	30.04.01	01.07	18.09.77	25.07
Common Tern	25.04.83	03.05	18.10.75	10.09
Arctic Tern	No data	02.05	30.10.	24.10
Turtle Dove	23.04.71	02.06	01.11.82	15.09
Cuckoo	17.04.87	19.06	08.10.77	27.07
Swift	29.04.01	02.05	26.10.75	22.09
Wryneck	18.04.81	19.04	17.10.74	10.09
Sand Martin	02.04.89	30.04	19.10.78	27.06
Swallow	31.03.02	19.04	02.11.84	21.10
House Martin	19.04.	28.04	14.11.	16.10
Tree Pipit	14.04. pre 63	19.04	02.11. pre 63	26.10
Red-throated Pipit	08.05.36		01.11. pre FIBO	
Yellow Wagtail	25.03.54	13.05	20.11.57	17.06
Pied Wagtail	20.02.03	06.03	17.11.	23.10
Bluethroat	22.03. pre 63	19.05	13.11.83	31.10
Black Redstart	01.03.	24.03	22.12.86	08.12
Redstart	09.04. pre 63	20.04	11.11.81	22.10
Whinchat	14.04.81	02.05	26.11.90	22.10
Northern Wheatear	13.03. pre 59	22.03	19.11.59	13.11
Ring Ouzel	16.03.88	29.03	19.12. pre FIBO	25.10
Grasshopper Warbler	07.04.02	20.04	23.10.00	10.09
Sedge Warbler	19.04.87	12.05	11.11.75	15.09
Marsh Warbler	22.05.84	03.06	06.10. pre 63	27.08
Reed Warbler	28.04.01	22.05	31.10.80	21.10
Icterine Warbler	13.05.99	25.05	13.10.76	09.09
Subalpine Warbler	20.04.00	01.06	04.10.79	05.06
Lesser Whitethroat	20.04.	25.04	08.11.	15.10
Whitethroat	11.04. pre 59	27.04	21.10.78	01.10
Garden Warbler	21.04.68	21.05	20.11.76	21.10
Blackcap	07.04.	19.04	20.12.	09.11
Wood Warbler	14.04.81	28.04	06.10.73	23.09
Chiffchaff	12.03.	03.04	No data	01.11
Willow Warbler	03.04.81	19.04	23.11.27	16.10
Goldcrest	27.02	20.04	19.12.03	09.11
Spotted Flycatcher	20.04.49	19.05	26.10.85	15.10
Pied Flycatcher	21.04.83	28.04	29.10.85	26.09
Red-backed Shrike	04.05.84	31.05	08.11.93	15.10
Common Rosefinch	08.05.77	24.05	30.11.91	06.10
Ortolan Bunting	26.04.64	12.09	01.11.00	03.10
Rustic Bunting	25.04.80	08.05	08.11.75	13.06
Little Bunting	04.04.58	25.09	19.11.75	21.10

# SYSTEMATIC LIST 2005

*Deryk Shaw*

A total of 211 species was recorded in 2005. No new species were added to the island list, which (including Chestnut-eared Bunting) stands at 364 species on Category A of the BOU list plus 8 other potential additions (*see full list at rear of report*).

## Notes

***Nomenclature*** – the species order and some names have been changed to comply with recent changes to the official British list by the British Ornithologists Union (BOU). Most changes are obvious, but wherever confusion may be possible, the previous name is included in parentheses.

### **Status Categories**

Vagrant	ten records or less in the past 20 years
Vagrant	ten records or less in the past 20 years
Rare	11-40 records in the past 20 years
Scarce	averaging 10 records or less per annum
Regular	averaging 11-40 records per annum
Frequent	averaging 41-500 records per annum
Common	averaging more than 500 records per annum

### ***Breeding Categories***

Small Number	on average, less than 100 pairs per annum
Moderate Numbers	on average, 101-1000 pairs per annum
Large Numbers	on average, more than 1000 pairs per annum

### ***Abbreviations***

+	all records documented
AIA	Apparently Incubating Adult
AON	Apparently Occupied Nest
BBRC	<i>British Birds</i> Rarities Committee
BOURC	British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
SBCRC	Shetland Bird Club Records Committee
SOTEAG	Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group

The numbers in parentheses after the names of those species considered by British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) are the totals up to the end of 2004 for Fair Isle, Shetland as a whole, Scotland and Britain respectively.

**WHOOPER SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus*

***Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring***

A party of 7 flew north on 3rd February. No further records until 4 on 28th September and 3 the following day. Main passage was confined to 11th-13th October when counts of 30, 41 & 23 were made. Family parties were seen on four dates between 25th October & 2nd December and an adult and juvenile settled from 14th November into December, when the juvenile died, the adult lingering into 2006.

**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE** *Anser brachyrhynchus*

***Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring***

One mixed with the wintering Greylag flock on 24th February and was joined by another from 1st March. This increased to 4 from 29th-30th March with 1-3 noted until 21st April. In autumn, an early party of 4 arrived on 30th August and remained until 14th September. A single on 18th September preceded main passage from 21st-23rd September when counts of 250, 300 & 180 were made. Smaller numbers (15-50, max 70) passed through daily up to mid-October before falling to single figures in November. A party of 12 on 18th November was the last sighting of the year.

+ **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** *Anser albifrons*

***Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and mid-winter***

In winter, a single of the Eurasian race *A.a.albifrons* was present from 15th-22nd February. In spring, two of this race were present from 9th-22nd April. The sole autumn record was a single of the Greenland race *A.a.flavirostris* which lingered from 29th September-4th December.

**GREYLAG GOOSE** *Anser anser*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

The wintering flock was the highest on record. Counts exceeded 100 almost daily and peaked at 208 on 11th February. Birds began to depart in late February but counts up to 70 were regular up to mid-April and single figures in May. Late spring records comprised 12 on 9th June and 9 Grey goose sp. on 20th June. A single on 2nd and 6 on 19th August were most likely Shetland breeders. Autumn passage commenced with 46 on 14th September and sightings were daily from 19th September. Counts in October regularly exceeded 100 and included peaks of 300 (11th), 850 (12th) & 237 (27th). Numbers dropped to 50-70 from mid-November to the year's end.

+ **GREATER CANADA GOOSE** *Branta canadensis*

***Rare spring visitor; 21 previous records (34 individuals)***

Recorded for the fifth consecutive year. A party of 6 was present from 17th-19th June.

**BARNACLE GOOSE** *Branta leucopsis*

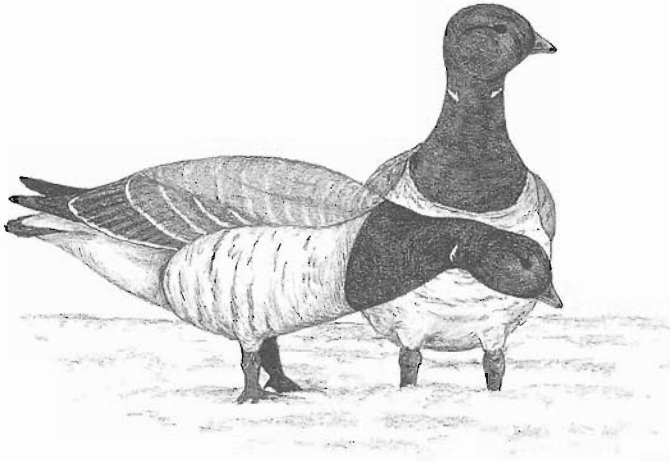
**Frequent autumn migrant, occasional in spring**

A flock of 15 on 16th January is a record winter count, with 12 on 22nd and 8 on 26th. There was an additional single on 13th February. In spring, a single on 17th-23rd April was followed by a good count of 48 (second highest spring count) on 21st May and 2 on 24th May with 4 the following day. Autumn passage commenced on 25th September and birds were present daily right up to 13th November. The maximum count was 83 on 11th October, except for the period 15th-21st October when an exceptional influx occurred; a record 608 arrived on 15th and increased daily until an incredible 985 was present on 20th. This had dropped to 238 the following day and 45 by 22nd. A flock of 21 lingered from 24th October – 13th November. Finally, there were 3 on 7th December.

**+ BRENT GOOSE** *Branta bernicla*

**Rare autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter**

In spring, one was seen at sea on 21st May whilst in autumn a single on 30th September was followed by 2 of the pale-bellied race (*B.b.hrota*) from 6th-21st October.



*Brent Geese (Mark Warren)*

**+ COMMON SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna*

**Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn**

In a good spring, a single on 20th March was followed by another from 3rd-12th April, joined briefly by a pair on 5th April, then further pairs on 12th and 22nd May.

**EURASIAN WIGEON** *Anas penelope*

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

A pair over-wintered, with an additional single on 3rd January. Spring passage was light with a ♂ in late March, 1-4 birds on 4 dates in April, 2-3 from 13th May-4th June and 5 on 29th June – a spring total of 17 birds. Two on 18th August were the first of the autumn and birds were seen daily up to mid-November. Peak September counts were 40 (25th) & 68 (26th). Highest numbers were noted in October with peaks of 107 (11th), 113 (17th), 129 (18th) and 104 (23rd). Just a pair was noted in December.

**EURASIAN TEAL** *Anas crecca*

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

In winter, 3 on 16th January was the peak count. A very light spring passage from late March – late May saw irregular counts of 1-4 (but for 5 on 28th April) and two later singles in June. In autumn, daily counts from 15th August were often well below 20 but included peaks in September of 37 (1st) & 26 (25th) and in October of 52 (11th) & 47 (13th). Counts of 1-3 were received in November and December.

**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred***

A small number of resident/feral birds makes distinguishing true migrants difficult, but a peak winter count of 18 on 15th January and a peak spring count of just 7 on 8th May suggests passage was negligible. At least three pairs bred and the first ducklings (a brood of 14) were noted on 29th April. Autumn numbers were also very small with mainly single figures noted and a peak of 24 on 20th October. Influxes towards the end of the year saw counts of 23 & 30 in December.

**+ NORTHERN PINTAIL** *Anas acuta*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

A pair on 16th April was the only spring record. In autumn, 3 on 27th September were followed by a high count of 6 on 11th October and a single on 13th October.

**+ GARGANEY** *Anas querquedula*

***Vagrant; eight previous records (15 individuals), all in spring***

A ♂ frequented the Hegri Burn area from 4th-6th May – the first record since 2001.

**+ NORTHERN SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata*

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

A ♂ on 28th April was the sole spring sighting. In autumn, there were 2 on 18th August with one remaining until 23rd August and another on 12th October.

**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula*

**Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn**

In spring, a ♀ on 25th-26th April preceded 1-2 daily from 11th-24th May and a later ♂ from 9th-22nd June. In autumn, singles on 6th & 10th September were followed with 1-3 from 20th-27th September and 1-2 daily from 3rd-25th October.

+ **GREATER SCAUP** *Aythya marila*

**Rare spring and autumn migrant**

An exhausted ♀ was picked up near South Light on 17th October (it died the following day) and another was in South Harbour on 1st December.

**COMMON EIDER** *Somateria mollissima*

**Resident, breeds in small numbers**

Present offshore all year. A flock of 47 off South Light on 22nd February was the only winter concentration noted. The annual post-breeding count in August revealed a population of 235 birds.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** *Clangula hyemalis*

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

Two in the Havens on 26th January was the only sighting until the spring when a ♀ was present from 16th-18th May and another on 31st May. As usual, birds were much more common in autumn with daily sightings from 9th October-1st November and sporadic reports until 4th December. Most counts were of single figures but sea watches at South Light in September produced 27 (18th & 19th) and 16 (21st).

+ **COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra*

**Scarce spring, autumn and winter migrant**

A ♂ in Hjukni Geo on 23rd April, which relocated to Furse from 24th-30th April, was the only record.

+ **VELVET SCOTER** *Melanitta fusca*

**Scarce autumn migrant, rare at other times of year**

Single ♂ were seen flying past South Light on 23rd & 24th October.

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula*

**Regular winter, spring and autumn migrant**

Singles were regularly noted in the Havens, Furse or South Harbour in January/February and up to 3 in March. Just a single female was seen in April (13th) and another in May (19th-21st). In autumn, birds were noted on just 9 dates between 9th October-17th November. Mainly singles were observed but 5 were seen on

18th October & 15th November. In December, one took up residence in Furse on 10th and remained into 2006.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** *Mergus serrator*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, 1-2 were seen on 8 scattered dates between 7th March & 29th June. In mid-summer there was a single on 5th July and another on 19th-26th July. Autumn sightings commenced from mid-September and single-figure counts were regular into November with a peak of 9 on 14th October. Sporadic singles were recorded in December.

**+ GOOSANDER** *Mergus merganser*

***Rare migrant in winter, spring and late autumn***

In spring, a ♂ was seen on 24th June. Autumn sightings comprised three ♂ together on 11th September and another ♂ on 13th September.

**COMMON QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix*

***Scarce spring, summer and autumn migrant; has bred***

One in Taing on 17th May was followed by 1-3 daily from 23rd May-2nd June and singles on a further 6 dates throughout June.

**RED-THROATED DIVER** *Gavia stellata*

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

In spring, one on 23rd March was followed with further singles on 2 dates in April, 3 dates in May and 3 dates in June. Flyover birds were seen on 2 dates in July and once in August. In autumn, 1-2 were noted flying past at sea on 4 dates in September and 8 dates in October.

**+ BLACK-THROATED DIVER** *Gavia arctica*

***Vagrant; five previous records (three in autumn)***

One was reported off Bunes on 9th October.

*Awaiting SBCRC decision*

**GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** *Gavia immer*

***Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring***

A better than average spring produced 6 singles – all in May, whilst autumn produced just 3 singles – all in October.

**+ GREAT-CRESTED GREBE** *Podiceps cristatus*

***Vagrant; 11 previous records (October to May)***

One frequented North Haven from 3rd-19th April – the first record since 1994.

+ **SLAVONIAN GREBE** *Podiceps auritus*

**Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring**

Singles on 8th, 12th & 13th October were the only records.

**NORTHERN FULMAR** *Fulmarus glacialis*

**Resident; breeds in large numbers**

Numbers of birds on the monitoring plots increased by 66.3% from the dramatic all-time low recorded in 2004. However, this figure is still well below average and 41.8% less than when monitoring began in 1986 (Fig 1). Breeding success was much improved; a productivity figure of 0.48 is the best since 1995.

Dark individuals (known as ‘blue’ fulmars) were noted on 20th-23rd April & 27th August.

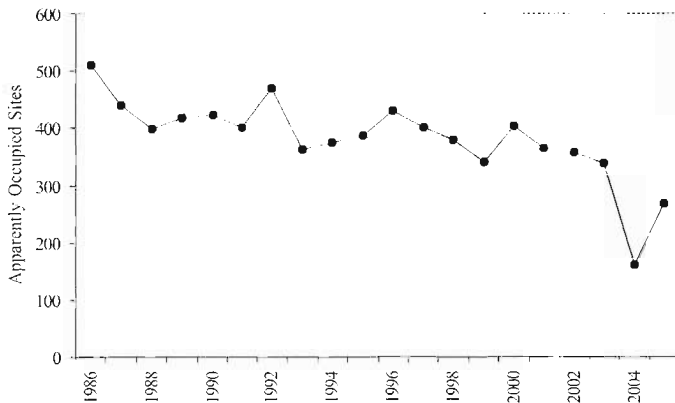


Figure 1. Plot counts of Northern fulmar on Fair Isle, 1986-2005. Counts shown are the sum of five study plots.

+ **CORY'S SHEARWATER** *Calonectris diomedea*

**Vagrant; previously only recorded in 1965 (88 birds) & 1992**

A lone individual was watched sitting on the sea off North Light for over half an hour on 8th September, before it took off and flew northwards.

*Awaiting SBCRC decision*

**SOOTY SHEARWATER** *Puffinus griseus*

**Regular autumn migrant**

Recorded regularly during sea watches at South Light or from *The Good Shepherd IV* crossing between 11th August-24th September. Most counts were of 1-2 but 4 were logged on 29th August & 6th September, 6 on 14th September and 12 (in one hour from South Light) on 24th August. A single from South Light on 9th October was the last.



**+ MANX SHEARWATER** *Puffinus puffinus*

**Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring**

One was seen flying past Bunes on 9th May and another there on 13th July. A single off North Light on 12th August was followed by counts of 3 past South Light on both 24th & 25th August. Finally, 2 passed South Light on 13th September.

**EUROPEAN STORM-PETREL** *Hydrobates pelagicus*

**Summer visitor; breeds in small numbers, but non-breeders common**

A single seen from *The Good Shepherd IV* crossing on 9th June was the first and birds were regularly reported from there up to mid-September. Tape-luring attracted varying numbers to the Observatory's mist-nets in July, August and early September with a best catch of 127 on 13th August. Finally, a storm-blown individual was picked up at South Light on 8th October.

**LEACH'S STORM-PETREL** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

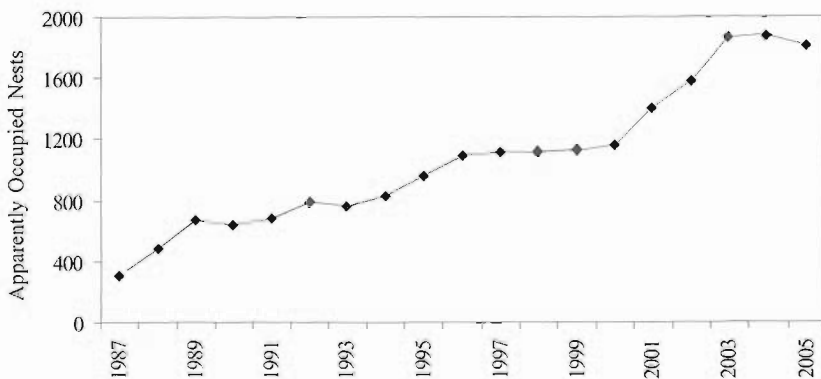
**Scarce migrant; summer and early autumn**

One seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* crossing on 5th July was followed by birds observed or trapped during European Storm-petrel trapping sessions on a further 6 dates in July (including 2 on 12th) and another 2 trapped on 13th August.

**NORTHERN GANNET** *Morus bassanus*

**Breeds in large numbers, seen offshore all year**

The first birds were not noted ashore until 15th February. The rapid growth rate of the breeding Gannet population has slowed down in recent years and in 2005 it halted and actually showed a slight decline – a decrease of 3.1% from 1,875 AON in 2004 to 1,817 in 2005 (Fig 2). The newest colony, on Sheep Rock, however continues to grow from 23 AON in 2004 to 25 AON in 2005. Breeding was typically successful; a productivity of 0.72 is above the long-term (1986-2004) mean of 0.68.



**Figure 2.** Whole island counts of Northern gannet on Fair Isle, 1987-2005

**GREAT CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

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

Counts of 1-2 were logged occasionally in South Harbour or North Haven in January whilst 9 on 15th February included an individual resembling the continental race *P.c.sinensis*. In spring, 2 on 21st April was followed by regular sightings of 1-3 from 7th-24th May and a single on 7th June. One on 31st July and another on 14th August preceded main autumn passage from 2nd September-23rd October. Counts of 1-3 were the norm but a peak of 6 on 30th September was followed by 4 the following day and 5 on 2nd October. Unusually, there were no later records.

**EUROPEAN SHAG** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

***Resident, breeds in moderate numbers***

Numbers on the population monitoring plots fell by 20.5% compared to 2004, equalling the lowest ever count (in 1999) and this was mirrored on the breeding productivity plot. Following the poorest breeding season on record in 2004, the number of AON at the breeding monitoring plot (Mavers Geo – Finniequoy) fell by 17% in 2005 to the lowest on record. Productivity too was equally depressed with only 31 chicks fledging from 53 nests – a productivity figure of just 0.70 being the same as the previous year and less than half the long-term (1986-2003) mean of 1.44. It would appear that, as in 2004, starvation was the reason for poor fledging success. Large chicks were seen wandering around in the colonies, rather than staying in the nest and many dead chicks were found during ringing trips into the colonies. Repeat biometrics of a sample of birds also showed that they were not gaining weight as fast as they should.

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea*

***Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter/spring***

Recorded in every month. Four on 2nd January was a good winter count and singles were occasionally observed until 4 on 20th March indicated the start of spring passage. Counts of 1-2 were regularly made in April and scattered singles on 6 dates in May and 3 dates in June. Autumn passage commenced in early July and counts of 1-3 were almost daily until heavier passage in September and October produced additional sporadic counts of 4-7 and peaks of 9 (10th September) and 10 (16th October). At least one bird remained until the year's end.

+ **EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD** *Pernis apivorus*

***Vagrant; 43 previous records (44 individuals)***

Recorded in 7 of the past 8 years. Two birds together flew south at midday on 2nd September followed, an hour later, by a third individual.

+ **RED KITE** *Milvus milvus*

**Vagrant; six previous records (four in spring)**

A juvenile loitered around the isle from 18th-23rd October – the first since 2003 and only the second in autumn.

+ **EURASIAN MARSH HARRIER** *Circus aeruginosus*

**Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn. (33 previous records)**

Recorded for the eighth successive year. A fine ♂ flew south through the middle of the isle and straight out to sea on 29th April.

+ **HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, 2 ♀ went through on 22nd May, followed by a ♂ on 27th, another ♂ on 29th and a ♀ on 31st May. In autumn, a ringtail was present from 18th-22nd October followed a few days later by a ♂ from 27th-28th and finally another ringtail on 18th November. Eight individuals constitute a record year.

+ **NORTHERN GOSHAWK** *Accipiter gentilis*

**Vagrant; five previous records**

One was spotted on 7th December, sitting on a post at Quoy before flying east and gaining height whilst being mobbed by the local Ravens – the first record since 1996.

*Awaiting SBCRC decision*

**EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

Spring passage commenced on 20th April and birds were seen daily until 1st May and regularly until 31st May with later birds on 7th-9th June. Most days there were just 1-2 birds but 3 were logged on 3 dates and an excellent 5 on 13th May. In autumn, birds were recorded from 14th August-30th October with regular counts of 1-3 and a peak of 4 on 30th September.

+ **COMMON BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

One was present from 21st-26th May and another from 11th October-12th November.

+ **ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD** *Buteo lagopus*

**Vagrant; 39 previous records; 17 in spring, 22 in autumn (40-41 individuals)**

The first record since 2000 and only the third since 1990. One flew straight through late morning on 13th May and was seen to come in at Sumburgh Head, Mainland Shetland 50 minutes later.

*Accepted by SBCRC*

*Errata: the record published in the 2004 FIBO Report for 12th May 2004 was NOT accepted by SBCRC*

+ **OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus*

**Rare spring and autumn migrant (77 previous records; 62 in spring, 15 in autumn)**

In spring, 2 singles passed through on 12th May, with further individuals on 21st-22nd May and 22nd June. The only autumn record was a very late bird on 23rd October – the latest Fair Isle sighting since one on 4th November 1935.

**COMMON KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

An over-wintering ♂ was seen occasionally in January and February. The first spring migrant was a ♂ on 4th April but was not followed until 19th April, when sightings became regular to the end of May. Mainly singles were seen but 2 were logged on 4 dates. There were 2 more singles in June and 3 in early July. Autumn passage commenced on 30th July and singles were recorded almost daily throughout August. Passage in September and October was heavier and more frequent with 1-3 recorded daily and a peak of 5 (2nd & 4th September). The last was a female on 21st November.

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A ♂ and a ♀ over-wintered and were seen occasionally in January & February. A light spring passage saw singles recorded irregularly up to 9th June, except for 19th-23rd April when 3 birds were present. In autumn, a single on 4th September preceded almost daily counts of 1-3 from 15th September-2nd November and a peak of 4 on 19th October. At least one remained until the end of the year.

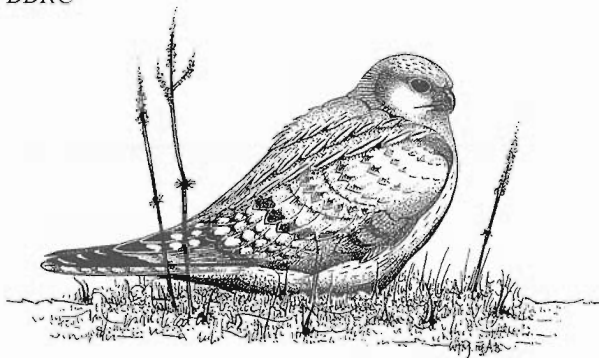
+ **GYR FALCON** *Falco rusticolus*

(12, 51, 238, 315)

**Vagrant; 12 previous records (13 individuals)**

A first-winter white morph ♂ was reported on 30th December 2004 and remained around the south of the isle until 11th January.

Accepted by BBRC



*Gyr Falcon (Will Miles)*

**PEREGRINE FALCON** *Falco peregrinus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred***

In spring, birds were regularly recorded from 9th April-27th May. Mainly singles were involved but 2 were reported on 4 dates. In autumn, one on 13th-14th August was not followed until daily sightings from 14th September-31st October. Ones or twos appeared in equal frequency and a maximum 3 were logged on 20th October.

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters***

At least two over-wintering birds were seen occasionally in January/February up to 14th March. Singles on 4 dates in April were the only spring sightings. In autumn, birds were recorded daily throughout October. Records of 2-6 were common and a maximum 7 was recorded on 15th, 20th & 25th. At least 3 birds remained into November and December.

+ **SPOTTED CRAKE** *Porzana porzana*

***Rare migrant, mostly autumn (43 previous records; nine in spring)***

One in Schoolton Ditch on 30th September was the only record.

+ **CORN CRAKE** *Crex crex*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant; formerly bred***

Singles on 10th & 20th September and 8th October.

+ **COMMON MOORHEN** *Gallinula chloropus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Two birds from October 2004 over-wintered at the Chalet and were last seen on 28th March. A single on 12th April was the only spring migrant. In autumn, one on 8th September was the only sighting until 2 arrived at the Chalet on 19th October. These perhaps relocated to Quoy in mid-November, where they remained into 2006.

**EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus*

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

One frequented the Havens from 16th-25th January. Fourteen on 6th February signalled the start of spring migration and had reached 51 by 18th. Numbers exceeded 100 by mid-March (146 on 17th) and most of the breeding birds had returned by the end of the month. Around 40-50 pairs were censused. Late migrants and non-breeding birds swelled numbers in April (max 132 on 18th) and May (max 122 on 27th) but a count of 220 on 14th June indicated that the first failed breeders were returning south. Numbers tailed off after mid-August and were single figures by mid-September until the last on 21st October.

**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula*

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

Six on 16th January was a record winter occurrence. Two on 6th February remained until 11th then 9 on 1st March saw the start of daily passage, peaking at 45 on 28th. At least 13 pairs remained to breed but small numbers of migrants trickled through until early June, with an increase in the last week of May (peak of 35 on 30th). Main autumn passage was in late August/early September when numbers peaked at 54 (26th), 52 (30th), 40 (1st) & 57 (6th). All other counts were below 35 and had dwindled to single figures by 24th September with stragglers until 23rd October.

+ **EURASIAN DOTTEREL** *Charadrius morinellus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, singles were on Vaasetter on 14th May and near the School on 29th May. In autumn, a juvenile on Bunes on 8th September (with an American Golden Plover), was joined by a second bird from 11th-14th with one remaining until 15th September.

+ **AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis dominica* (9, 24, 70, 257)

***Vagrant; nine previous records (all in autumn)***

A juvenile was found on Bunes, in the company of a Eurasian Dotterel, on 8th September and was present until 14th September.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis apricaria*

***Common spring and autumn migrant; has bred***

In winter, singles were seen occasionally (with 3 on 12th January) until 22 on 8th March signalled the start of spring passage. Numbers were quite low with 59 on 3rd April the only count above 20 with the exception of the first week of May when numbers exceeded 30 and peaked at 60 on 2nd May. Counts of 1-5 were regularly made throughout June and July until mid-August when autumn passage commenced. Counts did not exceed 50 until 20th September and peaked between 10th-20th October when 7 counts exceeded 100 and reached a maximum of 300 (12th). Numbers then rapidly tailed off until 6 on 13th November were the last.

+ **GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola*

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

Typically, just one record. A single on 17th March is our first in spring since 1995.

**NORTHERN LAPWING** *Vanellus vanellus*

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

Counts around 20-30 were regular during January/February but hard weather influxes produced a peak winter count of 50 on 15th January. Spring passage was

fairly light with peaks of just 45 (17th March) & 74 (20th March). The first display by the local breeders was on 2nd March. A total of 10 territories were counted and the first chicks appeared on 30th April. Small numbers of non-breeders were present in May/June. Autumn passage was barely discernible with daily counts consistently between 15-30 right up to mid-October and single figures thereafter until the end of the year, apart from a count of 30 on 10th December.

**RED KNOT** *Calidris canutus*

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

A single in the Havens on 15th-17th January was a rare winter record. Spring passage was typically very scant with singles on 7 dates between 18th May-4th June and 2 on 21st May. In autumn, 1-2 daily between 11th-24th July preceded daily passage from 4th August-20th September, with stragglers until 29th September. As usual, passage peaked in late August/early September when double-figure counts were made, with a maximum of 23 on 1st September.

**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba*

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

In spring, 2 on 14th May were followed by another on 18th then 5 on 26th, rising to 6 on 27th with one remaining until 3rd June. Singles on 15th & 21st June were the only later records. In autumn, 2 from 20th-26th July preceded daily sightings from 8th August-26th September. As usual, just single figures were noted except for peaks of 18 (24th August) and 14 (6th September).

**+ CURLEW SANDPIPER** *Calidris ferruginea*

***Scarce and irregular autumn migrant; vagrant in spring***

One was with the Golden Plover flock on 27th September.

**PURPLE SANDPIPER** *Calidris maritima*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant, also over-winters***

A difficult species to census due to its love of the extreme seaward edge of the rocky shore. Recorded irregularly in the first three months with a good peak of 25 on 1st January. Mainly single figures were noted in April until passage in May saw 5 counts over 20 and a peak of 38 on 8th May with stragglers until 10th June. Returning birds were noted from 20th July with single figures noted almost daily until the end of the year apart from peaks of 23 (3rd August), 11 (21st August), 33 (20th October), 39 (21st October) and 12 (27th October).

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred***

In winter, a single was noted on 15th-16th January. In spring, one on 23rd March was not followed until 2 on 18th April and daily records from 27th April-16th June.

Passage was heaviest in late May (from 19th) when numbers exceeded 20 almost daily and included peaks of 45 (23rd) & 49 (27th). Irregular counts of 1-2 were made in late June and July. Daily autumn passage commenced on 2nd August and continued until 22nd October with stragglers until 12th November. Main passage was from 24th August-8th September when numbers exceeded 50 daily with peaks of 80 (24th September), 76 (27th September), 77 (1st October) and 67 (8th October).

**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax*

**Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring**

There were regular records of 1-2 from 7th August-25th September, apart from 6 on 13th August. A late bird was seen on 23rd October.

**JACK SNIPE** *Lymnocyptes minimus*

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

A single on 3rd January was the only winter discovery. In spring, singles were flushed on 8 dates from 16th April-20th May with 2 on 1st May – a good total. In autumn, sightings were daily from the first (3) on 19th September. Heaviest passage was in October when mainly double figures were logged and peaks of 34 (8th) and 25 (13th & 15th). Numbers dropped to single figures at the end of October with just occasional records until the end of the year.

**COMMON SNIPE** *Gallinago gallinago*

**Common spring and autumn migrant, some over-winter; breeds in small numbers**

The peak winter count was 60 on 2nd February. Spring numbers were consistently between 25-40 and a peak of 55 on 30th April. No census of the breeding population was attempted. Autumn numbers were highest in late September and October when 11 counts over 100 and a peak of 170 (15th October) were made. Numbers dropped to 40-60 in November/December.

**EURASIAN WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola*

**Frequent spring and late autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters**

A single on 15th January was the only winter sighting. Spring records were confined to counts of 1-5 on 9 scattered dates from 14th March – 15th May. In autumn, 1-3 were noted from 7th October until an influx from 15th saw numbers peak at 50 on 17th & 31st. Numbers dropped to single figures from mid-November and occasional singles in December.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa limosa*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, a single on 2nd-4th June was the only record. In autumn, an early record on 7th-8th July was presumably a failed breeder (possibly from Shetland) and was



followed by a single on 18th August, which became a record flock of 17 on 24th August. Ten remained the following day, with 5 on 26th, rising again on 27th to 9, which slowly dwindled until the last on 19th September.

+ **BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica*

**Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring**

Only the fourth ever winter record and first for over 30 years; a group of 3 from 15th-19th January. A single on 11th April was the sole spring sighting. An early autumn bird on 8th July was not followed until a flock of 20 (third highest ever) passed through on 14th August. Singles on 18th & 26th-30th August were the only other sightings.

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, 2 on 25th April were the first and sightings were daily right up until 6th June, with stragglers until 12th. Passage was heaviest in the 2nd & 3rd weeks of May when double-figure counts were daily and a good peak of 28 (10th) was made. Two on 29th June were the first autumn migrants and counts of 1-4 were regular throughout July & August up to 12th September, with peaks of 10 (2nd July), 6 (17th July) & 8 (3rd September). Finally, a very late migrant was present on 17th October.

**EURASIAN CURLEW** *Numenius arquata*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant, occasionally over-winters; breeds in small numbers**

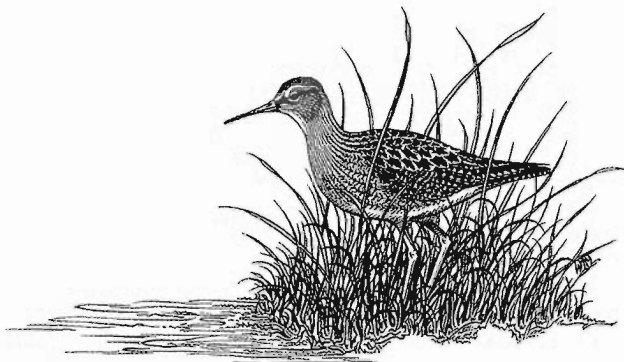
Winter counts peaked at 12 on 26th January. Spring passage peaked rather early at 32 on 20th March and was barely noticeable in April/May. The local breeders began displaying on 8th March, with 8 territories finally mapped and the first young hatched on 2nd June. Small numbers of failed or non-breeders were noted throughout June and 15 on 29th June were the first sign of proper return migration. Small numbers of birds were recorded irregularly in July but also counts of 31 (1st) and 39 (17th). Daily passage throughout August/September was generally of single figures but there were also peaks of 23 (15th August), 30 (23rd August) and 15 (2nd & 22nd September). Small numbers (1-5) were noted throughout October and irregularly in November/December.

**COMMON REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*

**Common migrant in winter, spring and autumn; has bred**

Recorded in every month. Winter counts of around 30 birds were regular in January/February but a cold weather influx produced a count of 60 on 19th January. Numbers fluctuated from 12-40 in March/April and had fallen to single figures by May and June. A count of 30 on 7th July signalled the start of return

migration. Peak monthly counts were; 33 (10th July), 150 (24th August), 84 (1st September) & 120 (1st October). Lesser numbers were recorded in November/December with a peak of 55 on 10th December.



*Redshank (Will Males)*

**COMMON GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia*

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

In spring, singles on 24th April and 4th May were the only records. Two on 7th July were probably the first returning migrants, followed by singles on 22nd-23rd and 26th July. There were singles on 8 dates in August and 1-2 almost daily throughout September with the last lingering from 25th September-22nd October.

**+ GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, singles were present on 19th April, 3rd May, 3rd & 14th June. In autumn, singles on 19th July & 18th August and 2 on 31st August were the only records.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, 1-2 were seen almost daily from 28th April-29th May with peaks of 6 & 4 (2nd & 22nd May respectively). Stragglers were noted on 5th(2), 6th & 15th June. In autumn, a single on 6th July was followed by 1-2 on 4 dates in August, a single on 2nd September, 4 on 25th September and a single on 12th-13th October.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres*

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

Recorded in every month. Peak monthly counts as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
155	180	125	125	87	14	34	155	170	205	100	112

+ **RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus lobatus*  
*Vagrant; 19 previous records, involving 22 individuals*

A ♀ showed well in North Haven on 9th-10th May. Another was on Mire o' Vatnagard on 14th June.

+ **GREY PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus fulicarius*  
*Vagrant; 19 previous records, involving 23 individuals*

Recorded for the fourth successive year. In September, singles were seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* crossing on 6th and in South Harbour on 27th and another was present here on 19th-21st October.

**ARCTIC SKUA** *Stercorarius parasiticus*  
*Frequent passage migrant; breeds in small numbers*

A dark-morph individual on 11th April was followed by further individuals on 15th & 20th. The first pale-morph bird arrived the following day and birds were ever-present from 26th April. Numbers gradually built up during May and all had departed again by 10th September with further singles off South Light on 3 dates until 27th September. Arctic skua's have been in slow decline since 1990 and dropped from 78 AOT in 2001 to 33 in 2004 (the lowest ever). However, this season saw an end to the recent trend with an increase of 115% to 71 AOT (Figure 3) - the vast majority of which (91.5%) laid eggs. However, despite this large increase in breeding attempts, only five chicks fledged bringing the total of fledged chicks in the last three years to just ten (five in 2003, zero in 2004). Competition from and predation by Great skuas, combined with a lack of food are thought to be the reasons.

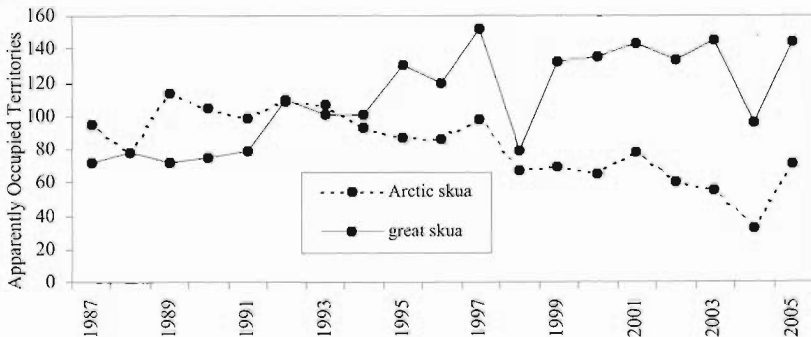


Figure 3. Whole island counts of Arctic skua and Great skua on Fair Isle, 1987-2005

**GREAT SKUA** *Stercorarius skua*  
*Frequent passage migrant; breeds in moderate numbers*

The first arrived on 2nd April and birds were present from 4th April-26th October

and a single off South Light the following day was the last. A count of only 96 AOT in 2004 was the lowest since 1998 (79 AOT). This season saw numbers increase by 50% to 144 AOT, similar to the high level in 2003 (145 AOT) and only eight less than the record 152 AOT in 1997 (Figure 3). However, only 81 pairs (56%) laid eggs and (as in 2004) just one chick fledged – a productivity of 0.007 (the lowest ever). In the period 1993–2001 Great skuas were typically successful, with a mean productivity of 0.91 and an average of 108 chicks fledged per year. Since then, a total of just 30 chicks have fledged – only nine in the last three years. The primary reason for such low fledging success must be due to the excessive amount of intra-specific depredation observed in recent years, which may indicate excessive difficulties skuas are encountering in finding other food resources.

**SABINE'S GULL** *Larus sabini*

***Vagrant; three previous records***

A juvenile passed close to shore at South Light on 12th November – the first record since 1982.

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Larus ridibundus*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Occasional counts of 1-4 were made in January and 1-2 in March. Spring passage commenced on 12th April and continued through May. Mainly single figures were noted but there were some larger peaks; 34 (30th April), 40 (11th May), 20 (12th-15th May) & 21 (27th May). Small numbers lingered throughout June until 14 on 7th July signalled that autumn migration had begun again. Birds were seen daily up to the end of October but just single-figure counts were made, apart from 14 on 20th August and 18 on 26th August. Occasional singles were seen in November and the last on 8th December.

**MEW (COMMON) GULL** *Larus canus*

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

Strong winds in mid-January resulted in exceptional counts of 55 (14th & 16th). Outside of this, regular counts of 1-3 were made from January until mid-March, when numbers crept into double figures. Daily counts in April and May mainly fluctuated between 15-50 but also included influxes of 184 (19th April), 137 (22nd April) & 75 (12th May). Single figures of non-breeders lingered through June. The number of Mew gulls nesting on Fair Isle has fluctuated between five and ten nests since 1987 until recently, when a record 13 pairs nested in 2004. In 2005, nine pairs nested, eight on Bunes (fledging four chicks) and a single at Horstebrekka's – which was probably predated by the nearby Arctic Skuas. This is the best fledging success since six chicks fledged from eight nests in 2000. Numbers were consistently around 30-40 in August and early September, except for a huge influx of 261 on 21st August. Single figures predominated during the remainder of

September and October, but another influx on 16th October produced a count of 120. Small numbers (up to 12) were seen occasionally to the end of the year.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus*

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

Three on Bunes on 26th March were the first but numbers built up very slowly in April (to 10 on 28th). Passage increased in May and peaked in the last week (36 on 29th). Only 3 pairs bred and 7 chicks were ringed in July. Influxes in July produced a maximum count of just 41 on 12th. Single figures in August increased slightly in the last week to 22 (25th) and 20 (30th) before tailing off to occasional 1-3 in September and the last, an adult, on 9th October.

**HERRING GULL** *Larus argentatus*

***Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also hard-weather migrant, autumn and winter***

Present throughout the year. Numbers were swelled when stormy weather caused birds to seek shelter on the isle with a maximum count of 3,500 on 29th November. A maximum of 30 pairs bred with the majority on Goorn (15 pairs) and Greenholm (9 pairs) – a far cry from the 486 counted in 1975 or even the 262 pairs in 1986. Breeding success was better than in 2004 with a total of 44 chicks ringed and only a few found dead.

**ICELAND GULL** *Larus glaucooides*

***Scarce migrant in winter and spring***

Up to 3 first-winters were seen in January and one in February. March produced at least 2 first-winters, a first-summer (8th) and an adult (7th). Further second calendar year birds were seen on 10th April, 13th-15th April, 29th April, 30th April-8th May, 19th May and 8th June. A third calendar year bird was seen on 5th June. In autumn, a first year on Bunes 7th-8th October and another at South Light on 25th November were the only sightings.

**+ GLAUCOUS GULL** *Larus hyperboreus*

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

Three first-winters were present in early January and a second-winter on 24th. Spring passage in March produced different singles on 16th, 20th and 21st. No further records until the autumn when a first-winter on 11th November, was followed by 3 (an adult and 2 first-winters) on 25th and 2 (a second-winter and a first-winter) on 27th. Finally, a first-winter was seen on 10th December.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus marinus*

***Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also hard-weather migrant, autumn and winter***

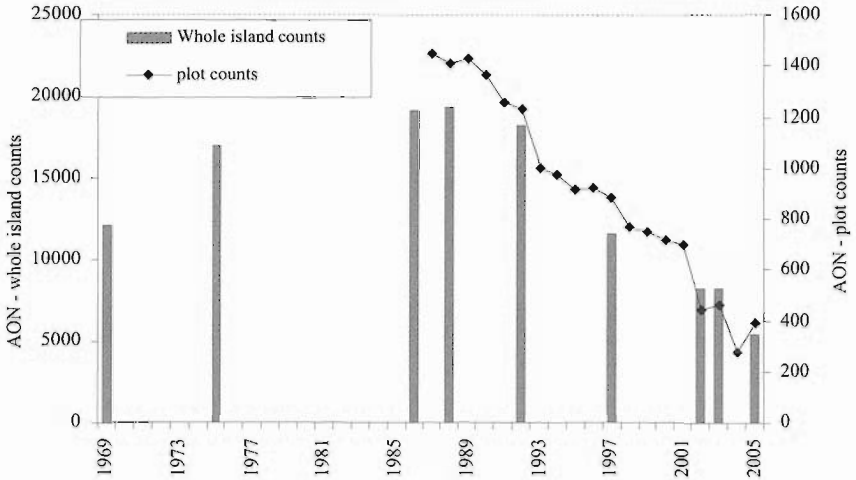
Present all year. No regular counts were made, but 550 were ashore in high winds on 25th October, 400 on 28th October and 600 on 29th November.

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** *Rissa tridactyla*

**Common autumn passage migrant; breeds in large numbers**

As usual, not seen regularly offshore until March and the breeding colonies were well attended by the third week. The island population of Black-legged kittiwake has declined by 33.5% in just three years – continuing a steady decline since 1990. The whole island count in 2002 was 8,175 Apparently Occupied Nests, but in 2005 only 5,433 were counted.

Numbers of AON at annual monitoring plots increased at all sites (compared to the record low of 2004) but for Da Nizz, which declined by a further 15% (60 AON in 2004 to 51 in 2005), and also Da Swadin, which again saw no birds attempt breeding. The total for all sites combined was 391 AON – an increase of 43.2% from 2004 – but still only half the number present as recent as 1998 (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Whole island and plot counts of Black-legged kittiwake nests on Fair Isle, 1969-2005. Plot counts are the sum of 10 study plots.

Following two seasons of complete failure to fledge any chicks, 2005 saw a slightly improved situation. Birds were, as in 2004, extremely late to start nesting with most pairs standing idle on ledges until the last few days of May. A lot of activity then followed and the overall number of AONs on the plots (391) was 43% higher than in 2004. Productivity ranged from zero at Shaldi Cliff (no chicks from 18 nests) to 0.76 at Bergaroo (19 chicks from 25 nests) and an overall mean of 0.41, although an improvement, is still some way below the long-term (1986-2002) mean of 0.68. In autumn, birds were regularly seen offshore until late October and occasionally in November/December.

+ **SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis*

**Scarce summer migrant**

Two in the Havens on 1st July had risen to 4 on 4th with a single on 6th and 3 on 7th. Another 2 were seen on 25th July.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo*

**Summer visitor, breeds in small numbers**

One on 3rd May was the only sighting until 4 on 23rd May. Birds were then seen almost daily until 23rd August, with a peak of 8 on 6th July, and on 3 further dates until 10th September. Since the early 1990's Common tern has barely maintained a breeding population on Fair Isle and with the population down to just a single pair in 2002 (which failed) it was perhaps a surprise that the birds returned in 2003. However no nesting attempt was made – the first time in over 30 years that no Common terns have nested. One pair successfully nested at South Light in 2004, raising a single chick to fledging and in 2005 this increased to three nests and three fledged chicks.

**ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea*

**Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers**

A single on 2nd May was followed by 1-5 on 3 dates until 60 on 11th May signalled the start of the main arrival. Numbers peaked at 400 on 26th May but few remained to breed. They failed to fledge any young for the fourth consecutive season. Being confined to feeding within the top few inches of the sea's surface, Arctic terns (along with Black-legged Kittiwakes) are liable to suffer in times of a sandeel shortage, which appears to have been the case in 2001-2005. In 2001, just four fledged from a record 2,836 pairs. Numbers have dropped dramatically since then and from 47 AIA in 2005, just a handful of chicks hatched, which all died shortly afterwards – either from starvation or depredation.

Birds began to gather at South Light from mid-July (peak of 400 on 25th-26th) and had nearly all departed by mid-August. Sporadic counts of 1-4 were then received up to 24th October.

**COMMON GUILLEMOT** *Uria aalge*

**Common autumn passage migrant; breeds in large numbers**

Small numbers were occasionally noted offshore in January and early February. The first birds were ashore on 22nd February but not ever-present until late March. The whole island census in June revealed a six-year decrease of 30.4%, from a peak of 39,257 attendant adult birds in 1999 to 27,320 in 2005.

At annual monitoring plots, the total count of 2,030 AIA was an increase of 35.7% from the record low in 2004 (1,496 AIA) and close to that made in 2003 (2,023).

The previous two years have seen the worst breeding seasons on record (Figure 5). Early signs in 2005 were also not good with late arrival and very low attendance. The first egg was laid on the 16th May by a lone bird sitting on a ledge at Peitron (three weeks later than normal and even three days later than in 2004). By late May, only a handful of eggs had been laid. However, about 29th May birds suddenly sprang into action – attendance was much higher and more eggs were laid. An average final productivity at the two plots of 0.28, although a long-way short of the long-term mean (0.74), is still better than expected and a vast improvement on the total failure to fledge any chicks in 2004. However, chick weights were very low and this may have implications for their post-fledging survival. Virtually all had departed by early August and small numbers were seen daily offshore until November and occasionally until the end of the year.

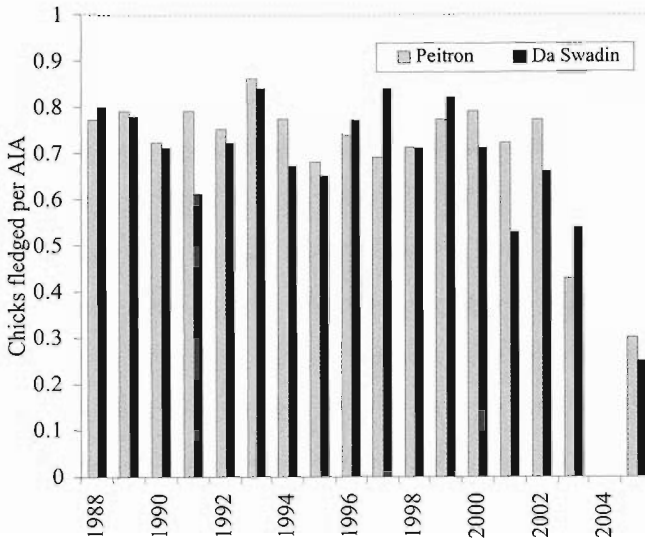


Figure 5. Breeding success of Common Guillemot at two study plots on Fair Isle 1988-2005.

### **RAZORBILL** *Alca torda*

#### **Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers**

A total of 3,421 Razorbills was counted at breeding sites around the island, a decrease of 4.9% on the 3,599 recorded during the last whole island count in 2000. At the Lericum monitoring site however, 2005 saw the highest ever count of birds present since records began in 1997. From eight counts in June a mean population of 94.4 birds is an increase of 60.3% from 2004.



Productivity at the Easter Lothar monitoring site in 2003 was estimated at 0.43 chicks assumed fledged per egg laid – a 36.8% decrease from 2002. Since monitoring began at this site in 1990, average productivity up to 2002 had been 0.62 (range 0.49-0.80). In 2004, as with Guillemots, no chicks fledged – zero productivity for the first time on record. In 2005, the situation was much improved from this and a record number of eggs (102) were laid at the plot. Repeat biometrics, however, showed that chicks were very underweight (even losing weight between visits) and a final productivity of 0.44 is similar to that of 2003 – the third year in a row of low fledging success. Virtually all had departed by early August and small numbers were noted offshore until 26th October.

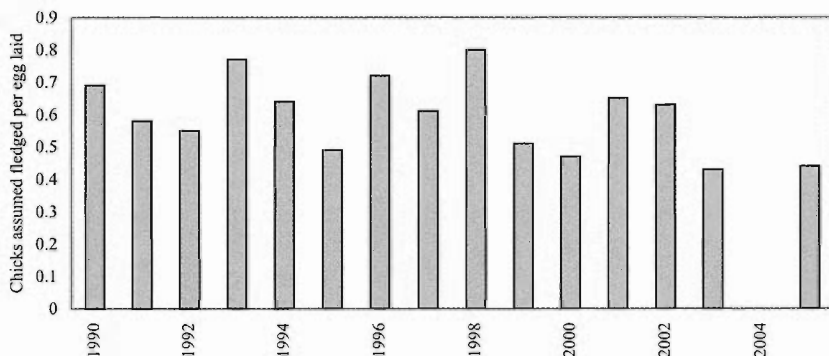


Figure 6. Breeding success of Razorbill at Easter Lothar, Fair Isle, 1990-2005.

### **BLACK GUILLEMOT** *Cephus grylle*

#### ***Resident, breeds in moderate numbers***

Numbers of Black guillemot along the entire east coast of the isle (North Light – South Light) had risen by 25.2% between 2004 and 2005. The final count was of 144 birds in breeding plumage.

**Table 1: Black Guillemot counts along entire east coast 1989-2004**

Year	'89	'91	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05
Max count	286	241	190	240	216	224	254	160	144	173	139	124	157	115	144
% change	+30.0	-15.7	-21.2	+26.3	-10.0	+3.7	+13.4	-37.0	-10.0	+20.1	-19.7	-10.8	+26.6	-26.8	+25.2

### **LITTLE AUK** *Alle alle*

#### ***Frequent late autumn/winter visitor***

One in the Havens on 9th January was the only winter sighting. Small numbers were seen offshore from 19th-30th October and occasionally until the end of the year.

### **ATLANTIC PUFFIN** *Fratercula arctica*

#### ***Summer visitor, breeds in large numbers***

In spring, two in the Bay of Furse on 24th March were the first and birds were

ashore from early April. An albino bird was seen on the sea at Wirvie on 11th July. Of 64 colour-ringed birds at Roskilie in 2004 just 21 were re-sighted in 2005 – the lowest return rate (32.8%) on record. Puffins have always appeared to be fairly successful with productivity never falling below 0.57 over the years (apart from 2001 – productivity of 0.31). This year saw a slight improvement on last year's productivity (0.63) with a figure equal to the long-term mean of 0.67. However, as in 2004 many (indigestible) Snake Pipefish were found discarded at the entrance to burrows indicating that preferred food was in short supply. Twenty-five food samples were obtained in 2005 and from a total of 152 individual fish, 53.6% were small Lesser sandeel, 2.6% Snake pipefish, 7.3% Gadidae, 36.8% Sprat and a single Greater sandeel (0.66%). The mean weight of samples was 5.67+0.29g – a vast improvement on the weights of samples in 2004 ( $3.3 \pm 0.78$ g) and similar to weights from 1998-2003 (range 5.3-6.1g). However, sample weights in the years 1990-1997 never fell below 7.6g and reached as high as 10.1g (in 1996). The average length of Sandeels in 2005 was also below average, at 59.1mm.

The all-day feeding watch at Roskilie on 7th July however, showed small Sprats to be the main food item brought back to chicks (61.11% of the 251 feeds logged). The number of feeds per burrow per day (6.44) was similar but slightly less than in 2004 (6.58).

An extraordinarily late breeding bird was observed carrying fish into a burrow on 4th September. Small numbers were seen offshore from mid-August to mid-September and singles on 9th & 12th October were the last.

**ROCK PIGEON (DOVE)** *Columba livia*

***Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also frequent spring and autumn migrant***

Not regularly censused. No high numbers were noted.

**+ STOCK PIGEON (DOVE)** *Columba oenas*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

Two on 4th April and 3 on 27th April were the only records.

**COMMON WOOD PIGEON** *Columba palumbus*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, a single on 18th-26th March preceded almost daily sightings from 5th April-8th July. Most counts were of 1-6 but higher numbers were noted occasionally; 18 on 28th April, 12 on 12th May and 10 on 24th-26th May. Sporadic singles were noted on 9 dates from 31st July-11th October and single figures daily from 15th October-17th November.

**EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*

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

One on 19th-20th April preceded almost daily sightings from 30th April-7th July. Most counts were below 6 but higher numbers in June produced counts of 14 (8th), 11 (17th & 23rd). In autumn, sporadic singles were seen from 29th July-2nd November, a total of just 4 birds.

**EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE** *Streptopelia turtur*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, sightings were confined to June with singles on 7 dates between 2nd-29th and a peak of 3 on 22nd. There was just one autumn record – a single on 15th September.

+ **COMMON CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus*

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

Singles on 19th & 21st June were followed by further singles on 5th-13th July and 21st-27th July.

+ **SNOWY OWL** *Bubo scandiacus*

***Vagrant; 23 previous records (22 in spring)***

The first record since 1991. One flew across the airstrip ahead of the incoming Loganair plane on the morning of 2nd April. It spent the remainder of the day on Vaassetter but had departed by the following morning.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**LONG-EARED OWL** *Asio otus*

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

In spring, singles were present on 2nd-4th April, 23rd & 31st May. Autumn records comprised singles on 26th September & 4th October and 2 from 18th-22nd October (with a peak of 3 on 19th) and 29th October with singles on a further 5 dates up to 12th December – an autumn total of at least 10 birds.

**SHORT-EARED OWL** *Asio flammeus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, one on 21st March preceded daily sightings of 1-5 from 19th April-14th June and irregularly until 12th July. In autumn, singles were seen regularly from 9th August until the end of September, except for 3 on 28th September. Further passage, from 7th October-2nd November included an influx from 15th-22nd October when 6 on 15th increased daily to a peak of 23 on 20th.

**COMMON SWIFT** *Apus apus*

***Frequent spring, summer and autumn migrant***

A fairly early record on 2nd May was followed with irregular counts of 1-6 from

21st May-24th August, with a peak of 11 on 3rd July. Singles on 4th & 22nd September were the last.

+ **EURASIAN WRYNECK** *Jynx torquilla*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, a single on 19th April was followed with 3 the following day, another on 23rd April and the last on 14th May. The only autumn records were singles on 4th & 10th September.

+ **GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopos major*

**Scarce and irregular irruptive autumn migrant; vagrant in spring**

One from 31st May-2nd June was only the 8th spring record.

+ **GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK** *Calandrella brachydactyla*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

One was reported on Vaasetter on 24th May. One lingered on Malcolm's Head from 15th-22nd October.

**SKY LARK** *Alauda arvensis*

**Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers over-winter; breeds in small numbers**

Irregular counts of 1-6 were made in January/February. A count of 18 on 8th March signalled the start of spring migration and the first singing birds were heard on 16th. A large influx on 20th March produced a count of 400, peaking at 450 on 28th March and numbers remained high (130-400) until 20th April. Lesser numbers (25-100) continued to pass through until mid-May. Autumn passage was heaviest from mid-September to mid-October when counts exceeded 100 almost daily with peaks of 225 (28th September), 290 (2nd October) & 240 (12th October). Numbers then fell to 30-50 until the end of October and to single figures by mid-November until the end of the year.

+ **HORNED (SHORE) LARK** *Eremophila alpestris*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

One lingered on Meoness from 4th-10th May and others were seen on 13th & 14th May.

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

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

In spring 1-7 were irregularly recorded between 30th April – 27th June. No autumn records.

**BARN SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica*

**Common spring and autumn migrant; occasionally breeds**

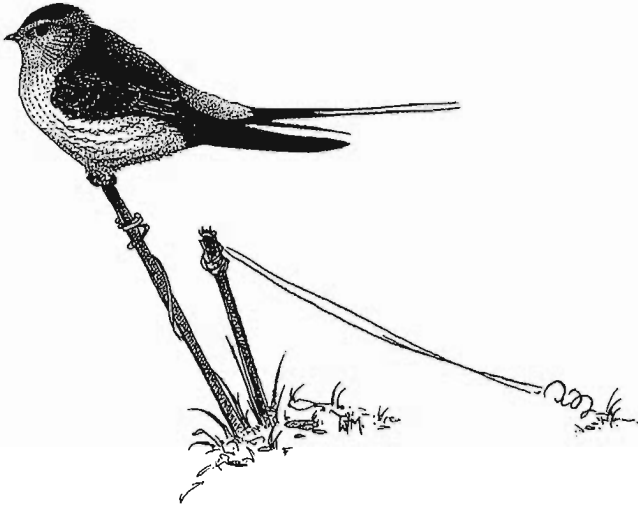
The first, on 19th April, preceded daily sightings from 24th April. Passage was heaviest in May but peaked at just 50 on 2nd, 21st & 22nd. Numbers in June were below 20 and single figures lingered from late June throughout July. Autumn passage commenced in early August and birds were seen daily until 12th September and regularly until 29th September. Counts exceeded 10 on just 4 dates with a maximum of 19 on 19th August. Five on 5th October and a late single on 21st October were the last.

**+ RED-RUMPED SWALLOW** *Cecropis daurica* (5,17, 39,485)

**Vagrant; five previous records, all in May/June**

The first since May 2000; one was seen in various parts of the south of the isle on 5th-6th June.

*Accepted by BBRC*



*Red-rumped Swallow (Will Miles)*

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbicum*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred**

In spring, one on 28th April was the first and birds were seen on most days from 30th April-26th June, with later birds on 3rd & 5th July. Most counts were of single figures but the third week of May produced daily counts of 13-32. In autumn, singles on 7th September and a lingering bird from 2nd-16th October were the only records.

**RICHARD'S PIPIT** *Anthus richardi*

**Scarce autumn migrant, vagrant in spring**

One found at Roskilie on 2nd May stayed around the Observatory until 9th May – only the 3rd spring record. In autumn, one on 25th-27th September was replaced by another from 27th September-6th October. Then, 1-3 daily from 15th-23rd October and a single on 4th-5th November.

+ **TAWNY PIPIT** *Anthus campestris*

**Vagrant; 16 previous records (12 in spring)**

An elusive individual was found on Bunes on 23rd May and was seen there again on 31st May – the first record since 1993 and the first in spring since 1990.

Accepted by SBCRC

+ **OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT** *Anthus hodgsoni*

(67, 127, 152, 274)

**Rare autumn migrant, vagrant in spring**

One was at North Naaversgil on 25th September. In October, one at Sma' Trinket Geo on 13th was followed by an amazing report of one inside the Axel trap near the Observatory on 16th. Another was found on Rippack on 23rd October and a possible flew over Barkland on 4th November.

Birds of 25th September, 13th and 23rd October accepted by BBRC. Others not accepted

**TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

A light spring passage saw daily counts of 1-6 from 19th April-4th June and the last on 8th June. A poor autumn saw singles on 15 dates between 21st August-8th October, with a peak of just 2 on 5th September. Finally, one on 26th October was the last.

**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis*

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

One was reported on 28th January. Spring passage commenced on 17th March but numbers did not exceed 100 until April, peaked at 300 on 21st April and petered out in early May. In autumn, passage was heaviest from 24th August-8th September, when daily counts exceeded 400 and peaked at 750 on 1st September, but counts of 200-400 were received right up to 17th October. Numbers then dropped below 100 and had fallen to below 20 by November with just 1-2 in December.

**ROCK PIPIT** *Anthus petrosus*

**Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also frequent spring and autumn migrant**

Present all year and no counts attempted although 'lots' were noted flying north on 17th March. Individuals of the Scandinavian race *A.p.littoralis* were seen on 23rd March, 18th May & 23rd May.

**YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, birds were recorded from 13th-23rd May and again between 31st May-17th June. Numbers were typically low with singles on 12 dates, 2 on 2 dates and a maximum of 3 on 18th May. The majority of sightings (10) were of the Grey-headed race *M.f.thunbergi* with just one of the British race *M.f.flavissima* (19th May) and the remainder (9) were unidentified. There were no autumn records – the first blank autumn since 1983.

**+ CITRINE WAGTAIL** *Motacilla citreola*

**(47, 84, 110, 173)**

**Vagrant; 47 previous records**

A first-summer ♂ was discovered at Barkland on 29th April and it remained in the area until 2nd May – only our 2nd ever spring record, following a first-summer ♂ on 26th April 1996.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant; has bred**

In spring, there were sporadic singles from 30th March-15th May and a late bird on 26th June – an estimated total of 7 birds. In autumn, a single on 25th August was followed by irregular counts of 1-2 on 8 dates in September and daily sightings of 1-3 in October.

**WHITE/PIED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant; occasional breeder**

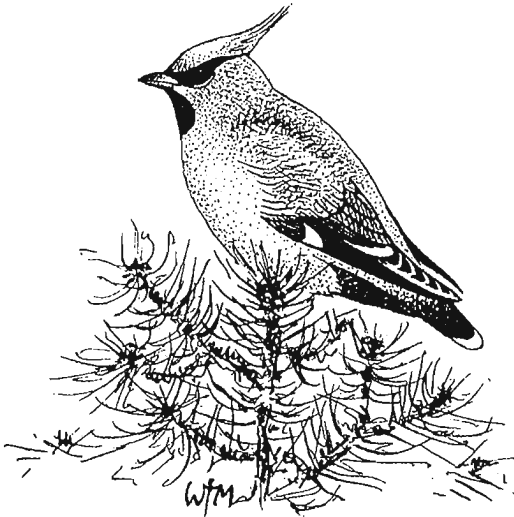
As every year, the first to arrive were Pied Wagtails *M.a.yarrellii* with sightings from 6th March. A light passage was daily from 11th April and most counts were below 10, with a peak of 17 on 2nd May. The first White Wagtail *M.a.alba* was on 3rd April but there were no more records until daily passage from 20th April-5th June. All counts were below 10 but for a peak of 17 on 28th April. At least 3 pairs of Pied Wagtails remained to breed with the first fledged young on 9th June. Autumn passage commenced in mid-August and ran until 23rd October. The vast majority of birds passed through in the last week of August and first week of September when most counts were over 50, peaking at 110 on 24th August. The majority (70%) of birds assigned to race were White Wagtails.

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING** *Bombycilla garrulus*

**Scarce/irruptive autumn migrant, rare in spring**

Following a record influx into Britain during the previous autumn/winter, a good return passage was predicted. Two on 19th April were followed by 1-2 on 10 further dates up to 28th May – a total of 7 birds. In autumn, birds were seen on most days

between 21st October and 9th November and the last on 16th November, with the majority from 3rd-7th November; 11 on 3rd rose to 40 the following day, falling to 14 on 5th and 9 by 6th-7th.



*Waxwing (Will Miles)*

**WHITE-THROATED DIPPER** *Cinclus cinclus*

*Rare spring & autumn migrant; 32 previous records*

What was assumed to be the same mobile individual was found in Wirvie on 26th-27th October and was seen in Hjukni Geo the following day. It was in the Gully and then back at Wirvie on 29th, the Gully again on 31st and was last seen in the Vaadal on 5th November. As with most records, it was considered to be of the nominate race (Black-bellied Dipper).

**WINTER WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

*Resident, breeds in small numbers. Also scarce spring and autumn migrant (status unclear)*

Present all year. The annual survey of singing males noted a minimum of 30 territories – about average and an increase of 3 from 2004. No noticeable passage was observed in spring, but 1-2 of the nominate race were noted on 6 dates in the latter half of October.

**HEDGE ACCENTOR (DUNNOCK)** *Prunella modularis*

*Frequent spring and autumn migrant; has bred*

In spring, the first on 22nd March was followed by counts of 1-8 on 6 dates until



daily sightings from 13th April-18th May, with stragglers up to 5th June. Passage was heaviest in April when double-figure counts from 19th peaked at 29 on 28th. Autumn passage commenced on 11th September and counts of 1-3 were regular up to 30th October with stragglers up to 17th November.

**EUROPEAN ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

Up to 8 were counted in January/February. Spring migration commenced with 10 on 20th March, 24 on 23rd and a peak of 74 on 28th. Counts in early April fluctuated from 3-30 but heavier passage in the last two weeks saw daily counts over 20 and a peak of 55 on 24th. Single figures were recorded daily in May up to 13th then irregularly up to 2nd June and the last on 12th June. In autumn, one alighted on *The Good Shepherd IV* crossing on 6th September followed by one on land on 12th before daily records from 25th September. Just single figures were recorded until main passage from 15th-31st October saw daily counts over 20 and a peak of 50 on 16th. Small numbers (2-6) were noted in November/December.

+ **THRUSH NIGHTINGALE** *Luscinia luscinia* (47, 65, 95,155)

***Rare spring migrant, vagrant in autumn***

One, a first-winter, at Skerryholm on 5th-6th September was only the 5th autumn record.

*Accepted by BBRC*

+ **SIBERIAN RUBYTHROAT** *Luscinia calliope* (2, 3, 3, 4)

***Vagrant; two previous records***

A first-winter ♀ was found near Midway on 23rd October. It could be elusive at times but tended to favour the rig at Quoy. It became trapped in the byre there on the morning of 27th, where it was caught and ringed before being released back into the crop. It remained there for the remainder of the day but was not seen subsequently.

This was the 3rd record for Fair Isle (previously 9th-11th October 1975 & 17th-19th October 2003). There have only been two other British records (in Dorset, October 1997 and Mainland Shetland, October 2001 – found dead).

*Accepted by BBRC*

**BLUETHROAT** *Luscinia svecica*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

A fairly quiet spring saw 1-2 daily from 19th-26th May, 3 on 31st May and the last on 2nd June – a total of 10 birds. Autumn records comprised daily singles from 25th September-8th October (apart from 2 on 30th September) and 20th-27th & 31st October, a total of 5 birds.

**BLACK REDSTART** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

**Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn**

In spring, one at Quoy from 24th-26th March was followed with singles on 2nd, 14th & 22nd April and 1-2 regularly from 26th April-9th June, an estimated total of 13 birds. Autumn passage commenced early, on 19th July and 1-2 were seen regularly right up to 28th October, with later birds on 18th November and 8th December (2).

**COMMON REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, 1-4 were recorded daily from 20th-30th April and 1-2 from 19th May-5th June. Two on 16th June and a single on 24th June were the last. In autumn, a single on 5th September was not followed until another on 23rd and 11 on 25th with 1-3 until 30th. Later records comprised 1-2 daily from 15th-22nd October.

**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, a ♀ on 2nd May was followed with regular counts of 1-4 from 13th May-9th June. Autumn passage began on 19th August and there were 1-5 daily up to 22nd October but for peaks of 6 on 2nd September & 1st October and 8 on 25th September.

**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, a male on 16th March was the first and there were 1-4 on 6 dates to 31st March, singles on 5th & 16th April and 1-4 from 24th-28th April. In autumn, daily singles from 10th-22nd October probably related to just 1 or 2 birds.

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

**Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small/moderate numbers**

Unusually, the first was a ♀ on 22nd March and 2-5 were seen almost daily until 5th April (apart from 10 on 3rd). Passage became daily from 11th April and was 100+ from 24th when birds of the Greenland race *O.o.leucorhoa* joined the rush northwards. Peak passage was from 11th-23rd May when numbers exceeded 200 daily, with 4 counts over 300 (including a maximum of 380 on 17th) and had petered out by mid-June. Return passage began in late July and was heaviest in the latter half of August/early September when almost daily counts over 100 peaked at 158 on 26th August. Numbers had fallen below 30 by October and were down to single figures by the last week of the month, up until 3rd November. Late singles on 12th & 13th November were the last.

**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, one on 29th March was followed by singles on 5th & 7th April, 3 on 13th and daily counts of 3-24 from 16th April-5th May, with 1-2 regularly until 26th May. Late singles on 17th & 19th June were the last. Autumn passage was confined to daily sightings from 5th-25th October, mainly involving single figures but with peaks of 15 & 19 (17th & 20th respectively).

**COMMON BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula*

**Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers over-winter; has bred**

Counts in January/February/early March ranged from 10-35. Spring passage began in mid-March when 61 on 17th rose to 130 by 20th and peaked at 150 on 23rd but had fallen below 25 by April. Single figures were recorded throughout May until 29th. A female with a brood patch was trapped on 17th June and another female was trapped on 22nd June. The latter summered around the Observatory and was last seen on 9th September. One on 18th September was the first autumn migrant and birds were daily from 23rd. A fall of 100 on 8th October was the first sizeable influx and 200-500 were noted daily between 15th-22nd with later falls on 25th (350) & 31st (265). Numbers dropped rapidly after 1st November with 40 the highest December count.

**+ BLACK-THROATED THRUSH** *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis* (8, 22, 27, 54)

**Vagrant; eight previous records (seven in autumn)**

A first-winter female was discovered on Hoini on 21st-22nd October. A stunning male was found at Klingers Geo the following day and remained in the south-east of the island until 24th October.

*Accepted by BBRC*

**FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris*

**Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters**

A single on 2nd and 2 on 31st January were the only winter records. Spring passage commenced with a single on 9th March and 8-15 were seen daily from 17th-28th March and again in early April. Main passage was in the second half of April and primarily between 19th-23rd, when counts exceeded 200 daily and peaked at 400 on 20th. Occasional stragglers were seen up to 28th May. In autumn, 1-2 early birds were seen between 13th-23rd August and 1-4 almost daily throughout September up to 13th October. Main passage then commenced, but numbers were generally low and only exceeded 100 on 6 dates to the end of October, including a peak of 300 on 25th. An influx on 1st November produced a maximum 500 but most quickly moved on. Further (smaller) influxes meant that birds were present to the end of the year, with 100 on 8th December the next highest count.

**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos*

**Common spring and autumn migrant, sometimes over-winters; has bred**

Higher than normal numbers overwintered. Peak counts in the first three months were; 16 (26th January), 12 (15th February) & 21 (28th March). Spring passage commenced with 64 on 19th April, rising to 170 (max spring count) the following day, with 75 on 21st and 105 on 22nd. Numbers then rapidly dwindled to single figures by May, with daily sightings up to 15th and stragglers to 4th June. In summer, one was present from 5th-13th July. In autumn, a single on 1st September was followed by irregular sightings of 1-3 until daily passage from 21st September. Just single figures were seen until 5th October when counts increased to 30-80 daily to 14th October. A fall of 500 (maximum count) on 15th had halved the following day but had risen again to 420 on 17th. Numbers then slowly dwindled to below 50 by November and 15 was the highest December count.

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*

**Common spring and autumn migrant, sometimes over-winters; has bred**



*Redwing (Will Miles)*

Overwintering numbers were fairly high with up to 65 counted in January and 30 in February & March.

Spring passage was barely discernible and 84 on 17th April was the only count over 20. There were regular sightings of 1-4 in May up to the last on 6th June. In autumn, small numbers were noted from 24th

September until a fall of 130 on 4th October was the precursor of some heavy passage. At least 2,000 arrived on 5th October and counts fluctuated from 600-3,000 up to 14th. A large fall on 15th produced an estimated 12,000 birds and 4,000-6,000 were recorded daily up to 20th. Numbers then fell to 1,600 on 21st and below 800 from 22nd (apart from 2,100 on 25th) and

to 350 by 1st November, 100 by 9th and 25 by 17th. Later influxes produced a peak December count of 100 (10th) and smaller numbers to the end of the year.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus*

**Scarce spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, 2 on 18th March were followed by another 2 on 23rd and 7 on 28th, with 2 until 4th April and further singles on 16th-22nd April and 22nd-24th May. In autumn, there were 1-4 almost daily from 15th-31st October.

+ **LANCEOLATED WARBLER** *Locustella lanceolata* (68, 84, 88, 104)

**Rare autumn migrant (68 previous records)**

One was found and trapped in the Bull's Park bird crop on 13th October and was released at the Observatory after ringing, where it was still present the following day. Another was discovered in the wetland opposite Aesterhoull on 17th October. Both accepted by BBRC

**COMMON GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, there were 1-6 on most days 20th April-7th May and a further 1-2 from 19th-22nd May – an estimated spring total of c15 birds. One on 10th September was the sole autumn record.

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

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

In spring, 1-2 from 12th-15th May were the first, followed by 2-9 daily from 20th May-5th June and stragglers on a further 6 dates to 27th June. Autumn records comprised 1-5 from 13th-19th August and just four more singles up to 15th September.

+ **BLYTH'S REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (20, 31, 45, 70)

**Vagrant; 20 previous records (5 in spring, 15 in autumn)**

One was found and trapped at the Chalet on 16th June and was still present the following day.

Twelve of the 21 records have been in the last 10 years.

Still under consideration by BBRC

+ **MARSH WARBLER** *Acrocephalus palustris*

**Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn**

In spring, there were 2 on 3rd June with one the following day and another on 14th-15th June. Autumn records comprised singles on 8th and 21st-27th August.

**EURASIAN REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

**Scarce spring migrant, regular in autumn**

In spring, 1-4 were recorded most days from 22nd May-16th June – an estimated total of 8 or 9 birds. For the third year in a row there was a mid-summer record, on 8th July. In autumn, there were 1-3 on most days 1st-11th September, singles on 21st, 23rd & 26th September and later singles on 13th, 19th & 20th-21st October.

***Acrocephalus sp.***

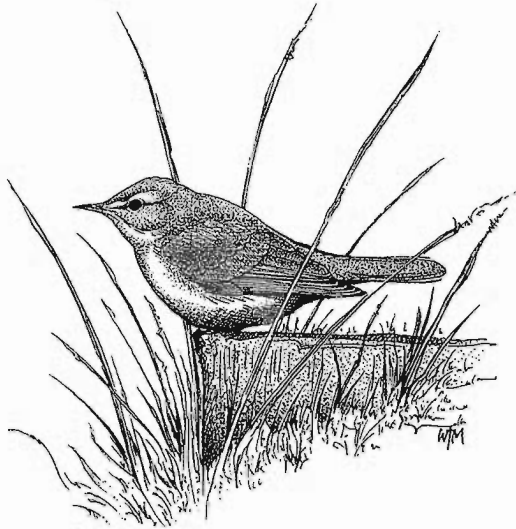
An unstreaked *acro.*, seen briefly at Barkland on 27th October, was thought to be either a Reed Warbler or a Blyth's Reed Warbler.

+ **GREAT REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus aedon* (11, 27, 38, 219)  
*Vagrant; 11 previous records (10 in spring)*

One was caught in North Grind trap on 13th May – the first since 1996.  
*Still under consideration by BBRC*

+ **BOOTED WARBLER** *Hippolais caligata* (11, 29, 36, 93)  
*Vagrant; 11 previous records (all in autumn)*

One, discovered in Field Ditch on the evening of 4th September, was seen at various crofts in the south until 6th September.  
*Still under consideration by BBRC*



*Booted Warbler (Will Miles)*

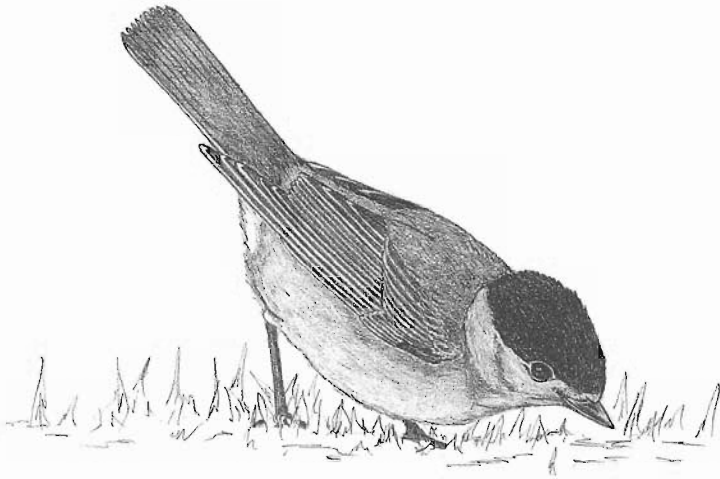
**ICTERINE WARBLER** *Hippolais icterina*  
*Scarce spring and autumn migrant*

In spring, there were 4 on 25th May (one remaining until 27th) and singles daily from 31st May-6th June and 15th-17th June – a total of at least 7 birds. In autumn, one on 2nd September had risen to 3 by 4th, with one lingering until 9th September.

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla*  
*Common spring and autumn migrant*

In spring, 3 on 19th April had risen to 7 the following day and 1-5 were recorded on most days from 24th April-18th June (but for 7 on 1st June) and the last on 25th June. In autumn, birds were present almost daily from 4th September-2nd

November. Just single figures were noted in September (except for 34 on 25th) and heavier passage in October included large maxims of 120 (17th), 95 (20th) & 80 (25th). One on 9th November was the last.



*Blackcap (Mark Warren)*

**GARDEN WARBLER** *Sylvia borin*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, there were regular counts of 1-3 from 21st May-27th June, with a peak of 4 on 14th June and a later bird on 2nd July. Autumn counts were only slightly more with 1-6 on most days from 13th August-25th September and 1-3 on 10 dates between 1st & 21st October.

**BARRED WARBLER** *Sylvia nisoria*

***Regular autumn migrant, vagrant in spring***

One on 14th August was followed by 2 on 19th, rising to 7 on 20th and 1-6 daily until 26th September. In October, singles on 4th, 14th & 20th were the last.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, an early single on 25th April was followed by another on 1st May and 2-3 birds between 8th-21st May. Main passage saw daily counts of 2-5 from 22nd May-4th June, apart from a maximum of 11 on 25th, followed by regular counts of 1-3 until the last on 16th June. In autumn, 1-2 were daily from 31st August-9th September, rising to 6 on 10th. There were no more until 1-2 from 23rd-25th September and singles on 1st & 15th October were the last.

**COMMON WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis*

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

In spring, a single on 27th April rose to 3 birds the following day. Birds were scarce (just 4 more birds) until daily passage from 19th May-18th June peaked at 6 on four dates with stragglers until 24th June. One on 8th July was not unprecedented. Autumn saw just daily singles 3rd-8th September and only one more, on 30th September-1st October.

+ **SUBALPINE WARBLER** *Sylvia cantillans* (67, 141, 194, 525)

***Rare spring migrant (63 previous records), vagrant in autumn (two records)***

A first-summer ♀ frequented the Chalet/Barkland area on 1st-5th June.  
*Still under consideration by BBRC*

+ **ARCTIC WARBLER** *Phylloscopus borealis* (72, 131, 167, 266)

***Rare autumn migrant (68 records), vagrant in spring (four previous records)***

One was trapped in the Vaadal on 22nd June and was still present there the following day – our fifth and earliest spring record.  
*Accepted by BBRC*

+ **PALLAS'S WARBLER** *Phylloscopus proregulus*

***Vagrant; 36 previous records***

Recorded for the third consecutive year. One at Dronger on 15th October became 2 on 17th, with one remaining until 23rd. Another was at South Light on 22nd October, then one at the School on 25th had moved to Schoolton by 28th October.

**YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER** *Phylloscopus inornatus*

***Regular autumn migrant***

As in 2003, another good year. One on 24th September had risen to 15 (equal 2nd highest count) the following day, with just 4 remaining on 26th. Birds were recorded daily up until 25th October with fluctuating counts of 1-7 and peaks of 12 (15th) & 9 (17th) indicating a high turn-over of birds. Two on 31st October were the last. An estimated total of 42-52 birds is second only to that of autumn 2003 (48-55 birds).

+ **WESTERN BONELLI'S WARBLER** *Phylloscopus bonelli* (1, 6, 7, 70)

***Vagrant; one previous record***

A Bonelli's Warbler, discovered at Quoy late morning on 10th September was, from plumage tones, thought to be this species. This was confirmed by measurements when it was trapped later that afternoon at North Shirva.

This is the second record for the isle. The previous record was on 22nd September



1961. There has also been one unidentified (either Western or Eastern) Bonelli's Warbler – on 30th September 1992.

*Still under consideration by BBRC*

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A poor year. In spring, an early individual on 28th April was only our second ever for that month, but this was not indicative of a good following passage, as the only other sighting was one from 14th-19th June. Similarly, the sole autumn record was a lone bird on 23rd September.

**COMMON CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, singles on 3rd & 4th April were followed by daily sightings from 9th April. Single figures were noted until a fall of 30 (4th highest spring count) on 28th April. Single figures regularly reaching double figures (20 on 23rd May, the next highest count) to the end of May before reverting back to single figures (1-7) throughout June. There was a late arrival of 5 on 1st July, 4 of which remained throughout the summer and well into the autumn, with the last departing on 28th September. Four on 25th September were the first autumn migrants but just occasional singles were then seen until mid-October when passage became daily, until the last on 1st November. All counts were of single figures but for 21 (20th) & 11 (22nd). Several individuals during this latter period were assigned to one of the eastern races *Pc.abietinus* or *Pc.tristis*.

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, 2 on 19th April were the first and birds were almost daily until 5th June, with stragglers up to 24th June. All counts were single figures except for 15 (3rd May) & 11 (23rd May). In autumn, a single on 8th August was followed with daily counts of 1-6 from 13th-25th August and again from 31st August-16th October. Main passage was during the first half of September and a fall of 60 on 10th was by far the largest with just five other counts over 15 and 24 on 12th being the next highest.

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

In spring, 2 on 20th March were followed with 25 on 23rd, rising to 37 (maximum count) the following day and tailing off to single figures throughout April (but for 12 on 3rd & 14th). Stragglers occurred to 11th May with a late bird on 1st June. Autumn passage began on 31st August and single figures were almost daily from 4th September-14th October. Much heavier passage from 15th-21st October saw four counts over 200 and three over 300 (max. 360 on 17th), dropping to 120 on

22nd and 60 by 23rd. There was a further influx of 150 on 25th before rapidly tailing off to single figures by November, with a single on 9th being the last.

**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

A light spring passage saw counts of 1-7 on most dates from 19th May-5th June and 1-2 on a further seven dates between 15th-30th June.

**+ RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula parva*

**Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring**

A single on 16th September was followed by birds on 5th-9th October (with 2 on 6th) and 17th October.

**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

**Frequent spring and autumn migrant**

A very light spring passage saw just 1-2 from 28th April-1st May and singles on 2nd, 3rd, 9th & 15th June. In autumn, there were singles on four dates 14th-23rd August, 1-8 daily from 31st August-11th September and singles on 25th & 26th September.

**+ GREAT TIT** *Parus major*

**Rare spring & autumn migrant; 30 previous records (c43 individuals)**

The first since 2002. Singles were present on 23rd March and 14th-15th April.

**+ EURASIAN GOLDEN ORIOLE** *Oriolus oriolus*

**Rare in spring, Vagrant in autumn; 39 previous records (32 in spring, 7 in autumn)**

A green bird on 20th May was followed by a superb ♂ on 24th May.



Great Grey  
Shrike  
(Will Miles)

**+ RED-BACKED SHRIKE**

*Lanius collurio*

**Regular spring and autumn migrant**

A quiet spring saw a ♀ on 31st May-3rd June, another 14th-15th June, with 2 ♀ on 16th June and a ♂ on 23rd June. In autumn, there was one 20th-28th August, 2 between 3rd-9th September and a late bird on 15th October.

**+ GREAT GREY SHRIKE** *Lanius excubitor*

**Scarce autumn migrant; rare in spring**

One at Quoy on 24th April was the first in spring since April 2000. In autumn, one at Barkland on 9th October was trapped in the Plantation the following day and remained in the area until 13th October.

**EURASIAN JACKDAW** *Corvus monedula*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

One on 30th March remained until 5th April. Then there were 3 on 20th April and 2 on 29th April, with one remaining until 5th May.

**ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus*

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

A good spring saw 3 on 28th March and 2-4 irregularly until 9th April. Nine on 13th April, rose to 10 the following day and 1-9 were logged on most days to 6th May. Finally, one arrived on 9th May and remained right up to 23rd June. In autumn, singles on 18th-21st October and 15th-17th November were, typically, the only records.

**CARRION CROW** *Corvus corone*

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

A good spring passage saw 1-5 almost daily from 4th-29th April. There was an influx of 35 on 30th April, dropping to 16 by 2nd May and single figures throughout the remainder of May (except for another influx of 22 on 11th). Singles were occasionally seen in June and early July. One on 20th-21st October was the sole autumn record.

**HOODED CROW** *Corvus cornix*

***Resident, breeds in small numbers***

The two or three pairs of resident birds cloud records of passage, but 18 on 30th April (with the Carrion Crow influx) were mainly migrants. A few migrants probably passed through in May. After two unsuccessful breeding seasons, one pair did manage to fledge five chicks, in July from a nest at Busta Geo. No definite migrants were noted in autumn.

**COMMON RAVEN** *Corvus corax*

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

The resident four pairs were disturbed by some passage in the second half of April, with regular counts of 2-7 and a large maximum of 21 on 22nd. One was seen carrying nest material on 20th March and the first fledged chicks were noted on 24th May. All four pairs successfully fledged chicks. In autumn, a party of 12 on 1st September was the only noted sign of migration.

**COMMON STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris*

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

Present all year. Peak spring counts were in March, with 800 (1st), 700 (20th) & 980 (28th) particularly high. Following on from last years record number of nests

(115) found around the interior of the isle, 2005 saw a similar number (112). Clutch size (4.7) was also similar to the previous year, however a slightly reduced hatching success (78.7%), but an improved fledging success (83.7%), resulted in a slightly below average overall breeding success (65.9%). The first fledged chicks were noted on 12th June. An albino was present 24th-26th July.

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus*

***Resident, breeds in small numbers***

Present all year. No counts made.

**EURASIAN TREE SPARROW** *Passer montanus*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, there were 4 on 3rd May, dwindling to one by 6th. Another 4 arrived on 12th May, with 2 remaining right through the summer/early autumn and were last seen on 16th September. These were joined briefly by 3 others on 9th July.

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

In winter, 2 ♂ were noted from early January-mid March. Spring passage commenced with 18 on 20th March, peaking at 21 on 23rd. Just single figures were logged on most days in April and throughout May. A ♂ on 20th June was unusual. In autumn, a single from 11th September was joined by another on 21st before daily counts of 1-11 were made from 25th September-9th November, with 1-3 stragglers to the end of the month and a single ♀ into December.

**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla*

***Common spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, birds were recorded between 3rd April-26th May but almost all were seen during 19th April-3rd May, when daily counts of 18-40 were made, with peaks of 60 & 48 (23rd & 28th April respectively). In autumn, 1-4 from 25th September-3rd October increased to 20-50 from 4th-14th October and peaked at 230 on 15th. Numbers then remained between 120-180 until 21st before dropping below 100 with just a few stragglers in November, the last on 30th.

**EUROPEAN GREENFINCH** *Carduelis chloris*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

Two on 4th April and a single on 23rd April were the only spring sightings. In autumn, a brief passage began with 20 on 16th October, peaked at 35 on 22nd and had dwindled to single figures by 27th October. Singles occurred throughout November with the last on 8th December.

**+ EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, there were singles on 3rd-5th April, 17th-27th April and 12th-15th May. In autumn, 3 on 11th October had risen to 4 the following day with further singles on 21st-25th October and 22nd November-7th December.

**EURASIAN SISKIN** *Carduelis spinus*

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

In spring, there were irregular sightings of 1-4 from 19th March-4th June. One on 6th July was an uncommon mid-summer record. In autumn, a single on 7th September was the first and there were regular counts of 1-6 from 25th September-2nd November, with peaks of 13 & 10 on 4th & 11th October respectively. One on 13th November was the last.

**COMMON LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina*

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

In spring, a ♂ on 3rd April was followed with regular counts of 1-4 from 11th April-3rd June. A single was seen on 3 well-dispersed dates in July. Autumn records comprised 2 on 29th September, 5 on 4th October, 1-4 daily from 9th-23rd October with the last, a single, on 29th October.

**TWITE** *Carduelis flavirostris*

***Common spring and autumn migrant, small numbers over-winter; breeds in small numbers***

The maximum winter count was 29 on 15th February and 45 on 9th April was the peak spring count. A small number (5-10 pairs) remained to breed. In autumn, numbers began to build up from 10th August and there were five counts in excess of 100 by the end of the month (peak 127 on 12th). Most counts in September were over 100, peaked at 200 (12th) & 210 (22nd) and were generally around 50 after mid-October, below 20 by November and single figures by December.

**LESSER REDPOLL** *Carduelis cabaret*

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

In spring, singles were identified on 23rd April & 25th May. A Redpoll sp. on 3 dates in mid-July was probably this species. In autumn, 1-3 were seen almost daily from 20th September-28th October.

**COMMON REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, 1-3 were regularly recorded from 26th April-23rd May (a total of 3-4 birds) and one 15th-16th June. All were of the Fenno-Scandian race *C.f.flammea* ('Mealy' Redpoll). An unidentified Redpoll (Lesser or Common) was present

11th-19th July and another on 29th August. From 20th September-3rd October, 1-4 were seen daily, fairly equally split between the three races *C.f.flammea*, *C.f.rostrata* ('Greenland') and *C.f.islandica* ('Iceland'). Heavier passage from 15th-27th October saw daily counts from 13-26 and peaks of 38 (20th) & 84 (25th). The vast majority were *C.f.flammea* but 1-2 each of *C.f.rostrata* and *C.f.islandica* were also identified. Just stragglers remained after 28th October with the last (2) on 22nd November.

+ **ARCTIC REDPOLL** *Carduelis hornemanni* (101, 185, 362, 811)

***Rare autumn migrant; vagrant in spring***

An individual of the race *C.h.exilipes* (Coues' Redpoll) was trapped on 20th October and remained until 25th, with another reported on 23rd October.

*Still under consideration by BBRC*

**COMMON CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra*

***Scarce/irruptive late summer/autumn migrant***

A single ♀ on 15th June preceded 1-4 daily from 22nd-28th June and regular sightings in July/August. Most counts were single figures but mid-July produced counts of 12 (14th) & 30 (19th). Finally, one on 3rd September was the last.

**COMMON ROSEFINCH** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, there were 1-2 on most days from 24th May-9th June, including red ♂ on 27th May & 1st June – a total of around 7 birds. In autumn, 1-2 were noted on six dates from 18th August-3rd September and 1-3 daily from 9th September-6th October, an estimated autumn total of 10-12 birds.

**COMMON BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

***Scarce autumn migrant, less regular in spring***

Following last autumn's incredible influx into western Europe it was anticipated that birds returning north and east would be recorded. In spring, a ♂ on 24th March was followed with a ♀ on 26th & 27th March and further singles on 19th-20th April, 21st April and 27th April-9th May. Autumn produced just 1-3 daily from 19th-25th October – a total of 4-5 birds.

+ **HAWFINCH** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, there were 2 on 28th-29th March, one remaining until 2nd April. One was found dead on 24th April. Similarly, in autumn a single on 13th-14th October was joined by another on 15th with both remaining until 17th October.



*Greenland Redpoll (15th-23rd October).*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Red Kite (18th-23rd October).*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Black-bellied Dipper (26th October-5th November).*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Arctic Redpoll (exilipes) (20th-25th October).*

*Deryk Shaw*



*Pallas's Warbler (22nd October).*

*Rebecca Nason*



*Black-throated Thrush, male  
(23th-24th October).* *Rebecca Nason*



*Lanceolated Warbler (13th-14th  
October).* *Rory Tallack*



*Black-throated Thrush, female  
(21st-22nd October).* *Deryk Shaw*





*Siberian Rubythroat (23rd-27th  
October).* Rebecca Nason



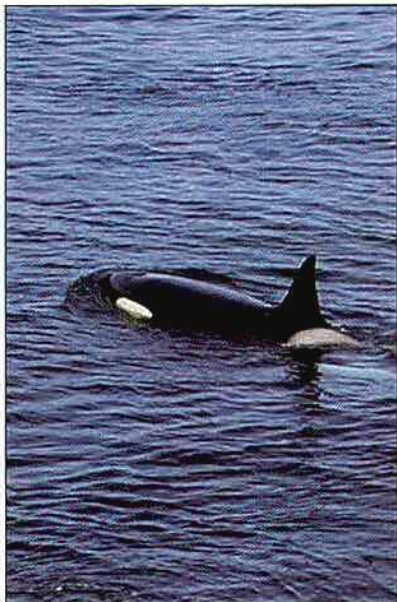
*Rebecca Nason*



*Rebecca Nason*



*Steve Minton*



*Killer Whales (11th June).*



*Deryk Shaw*



*Rael Butcher*



*Becki Rosser*

**LAPLAND LONGSPUR (BUNTING)** *Calcarius lapponicus*

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

Spring records comprised singles on 25th March and 17th-21st April. In autumn, one on 7th September was the first and singles were regularly reported until 5 on 20th September signalled the start of daily sightings, right up until 1st November. Most counts were of 6-12 with peaks of 16 (5th October) & 15 (17th October). Finally, one was reported near South Light on 8th December.

**SNOW BUNTING** *Plectrophenax nivalis*

***Common spring and autumn migrant, often over-winters***

Present all winter with a peak of just 25 on 3rd January & 15th February. Some passage was noted in late March with 40 on 22nd rising to 63 on 23rd. Single figures were noted in April and May but for parties of 12 (12th May) & 10 (15th May), with the last on 4th June. Autumn passage commenced with 2 on 8th September and had reached double figures by 15th. Counts fluctuated widely (20-98) throughout most of October until peak passage from 25th saw numbers exceed 100 daily up to late November, with in excess of 200 on four dates and a maximum of 300 on 31st October. The peak December count was 40 on 24th.

**YELLOWHAMMER** *Emberiza citrinella*

***Regular spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, a male on 20th March was followed with another on 28th and 1-2 from 10th-14th April, 30th April, 12th-13th May and 28th May-4th June. In autumn, 1-2 were present daily from 12th October-2nd November.

+ **ORTOLAN BUNTING** *Emberiza hortulana*

***Scarce spring and autumn migrant***

One, near Auld Haa from 12th September-3rd October, was the only record.

+ **RUSTIC BUNTING** *Emberiza rustica* (116, 209, 280, 445)

***Scarce spring & autumn migrant; 116 previous records***

Two records; a ♂ near the Plantation and Gilsetter on 8th May and another ♂ at Shirva on 13th June.

*Still under consideration by BBRC*

**LITTLE BUNTING** *Emberiza pusilla*

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

In autumn, 1-2 were recorded daily from 25th September-4th October and again from 16th-21st October with a late bird on 6th-7th November – an estimated total of 7 birds.

**REED BUNTING** *Emberiza schoeniclus*

***Frequent spring and autumn migrant***

In spring, 3 on 23rd March were the first and birds were seen almost daily right up to 1st June. All counts were single figures except for 15 (24th April), 11 (28th April) & 12 (3rd May). Similarly in autumn, single figures were noted daily from 25th September-2nd November with a peak of 10 on 17th & 18th October.

**+ CORN BUNTING** *Emberiza calandra*

***Vagrant; formerly bred***

One frequented the crofts in the south of the isle from 25th April-5th May – only the 4th record since the 1970s.

**ESCAPES (Category E):**

**RED-BREASTED GOOSE** *Branta ruficollis*

One mingled with the farmyard/feral ducks on the Chalet pond from 11th July-12th October.

**EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE x BARBARY DOVE**

*Streptopelia turtur x Streptopelia roseogrisea*

A bird superficially resembling a Turtle Dove sp and bearing a plastic ring was trapped on 15th October. It was traced to a collection from near Zwolle, Netherlands. It was hatched in March 2004 (from parentage of a male European Turtle Dove and a female domesticated form of Barbary Dove) and escaped in July 2004. It (or possibly two individuals) was present until 2nd November.

## Recent Rarity Committee Decisions

*Deryk Shaw*

The following recent (non-) decisions by the relevant adjudicating bodies have been received and have not appeared in previous FIBO Reports:

- |       |   |                                    |                            |
|-------|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2001: | Black-headed Bunting                                | adult ♀, Setter,<br>22nd September | Accepted by BBRC           |
| 2003: | Savi's Warbler (of eastern race <i>L.l.fusca</i> ), | 30th September                     | Awaiting BOURC<br>decision |
| 2004: | Rufous-tailed Robin ( <i>Luscinia sibilans</i> ),   | 23rd October                       | Accepted by BOURC          |
|       | Chestnut-eared Bunting ( <i>Emberiza fucata</i> ),  | 15th-20th October                  | Awaiting BOURC<br>decision |

## ***RINGING REPORT***

*Alan Bull*

Mirroring previous years, 2005 was a fairly poor breeding season for Seabirds. Despite this a total of 4,788 birds of 102 species were ringed during the year (see Table 2). Table 1 gives the ten most commonly ringed species.

*Table 1. The ten most commonly ringed species, with totals, on Fair Isle in 2005: (2004 totals for comparison).*

Species	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>
Starling	549	519
Storm Petrel	493	88
Razorbill	396	129
Meadow Pipit	317	300
Blackbird	277	305
Wheatear	271	239
Guillemot	252	13
Shag	241	327
Blackcap	164	124
Redwing	150	73

There were no additions to the ringing list during 2005, although a Siberian Rubythroat, self-trapped in a byre at Quoy, became our (and Britain's) second ringing record and a Western Bonelli's Warbler trapped in September was also our second record. Other unusual species ringed during the year included our seventh Great Reed Warbler, eleventh Blyth's Reed Warbler and Great Tit, twelfth-fifteenth Goldfinch, twelfth Richard's Pipit and seventeenth Whimbrel.

Scarcely ringed species included Golden Plover, Rock Dove and Arctic Redpoll.

High annual totals were achieved for Starling (549) and Redwing (150), whilst wader numbers were increased due to the implementation of baited, walk-in 'spring' traps in the Havens and at South Harbour. Species ringed in low numbers (although 'up' on recent years) once again included all Seabirds as a result of another poor breeding season.

*Table 2. Numbers of birds ringed on Fair Isle and recovered/controlled elsewhere in 2005, together with cumulative totals from 1948*

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i> <i>2005</i>	<i>Total</i> <i>1948-05</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>2005</i>	<i>1948-05</i>
Whooper Swan	–	–	–	41	–	7
Bean Goose	–	–	–	1	–	–
Pink-footed Goose	–	–	–	14	–	1
White-fronted Goose	–	–	–	3	–	1
Greylag Goose	–	–	–	42	–	9
Barnacle Goose	–	–	–	4	–	–
Shelduck	–	–	–	5	–	–
Wigeon	–	–	–	56	1	5
Teal	–	–	–	73	–	4
Mallard	–	–	–	16	–	1
Pintail	–	–	–	2	–	1
Shoveler	–	–	–	1	–	–
Pochard	–	–	–	3	–	–
Ring-necked Duck	–	–	–	1	–	–
Tufted Duck	–	–	–	19	–	–
Scaup	–	–	–	5	–	–
Eider	–	–	–	169	–	1
Long-tailed Duck	–	–	–	18	–	1
Velvet Scoter	–	–	–	2	–	–
Goldeneye	–	–	–	21	–	1
Red-breasted Merganser	–	–	–	3	–	–
Goosander	–	–	–	3	–	1
Quail	–	–	–	9	–	–
Red-throated Diver	–	–	–	1	–	–
Little Grebe	–	–	–	10	–	–
Great Crested Grebe	–	–	–	1	–	–
Red-necked Grebe	–	–	–	1	–	–
Slavonian Grebe	–	–	–	3	–	–
Fulmar	24	75	99	16915	2	174
Storm Petrel	493	–	493	30380	8	1191
Leach's Petrel	5	–	5	92	–	3
Gannet	1	25	26	470	–	9
Cormorant	–	–	–	7	–	–
Shag	6	235	241	22786	4	563
Grey Heron	–	–	–	21	–	–
Marsh Harrier	–	–	–	1	–	–
Hen Harrier	–	–	–	2	–	–

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i> <i>2005</i>	<i>Total</i> <i>1948-05</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>2005</i>	<i>1948-05</i>
Goshawk	—	—	—	2	—	—
Sparrowhawk	9	—	9	376	—	24
Kestrel	2	—	2	50	—	8
Red-footed Falcon	—	—	—	1	—	—
Merlin	—	—	—	194	—	12
Peregrine Falcon	—	—	—	6	—	1
Water Rail	6	—	6	328	—	3
Spotted Crake	—	—	—	19	—	—
Little Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baillon's Crake	—	—	—	1	—	—
Corncrake	—	—	—	42	—	2
Moorhen	—	—	—	101	—	3
Coot	—	—	—	15	—	1
Great Bustard	—	—	—	1	—	—
Oystercatcher	1	20	21	1512	—	72
Little Ringed Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ringed Plover	14	—	14	695	—	6
Dotterel	—	—	—	4	—	—
Golden Plover	1	—	1	24	—	—
Grey Plover	—	—	—	1	—	—
Lapwing	—	—	—	340	—	6
Knot	2	—	2	102	—	2
Sanderling	13	—	13	109	—	1
Semi-palmated Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Little Stint	—	—	—	123	—	—
Temminck's Stint	—	—	—	2	—	—
White-rumped Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Baird's Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Pectoral Sandpiper	—	—	—	5	—	—
Curlew Sandpiper	—	—	—	6	—	—
Purple Sandpiper	11	—	11	170	—	1
Dunlin	32	—	32	585	—	7
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Ruff	—	—	—	41	—	1
Jack Snipe	—	—	—	137	—	3
Common Snipe	9	—	9	485	—	4
Great Snipe	—	—	—	2	—	—
Woodcock	8	—	8	460	—	24
Black-tailed Godwit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Bar-tailed Godwit	—	—	—	9	—	2



<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i> <i>2005</i>	<i>Total</i> <i>1948-05</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>2005</i>	<i>1948-05</i>
Whimbrel	1	–	1	17	–	–
Curlew	–	13	13	172	–	6
Spotted Redshank	–	–	–	3	–	–
Redshank	1	–	1	283	–	3
Greenshank	–	–	–	13	–	–
Green Sandpiper	–	–	–	57	–	1
Wood Sandpiper	–	–	–	19	–	–
Common Sandpiper	–	–	–	70	–	1
Turnstone	5	–	5	86	–	–
Red-necked Phalarope	–	–	–	5	–	–
Grey Phalarope	–	–	–	3	–	–
Pomarine Skua	–	–	–	1	–	–
Arctic Skua	–	4	4	3861	–	67
Great Skua	–	2	2	2494	2	48
Black-headed Gull	–	–	–	46	–	2
Common Gull	–	6	6	209	–	3
Lesser Black-backed Gull	–	7	7	1444	–	34
Herring Gull	–	44	44	4381	–	96
Iceland Gull	–	–	–	1	–	–
Glaucous Gull	–	–	–	40	–	1
Great Black-backed Gull	–	2	2	2845	–	113
Kittiwake	31	8	39	7018	–	37
Common Tern	–	–	–	481	–	3
Arctic Tern	–	16	16	11282	–	36
Guillemot	52	200	252	35784	19	1071
Razorbill	66	330	396	11003	4	259
Black Guillemot	1	5	6	1641	–	19
Little Auk	–	–	–	13	–	–
Puffin	81	50	131	13086	–	33
Rock Dove	1	–	1	68	–	–
Wood Pigeon	–	–	–	72	–	2
Collared Dove	5	–	5	359	–	6
Turtle Dove	–	–	–	81	–	2
Cuckoo	–	–	–	108	–	1
Scops Owl	–	–	–	1	–	–
Snowy Owl	–	–	–	1	–	1
Long-eared Owl	2	–	2	253	–	13
Short-eared Owl	–	–	–	18	–	–
Nightjar	–	–	–	4	–	–
Swift	–	–	–	17	–	1

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i> <i>2005</i>	<i>Total</i> <i>1948-05</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>2005</i>	<i>1948-05</i>
Hoopoe	—	—	—	3	—	—
Wryneck	1	—	1	230	—	—
Great Spotted Woodpecker	—	—	—	29	—	—
Short-toed Lark	—	—	—	9	—	—
Woodlark	—	—	—	3	—	—
Skylark	25	6	31	1301	—	3
Shorelark	—	—	—	5	—	—
Sand Martin	—	—	—	8	—	—
Swallow	1	—	1	260	—	2
House Martin	—	—	—	142	—	1
Richard's Pipit	1	—	1	12	—	—
Blyth's Pipit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Tawny Pipit	—	—	—	3	—	—
Olive-backed Pipit	—	—	—	10	—	—
Tree Pipit	2	—	2	654	—	—
Pechora Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Meadow Pipit	281	36	317	10819	—	45
Red-throated Pipit	—	—	—	9	—	—
Rock Pipit	130	4	134	9620	—	29
Yellow Wagtail	—	—	—	10	—	—
Citrine Wagtail	—	—	—	5	—	—
Grey Wagtail	3	—	3	39	—	1
White/Pied Wagtail	18	—	18	760	—	4
Waxwing	17	—	17	66	—	—
Dipper	—	—	—	15	—	—
Wren	25	—	25	905	—	—
Duncock	72	—	72	2623	—	8
Robin	105	—	105	8992	—	40
Thrush Nightingale	—	—	—	33	—	—
Nightingale	—	—	—	30	—	—
Rufous-tailed Robin	—	—	—	1	—	—
Siberian Rubythroat	1	—	1	2	—	—
Bluethroat	6	—	6	289	—	2
Red-flanked Bluetail	—	—	—	2	—	—
Black Redstart	1	—	1	160	—	—
Redstart	4	—	4	1826	—	1
Whinchat	—	—	—	634	—	2
Stonechat	—	—	—	56	—	—
Northern Wheatear	262	9	271	16886	—	74
Pied Wheatear	—	—	—	1	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i> 2005	<i>Total</i> 1948-05	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			2005	1948-05
Black-eared Wheatear	—	—	—	3	—	—
Rock Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
White's Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Hermit Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Grey-cheeked Thrush	—	—	—	2	—	—
Ring Ouzel	8	—	8	506	1	9
Blackbird	277	—	277	23083	1	331
Eye-browed Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	1
Dusky Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dark-throated Thrush	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fieldfare	—	—	—	643	—	1
Song Thrush	49	—	49	3030	—	32
Redwing	150	—	150	9070	—	74
Mistle Thrush	—	—	—	22	—	—
Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler	—	—	—	12	—	—
Lanceolated Warbler	1	—	1	36	—	—
Grasshopper Warbler	6	—	6	132	—	—
River Warbler	—	—	—	8	—	—
Savi's Warbler	—	—	—	4	—	—
Aquatic Warbler	—	—	—	24	—	—
Sedge Warbler	10	—	10	499	—	1
Paddyfield Warbler	—	—	—	9	—	1
Blyth's Reed Warbler	1	—	1	11	—	1
Marsh Warbler	3	—	3	134	—	—
Reed Warbler	7	—	7	301	—	1
Great Reed Warbler	1	—	1	7	—	—
Thick-billed Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Olivaceous Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Booted Warbler	—	—	—	10	—	—
Icterine Warbler	3	—	3	107	—	—
Melodious Warbler	—	—	—	12	—	—
Subalpine Warbler	—	—	—	28	—	—
Sardinian Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Barred Warbler	5	—	5	415	—	1
Lesser Whitethroat	10	—	10	754	—	1
Whitethroat	11	—	11	994	—	—
Garden Warbler	23	—	23	3577	—	4
Blackcap	164	—	164	5692	—	25
Greenish Warbler	—	—	—	23	—	—
Arctic Warbler	1	—	1	33	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>1948-05</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>1948-05</i>
Pallas's Warbler	—	—	—	4	—	—
Yellow-browed Warbler	9	—	9	136	—	—
Hume's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Radde's Warbler	—	—	—	1	—	—
Dusky Warbler	—	—	—	7	—	—
Western Bonelli's Wblr	1	—	1	2	—	—
Wood Warbler	1	—	1	109	—	—
Chiffchaff	46	—	46	1305	—	5
Willow Warbler	39	—	39	3674	—	7
Goldcrest	73	—	73	1752	—	3
Firecrest	—	—	—	1	—	—
Brown Flycatcher	—	—	—	1	—	—
Spotted Flycatcher	5	—	5	779	—	3
Red-breasted Flycatcher	—	—	—	58	—	—
Collared Flycatcher	—	—	—	2	—	—
Pied Flycatcher	7	—	7	964	—	—
Blue Tit	—	—	—	2	—	—
Great Tit	1	—	1	11	—	—
Coal Tit	—	—	—	1	—	—
Treecreeper	—	—	—	1	—	—
Golden Oriole	—	—	—	8	—	—
Brown Shrike	—	—	—	1	—	—
Isabelline Shrike	—	—	—	2	—	—
Red-backed Shrike	2	—	2	238	—	—
Lesser Grey Shrike	—	—	—	6	—	—
Great Grey Shrike	1	—	1	116	—	1
Woodchat Shrike	—	—	—	13	—	—
Jackdaw	—	—	—	4	—	—
Rook	—	—	—	7	—	—
Hooded Crow	—	—	—	48	—	—
Raven	—	—	—	27	—	—
Daurian Starling	—	—	—	1	—	—
Starling	326	223	549	27034	—	192
Rose-coloured Starling	—	—	—	3	—	—
House Sparrow	50	—	50	1635	—	3
Tree Sparrow	2	—	2	115	—	1
Chaffinch	36	—	36	2987	—	12
Brambling	116	—	116	3721	1	16
Greenfinch	23	—	23	454	6	29
Goldfinch	4	—	4	15	—	—

<i>Species</i>	<i>Ringed as:</i>		<i>Total 2005</i>	<i>Total 1948-05</i>	<i>Recovered/Controlled</i>	
	<i>Juv/Ad</i>	<i>Pullus</i>			<i>2005</i>	<i>1948-05</i>
Siskin	6	—	6	470	—	1
Linnet	3	—	3	165	—	1
Twite	96	—	96	5937	1	11
Lesser Redpoll	1	—	1	29	—	—
Common Redpoll	21	—	21	643	—	6
Arctic Redpoll	1	—	1	21	—	—
Two-barred Crossbill	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Crossbill	1	—	1	533	—	2
Parrot Crossbill	—	—	—	37	—	—
Pallas's Rosefinch	—	—	—	1	—	—
Common Rosefinch	2	—	2	207	—	1
Bullfinch	2	—	2	299	—	—
Hawfinch	3	—	3	25	—	1
Tennessee Warbler	—	—	—	2	—	—
Savannah Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Song Sparrow	—	—	—	3	—	—
White-crowned Sparrow	—	—	—	1	—	—
White-throated Sparrow	—	—	—	2	—	—
Lapland Bunting	—	—	—	48	—	—
Snow Bunting	2	—	2	635	—	3
Pine Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellowhammer	—	—	—	65	—	—
Ortolan Bunting	—	—	—	20	—	—
Cretzschmar's Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Yellow-browed Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Rustic Bunting	—	—	—	17	—	1
Little Bunting	—	—	—	35	—	1
Chestnut Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Yellow-breasted Bunting	—	—	—	6	—	—
Reed Bunting	20	—	20	485	—	3
Pallas's Reed Bunting	—	—	—	2	—	—
Chestnut-eared Bunting	—	—	—	1	—	—
Red-headed Bunting	—	—	—	5	—	—
Black-headed Bunting	—	—	—	4	—	—
Corn Bunting	—	—	—	3	—	—
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>3468</b>	<b>1320</b>	<b>4788</b>	<b>335226</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>5013</b>

*Ringling recoveries/controls reported to FIBO during 2005*

A re-trap is a bird ringed and then re-caught alive at the same place of ringing.

A control is a bird ringed by one ringer and then caught elsewhere alive by another ringer.

A recovery is a bird ringed and then found dead elsewhere (birds ringed and found dead on the isle are not included in table 2).

The co-ordinates of Fair Isle are 59°32'N, 01°37'W.

*Part I. Birds ringed on Fair Isle and recovered/controlled elsewhere (Table 2)*

**WIGEON.** Our fifth recovery – a first-year male ringed in September 1998 was shot in April 2004 at Gavrilokva, Bashkir, **U.S.S.R.** (3660 km, E). A high presence of hunters has resulted in many British-ringed Wigeon to be recovered in the USSR and, given the date, suggests that this bird was returning to (or on) breeding grounds, presumably where it originated from.

**FULMAR.** Two reports received, both involving birds ringed as chicks. One ringed in July 1981 was found dead at Oostende, **Belgium** in February 2005 (965 km, SE) and the other was ringed in July 1990 and found dead on a beach at Ostfold, **Norway** in January 2005 (692 km, E).

**STORM PETREL.** Eight birds, ringed on Fair Isle during mist-netting sessions in July and August, were reported elsewhere during 2005 (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. Storm Petrels ringed on Fair Isle and controlled elsewhere; reports received during 2005

Recovery Site	No.	Recovery Site	No.
Treshnish Isles, Strathclyde	1	Mousa Broch, Shetland	1
Eilan Nan Ron, Highland Region	3	Utsira, <b>NORWAY</b>	1
Auskerry, Orkney	1	Rogaland, <b>NORWAY</b>	1

A very typical spread of recoveries: the bird at Mousa was ringed in 2002 and found in June 2005 (56 km, NE) and was previously reported at this breeding colony in July 2003. The Treshnish bird, ringed in 1999, was controlled in June 2005 (442 km, SW) and the Auskerry bird was controlled in July 2005

having been ringed in 2004 (77 km, SW). One of the birds controlled at Eilan Nan Ron was ringed in July 1991, controlled in Orkney in August 1991 and then controlled in July 2005 at Eilan Nan Ron (190 km, SW). The other two birds from Eilan Nan Ron were controlled in July 2005, one ringed in 1993 and the other in 1999. The bird controlled at Utsira, **Norway** was ringed in 1995 whilst the bird at Rogaland, **Norway** was ringed in 1998 – both were controlled in August 2002.

**SHAG.** Four reports received, all of birds found dead. A chick ringed in June 1983 was found at Cullen, Grampian Region in January 2005 (217 km, SSW); an adult male ringed in July 1984 was found at Tarbat Ness, Ross-shire in February 2005 (225 km, SSW); an adult male ringed in June 1986 was found at Auskerry, Orkney in July 2005 (77 km, SW) and a chick ringed in June 1993 was found on Stronsay, Orkney in June 2005 (73 km, SW).

**GREAT SKUA.** A chick ringed in June 1984 was found dead in September 2004 at Landes, **France** (1715 km, S) and a chick ringed in July 1995 was found dead at Goteborg och Bohus, **Sweden** in June 2005 (749 km, ESE).

**GUILLEMOT.** Nineteen reports were received during 2005. Five adults were recovered (all found dead): one bird ringed in June 1982 was found in January 2005 at Withernsea, Humberside (655 km, SSE) and another ringed in June 1982 was found amongst other dead Guillemots on a beach in Heacham, Norfolk in February 2005 (747 km, SSE). One ringed in June 1985 was found at Schiermonnikoog, **Netherlands** in March 2005 (825 km, SE); one ringed in June 1993 was found at Old Hunstanton, Norfolk in March 2005 (744 km, SSE) and the final bird was found in June 2003 at Vestfold, Norway (685 km, E).

Recoveries of chicks, all found dead or dying are summarised below in Table 4.

*Table 4. Guillemot chicks ringed on Fair Isle and recovered elsewhere, reports received during 2005*

<b>Ringling Date</b>	<b>Finding Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Distance and Direction</b>
June 1979	March 2005	Schleswig-Holstein, <b>Germany</b>	809 km, SE
July 1981	April 2005	Jylland, <b>Denmark</b>	730 km, E
June 1982	May 2004	Hordaland, <b>Norway</b>	378 km, E
July 1986	January 2005	Holkham, Norfolk	743 km, SSE
June 1992	March 2004	Nordland, <b>Norway</b>	1090 km, NE
June 1994	July 2005	Cruden Bay, Grampian Region	238 km, S
June 1996	February 2003	Aust-Agder, <b>Norway</b>	609 km, E

June 1997	March 2005	Whitstable, Kent	925 km, S
June 1997	February 2003	Sor-Trondelag, <b>Norway</b>	724 km, NE
June 1997	August 2003	Nordland, <b>Norway</b>	1001 km, NE
June 1998	October 2005	Nolsoy, <b>Faeroes</b>	388 km, NW
June 1998	January 2005	More og Romsdal, <b>Norway</b>	656 km, NE
July 2002	February 2004	Volda, <b>Norway</b>	508 km, NE
July 2002	April 2004	Froya, Sor-Trondelag, <b>Norway</b>	709 km, NE

**RAZORBILL.** Just four birds were reported during 2005. An adult ringed in June 1985 was found dead at Terschelling, **Netherlands** in January 2005 (805 km, SE); an adult ringed in June 1995 was found dead at Ostfriesische, **Germany** in February 2005 (848 km, SE); a chick ringed in July 1998 was controlled as a breeding bird on Bardsey Island, Wales in June 2004 (779 km, SSW) and a chick ringed in June 2002 was found dead on a beach in Coruna, **Spain** in January 2003 (1855 km, SSW).

**RING OUZEL.** Our ninth recovery: an adult female ringed in April 1999 was 'found' at Imilchil, **Morocco** in January 2005 (3056 km, S).

**BLACKBIRD.** A first-year female ringed in October 2004 was found dead in June 2005 at Gavleborg, **Sweden** (996 km, E).

**BRAMBLING.** A second-year female ringed in April 2002 was controlled in October 2005 at Vlieland, **Netherlands** (807 km, SE).

**GREENFINCH.** Six reports were received during the year, all of birds controlled in Orkney. A male ringed in October 2003 was found at Finstown in December 2004 (103 km, SW) having been previously controlled in December 2003 at Crantit House, Orkney. A first-year female ringed in October 2003 was controlled at Crantit House in December 2004 (99 km, SW); an adult female, ringed in October 2004, was controlled in January 2005 at Crantit House (99 km, SW); a first-year male, also ringed in October 2004, was controlled at St Ola in November 2004 (100 km, SW). Finally, two birds ringed on the same day in November 2004 were controlled at Finstown (103 km, SW) – one in December 2004 and the other in February 2005.

**TWITE.** A first-year female ringed in September 2004 was controlled a month later at Evie, Orkney (101 km, WSW).



*Part II. Birds ringed elsewhere and controlled on Fair Isle.*

**STORM PETREL.** Belated reports of birds ringed in **Norway** include a bird ringed in August 2001 at Utsira and controlled on Fair Isle nine days later (370 km, W) and a bird ringed in September 2003 at More of Romsdal and controlled on the isle in August 2004 (541 km, SW). Two birds were controlled from North Ronaldsay, Orkney – one ringed in August 2003 and controlled in July 2005 and the other ringed in August 2005 and controlled eleven days later (51 km, NE). A bird ringed in July 2004 at Eyemouth, Borders was controlled in July 2005 (409 km, N) and finally a bird ringed in July 2005 at Fife Ness was controlled in August 2005 (368 km, N).

**TURNSTONE.** A bird ringed in December 2003 at Port Sutton Bridge, Lincolnshire was controlled on the isle in May 2005 (761 km, N).

**DUNNOCK.** One ringed in May 2005 on Foula, Shetland was controlled two weeks later (71 km, SSE).

**BLACKBIRD.** An adult female ringed on North Ronaldsay, Orkney in June 2005 was controlled three weeks later (49 km, ENE) and summered on the isle.

**BLACKCAP.** A first-year female ringed at Antwerpen, **Belgium** in September 2004 was controlled a month later (1014 km, NW). Interestingly, this bird was heading NW when, at this time of year, it would have been expected to be travelling south.

**GARDEN WARBLER.** An adult ringed in May 2004 at Ottenby, Oland, **Sweden** was controlled in August 2004 (1128 km, E).

**LINNET.** A first-year female ringed in October 2004 at North Ronaldsay, Orkney was controlled on the isle in April 2005 (49 km, ENE) – a typical movement.

**TWITE.** One ringed in February 2004 was controlled on Fair Isle in May 2005, having been ringed at Deerness, Orkney (95 km, NE) and another, also ringed in February 2004 but at Evie, Orkney was controlled on the Isle in April 2005 (101 km, NE).

## A Selection of Rarity Descriptions from 2005

### Gyr Falcon; 13th record

*Mark Newell*

Arriving on Fair Isle for the Hogmannay celebrations, I had a few hours of daylight left and took a wander to suss out what was around. While doing so I got a phone call from Alan Bull saying he had spoken to Phil Welch, one of the islanders, who had seen a large white bird the previous day which he believed was a Snowy Owl. Later in the day this was mentioned in the company of Iain Stout who also recalled seeing a large white bird fly past his croft. However, his thoughts weren't of an owl but a raptor, which he described as looking like an odd Iceland Gull. Alan Bull and I immediately suggested Gyr Falcon especially after the bird I had seen on Islay gave the initial impression of an Iceland Gull. The next couple days passed without any sightings but with plenty of drinking. Then on the 2nd January I took a wander around the south of the island for some fresh air before lunch. With several squally showers passing through I took shelter in the Burkle poly-tunnel as one whipped through. Gazing absently out of the doorway at a small group of Curlew flying over Meoness I suddenly became aware of a large white falcon battling into the wind – GYR! As the rain stopped I ran out towards the Chapel Brae to see the falcon drop to the ground near the Walli Burn barely six feet from a flock of Greylag Geese. It remained there for five minutes eyeing the geese but seemingly unable to do much in the wind. I ran back to the South Light to phone Alan Bull and a couple of interested islanders. By the time I was ready to head out again Alan turned up saying he had just caught sight of the Gyr in flight before it disappeared. The following day Alan again located the Gyr on the ground in the corner of a field where it remained for twenty minutes before flying leisurely off pursued by a Hooded Crow and to my knowledge it wasn't seen again.

General Description: A large powerful falcon which in flight would give the brief impression of a short winged Iceland Gull due to its colour and steady wing beats. In direct comparison with Hooded Crow was longer winged and more compact with broad based wings tapering to the point. Didn't dwarf the crow so may have been a male. Probably larger than a female Peregrine but difficult to judge as white birds always look bigger than they really are. Plumage all white with varying degrees of black spotting. This was densest around the edge of the wings, particularly the primaries which had an almost solid border when seen in flight. Upperparts streaked black with a couple of covert bars formed on the closed wing. The secondaries and tertials were more barred than streaked. Back was less spotted and head largely all white with the exception of the nape which had a smudgy dark streak from the rear of the crown down the nape. There was a slight shadowing around the eyes. The tail appeared to be faintly banded. The underwing was clean

white. The hooked bill was a bluish colour although slightly darker grey at the tip. The largely feathered legs looked yellowish on a brief glimpse.

Footnote by Deryk Shaw: This bird was seen on and off by various islanders until the 11th January – the day before I returned to the isle. That day (12th) one was seen flying over Loch of Spiggie on Mainland Shetland – where I had been staying until that morning!!! Could it have been the same bird and did I pass it in the Loganair plane?

Status: *Breeds in northern Eurasia and northern North America with some wintering just south of the breeding range. Three colour morphs exist which are to some extent geographically isolated. White-phase birds breed in the high Arctic. By the end of 2004, some 315 had occurred in Britain, 75% of them in Scotland.*

## **Snowy Owl; 24th record – first since 1991**

*Deryk Shaw*

Circumstances: At 0930hrs on 2nd April, I had just ringed a few Blackbirds in the Ringing Hut and was walking towards Setter, planning to do a census of the south of the isle, when Stuart Thompson (jr) drove past, stopped his car and shouted me over. He informed me that a group of islanders at the airstrip had just seen a Snowy Owl fly across the airstrip in front of the incoming Loganair islander plane! He said it flew towards Homisdale. I immediately altered my plans and ran towards the airstrip and Homisdale. No sign! I decided that it would most likely head north towards Ward Hill. I spent the whole of the morning running around the North of the isle like a man possessed, but all to no avail. Dejected, I returned home for lunch. A quick bite to eat and I ventured out again at 2pm. I checked the traps and then headed across the parks towards Vaasetter. I was about two thirds of the way across South Park when “Hallelujah!” I spotted the bird sitting in a gap in the stone dyke of Hjon Park. I breathed a sigh of relief and phoned Hollie to bring my 'scope and camera. I also phoned a few islanders and the Shetland Grapevine and Birdline Scotland. I watched the bird until dusk, mainly just sat in the same spot, but it did move a short way onto Vaasetter and later flew across to the airstrip, where it was harassed by Hooded Crows. It could not be found the following day!

General Appearance: A massive white owl, flecked with black. An awesome bird!

Behaviour: Largely stationary, sitting in a wall, on top of a wall, then on short heather – just observing goings on!

Head: Large round. Almost all white but for a narrow band of dark grey flecks on top of crown between two small ear tufts and an area of blackish-grey scalloping on nape. Dense feathering around bill was dirtier creamy-white and reduced bill to a grey line on front of face.

Upperparts: Predominantly white with untidy rows of small blackish-grey scallops along entire remainder of upperparts, including wings except for tertials and tail which had narrow dark-grey bars.

Underparts: Throat and upper breast pure white extending down to a wide “V” in centre of lower breast. Rest of breast covered with brownish scallops/bars – denser and less distinct than on upperparts. Flanks white, only faintly scalloped brownish. Belly and undertail not seen/noted.

Bare parts: Eyes; oval, deep yellow with black mascara effect. Bill; appeared grey and small, almost hidden by feathering, reducing it to a narrow strip. Feet; densely feathered white, blackish talons protruding.

Status: *Breeds in the high Arctic, occasionally further south in years of good food supply. Nomadic wanderers are noted in Europe outside the breeding season. Since the disappearance of the resident Fetlar birds in 1992, Snowy Owls have become very rare in Shetland with just two previous records – the last in 1997.*

### **Olive-backed Pipit; the 3rd of the autumn and 70th record**

*Deryk Shaw*

Circumstances: A cracking male Black-throated Thrush had been found earlier that morning at Klinger’s Geo and everyone had good views before it flew south and disappeared. I was heading back to my SW census route when Rael Butcher (AW) phoned to say he had re-located the thrush on the Rippack. I headed back over there to see if I could get a picture (as I had my ‘scope and camera with me that day). I had settled down c40m south of the bird and spotted Rebecca Nason (photographer) and Magnus Robb (sound recordist) appear over the brow on the opposite side and pointed out the bird to them. I was getting some distant shots of the thrush when I heard a call I recognised as an Olive-backed Pipit. I looked up and saw it flying towards me. It called again and landed in a grassy hollow just 8-10m below me. The thrush then flew and landed on the opposite slope, a few metres from the pipit. I was caught in a dilemma about which to focus on! Unfortunately for the OBP the thrush took precedence and I continued trying to get some good pictures. I was joined by RJN and informed her of the pipit. The thrush then flew a little further away. We went to look for the pipit and spotted it sneaking through the grass and I got some good ‘scope views but no camera shots. After a couple of minutes it suddenly got up, called and flew to the top of the slope and landed again in rough grass 15-20m away. I called over to RM and told him to get ready to record it when it flushed again. This it did as we approached and he got some excellent recordings! It landed again another 30m away. I had very little credit on my mobile phone so shouted over to RJN if I could borrow hers to phone it in. I turned away from my tripod to walk towards her. My tripod, with ‘scope and camera attached fell (the

disadvantage of the Scopac – it acts like a sail in even mildly windy conditions!!). My camera smashed! I was cursing the loss, when my mobile rang “Possible Sibe Rubythroat at Midway!” No time to lament – camera, thrush and pipit were already forgotten about . . .

*This description is from mental notes taken at the time and written up in my notebook that evening:*

General Appearance: A small skulking pipit with fairly plain olive upperparts, a striking white supercilium, heavy black streaking below, white belly and noticeably pink legs.

Behaviour: Skulked slowly through the rough grass, keeping low with horizontal carriage, continuously pumping tail downwards as it walked.

Head: Olive crown finely streaked black. Deep buff fore-supercilium changing to white over and behind eye, extending to rear of ear coverts. White spot at rear of ear coverts with a (less distinct) dark spot immediately below this.

Upperparts: Olive, faintly streaked dark (blackish grey). Two noticeable buffish-white wingbars – median covert bar shorter than greater covert bar.

Underparts: Throat white. Breast buff (paler than fore-supercilium) with bold black streaking. Flanks washed greyer-buff with finer streaking. Belly white and unmarked.

Bare parts: Eye; black Bill; not noted Legs/feet; noticeable, light pink

Call: distinctive, like a quieter, clear thin Tree Pipit – lacking the harsh buzzy ending of that species. “That’s a familiar sonograph” was the quip from Magnus Robb at the time.

Status: *A rare autumn migrant from Siberia (very rarely in spring). Shetland holds the monopoly on Scottish records (83%), over half of which have been on Fair Isle.*

## **Citrine Wagtail; 2nd spring record**

*Mark Warren*

Circumstances: On 29th April, I’d just started as Fair Isle Assistant Warden (2nd day) and Warden, Deryk Shaw was showing me around the SW census route. There wasn’t much about although a few migrants were found late morning. At 12.15 we were checking the ditches opposite Barkland when we noticed something bright yellow dash around a corner. We re-found the bird quickly and realised it was a Wagtail, but as the bird was face on we could only see the yellow head and underparts, leading us to assume it was a Yellow Wagtail. I was about to say to Deryk that based on the lack of markings on the face the bird looked more like a ‘*lutea*’ Yellow Wag, when it jumped around to reveal a pure grey mantle with bold

white edges to the flight feathers, and a black smudge across the nape to the back of the crown. “Cit Wag” we shouted at each other. News was phoned out to the other Obs. staff, all obtaining excellent views and photos of the bird were taken that afternoon.

Description: The bird’s head, throat and breast were uniform lemon yellow fading to yellowish-white on the belly and flanks to almost entirely whitish undertail coverts. The face was unmarked and lacking a supercilium or eye-stripe, although the lores had a slight dark smudge to them. The mantle and back was solid grey, as was the rump and a blackish collar around the nape extended up over the back of the neck to the rear of the crown. The tail feathers were black with the outer web of T6 being white. The wings were blackish-based but with prominent white edges to all the flight feathers. This was most obvious on the wing coverts where the white feather tips formed distinct white wing bars. The bill was entirely black as were the legs. The bird frequently called when it flew. This was similar to a Yellow Wagtail but slightly more ‘buzzing’, sharper and less drawn out. The bird remained on the island until the 2nd May, although it was often elusive and roamed around a lot. During its stay all the Obs staff and a couple of visitors staying on the island at the time obtained excellent views.

Status: *A rare migrant from Siberia that is now expected on Fair Isle in autumn (46 records – over a quarter of British records). The number of British records is increasing, due to an expanding population into Eastern Europe, and so too is the number of spring records. The first British spring bird was as recent as May 1990 but there have now been almost 20 to date.*

## **Thrush Nightingale; 5th autumn record**

*Rael Butcher*

Circumstances: Walking around a pile of pallets at Skerryholm croft I flushed a fairly large passerine onto some hay bails only 10ft or so in front of me. The bird only sat briefly but it was clearly one of the Nightingales and in the brief view I got the bird showed off its well-marked throat and breast markings and showed very little contrast between tail and upperparts. Going on this I thought to myself “Oh, Sprosser!” but knowing the skulky habits of Nightingales I thought it best to leave the bird in the pallets rather than flush the bird into the nearby hedge before others had seen it. I rang Deryk Shaw and Paul Baxter telling them I reckoned I’d got a Thrush Nightingale and waited for them to arrive.

DS appeared shortly as the bird flew across the road and quickly hopped around the corner of The Haa croft in a thrush like manner with it’s tail slightly cocked and wings drooped. As DS followed the bird around the corner it flew, making a single high pitched “tzzt” call and landed a short distance away by the Wallie Burn. As we

approached the spot that the bird had landed, PB arrived and we all watched the bird feeding quite lazily by the burn, giving me a chance to note the following features. The rufous-tinged tail showed very little contrast with the uniformly grey/brown upperparts. Wings were similarly edged rufous, but for the tertials which were the colour of the upperparts with pale rufous tips. The malar stripes were broad and dull brown contrasting with whitish chin and dirty white submoustachial stripes, and the bill was dark grey with yellow gape flange giving a “chick-like” appearance, and giving the bird a sad facial expression. The head was rounded and again a dull greyish brown colour, with a large black eye and pale orbital ring. Underparts were smoky grey, and legs dark grey. The bird then flew to the end of the burn and was lost for five minutes while I phoned the observatory to inform other birders and ask for ‘scopes and cameras to be brought down.

I soon relocated the bird feeding on a bare patch of earth in the middle of a potato strip, giving good views of the unmarked white undertail coverts as it fed less than 10ft in front of us. At such a close range DS commented on the short 1st primary. The bird then flew from the potatoes and landed in long grass before moving into the hedge by Skerryholm. We left the bird in the bushes until the rest of the staff and visitors had arrived, when DS slowly walked alongside the hedge with the bird just skulking along in front. After a second attempt the bird finally came out of the hedge and flew around the back of the house, returning shortly after following a near miss with a cat! Before going back to the hedge it alighted on a strainer post, giving me a chance to view the bird through my ‘scope. I recognised that the bill was dull pink to the base of the lower mandible and the legs were greyish pink, rather than the dark grey colour I had previously thought. I also had a better look at the breast, which was smoky grey with faint spotting, creating a smudged grey shawl effect. The bird finally flew back to the pallets where it was left alone. It was seen there later on 5th and again the following day, but not after.

Upperparts: Uniformly dull grey/brown above with slightly paler tones in the rump area with only a little contrast with tail.

Head: Nape and cap dull grey brown as mantle, with slightly warmer tones to the forehead when viewed at close range through telescope. The ear-coverts were also grey/brown with slight pale flecking visible at close range. The obvious grey-brown malar stripes extended from the bill and diffused on the upper breast, contrasting strongly with the white chin and dirty white submoustachial stripes. Eye black with pale orbital ring.

Underparts: Belly and flanks were smoky grey, palest on the middle of the lower belly and between the legs. Breast also smoky grey with faint smudged spots creating a shawl-like appearance. This feature was most obvious from front on, and making the breast darker than the rest of the underparts. Undertail coverts appeared unmarked off-white.

Wings: The whole wing was edged rufous, with the exception of the tertials, which were dull grey/brown and had pale rufous tips. The very short 1st primary and four un-moulted greater coverts (broadly edged rufous) were obvious when looking through the 'scope.

Tail: Fairly long and brown with a dull-rufous tinge, the central tail feathers appearing brightest in flight.

Bill: Dark grey with pink base to lower mandible. Legs: Greyish pink

Status: *The eastern counterpart to our Common Nightingale is increasing and expanding westwards and now breeds commonly in southern Norway and Denmark. It is far more common as a spring vagrant to Britain but being a skulky species and an early migrant it is perhaps being overlooked in autumn – three of the five Fair Isle records have been in August.*

### **Siberian Rubythroat; 3rd record**

*Martin Culshaw*

Circumstances: On Sunday 23rd October 2005, I was birding at the south end of Fair Isle, having just seen a newly-discovered male Black-throated Thrush with most of the other birders on the island. I decided to head further south after that and found myself walking along the Meadow Burn in the hope of finding another exciting vagrant. At around 12.15 p.m., as I neared the point where the Burn meets the road on the west side (just south of Midway), I met Ewan Douglas, a birder who had recently arrived on the island and was staying at the Obs. ED told me that he had come upon a small passerine in the ditch there which he believed was probably a Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* based on its skulking behaviour and a prominent supercilium. However, he appeared rather unsure of the identification and asked me if I was “any good with warblers.” He had been watching the bird pop in and out of the ditch and on to shorter grass for a few minutes and thought he might have photographed it through his telescope. He agreed that I should approach where the bird seemed to be located and as I walked next to the roadside ditch, a small to medium size passerine flew out of the ditch and further up the road into long grass. This happened on subsequent occasions as I approached the bird – something I had to do as each time it landed in very thick grass within the ditch and could not be seen from distance. During a more prolonged flight view, I caught sight of the bird’s pale supercilium and rather plain brownish upperparts. Initially I thought the bird might be a Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* and I informed ED of this but suggested that we get a better view since there was the outside possibility that it was a Siberian Rubythroat. Eventually the bird sat up on a fence wire in profile and I was astonished by both its head pattern and the absence of breast markings – confirming that it was indeed a Rubythroat! The bird then faced me directly and I



struggled to contain myself as I shouted over to ED what the bird was and what the impact of the discovery would be for Sunday Lunch at the Obs! After some frantic phone calls, a large crowd gathered by which time I, Deryk Shaw and Nick Dymond had obtained great views of the bird running up the road on its long legs. Over the next 2½ hours (up until 3 p.m.) the bird proved elusive but showed well intermittently. It was difficult to keep up with it as it moved between crofts and fed actively at the roadside, in ditches and on stone dykes. Most observers that day eventually obtained excellent views.

Size and structure: A small passerine, superficially similar to Bluethroat, especially from behind. However, more compact and with noticeably longer legs. Also had more of a pot-bellied look than Bluethroat.

Behaviour: The bird was generally rather secretive particularly when a larger crowd was present. It could be seen actively feeding on the ground, in ditches, on roadside verges and by dykes. Occasionally it perched on a fence-wire or the top of a wall. I noticed it would shiver its whole rear body at times – reminiscent of the tail vibration of Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* but more subtle and involving the whole rear end of the body.

Upperparts: Generally evenly brownish in colour. The tertiaries, secondaries and primary tips were somewhat darker and more rufous on the closed wing - as was the upper tail. Although not noticeable to me in the field, there were small pale tips (“thorns”) to the greater coverts visible on photographs of the bird.

Underparts: The breast and flanks were a buff-brown colour. Other than the contrast between the pale throat and the buff breast, there were no breast markings in the form of bibs, bands or streaking. I noted the belly to be paler, almost whitish. The undertail coverts were buff-yellow.

Head Pattern: Crown and ear coverts were brown, ear coverts being slightly mottled. There was a prominent supercilium reaching the bill – it was buff-white in front of the eye, merged with a thin white eye-ring and, unlike Bluethroat, extended only slightly and diffusely behind the eye. The lores were a solid darker brown (tapering to the bill) and contrasted with the supercilium above and a thin white sub-loral area below. This gave the face a distinctive appearance in profile. There was a pale buff sub-moustachial stripe and a darker (brownish), thin but complete malar stripe merging with the top of the breast. The chin and throat looked white. The iris was dark.

Bare Parts: The bill was all dark, straight and sturdier than that of Bluethroat. It was about the same length as the distance between the eye and the base of the bill. The legs were pale pink and noticeably long – longer than of Bluethroat.

Age/Sex: It was felt that the bird was a 1st winter female based on the absence of any red on the throat and the presence of pale tips to the greater coverts. The bird was seen in the Burkle/Quoy area for a few minutes every day up to 27th

October, before doing its vanishing trick. On the last date, it entered a building at Quoy and was caught with a hand-net. It was ringed, photographed and a brief description taken before being returned to Quoy. It was seen there later that afternoon but could not be found next day.

Status: *Breeds widely over Siberia, south of the Arctic circle, as well as in northern Mongolia, Manchuria and Japan. A species high on most British birders 'want list' it is becoming a 'Fair Isle special' with three of the five British records (all in October) occurring here.*

### **Black-throated Thrush; 10th record**

*Rael Butcher*

Circumstances: Census was fairly quiet on the morning of the 23rd October, with only a handful of thrushes left from the few thousand or so present the previous couple of days. Whilst working my way along the geos a large thrush flew towards me in the sun from Klinger's geo, which I assumed was going to be a fieldfare. But when I raised my bin's I was shocked to see that, despite poor light, the bird clearly had a solid dark throat and breast. Having seen a 1st winter female Black-throated Thrush two days previously the likelihood of a second seemed pretty low, but what else could it be with such a solidly dark throat? With the bird landing out of sight nearer Sma' Trinket Geo I took a second to phone Deryk Shaw saying, "This might be a bit premature as I've only seen the bird in direct sunlight, but I think I've got an adult male Black-throated Thrush!, Make your way inland and I'll ring back in a second". Approaching Sma' Trinket the bird flew past me giving a series of loud Fieldfare-like chacks before landing back in Klinger's Geo. Having heard Black-throated Thrush just two days previously, the call confirmed the identification and I sprinted after it shouting "IT REALLY IS ONE!!!" to DS on the phone. Typically, I couldn't pick the bird up on the cliff face, and after a few minutes with no sign I started to worry. But sure enough it re-appeared, flying back to Sma' Trinket Geo and again back to Klinger's Geo. Whilst chasing about between geos I managed to frantically wave over Martin Culshaw, and we peered over the cliff top to see a male Black-throated Thrush hopping about on the slope. With such a solid black throat, sooty grey upperparts and no sign of any juvenile greater coverts I assumed it must be an adult. It constantly switched between the two geos, leaving me on the phone for the majority of time, giving different instructions to people depending on the location of the bird.

By the time the first people arrived the thrush was feeding on a grassy slope in full view, allowing me to pick up a few of the finer details such as the orangey yellow base to the lower mandible, warm brown mid-wing panel, smoky grey rear flanks, and the extent of the black throat, which flared back onto the nape and above the

eye. With more and more people arriving the bird flew across Sma' Trinket and landed on the cliff top where it showed well for at least 10 minutes. The flight was very similar to that of a Fieldfare with slow deep wing beats, the body very similar in shape, with a generally long appearance emphasised by the long tail. Also very fieldfare-like was the black tail which contrasted with the pale rump, and the upright stance with back held straight and bill held at an upward angle.

Once again the bird flew across to Klinger's Geo but shortly after returned back to Sma' Trinket Geo, by which time Rory Tallack had arrived with the remainder of our visitors and my telescope. This allowed me the chance to sit and take notes while we watched it feeding on the cliff top for approximately 5 minutes, before it flew over Breck's. It was then relocated at Swarzie Geo. I left it feeding with Blackbirds at Swarzie Geo at 10:50 – about an hour before running to see Fair Isle's 3rd, and Britain's 5th Siberian Rubythroat!

Structure and jizz: Very similar to that of Fieldfare with slow sluggish movements, hopping about on the ground. The long legs were fairly straight with upright back and similarly straight tail. When standing, the wings drooped down below the tail. Bill always held slightly upwards. In flight clearly long-tailed and long-winged with slow deep wing-beats.

Upperparts: Mantle dull sooty grey, scapulars same but with faint pale tips creating a scaly effect. Rump paler grey than mantle with a "shinier" look, contrasting with the tail. Nape as mantle but a tinge darker.

Underparts: White with smoky grey rear flanks. Undertail coverts with warmer buff tones, but never seen well.

Tail: Black with thin brown fringes.

Wings: All flight feathers black with dull grey fringes to wing coverts and primaries which were tipped white. Secondaries fringed warm brown creating a mid-wing panel on the closed wing. Tertiaries black, with clearly darker black inner web and pale brown fringes. These creating strong contrast with the pale rump from a rear view. Brief views of the underwing in flight showed rusty underwing coverts as on a song thrush. Wings looked long both in flight and on the deck, with large primary projection falling just short of the tail base. The wings were always drooped below the tail when stood.

Head: Cap dull sooty grey as nape. Chin and throat black and breast a more solid black, creating a two tone black throat when viewed face on. The lower breast having a series of faint white u-shaped markings created by white tips to the breast feathers. The black on the throat flared back onto the nape sides and faintly behind the ear-coverts, and the black on the face back over the eye.

Bill: Dark grey with orangey yellow base to lower mandible.

Legs: Long. Greyish pink. Eye: Black.

Call: The second time the bird was flying it let of a series of loud Fieldfare-like chacks, but sounding higher pitched or “squeakier” than Fieldfare. One of the observers (Magnus Robb) sound-recorded the bird and picked up a quiet high-pitched contact call in flight, which he told me sounded similar to that of a Blackbird.

Status: *Breeds in eastern Russia and central and southwestern Siberia. Over 40% of the 54 British records have been in Shetland.*

## **Lanceolated Warbler; 70th record**

*Martin Culshaw*

Circumstances: On Monday 17th October 2005, I was birding at the south end of Fair Isle. I was walking through a very marshy area between Kenaby and Aesterhoull around 11 a.m. when I happened to flush a small passerine. I saw the bird only briefly as it flew low over the ground for a few yards before landing. It looked like a warbler and I was excited that it might be a *Locustella* species. I approached the area where it had seemed to land but I was unable to flush the bird again despite extensive trudging through the marsh and “pishing”. Eventually I gave up and returned to the Observatory for lunch. There I informed several others of my sighting. It was agreed that a few of us return to the area that afternoon to try to relocate the bird. It was not until mid-afternoon that we were able to return to the site. Four of us (Simon Aspinall, Phil Harris, Deryk Shaw and myself) walked across the marsh and the bird was flushed from exactly the same spot where I had first seen it. We all realised that it was indeed a Lanceolated Warbler as it flew away from us for a few yards before diving back into some grassy tussocks. We flushed it a second time but when it landed again, despite the four of us standing around the exact spot where it had landed, we were unable to see the bird. The news was put out so that other birders could attend the scene. Despite the presence of around 20 people, the bird was not found again for about half an hour. Thereafter it showed intermittently and subsequently extremely well (down to a few feet) when its mouse-like scurrying through the long grass brought it to an area of short turf. Here it stood out in the open and watched us all for well over a minute.

Size and structure: A small, short-tailed warbler. It looked smaller than Grass-hopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*. Rather stocky-looking owing to its seemingly relatively short neck (particularly during prolonged views). Tail corners looked rounded.

Upperparts: Generally brownish in colour with prominent dark (black) tramline streaking down the mantle and back. Tertials were seen to be very dark (blackish) with thin, even, sharply-defined buff fringes. I thought that these fringes were perhaps very slightly paler on the inner webs of the tertials but this may have been

an effect of the light. Dark centres to scapulars and coverts. There was also a little dark streaking on the crown. There was a thin buff supercilium and eye-ring. The upper tail was plainer- warm brown with only very slight streaking.

Underparts: Generally buff-brown, paler on belly. It was a smart-looking, well-streaked individual. The streaking was dark, sharp and thin, and evenly-distributed in two lines down each flank as well as across the breast. Throat buff and less obviously streaked. I saw some dark flecks on the buff/yellow undertail coverts but could not ascertain the exact shape of these.

Bare Parts: Upper mandible was dark, lower mandible pinkish. Legs were pinkish.

Behaviour: Generally very skulking. The bird was extremely reluctant to fly and instead chose to run through long grass so quickly that it was hard to keep up with! Finally, it came out into the open and showed very well as it stared at the assembled crowd. Whenever it flew, it kept low over the grass and travelled only relatively short distances.

Status: *Breeds in much of Siberia and Northern Russia but has recently colonised Eastern Finland. Its scurrying habits and reluctance to fly probably explain why this is the ultimate Fair Isle speciality (70 of 106 British records) with the island's network of ditches and people available to trudge them at the optimum time (mid-September to mid-October).*

## **Booted Warbler; 12th record**

*Mark Warren*

Circumstances: There had been a good arrival of migrants over the previous few days and with new scarcities found during the morning census on 4th September (including two Icterine Warblers, Red-backed Shrike and the first Wryneck of the autumn), I decided to check the Vaasetter area after tea. By about 7.30pm I had made my way to Field Ditch and was just approaching the pallets at the end when I noticed a bird, which for a brief moment I took to be a Chiffchaff. It wasn't until I walked past and flushed it from one part of the fence to another that I realised (even in the fading light) how pale and washed out the brownish upperparts were. I immediately suspected the bird to be a Booted Warbler (having found one in Cornwall in 2002). I continued to watch the bird for 10 minutes or so, realising it was not a *Phylloscopus* but the smallest of *Hippolais* Warblers. I began working through the ID features for Booted. The bird had a subtle off-white supercilium, darkish eye-stripe and lores, a slight shadow above the fore part of the supercilium and a sharp and pointed bill. The underparts were white and the tertials had dark centres to them. I was now fairly happy the bird was a Booted Warbler so phoned Paul Baxter (of Barkland) and the Obs. Paul glimpsed the bird and agreed with my ID based on upperpart colouration alone. The bird then seemed to go to roost in the

long grass in the Field Ditch area and unfortunately staff from the Obs arrived too late. An early start on the 5th for most at the Obs saw c15 birders set out at dawn in dense fog, to search for the bird. After processing some trapped birds in the ringing hut I decided to just check Setter on the way to Field Ditch and found the Booted Warbler in the crop at 7am. It was remarkably elusive but eventually showed well to everyone at close range and I was able to take a more precise description. It disappeared after a couple of hours, not to be seen again until the next morning (6th Sep) when it had relocated to North Shirva (briefly – seen only by Paul) and eventually to Skerryholm in the far south of the Island (again re-found by Paul), where FIBO warden Deryk Shaw eventually caught up with it at the fourth attempt.

General appearance and Jizz: A difficult bird to describe, being distinct in its own right. Vague similarities can be drawn with other Warblers. The bird was distinctly small for a '*Hippolais*' Warbler with a remarkable Chiffchaff like appearance. It was a slim bird with short under-tail coverts, not chunky bodied like other members of the same genus. In no way did it look much like an '*Acrocephalus*,' as Syke's Warbler can. It was short-tailed and fairly short-winged, the primary projection approximately half the length of the tertails. Depending on posture its head shape would vary from appearing flat headed, to an occasional peaked crown, similar to other '*Hippolais*' Warblers. The bird always fed near to the ground, making it at times difficult to detect and observe. It fed with purposeful movements, hopping from one spot to another but would often remain in one place to methodically pick insects off a plant and 'crane' its neck to do so but it did not hover as a '*Phylloscopus*' does. Its movements and general behaviour were definitely more reminiscent of an '*Acrocephalus*'. Its flight was untidy and usually only for short distances.

Upperparts: These were uniform pale buffish-brown and I wish I didn't have to use this cliché but they really were the colour of 'milky tea'. The bird had a 'washed out' and faded look about it, quite distinct from other Warblers. The only species the upperparts bore a resemblance to is Paddyfield Warbler, a species I am familiar with (one found October 2004). The tail was the same colour and on close inspection on the second day there was a sullied pale whitish edge to the outer web of T6. This was particularly hard to see, usually only apparent in flight or when the bird flicked its tail. The wings were of a similar colour to the rest of the upperparts but a slightly warmer brown on the primaries and secondaries, with pale fringes creating a subtle pale wing panel. The tertials had dark centres, brown in colour – another useful feature to help rule out Sykes Warbler.

Underparts: Off white in colour from the throat, through breast, belly to undertail coverts and unpatterned. The flanks were washed with buff.

Head: The colouration of the crown was as the upperparts. A subtle creamy/white supercilium was present beginning at the bill base and extending only slightly

beyond the eye (c2mm). The supercilium was framed by a dark brownish eye-stripe and lores. There was a hint of a dark shadow above the fore part of the supercilium although this was very subtle and frequently hard to see, not being as prominent as that of Paddyfield Warbler. The ear coverts were similar in colour to the upperparts.

Bare Parts: The bill was short and spiky, more similar to a '*Phyllosc*', but a fraction longer and slightly wider. It was quite unlike the bills of the other '*Hippolais*' Warblers I am familiar with (Icterine/Melodious). The upper mandible was dark horn in colour with the lower being paler and pinkish, no dark tip was visible in the field. The legs were pinkish/brown. Iris colouration was not observed and the bird was not heard to call.

Status: *Breeds in Central Russia and western Siberia but is expanding west and now breeds in Southern Finland, resulting in increasing numbers in Britain (65 of the 93 accepted records have been since 1990). Shetland accounts for over 80% of Scottish records and over 30% of British records.*

## **Western Bonelli's Warbler; 2nd record**

*Deryk Shaw*

Circumstances: It was 10th September and I had just returned from North census which, apart from a nice walk, had turned up a good few Willow Warblers (60 were logged that evening) and a couple of Pied Flys. I was in the office on the phone, when Rory 'Danger' Ranger came in. I signalled I'd be with him in a minute and he went out. He returned a few seconds later and held a piece of paper in front of me with a scribbled note that read – "Bonelli's Warb at Quoy!" – I nearly dropped the phone but managed to stay calm and finish taking the booking and answering the usual questions associated with the procedure. Job done, it was action stations with the usual clamour for boots, optical equipment and bundle into the van and people carrier.

A handful of people were at Quoy when we arrived but the bird was out of view in the Sheep cru next to the neap rig. After a few minutes it appeared for only seconds on the fence before flying across the field to some Angelica plants by the roadside. It showed reasonably well, but distantly for ten minutes or so and then flew again and was lost. After lunch, a search re-located it at Shirva where it showed very well in the thistle patch. However, it was not calling and collective experience of Bonelli's sp was limited – although we thought Western was most likely on upper-part colouration. Fearing this I had brought along a mist-net. It was erected in the thistles and after a half-hour wait for some more visitors who had just arrived on the boat (in case we 'booted' it in our attempts to catch it) and satisfactory views obtained, it was flushed into the net. A check on 2nd Primary length and I announced it was almost certainly Western Bonelli's. It was taken to the Obs for

processing and released into the Obs Plantation, where it remained for a few minutes before flying towards the Havens and disappearing.

General Appearance: A small pale *phylloscopus* warbler with silky white underparts, fairly plain face, greeny-yellow edging to flight feathers and rump.

Behaviour: Very active. Flitting about in umbellifers/thistles hovering occasionally and suddenly flying long distances.

Head: Greyish-brown crown and ear coverts. Face fairly plain; Lores pale greyish. Narrow indistinct buff-white supercilium from base of bill, over eye then flared out behind eye and became greyer and even fainter. Supercilium bordered above by a very subtle brownish line (only noted in-hand).

Upperparts: Mantle greyish but with varying amounts of brown and yellowy-green admixed depending on angle of view and light conditions. Appeared very grey in strong sunlight but browner in shade and in-hand was obviously mixed with a fair amount of yellowy-green. Lower back, rump and uppertail coverts greeny-yellow, palest on rump. Tail feathers grey edged greeny-yellow. Wings grey, with noticeable greeny-yellow edging to flight feathers and pale tips. Tertails grey, edged light grey (whitish) and greater coverts edged similar. Primary projection c3/4 exposed tertial length.

Underparts: Brilliant silky white – especially in sunlight. In the hand a few yellow streaks could be seen on sides of breast and undertail coverts.

Bare parts: *Eye:* Black and obvious in plain face. Narrow off white eye-ring. *Bill:* upper mandible horn. Lower mandible proximal 50% greyish pink, distal 50% horn. Cutting edge pale pinkish. *Legs:* dark (brownish-grey)

Call: Alas it did not call!

In-hand biometrics:

Ring no. OM3791    Age: 1stW    Wing: 63mm    2ndP = 6/7 (closer to 7)  
WingPoint = P4    Emarginations: 3rd, 4th, 5th, slightly 6th PP  
P1 = 4mm > pc    P2 = 26.2mm > P1    1stSS – WP = 15.8mm    Tail = 50.8mm

Discussion: Although the bird did not call, the brownish tinge to upperparts, wing length and length of P2 indicate that it was a Western Bonelli's Warbler.

Status: *Breeds in northwestern Africa and southwestern Europe from Iberia and France east to Austria, Slovenia and Croatia. All except one of the (now) eight Scottish records have been in Shetland.*



# Systematic Checklist of the Birds of Fair Isle

*Alan Bull & Deryk Shaw*

The table below is a checklist of the birds of Fair Isle up to the end of 2005. The species name is followed by a code to summarise their status on Fair Isle (see below). The main list includes all birds recorded on Fair Isle from Categories A-C of the British List (364 species). Five species in Category D, two Category D candidates, one extinct and presumed escapes (Category E) are also included in lists at the end. One of the two new species recorded on Fair Isle during 2004 (Chestnut-eared Bunting) is still waiting acceptance by the British Ornithologists Union Records Committee (BOURC), but has been included in the main list.

## Status Categories

Vagrant (V)	ten records or less in the past 20 years
Rare (R)	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 (B, followed by:)

Small Numbers (S)	on average, less than 100 pairs per annum
Moderate Numbers (M)	on average, 101-1000 pairs per annum
Large Numbers (L)	on average, more than 1000 pairs per annum

Mute Swan (V)				Long-tailed Duck (FM)			
Bewick's Swan (V)				Common Scoter (S)			
Whooper Swan (FM)				Velvet Scoter (S)			
Bean Goose (V)				Common Goldeneye (RM)			
Pink-footed Goose (FM)				Smew (V)			
Greater White-fronted Goose (S)				Red-breasted Merganser (FM)			
Greylag Goose (CM)				Goosander (S)			
Canada Goose (R)				Common Quail (S)			
Barnacle Goose (FM)				Red-throated Diver (RM)			
Brent Goose (R)				Black-throated Diver (V)			
Common Shelduck (S)				Great Northern Diver (S)			
Eurasian Wigeon (FM)				Yellow-billed Diver (V)			
American Wigeon (V)				Little Grebe (R)			
Gadwall (R)				Great Crested Grebe (V)			
Eurasian Teal (FM)				Red-necked Grebe (V)			
Mallard (BS, FM)				Slavonian Grebe (S)			
Northern Pintail (S)				Black-browed Albatross (V)			
Garganey (V)				Northern Fulmar (BL, CM)			
Northern Shoveler (S)				Cory's Shearwater (V)			
Common Pochard (R)				Great Shearwater (V)			
Ring-necked Duck (V)				Sooty Shearwater (FM)			
Tufted Duck (RM)				Manx Shearwater (S)			
Greater Scaup (S)				European Storm-petrel (BS, FM)			
Common Eider (BS, FM)				Leach's Storm-petrel (B?, RM)			
King Eider (V)				Northern Gannet (BL, CM)			
Steller's Eider (V)				Great Cormorant (FM)			
Harlequin Duck (V)				European Shag (BL, CM)			

Little Bittern (V)				Curlew Sandpiper (S)			
Grey Heron (FM)				Purple Sandpiper (FM)			
Purple Heron (V)				Dunlin (FM)			
White Stork (V)				Buff-breasted Sandpiper (V)			
European Honey-buzzard (R)				Ruff (RM)			
Red Kite (V)				Jack Snipe (FM)			
White-tailed Eagle (V)				Common Snipe (BS, CM)			
Eurasian Marsh Harrier (R)				Great Snipe (R)			
Hen Harrier (S)				Long-billed Dowitcher (V)			
Pallid Harrier (V)				Eurasian Woodcock (FM)			
Montagu's Harrier (V)				Black-tailed Godwit (S)			
Northern Goshawk (V)				Bar-tailed Godwit (RM)			
Eurasian Sparrowhawk (RM)				Whimbrel (FM)			
Common Buzzard (S)				Eurasian Curlew (BS, FM)			
Rough-legged Buzzard (V)				Upland Sandpiper (V)			
Golden Eagle (V)				Spotted Redshank (S)			
Osprey (S)				Common Redshank (CM)			
Lesser Kestrel (V)				Common Greenshank (RM)			
Common Kestrel (RM)				Lesser Yellowlegs (V)			
American Kestrel (V)				Solitary Sandpiper (V)			
Red-footed Falcon (V)				Green Sandpiper (RM)			
Merlin (RM)				Wood Sandpiper (S)			
Eurasian Hobby (R)				Common Sandpiper (FM)			
Gyr Falcon (V)				Spotted Sandpiper (V)			
Peregrine Falcon (RM)				Ruddy Turnstone (CM)			
Water Rail (RM)				Red-necked Phalarope (V)			
Spotted Crake (R)				Grey Phalarope (V)			
Little Crake (V)				Pomarine Skua (R)			
Baillon's Crake (V)				Arctic Skua (BS, FM)			
Corn Crake (S)				Long-tailed Skua (R)			
Common Moorhen (S)				Great Skua (BM, FM)			
Common Coot (R)				Mediterranean Gull (V)			
Common Crane (V)				Laughing Gull (V)			
Sandhill Crane (V)				Little Gull (V)			
Little Bustard (V)				Sabine's Gull (V)			
Great Bustard (V)				Black-headed Gull (FM)			
Eurasian Oystercatcher (BS, FM)				Ring-billed Gull (V)			
Pied Avocet (V)				Mew (Common) Gull (BS, FM)			
Stone-curlew (V)				Lesser Black-backed Gull (BS, FM)			
Collared Pratincole (V)				Herring Gull (BS, CM)			
Black-winged Pratincole (V)				Iceland Gull (S)			
Little (Ringed) Plover (V)				Glaucous Gull (RM)			
Ringed Plover (BS, FM)				Great Black-backed Gull (BS, CM)			
Kentish Plover (V)				Black-legged Kittiwake (BM, CM)			
Eurasian Dotterel (S)				Ivory Gull (V)			
American Golden Plover (V)				Gull-billed Tern (V)			
Pacific Golden Plover (V)				Caspian Tern (V)			
European Golden Plover (CM)				Sandwich Tern (S)			
Grey Plover (S)				Roseate Tern (V)			
Northern Lapwing (BS, FM)				Common Tern (BS, RM)			
Red Knot (FM)				Arctic Tern (BM, FM)			
Sanderling (FM)				Black Tern (V)			
Semi-palmated Sandpiper (V)				White-winged Tern (V)			
Red-necked Stint (V)				Common Guillemot (BL, CM)			
Little Stint (RM)				Brünnich's Guillemot (V)			
Temminck's Stint (V)				Razorbill (BL, FM)			
White-rumped Sandpiper (V)				Black Guillemot (BM)			
Baird's Sandpiper (V)				Little Auk (FM)			
Pectoral Sandpiper (V)				Atlantic Puffin (BL, CM)			

Pallas's Sand grouse (V)			Bluethroat (RM)		
Rock Pigeon (BS, FM)			Red-flanked Bluetail (V)		
Stock Pigeon (S)			Black Redstart (RM)		
Common Wood Pigeon (FM)			Common Redstart (FM)		
Eurasian Collared Dove (FM)			Whinchat (FM)		
European Turtle Dove (S)			Stonechat (S)		
Oriental Turtle Dove (V)			Isabelline Wheatear (V)		
Common Cuckoo (RM)			Northern Wheatear (BS, CM)		
Barn Owl (V)			Pied Wheatear (V)		
Eurasian Scops Owl (V)			Black-eared Wheatear (V)		
Snowy Owl (V)			Desert Wheatear (V)		
Long-eared Owl (RM)			Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush (V)		
Short-eared Owl (RM)			White's Thrush (V)		
European Nightjar (V)			Hermit Thrush (V)		
Common Swift (FM)			Swainson's Thrush (V)		
Pallid Swift (V)			Grey-cheeked Thrush (V)		
Alpine Swift (V)			Ring Ouzel (FM)		
Little Swift (V)			Common Blackbird (CM)		
Common Kingfisher (V)			Eye-browed Thrush (V)		
European Bee-eater (V)			Dusky Thrush (V)		
European Roller (V)			Dark-throated Thrush (V)		
Hoopoe (R)			Fieldfare (CM)		
Eurasian Wryneck (RM)			Song Thrush (CM)		
Great Spotted Woodpecker (S)			Redwing (CM)		
Calandra Lark (V)			Mistle Thrush (RM)		
Bimaculated Lark (V)			Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler (V)		
Greater Short-toed Lark (S)			Lanceolated Warbler (R)		
Crested Lark (V)			Common Grasshopper Warbler (RM)		
Wood Lark (V)			River Warbler (V)		
Sky Lark (BS, CM)			Savi's Warbler (V)		
Horned (Shore) Lark (R)			Aquatic Warbler (V)		
Sand Martin (RM)			Sedge Warbler (FM)		
Barn Swallow (CM)			Paddyfield Warbler (V)		
Red-rumped Swallow (V)			Blyth's Reed Warbler (R)		
House Martin (FM)			Marsh Warbler (S)		
Richard's Pipit (S)			Eurasian Reed Warbler (RM)		
Blyth's Pipit (V)			Great Reed Warbler (V)		
Tawny Pipit (V)			Thick-billed Warbler (V)		
Olive-backed Pipit (R)			Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (V)		
Tree Pipit (FM)			Booted Warbler (V)		
Pechora Pipit (R)			Sykes's Warbler (V)		
Meadow Pipit (BS, CM)			Icterine Warbler (S)		
Red-throated Pipit (R)			Melodious Warbler (V)		
Rock Pipit (BS, FM)			Blackcap (CM)		
Buff-bellied Pipit (V)			Garden Warbler (FM)		
Yellow Wagtail (RM)			Barred Warbler (RM)		
Citrine Wagtail (R)			Lesser Whitethroat (FM)		
Grey Wagtail (S)			Common Whitethroat (FM)		
White/Pied Wagtail (BS, FM)			Dartford Warbler (V)		
Bohemian Waxwing (S)			Subalpine Warbler (R)		
White-throated Dipper (V)			Sardinian Warbler (V)		
Winter Wren (BS, RM)			Greenish Warbler (R)		
(Dunnock) Hedge Accentor (FM)			Arctic Warbler (R)		
Alpine Accentor (V)			Pallas's Leaf Warbler (R)		
European Robin (CM)			Yellow-browed Warbler (RM)		
Thrush Nightingale (R)			Hume's Leaf Warbler (V)		
Common Nightingale (R)			Radde's Warbler (V)		
Rufous-tailed Robin (V)			Dusky Warbler (V)		
Siberian Rubythroat (V)			Western Bonelli's Warbler (V)		

Wood Warbler (RM)				Black-faced Bunting (V)			
Common Chiffchaff (FM)				Pine Bunting (V)			
Willow Warbler (CM)				Yellowhammer (RM)			
Goldcrest (FM)				Ortolan Bunting (S)			
Firecrest (V)				Cretzschmar's Bunting (V)			
Spotted Flycatcher (FM)				Yellow-browed Bunting (V)			
Red-breasted Flycatcher (S)				Rustic Bunting (S)			
Collared Flycatcher (V)				Little Bunting (S)			
Pied Flycatcher (FM)				Yellow-breasted Bunting (R)			
Coal Tit (V)				Chestnut-eared Bunting (V)			
Blue Tit (V)				Reed Bunting (FM)			
Great Tit (R)				Pallas's Bunting (V)			
Eurasian Treecreeper (V)				Black-headed Bunting (V)			
Eurasian Golden Oriole (V)				Corn Bunting (V)			
Brown Shrike (V)				Bobolink (V)			
Isabelline Shrike (V)				Baltimore Oriole (V)			
Red-backed Shrike (RM)							
Lesser Grey Shrike (V)							
Southern Grey Shrike (V)							
Great Grey Shrike (S)							
Woodchat Shrike (V)							
Black-billed Magpie (V)							
Eurasian Jackdaw (S)				CATEGORY D			
Rook (RM)				Saker Falcon (V)			
Carrion Crow (FM)				Asian Brown Flycatcher (V)			
Hooded Crow (BS, RM)				Daurian Starling (V)			
Common Raven (BS, RM)				Chestnut Bunting (V)			
Common Starling (BM, FM)				Red-headed Bunting (V)			
Rosy Starling (R)							
Honse Sparrow (BS)							
Eurasian Tree Sparrow (R)							
Chaffinch (FM)				CATEGORY D CANDIDATES			
Brambling (FM)				Wood Duck (V)			
European Serin (V)				Yellow-headed Blackbird (V)			
European Greenfinch (RM)							
European Goldfinch (R)				CATEGORY E			
Eurasian Siskin (FM)				Black Swan			
Common Linnet (RM)				Bar-headed Goose			
Twite (BS, FM)				Red-breasted Goose			
Lesser Redpoll (S)				Lanner Falcon			
Common Redpoll (FM)				White-shouldered Starling			
Arctic Redpoll (R)				House Finch			
Two-barred Crossbill (V)				Pallas' Rosefinch			
Common Crossbill (RM)				Long-tailed Rosefinch			
Parrot Crossbill (V)				Yellow-billed Grosbeak			
Common Rosefinch (RM)				Black-headed Grosbeak			
Common Bullfinch (RM)				Indigo Bunting			
Hawfinch (S)				Lazuli Bunting			
Tennessee Warbler (V)				Painted Bunting			
Blackburnian Warbler (V)				Varied Bunting			
Yellow-rumped Warbler (V)							
Blackpoll Warbler (V)				EXTINCT			
Savannah Sparrow (V)				Great Auk			
Song Sparrow (V)							
White-crowned Sparrow (V)							
White-throated Sparrow (V)							
Lapland (Bunting) Longspur (FM)							
Snow Bunting (CM)							

## Moths on Fair Isle in 2005

*Nick Riddiford*

Moth trapping mainly took place between June and early September, though some activity took place in May at Lower Stoneybrek (LSB) and October at Schoolton (Table 1). The actinic light trap and sugaring were also tried at Schoolton on two calm nights in March, but without success. A total of 51 species was recorded in 2005, well below totals achieved in the previous two years. This was partly explained by a 42% reduction in trapping activity compared with 2004 due to a combination of poor weather, a trap malfunction at Lower Stoneybrek at a crucial time of year and the loss of the Barkland actinic with the departure of Glen Tyler. In addition micro moths, many of which need to be specifically targeted, were given much less attention in 2005.

Nevertheless, the three moth traps and one “sugaring” site produced a number of notable records. Leading the way were three additions to the Fair Isle list: the pyralid *Chrysoteuchia culmella*, Clouded-bordered Brindle and, most unexpectedly, a spectacular Garden Tiger. Turnip Moth and Six-striped Rustic were second Fair Isle records, the last appearing for the second successive year. Following the discovery of a full-grown Sword-grass caterpillar in 2004, hope of a small breeding population in the Quoy-Schoolton area was maintained by the occurrence of an adult attracted to sugared posts at Schoolton on two consecutive nights in October.

Since trapping for moths became a regular activity on the isle in the 1980s, we have come to recognise the general appearance periods for the commoner moths. The flying adult is only one part of the moth’s life cycle, of course, and we know precious little about other stages. We are slowly beginning to fill this gap. It is worth relating that a half-grown Square-spot Rustic caterpillar was found overwintering between the wooden parts of a window frame at the Observatory on 15th February. This was an interesting discovery because it demonstrates a strategy of diapause. The adult is on the wing in late summer-early autumn. Presumably eggs laid at that time hatch out, the larva feeds into the autumn then seeks an overwintering site before completing the larval and pupal stages during the following year’s vegetation growth period – which on Fair Isle hardly starts before May. Having said that, a Large Yellow Underwing caterpillar found at the school on 24th March, though close to full-grown, was actively feeding on grass.

Table 1. Summary of trapping effort in 2005

Site	<i>Trap nights</i>						
	Year	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
All sites	149	8	11	53	47	21	9
Observatory (UV)	50	2	10	18	13	6	1
Lower Stoneybrek(Actinic)	35	6	1	15	7	6	
Schoolton (Actinic)	37			17	16	4	
Schoolton (sugar)	27			3	11	5	8

*Note:* the table does not include 2 unsuccessful trap/sugar nights at Schoolton in March.

## Systematic List

The following short-hand has been used in the following list: LSB for the Lower Stoneybrek actinic trap; Observatory for the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Ultra Violet (UV) trap. An asterisk preceding a record indicates that the moth has been seen and confirmed or determined by Dr Mark Young of Aberdeen University – including from genitalia characters in the case of difficult species.

### Hepialidae

18 **Map-winged Swift** *Hepialus fusconebulosa*. One to five were recorded regularly from 16th June to 1st August at all light traps. A typical spread of records.

### Plutellinidae

464 **Diamond-back Moth** *Plutella xylostella*. None of this migrant micro in the traps, but small numbers seen frequently in the summer months, normally associated with south-east winds.

### Oecophoridae

647 **Brown House-moth** *Hofmannophila pseudospretella*. There was one field record on 22nd September. Under-recorded.

648 **White-shouldered House-moth** *Endrosis sarcitrella*. Singles were in the Schoolton actinic on 14th & 15th July. A very common species, so clearly under-recorded.

674 \***Depressaria badiella**. One trapped at Schoolton on 18th August: the 4th Fair Isle record.

### Tortricidae

1029 **Eana osseana**. It was a particularly good year for this species. Recorded from 15th July to 18th August, 30 on 9th and 57 on 12th August in the Observatory trap

were impressive numbers. The largest captures at Schoolton actinic were in July: 18 on 11th and 15 on 14th.

1030 *Eana penziana*. There were 13 moth/nights at the Observatory between 16th July and 20th August, maximum 2. The Schoolton actinic took one on 6th July and recorded 8 moth/nights between 9th and 22nd August.

1043 \**Acleris aspersana*. One trapped at the Observatory on 18th August.

1109 \**Lobesia littoralis*. One trapped at LSB on 11th July.

1201 *Eucosma cana*. Single individuals were trapped at the Observatory on 10th,\* 11th and 17th July. In the Schoolton actinic there was one on 17th July and 2 on 1st August.

### Pyralidae

1293 \**Chrysoteuchia culmella*. Two in the Schoolton actinic on 11th July comprised the first recorded evidence on Fair Isle of a species widespread in mainland Britain. Because of the level of moth monitoring in traps and field it is unlikely that this species has been overlooked in the past, making this species a true newcomer to the isle.

1304 *Agriphila straminella*. One on 12th August in the Schoolton actinic was the only record. The species was abundant at about this time, but no specific field records were made.

1388 *Udea lutealis*. At Schoolton, 2 to 4 were caught on all trap-nights between 1st and 13th August at Schoolton, with 10 in the trap on 12th; and there were 1 to 4 on four of five trap-nights between 17th and 21st August. The species was abundant in most grassy areas in the first half of August.

### Geometridae

1723 **Red Carpet** *Xanthorhoe munitata*. The only records were at Schoolton. An early individual was in the trap on 23rd July, followed by 1-4 on 10 trap-nights, 1st to 22nd August and 7 on 17th; a late individual was trapped on 3rd September. Singles were attracted to sugar on 26th July and 18th August.

1727 **Silver-ground Carpet** *Xanthorhoe montanata*. There were records at all three sites on ten scattered dates between 7th July (LSB & Schoolton) and 17th August (Schoolton), all singles apart from 2 at LSB on the first date.

1728 **Garden Carpet** *Xanthorhoe fluctuata*. An early capture at LSB on 25th May was followed by singles at the Observatory on 18th June and 18th August and one at Schoolton on 3rd September.

1742 **Yellow Shell** *Camptogramma bilineata*. As in most years, all records refer to field observations, comprising singles on 11th, 17th and 18th July. The species is often encountered on the cliffs.

1809 **Twin-spot Carpet** *Perizoma didymata*. The only record is one in the

Schoolton actinic on 14th August. There were field sightings about the same time, but these went unrecorded.

1823 **Netted Pug** *Eupithecia venosata*. Two were observed visiting sea campion *Silene maritima* in Lower Stoneybrek garden on 26th June where one was also trapped on 20th July. The only other record was one trapped at the Observatory on 10th July.

1828 **Satyr Pug** *Eupithecia satyrata*. One was trapped at the Observatory on 18th June.

1854 **\*Juniper Pug** *Eupithecia pusillata*. One was intercepted inside the Observatory on 17th August.

1884 **The Magpie** *Abraxas grossulariata*. The now annual influx began on 4th July, when the first field record was reported. The influx was at its strongest between 14th and 18th July. There was an impressive 14 in the Observatory trap on 15th. Schoolton actinic achieved a record 6 on 14th and 5 on 15th. Reports of Magpie moths flooded in from visitors and islanders alike, from as far apart as the north cliffs, Easter Lother, Setter, Pund, Stoneybrek, Nether Taft, the Rippack, Kenaby & Skerryholm. Totals of 15 plus on 15th and 17 on 17th gave some idea of the influx, but the true number was certainly higher and constituted the largest influx yet.

### Sphingidae

1984 **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum*. One was seen by day on 25th June.

### Arctiidae

2057 **Garden Tiger** *Arctia caja*. One in the Observatory trap on 18th July was the first Fair Isle record. There have been a number of recent records in Shetland, so the occurrence is not as surprising as it might first seem.

### Noctuidae

2087 **\*Turnip Moth** *Agrotis segetum*. One at Lower Stoneybrek on 1st September was the second Fair Isle record.

2091 **Dark Sword-grass** *Agrotis ipsilon*. One entered the Schoolton actinic on 4th July. The only other records were all on sugar at Schoolton, on 20th, 23rd & 25th October.

2104 **Northern Rustic** *Standfussiana lucernea*. Recorded regularly from the first appearance at Schoolton on 10th July to the last at the Observatory on 5th September. It was commonest from late July to mid August at all sites, with maxima of 18 on 12th August at the Observatory and 17 on 8th August at Schoolton.

2107 **Large Yellow Underwing** *Noctua promuba*. Though recorded at all sites between 11th July and 6th October, it was commoner in the south. The main period



at all sites was August into early September when it was recorded on nearly all trap-nights in the south, with maxima of 19 at Schoolton and 22 at LSB, both on 1st September. The species also comes readily to sugar, and 9 were attracted to that source at Schoolton on 11th August.

2117 **Autumnal Rustic** *Paradiarsia glareosa*. The records reflected the heather moorland association of the species. Thus, whilst Schoolton actinic recorded only 5 moth/nights, concentrated on 17th-18th August, the Observatory had consistent captures from 9th August to 8th September, including on all trap-nights between 12th and 20th August, when the maximum capture was 5. Captures at LSB comprised a dark phase (*edda*) on 5th September and 2 of the light phase form the following night. All the Schoolton records were of the light phase (*glareosa*). The phases of the Observatory captures were not recorded.

2118 **True Lover's Knot** *Lycophotia porphyrea*. The only records were at the Observatory, where it was common. After an early single on 9th July it was recorded on all trap-nights to 14th August, with maxima of 29 on 1st & 34 on 11th August.

2120 **Ingrailed Clay** *Diarsia mendica*. There were 2 early individuals on 2nd July at the Observatory, otherwise all records spanned the period 15th July to 8th September – with the exception of a late moth to sugar at Schoolton on 5th October. The main capture period was from 28th July to 6th September. The species was most abundant at Schoolton, with 14 or more trapped on fifteen nights and a maximum of 37 on 15th August. These are not exceptional numbers, however and, though the species was captured on virtually all trap-nights at all sites, the numbers were generally lower than in some recent years. This may purely be an artefact of the weather.

2123 **Small Square-spot** *Diarsia rubi*. One to three were trapped on a regular basis from 7th July to 9th August at Schoolton and the Observatory.

2126 **Setaceous Hebrew Character** *Xestia c-nigrum*. One in the Schoolton actinic on 3rd September was the only record.

2133 **Six-striped Rustic** *Xestia sexstrigata*. One trapped at Lower Stoneybrek on 2nd September: the second Fair Isle record, just one year and a month after the first!

2134 **Square-spot Rustic** *Xestia xanthographa*. The first date at Schoolton was 9th August. Typically, the species was commonest from that date into September. It was far commoner at Schoolton, particularly in September when the actinic took 39 on 3rd and 29 on 5th. Nine attracted to Schoolton sugar on 6th September were the last registered for the year.

2147 **The Shears** *Hada plebeja*. We have an inadequate knowledge of the flight period for this species because it tends to be on the wing before the weather is kind enough to permit the setting of traps. The decision to set the trap in May at LSB was rewarded with a Shears on 23rd. The Observatory records were all in June: 2

on 9th, 1 on 17th and 1 on 19th. At Schoolton there were actinic captures on 7th(2), and 9th, 10th, 11th and 14th July; and 1 on sugar on 11th. By mid July the flight period is normally at an end. Therefore, it was a surprise when one in immaculate condition - and thus almost certainly newly emerged – was found in the Schoolton trap on 9th August.

2171 **Marbled Coronet** *Hadena confusa*. Another early moth as demonstrated by 6 trapped at the Observatory on 9th June, followed by singles on 5 nights between 17th and 28th June and 6 moth/nights in the period 10th-22nd July. The Schoolton actinic produced singles on 15th and 23rd July and a late one on 1st August.

2176 **Antler Moth** *Cerapteryx graminis*. This is a species that occurs more frequently in the Observatory trap than further south. It was recorded there on most trap-nights from 13th July to 20th August, with maxima of 44 on 12th and 21 on 14th August. There were a few September records with the last on 10th. Schoolton actinic captures mirrored that flight period, with the earliest on 11th July and the last on 3rd September. The species occurred on all trap-nights from 25th July to 16th August, but the maximum was a mere 9, on 14th August. Only two individuals visited the LSB trap: on 18th July and 22nd August.

2198 **Smoky Wainscot** *Mythimna impura*. One at the Observatory on 9th August, 3 in the Schoolton actinic on 12th, 3 on 14th and 1 on 15th August was a better than average showing for this scarce presumed migrant.

2242 **Sword-grass** *Xylena exsoleta*. Though it cannot be known for certain, records on Schoolton sugar on 12th and 13th October are likely to refer to the same individual.

2306 **Angle Shades** *Phlogophora meticulosa*. The only records were in October. None was taken in the traps, but singles were attracted to Schoolton sugar on 11th and 15th; and there were field records, also of single examples, on 14th and 23rd.

2321 **Dark Arches** *Apamea monoglypha*. In recent years the Dark Arches has overtaken the Ingrailed Clay as the commonest moth attracted to traps. At the Observatory it was taken on all trap-nights between 8th July and 20th August. Highest numbers were consistently in the latter month and included 70 on 12th and 41 on 14th. In September there were 2 on 2nd and 4th and 1 on 10th. It was a similar pattern, but even higher numbers at Schoolton. The actinic caught on all but one trap-night from 9th July to 5th September. There was an early good catch of 34 on 11th July but this was totally eclipsed during the period 26th July-17th August when totals exceeded 100 on 7 trap-nights, peaking at 158 on 11th August. LSB had the earliest example, on 7th July but its maximum capture was just 16, on 21st August. The species also has a liking for sugar with 31 on Schoolton posts on 26th July and 15 or more consistently on all post-nights 1st-16th August, maximum 32 on 14th.

2326 **Clouded-bordered Brindle** *Apamea crenata*. One on sugar at Schoolton on

11th July was new to Fair Isle. In recent years it has been recorded on all the main Shetland islands, so this record completes the set!

2329 **The Confused** *Apamea furva*. The Confused was scarcer than usual. It was commonest at the Observatory – recorded on 5 trap-nights, 1st-20th August, maximum 3 on 12th. Schoolton had singles to light on 26th July and 18th August and to sugar on 14th and 18th August. LSB had the last of the year, on 22nd August.

2330 **Dusky Brocade** *Apamea remissa*. Apart from one on sugar at Schoolton on 1st August, all records were in July from 7th. There was just one at the Observatory, on 14th July. LSB recorded 8 moth/nights between 7th and 20th, including 5 on 12th. It was most frequent at Schoolton, with captures on 7 trap-nights including an exceptional 10 on 11th. There was one field record, at Barkland on 19th July.

2340 **Middle-barred Minor** *Oligia fasciuncula*. This is a shy visitor to traps. The only trap records were singles at LSB on 8th and Schoolton on 11th July, and 2 at the Observatory on 12th August. It is, however, very common by day in the crofting area most frequently encountered in late July-August on flowers of marsh ragwort *Senecio aquaticus* and wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*.

2343 **\*Common Rustic** *Mesapamea secalis*. One in Schoolton actinic on 19th August a typical record for this scarce migrant.

2350 **Small Wainscot** *Photedes pygmina*. Two were trapped at LSB on 6th September. It is an infrequently recorded, presumed migrant.

2357 **\*Large Ear** *Amphipoea lucens*. One at the Observatory on 18th August was the third Fair Isle record.

2441 **Silver Y** *Autographa gamma*. None entered the traps, but the species was seen from time to time in the field between 6th July and 20th October. No major numbers of this classic migrant were noted in 2005, but there was a small influx between 13th and 20th October.

2361 **Rosy Rustic** *Hydracia micacea*. This is one of the latest species to appear. The earliest was in the Schoolton actinic on 14th August. It was taken on all trap-nights at Schoolton between 30th August and 5th September, maximum 7 on 3rd and at LSB between 3rd and 8th September, maximum 7 on 5th & 6th. It was much less common at the Observatory, the only records being 2 on 20th August and one on 2nd and 4th September.

**Footnote:** On 4th September, just before midnight, I went to check the posts at Schoolton for moths on the sugar. It was thick fog and a Northern Wheatear was fluttering around the actinic light trap. It was still doing the same when I returned from my round of the posts and was clearly attracted by the light rather than opportunistically catching moths. I watched it enough to ensure that this was the case. It was fluttering up and down against the white-washed wall and bumping into the trap, completely ignoring the moths around the trap. I shoed it round the

corner away from the light to save it from a night of pointless fluttering. I pass the light trap every time I visit the sugared posts and have never witnessed this before. It is an exceptional occurrence brought about by exceptional weather conditions and recalls the pre lighthouse automation days when a combination of poor visibility and slowly rotating beams provided a potentially fatal attraction to migrant birds.

**Acknowledgements:** My grateful thanks to Deryk Shaw and his team at the Bird Observatory and Pat & Neil Thomson for their night-time activities, to Mark Young for determining or confirming difficult species and to the many islanders and visitors for making their field observations known to us. A special thanks to Pat Sellar for encouraging us to turn to moth monitoring. Two of his traps, supplied nearly two decades ago, are still active on the isle today.



*Garden Tiger Moth (Lachlan Shaw)*

## Other Wildlife

*Mark Warren*

Records of most forms of wildlife are kept at the Observatory and visitors are encouraged to report their sightings to a member of staff and during the evening log. It is Cetaceans, Butterflies and Moths, which make up the bulk of these sightings. These records are submitted to the relevant organisations in Shetland, which produce the following Annual Reports:

**Shetland Entomological Group** (includes records of butterflies and moths from Fair Isle). Membership £5, includes Annual Report. Contact Mike Pennington, 9 Daisy Park, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland. Tel: 01957 711307.

**Shetland Sea Mammal Group** (includes records from Fair Isle and also the '*Good Shepherd IV*' during crossings to and from Shetland). Membership £8, includes Annual Report. Contact Austin Taylor, 3 Murrayston, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0RE

### Summary of Cetaceans

Unsurprisingly the majority of sightings in 2005 came from *Good Shepherd IV* crossings during the summer months, although two pods of Killer Whales were undoubtedly the highlight of land-based observations during the year.

**Minke Whale** (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*): A good year with several sightings. The first was a single seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 21st June, with another a few weeks later on 2nd July. A flurry of sightings in September began with one from the *GSIV* on 6th, 3 from land and 1 from *The GSIV* on 10th, 5 off Bunes on 12th and finally 6 off the South Light on 15th.

**Killer Whale** (*Orcinus orca*): The highlight for many (staff and visitors alike) in 2005 was the appearance of 4 (a male, two females and a calf) '*Orcas*' on 11th June. First seen in Finnequoy Bay after lunch the pod slowly rounded the Isle once, coming very close to the shore at South Light and off Bunes, allowing some extraordinary views and photo opportunities. A second pod consisting of 2 males and a female were seen briefly off the South Light by Island residents during the afternoon of 30th July. They were re-located in the same area at lunch the next day, lingering for less than an hour before making off to the south towards North Ronaldsay.

**White-beaked Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*): At least 2 were reported from *The Good Shepherd IV* on 3rd and 6th September, with a further 2 again from the *GSIV* on 18th October.

**Atlantic White-sided Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*): Just one sighting of a single from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 10th September.

**Risso's Dolphin** (*Grampus griseus*): A fairly fresh corpse was found on the beach in Furse on 22nd May. Two further sightings, on 6th and 10th September, both from the *Good Shepherd IV* and each of two animals.

**Harbour Porpoise** (*Phocoena phocoena*): Sightings were restricted to the second half of the year with the first not until 14th August when four were seen from land. Two were reported off Bunes on 16th with at least 15 seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 18th. In September 4 were seen from the *GSIV* on 3rd with 5 from there on 6th. Two off North Light on 8th, were followed by 11 from there and Bunes on 12th with at least 11 off Bunes on 15th. The final sightings of the year were of 3 from the *GSIV* on 18th October and a single on 20th.

### Pinnipeds

**Grey Seal** (*Halichoerus grypus*): Counts of adults are infrequently made, although 250 were on the beach below Hoini on 23rd March, and a whole island census on 30th August revealed only 134. The late autumn census of newborn pups carried out every 4 days from late September to mid November gave an estimated total of 79 pups born in various geos around the isle. This figure represents a significant drop compared to recent years, from 109 born in 2004, and a record 126 in 2003. **Common Seals** (*Phoca vitulina*) were regularly seen in spring and autumn in South Harbour although the census on 30th August revealed only 2 individuals.

### Other Sea Sightings

**Basking Shark** (*Cetorhinus maximus*): One was seen from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 2nd July – only the second sighting since 1970s, following one seen off Bunes in October 2004.

### Summary of Butterflies

2005 was a quiet year for Butterflies on Fair Isle. Only three species were seen, between 16th June and 30th October. **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*) dominated, with the first on 19th June and a peak of 16 on 2nd July – the month in which most were seen – with occasional singles noted until 30th October. There were only three sightings of **Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*) – a single on 16th June, 2 on 2nd July and 1 on 30th August. Even more surprisingly there was only one record of **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*), on 20th August.

*Summary of other miscellaneous sightings*

**Common Frogs** (*Rana temporaria*) were noted occasionally around the Pund/Barkland area from 8th March until the last on 4th October, with the first spawn found there on 9th March. A **Common Eel** (*Anguilla anguilla*) was seen in the Vaadal stream on 14th August. A **Squid sp.** in Hesti Geo on 15th May was an unusual land based sighting, as were the **Goose Barnacles** (*Lepas anatifera*) found on a washed up piece of rope in South Haven on 17th October. **Shetland Bumble Bees** (*Bombus muscorum*) were recorded regularly from mid-May until August with a peak count of 8 on 19th June. **Hoverflies** (Syrphidae) were also noted regularly from June–September.

## **Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust (FIBOT) Financial Report and Accounts**

*Mike Wood*

A summary of FIBOT's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2005 appears on the following pages. The full statutory accounts can be inspected at the Bird Observatory on Fair Isle.

The year ended 31st October 2005 was another excellent year for FIBOT as a business. Those of you who may feel they have read this before more than once are right, as for the past few years Hollie and Deryk have been setting new records in terms of attracting visitors to the Observatory and 2005 beat all previous milestones by some distance.

The guest numbers in 2005 hit a new record level of 2,739 bed-nights, beating the previous record of 2,567 ~~sej~~ in 2004, and well above our approximate break-even level of 2,000 bed-nights. The distribution of visitors across the months was particularly good, as we no longer rely on the September rush but attract people in every month from May right through to the last week in October. Overall revenue was excellent and Shop income was good, but a key feature of 2005 was Bar revenue which was 28% higher than the previous record. In part this mirrors the record visitor numbers, but also it reflects the way in which the Observatory has become a focal point for island events.

Those readers who visit Fair Isle will be aware of the continuous improvements to the facilities and appearance of the Observatory over the past few years that increase the pleasure of staying there. We are able to achieve that through a combination of hard work by Hollie, Deryk and their staff, generous help from islanders, and the high visitor levels and excellent financial performance of recent years. We aim to continue this virtuous circle of improved facilities leading to more visitors, enabling further investment in improved facilities. Our healthy finances also allow us to make some improvements to the island environment in ways that benefit both birds and birdwatchers.

We continue to receive valuable 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 vital for the continued financial health of FIBOT and we are working hard to ensure that we continue to fulfil the requirements of these two organisations.



We received several generous donations during the year and, where appropriate, these will be placed in the FIBOT Endowment Fund. 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. We have opened a new bank account for donations that have been made specifically for the New Observatory Project.

The overall financial position remains satisfactory in that we retain reasonable cash balances and investments whilst at the same time continuing to make the Observatory an even more comfortable and pleasant place to stay. So long as we continue to improve the facilities of the Observatory sensibly and operate comfortably within our cash flow, the financial situation should remain healthy. With continued careful management and prudent control of expenditure, we aim to maintain the right balance between accumulating financial reserves and improving the Observatory. My personal thanks go to Hollie and Deryk for their extremely hard work in making this situation possible.

## Income and Expenditure Report for the year ended 31st October 2005

	2005	2004
	£	£
<b>Sales Income</b>		
Lodge Income	77,436	72,293
Shop Sales	6,847	7,586
Bar Income	16,123	12,602
Miscellaneous Lodge Income	982	1,862
	101,388	94,343
<b>Cost of Sales</b>		
Purchases	38,027	34,047
Wages & Salaries	31,289	30,897
	69,316	64,944
<b>Trading Profit</b>	32,072	29,399
<b>Other Income</b>		
Interest Received	4,916	3,272
Deferred Grant Income released	0	0
Subscriptions	4,998	4,963
Donations	3,296	3,166
Grants Received	17,624	14,543
Other Income	0	0
	30,834	25,944
<b>Gross Profit</b>	62,906	55,343
<b>Other Expenses</b>		
Administration	8,098	6,983
Establishment	33,394	28,436
Sales & Marketing	5,478	5,190
Financial & Legal	1,644	1,333
Depreciation	11,000	11,000
	59,614	52,942
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	3,292	2,401

## Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2005

	31/10/05	31/10/04
	£	£
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	65,908	74,206
Investments	<u>10,857</u>	<u>10,857</u>
	<u>76,765</u>	<u>85,063</u>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Stocks	7,333	8,910
Debtors	11,136	7,042
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>115,828</u>	<u>83,808</u>
	<u>134,297</u>	<u>99,760</u>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<u>(27,451)</u>	<u>(17,937)</u>
<b>Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)</b>	<u>106,846</u>	<u>81,823</u>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	<b>183,611</b>	<b>166,886</b>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year</b>	<u>( 0)</u>	<u>( 0)</u>
	<b>183,611</b>	<b>166,886</b>
<b>Representing:</b>		
Accumulated Surplus	183,611	166,886
Appeal Reserve	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	<u>183,611</u>	<u>166,886</u>

**Fair Isle Endowment Fund – Accounts for the year ended  
31st October 2005**

<b>Revenue Account</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Investment Income (Gross)	2,254	1,871
Investment Income (Net)	324	281
Total	<u>2,578</u>	<u>2,152</u>
Management Fees	425	294
Balance due to FIBOT	2,153	1,858
Total	<u>2,578</u>	<u>2,152</u>
 <b>Capital Account</b>		
Investments at Market Value		
£2,875 5.5% Treasury Stock 2008/12	2,979	2,973
Unit Trusts (several)	67,004	55,636
Cash at Bank	41,736	39,582
Less Accumulated Income due to FIBOT	(14,189)	(12,036)
Total	<u>97,530</u>	<u>86,155</u>
 Represented by:		
Balance at beginning of year		
– Dr John Forster Will Trust – Advance	60,000	60,000
– General Fund	26,155	19,726
Unrealised Gain/Loss on Investments	11,375	6,429
Total	<u>97,530</u>	<u>86,155</u>

## The John Harrison Memorial Fund

*Have you thought of joining the staff of Britain's most famous Bird Observatory as a supported volunteer? A limited number of grants are given to young people to work with other ornithologists at Fair Isle Bird Observatory.*

**The John Harrison Memorial Fund** provides financial assistance to young ornithologists between the ages of 16 and 24 to enable them to visit Fair Isle and take part in the daily work schedule of the Bird Observatory. This opportunity has launched the careers of many budding ornithologists, and several have later become staff of Fair Isle Bird Observatory itself. It was established in 1968 by the late Richard Richardson in memory of John Harrison of Hunstanton, Norfolk, who visited the island three times before he died at the very early age of nineteen.

Grants cover the cost of travel (so long as it is by the most economic means) from home to the Observatory and back. Full travel costs may only be given for visits of two weeks or longer. While at the Observatory, awardees pay just £10 per day towards the cost of food and accommodation. Successful applicants are responsible for arranging their travel.

Awardees take part in the routine work conducted by the ornithological staff. The type of work varies depending on the time of year, so you are advised to contact the Warden if you have a particular interest such as ringing or migration studies, so that you can arrange your visit at the most appropriate time. Preference will be given to applicants wanting to come between April and July, which incidentally are great times for spring migrants and breeding seabirds. Daily duties can involve on average two hours of data entry on computers, as well as migration censusing, ringing, trap repairs, tree planting, visitor liaison, and occasional maintenance tasks.

Successful applicants will be expected to write a short report of their stay suitable for publication in the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Annual Report.

Application forms are available from the Bird Observatory and once completed should be sent to Dr Peter Evans, Cynifryn, Abershore, Llanfaglan, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 5RA (e-mail [peter.evans@zoology.oxford.ac.uk](mailto:peter.evans@zoology.oxford.ac.uk), tel. 01286 672071) along with a detailed CV (including your e-mail address and phone number), and two references (such as from a school teacher or university lecturer, and a senior naturalist/ornithologist) with whom you are well acquainted.

Dr Evans will then notify you if your application is successful, and you should then check the availability of accommodation with Hollie, the Administrator at the Observatory, and reserve your bed. You should then provide Hollie with details of your travel, and don't forget to save all travel receipts and present them to her when you arrive, to claim your travel back. Cost of travel will be offset against your bill for accommodation.

*Don't miss this opportunity!*

**John Harrison Memorial Fund – Accounts for the year ended  
31st October 2005**

<b>Revenue Account</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2004</b>
	£	£
Investment Income – Gross	245	490
Net	18	9
Deposit Interest received	302	49
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>565</u></b>	<b><u>548</u></b>
Grants Paid	400	0
Management Expenses	80	294
Balance to Capital Account	85	254
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>565</u></b>	<b><u>548</u></b>

**Capital Account**

**Investments at Market Value**

£7,255 6.75% Treasury Stock 2004	0	7,475
Mercury 637 British Blue Chip Units	926	786
Cash at bank	9,058	1,718
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>9,984</u></b>	<b><u>9,979</u></b>

Represented by:

Balance at beginning of year	9,979	9,584
Balance from Revenue Account	85	254
Realised Gain/Loss on Investments	(220)	0
Unrealised Gain/Loss on Investments	140	141
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>9,984</u></b>	<b><u>9,979</u></b>

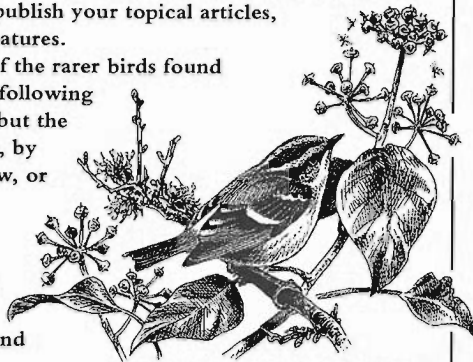
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To read more about Fair Isle and some of the rarer birds found in the past, you may want to check out the following articles in past issues of *Birding Scotland*. All but the very first two issues are still available to buy, by contacting Stuart Rivers at the address below, or by visiting the *Birding Scotland* web site at: [www.birdingscotland.org.uk](http://www.birdingscotland.org.uk)

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- Autumn 2004 on Fair Isle - from the worst to the best? D. Shaw. *BS* 7(4): 145-151.
- Tennessee Warbler, Fair Isle, September 1975. G. Walbridge. *BS* 7(3): 119-122.
- A birds eye view of Fair Isle - some unfinished business. R. Nason. *BS* 7(2): 56-58.
- Britain's first Eastern Savi's Warbler, Fair Isle, September 2003. N. Green. *BS* 7(1): 27-30.
- Siberian Rubythroat - the second for Fair Isle. A. Bull. *BS* 6(4): 181-182.
- Savannah Sparrow - the second for Fair Isle. D. N. Shaw. *BS* 6(4): 178-180.
- Britain's first Spring Thick-billed Warbler. A. Bull. *BS* 6(3): back cover.
- Savannah Sparrow, Fair Isle, September 1987. P. Ellis. *BS* 6(2) 85-87.
- Blackburnian Warbler, Fair Isle, 7th October 1988. J. Willmott. *BS* 6(1): 1-2.
- Black-faced Bunting on Fair Isle - a first for Scotland. P. French. *BS* 5(1): 37-38.
- Siberian Rubythroats in Shetland. D. Coutts. *BS* 5(1): 33-34.
- Fair Isle Bird Observatory - the history. H. & D. Shaw. *BS* 4(2): 60-65.
- Collared Flycatcher, Fair Isle, October 1986. M. Pennington. *BS* 4(1): 39-41.
- Brown Shrike on Fair Isle, 21st October 2000. D. Shaw. *BS* 4(1): 33-35.
- Dartford Warbler on Fair Isle - the second record for Scotland. H. Maggs. *BS* 3(3): 129-30.
- The Calandra Lark on Fair Isle, May 1999. S. Turner. *BS* 2(4): 185-86.
- The Myrtle Warbler on Fair Isle, June 1999. C. Holt. *BS* 2(4): 185.
- Do You Still Need - Lanceolated Warbler? A. Murray & K. Osborn. *BS* 2(3): 100-101.
- Isabelline Wheatear on Fair Isle, 20th September 1998. J. Gordon, P. & R. Crockett. *BS* 2(1): 40-42.
- Blyth's Reed Warbler, Fair Isle, September 1996. P. Harvey & K. Shaw. *BS* 2(1): 14-17.
- Do You Still Need - Pechora Pipit? K. Osborn. *BS* 1(4): 163.

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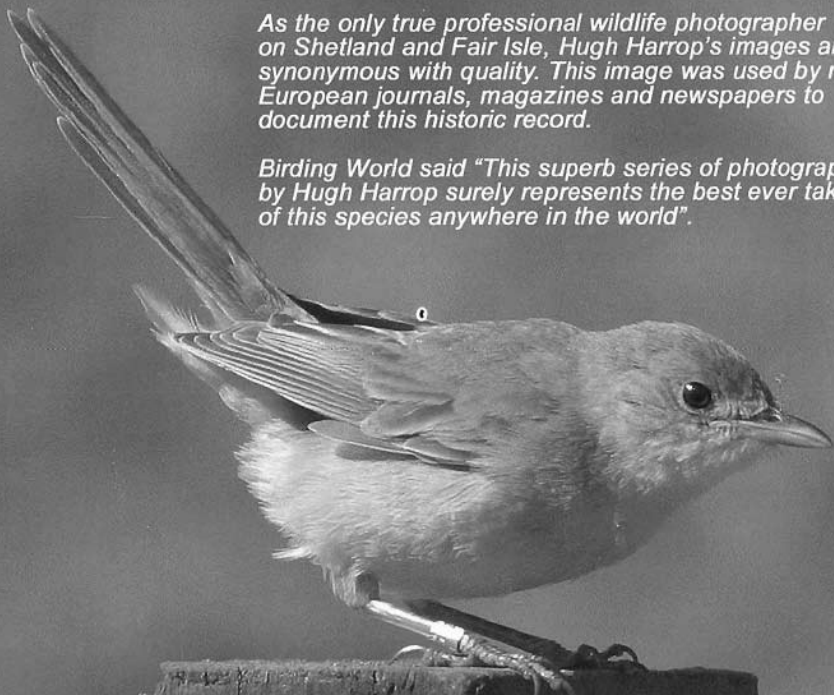
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