

Fair Isle Bird Observatory

BULLETIN



Edited by
PETER E. DAVIS

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Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust

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Hon. Secretary.

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FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY BULLETIN

Vol. 5 No. 1 (New Series)

JANUARY 1962

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1. The Birds of Fair Isle—Part 1.

PETER DAVIS

No comprehensive list of the birds of Fair Isle has been published since the one included as Chapter 21 of William Eagle Clarke's "Studies in Bird Migration" in 1912. The fiftieth anniversary of his great work has now passed, and this seems a suitable time to begin a new assessment of the island's avifauna. To spread the time-consuming task of abstracting the data, I have decided to publish the list in instalments in the Bulletin; by dealing with about fifty species in each issue the list will be completed within Volume 5. Additions and amendments will also be printed, as necessary, in the Bulletins.

The history of ornithological observations on the island begins with Eagle Clarke's first visit in the autumn of 1905. Having discovered the "British Heligoland," as he called it, he became a frequent visitor until the outbreak of the first world war, and returned for a last stay in 1921. He encouraged and equipped the first of the remarkably skilled native observers and collectors, George Wilson Stout of Busta, who left the island in 1909. From this year the official watcher was Jerome Wilson of Springfield, who continued to report regularly on the birds of the island until the early 1930s, and intermittently until his death in 1948. He was the chief contributor of Fair Isle records to the long series of annual "Reports on Scottish Ornithology" compiled by the Misses Baxter and Rintoul from 1909 onwards. Mary, Duchess of Bedford, a keen bird-watcher and a skilful shot, made several protracted stays in the isle between 1910 and 1914. From 1921 to 1927 the distinguished Scottish ornithologist, Surgeon Rear-Admiral J. H. Stenhouse, paid annual visits to the island. With his encouragement, George Stout of Field started to provide records and specimens. "Fieldy" is happily still with us, and still making his unique contribution to our work. His son, James A. Stout of Midway, and Jerome Wilson's son, James Wilson (now of Schooltown) inherited their fathers' skill, and they, with many other members of the island community, have made a great many valuable observations.

In the early 1930s George Waterston, then still at school, began his long association with the island and its birds; and later in the decade there were visits from several workers who have since become eminent figures in the world of ornithology, including A. G. S. Bryson, James Fisher, P. A. D. Hollom, R. M. Lockley, C. A. Norris, and L. S. V. Venables. During their sojourn in a German prisoner-of-war camp in the second world war, George Waterston and Ian Pitman discussed the possibility of acquiring the island and founding

a bird observatory there. These plans matured soon after the war, with the enthusiastic support of Arthur B. Duncan, Bryson, and others. In 1947 George Waterston became owner of the island, and in July 1948 the bird observatory and hostel for visiting bird-watchers were officially opened, with Kenneth Williamson as Director. His term of office lasted until early 1957, and I became Warden in April of that year.

Apart from the Fair Isle chapters in "Studies in Bird Migration" and in the Duchess of Bedford's "A Bird-Watcher's Diary" (edited by A. B. Duncan and printed in 1938), nearly all the Fair Isle bird-records published before 1948 appeared in the *Annals of Scottish Natural History* and its successor the *Scottish Naturalist*. Kenneth Williamson abstracted these records, adding a number from MS. sources, and compiled a "status-book" for the years up to 1948. A few other old records have since come to light, but the "status-book" is probably a fairly complete compilation of the written records before the observatory's time. Inevitably it contains a number of reports of rarities and sub-rarities which are unverifiable because no description of the birds was ever made. At the risk of treading on one or two surviving toes, I have omitted or "square-bracketted" many of these; including some which were given general acceptance at the time.

The even greater mass of anecdotal records, never written down, or only recounted in the vaguest terms some time after the event, must also be largely ignored. It has frequently happened, that in discussing a "first for Fair Isle" or some other very unusual record with the islanders, we have been told that there have been several such occurrences many year ago. We can only regret that no one had the time or inclination to take note of them; though in fairness it may be added that this failure was often due to the "What's missed is mystery" attitude inculcated by many visiting ornithologists until quite recent times.

The fifteen seasons of regular observation since 1948 have given a reasonably clear picture of the status of most regular and near-regular species, and the general statements in the list are based chiefly on these observatory records. It should be noted, however, that the series of regular observations between November and April is still too limited; regular watching in these months has only been done since 1957, and until now there has usually been a break in recording from mid-December to late January. The status of many species in winter is therefore known only from scattered observations over a long period of time.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer*. Scarce but regular on autumn passage, in very small numbers (no record of more

than five on one day). Mainly October-November, but occasionally as early as August (3rd, 1953; 18th, 1960). Once December, once January, once March. Recorded in most years between 1949 and 1956 in May or June, and once early July (3rd, 1950), but no spring records since 1956 and only one before 1949 (15th May 1924).

WHITE-BILLED DIVER *Gavia adamsii*. An adult in full summer dress on 14th May 1961.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata*. Regular passage-migrant in very small numbers. A slight predominance of records in May and June, but almost as many in July, August, and September; very few April and October-November. Extreme dates recorded are 13th April (1950) and 25th November (1962). Once February (25th, 1952).

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*. "Two or three" are said to have been seen in May 1940. One was observed in North Haven on 13th-16th February 1958, and found dead on the beach on 23rd.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps griseigena*. Six records, all of single birds: 9th February 1915 (obtained), 8th-11th February 1922, 26th October to 1st November 1926, 13th February 1929, 10th February 1937 (found dead), and 16th September 1956.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*. Seen most years on autumn passage (18th August to 7th December, mostly October), and occasionally in spring (13th February to 10th May, mostly March and April). Usually single birds, and no record of more than three on one day.

LITTLE GREBE *Podiceps ruficollis*. Clarke (1912) gives several October records between 12th and 27th; one 9th December; also one spring occurrence, 9th May 1908. The only dated records since then are for 8th October 1925 and 16th-24th September 1960, though the species is said to have been seen on a number of occasions "in the winter."

[BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS *Diomedea melanophrys*. An albatross believed to be of this species was present for much of the day on 14th May 1949.]

LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. One or two occasionally seen on the crossing in September, usually nearer to Sumburgh than to Fair Isle but rarely on the Fair Isle side. No records on or from the island.

STORM PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*. Small numbers often seen on the crossing, May to October. Bred regularly on Ward Hill, at Dutfield, in the Kirn of Skroo, and elsewhere up to 1943. No certain breeding-records 1944-61 but probably continued to nest in inaccessible places. A nest found at Bunes, and a broken egg at North Haven, in 1962. Birds have been seen on or near the island between 8th May and

10th November, but many of these were probably non-breeding visitors (one ringed 18th July 1958 was retrapped at Mousa, Shetland on 8th August). Breeding-season data are very few, but suggest egg-laying from about 20th June to end July or early August, considerably later than in Wales.

MANX SHEARWATER *Procellaria puffinus*. Occasionally seen from the island and on the crossing, in very small numbers; extreme dates, 8th April and 26th October. Never proved to breed, though at least two records of single birds calling over the isle at night, in recent years. Local name (obsolete) "Lingy-bird."

GREAT SHEARWATER *Procellaria gravis*. Single birds seen offshore by L. S. V. Venables on 14th and 21st September and 8th October 1936.

SOOTY SHEARWATER *Procellaria grisea*. Single birds, and rarely up to four, seen from the island and on the crossing in most autumns. Extreme dates, 9th August and 3rd October; mostly late August and first three weeks September.

[**BULWER'S PETREL** *Bulweria bulwerii*. A large all-black petrel seen by James A. Stout on the crossing, 18th January 1952, was probably of this species.]

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*. In the 19th century, only seen at offshore fishing-grounds. Present around cliffs in 1902, and breeding first recorded 1903 (about a dozen pairs in N.W. cliffs, and probably some Sheep Craig), "increased tremendously" by 1912 (Clarke). The increase has apparently continued to the present time. Counts and estimates gave c. 3000 occupied sites in 1949 and c. 5000 in 1959. In the early years of breeding the birds deserted the cliffs by mid-September and did not return until December or January, but by the early fifties they were absent only a month or six weeks in September-October; now they are seldom absent for more than ten days in late September, and in some years the cliffs are never completely deserted except in severe gales. Eggs are laid from about 10th May, and last chicks leave cliffs about mid-September (late date, 27th, 1958). Blue-phase birds are common offshore in winter, and are seen occasionally in summer; have bred on several occasions. Birds ringed on the island have been recovered as far away as the Murmansk coast, Faeroes, Newfoundland, and North Spain. Local name, "Maalie" or "Maalimuck."

GANNET *Sula bassana*. Seen offshore in all months, generally common April to June, abundant July to October, and in only small numbers November to March. Flightless juveniles, presumably from the Shetland colonies, sometimes come ashore in rough weather in August-September. Local name, "Solán."

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*. Regular on spring and autumn passage in very variable numbers, but on peak days rarely more than twenty in spring or forty in autumn. Mainly April-May and late August to mid-October, but recorded in all months. Visits the island fairly frequently in most winters, and often stays for some days or even weeks, but very doubtful if any individuals spend the whole winter around the island. Comparatively few June records, and rare in July.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*. An abundant breeding-bird. Clarke described it as "a very abundant resident" in 1912; a census in 1959 gave c. 1200 nests. Less numerous in winter (October to March). Passage seen offshore in most months, but especially September. Recoveries of birds ringed as young on the island show dispersal mainly to Shetland, Orkney, and northern Scotland, but some have reached Norway, Germany, Holland, S.E. and S.W. England. Local name, "Skarf."

HERON *Ardea cinerea*. Regular on spring passage, mainly March to early May, occasionally late May or early June. More frequent during post-breeding dispersal, late June or July to October, the largest arrivals (up to c. 30 at peak) being normally in late August or September. One or two birds have over-wintered successfully in recent years, and a few also visit the island casually in all winter months. Local name (obsolete), "Hegri."

LITTLE BITTERN *Ixobrychus minutus*. A female obtained by L. Anderson on 10th April 1940, and two or three others reported seen in the early summer of the same year.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*. One seen 4th-6th April 1930.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*. Regular passage-migrant in small numbers, mainly March-May and August-November, rarely exceeding 20 at peak but twice over 40 seen (both early November). Frequent visitor during the winter months, and probably some have over-wintered but this is usually prevented by shooting. Occasional visitor in June and July.

TEAL *Anas crecca*. Regular passage-migrant in spring and autumn. Spring records from "first week March" to 8th June, once 16th; mainly late April and May; the numbers have rarely attained double figures. Autumn records 26th July to early December, mostly late August to early October; often more than ten but rarely more than twenty on peak-days. A few records in late December and January, but none February; and none at midsummer.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*. Two shot in the spring of 1935.

BAIKAL TEAL *Anas formosa*. A female present from 29th September to 7th October 1954. The B.O.U. List Sub-Committee considered that it might have been an escape, despite the

fact that it coincided with several other Siberian vagrants.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*. Five spring records, in 1912, 1927, 1950, 1961, and 1962, all between 19th April and 14th May; two birds were present on two of these occasions. Three autumn records, 11th October 1911, 6th-7th and 19th September 1961.

WIGEON *Anas penelope*. Regular passage migrant. Very small numbers in spring (late March to late May, occasionally early June), more frequent and numerous in autumn (mid-August to early December, mainly mid-September to mid-November), when often up to twenty and sometimes forty or more on peak-days. Occasional visitor in winter, though few records in February. No records between mid-June and mid-August until recent years, but one 1st-2nd July 1958, four different birds July 1960, and one 24th June 1962.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*. Scarce and irregular in spring (30th March to 6th June, mainly late April and May). Two July records (3rd, 1950 and 22nd, 1959). One or two occur most years in autumn, 9th August to 18th October. No winter records.

SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata*. Only one record before 1948, on 18th August 1923. Since 1948, one or two recorded five times in spring (6th April to 4th June), and on ten occasions in autumn (29th July to 27th September). One 18th January 1952 (J. A. Stout).

SCAUP *Aythya marila*. A few spring records (22nd February to 31st May), but only three in the past fifteen years. Recorded almost every year on autumn passage, though rarely more than one or two; extreme dates 28th July to 3rd December, but great majority October and early November.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*. Very small numbers in most years on spring and autumn passage; up to four seen on peak-days in spring, up to five in autumn. Spring dates: 25th March to 6th June (mostly May). Autumn records: 23rd July to 28th November, mostly late September and early October. One midsummer record, two birds on 1st-2nd July 1953.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*. Two spring records, 25th March 1914 (two), and 10th-11th April 1944. Two at midsummer, 8th-9th July 1912, and 6th July 1955. Ten in autumn, between 10th August and 23rd November, mostly October; four of these are in the past fifteen years. One winter record, 20th December 1911.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*. One or two seen most recent years in early spring, and will probably prove fairly regular; the extreme dates are 3rd February and 21st April (once 23rd May), mostly late March to mid-April. Regular passage-migrant in autumn, recorded between 26th August and 15th December, the great majority in October and November.

Rarely exceeds five on best days, but up to seventeen recorded.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*. Regular spring and autumn passage-migrant, and occasional visitor during the winter; in very variable numbers. In spring rarely more than one or two present; most records in April-May but seen to 11th June. Recorded in autumn from 12th September, but mostly October-November; seldom more than 10 to 15 on peak-days, but up to 38 observed. Three midsummer records, 28th June 1911, 4th July onwards, 1924, and 4th to 18th July 1956. Local name, "Calloo."

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*. Eight or nine spring records (five or six since 1949), between 21st March and 15th June. Annual in autumn, usually one or two individuals, but up to five recorded. Extreme dates are 12th July and 1st December, but most are in September-October. One winter record, 28th-29th January 1952.

[**SURF SCOTER** *Melanitta perspicillata*. Three sight-records, and one "washed ashore": in "winter" 1934, February and November 1936, and December 1940; but no details were recorded.]

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*. Twenty or twenty-one records, twelve between 15th April and 4th July (mostly late May and early June), and eight or nine between 4th September and 25th November. Fifteen or sixteen of these records are in eight years since 1948. Most records are of single birds, but up to three observed.

EIDER *Somateria mollissima*. A common breeding-bird on the coast and the hill-ground. Population about 300 birds in recent years, and no evidence of any great change in this century. Remains numerous during the winter, though some may leave in the late autumn. No certain evidence of passage-movements. Local name, "Dunter."

KING EIDER *Somateria spectabilis*. An adult male seen by W. E. Clarke on 13th May 1910; a male obtained 11th November 1935; and one reported seen offshore on 31st March 1936.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*. A regular visitor, recorded in all months, though very few August records. Rather more frequent in April and May than in the other spring months, and autumn movements most pronounced from late September to early November. Rarely more than five seen at one time. A pair nested in 1934, probably on the Stack of North Haven, the female and young later seen off Buness.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*. Four late-winter and spring records: one 18th February to 4th March 1929, one 11th-12th April 1950, one 5th-10th June 1950, and one 3rd-4th June 1957. Six autumn records: one 20th-22nd September

1962 and the rest between 20th November and 10th December. Four of these late-autumn records are since 1959, and the species will probably prove to be more frequent than the available data suggest.

SMEW *Mergus albellus*. Four records: one obtained 21st January 1913, two seen about 20th January 1937, "two or three" seen December 1941, and one 26th September 1961.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*. A few seen most years (annually since 1952). Slightly more autumn than spring records. In spring recorded between 14th March and 16th June (mostly May); and in autumn between 15th July and 27th November (mostly August-September). Most records are of single birds but occasionally up to four and once eight seen.

GREY-LAG GOOSE *Anser anser*. Usually the commonest goose at Fair Isle in recent years, though remarkably few records before 1948. Regular on autumn passage (30th August to early December, mainly late October and early November) in very variable numbers, often up to twenty and sometimes seventy or more on peak-days. Occasional visitor between December and March, and occurs most years on spring migration (mainly late April and early May) in very small numbers. A few June records and one July (four 1st to 4th, 1951).

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*. Occurs in most autumns (15th September to 27th November, mostly October), usually in very small numbers, but up to fifty recorded. Three dated records in late December and January, and said to have occurred on several other occasions in winter. The only spring occurrences on record were all in 1961, three 18th April, one 19th (shot), and three 24th. The Greenland form *A. a. flavirostris* apparently predominates, there being six determinations of this form (including one party of twelve) against only two of the typical form, in recent years.

BEAN GOOSE *Anser arvensis*. Three records: one obtained 10th January 1913, "several" shot October-November 1936, and one present from "early spring" 1950 until it was shot about 20th June.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser brachyrhynchus*. Recorded almost every year on autumn passage (26th September to 11th December, mostly October), usually in small numbers but up to 33 noted. A few winter records, late December to early March. No dated spring records until 1955, but a few seen in all but two springs since then, 11th April to 11th June. One ringed near Annan, Dumfries, on 26th October 1954 was shot on the island on 17th May 1956.

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicula*. Apparently a frequent visitor in the first three decades of this century, with at least twenty-two dated records up to 1928. Half of these were in

autumn (3rd September to 21st November), four were in winter (10th January to 12th February), and seven in spring (21st April to 15th May). The numbers recorded were usually less than five, but up to twenty-five (19th October 1914) and once forty (6th October 1922) noted. It is however by no means unlikely that some of these birds were actually Barnacle Geese, since there are very few records of that species before 1948, and some of the islanders still make no distinction between the two kinds of black geese. Since 1928 there have been only four records; three birds 30th September to 1st October 1949, one 27th May 1950, two 8th to 13th September 1955, and one 3rd October 1960. The only ones racially assigned were the 1949 and 1955 birds, which were of the Pale-breasted form *B. b. hrota*.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*. Fairly regular on autumn passage (seen every autumn 1957-62), usually in very small numbers but up to eighteen recorded. One August record (18th, 1927), one in November (12th, 1962), and one December 7th, 1962), otherwise all between 17th September and 28th October. Three winter records: one on several dates between 8th January and 1st March 1909, one 9th February 1915, and one 12th March 1952. Three spring records: eleven 1st-5th, twenty-five 6th, fourteen 7th May 1953, one 19th April 1961 (shot), and two 24th April to 1st May 1961. Has apparently become much more frequent in recent years, as only the two old winter records and the August one date from before 1952 (but see remarks under Brent Goose). One shot on 12th November 1962 had been ringed in Vest-Spitsbergen as a flightless adult on 24th July 1962.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*. Four on 6th June 1962, one of which was present until the 24th. These were heavy-looking and remarkably tame birds which had probably wandered from some private water in Britain.

[**MUTE SWAN** *Cygnus olor*. George Stout believes he saw one about thirty years ago.]

WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*. Regular on spring and autumn passage, in very variable numbers; but in some years frequent in parties of up to ten and occasionally up to forty birds. Occasional visitor during the winter, particularly in hard weather; and odd birds have spent several weeks on the island at this season. The spring records are mainly end March to third week April, but once late May (19th-20th, 1951) and once June (10th, 1955). In autumn, one August record (3rd-6th, 1958), a good many in late September (from 12th), but mostly October and early November.

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus columbianus*. Four old records: 18th November 1910 and 30th November 1911 (both shot); seven seen 12th January 1922; one shot 17th April 1925.

(To be continued)

2. The Rarer Birds at Fair Isle, Spring 1962.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*. Single birds in full summer dress, 1st and 25th-27th April.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*. A party of three and a single bird on 6th June. The party flew away north, and were presumably the birds present at Hillwell in Shetland in mid-June (see para. 9). The single bird remained at Fair Isle until at least 24th June. All were large and rather tame birds, and presumably from the feral British stock. A first record for Fair Isle.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*. One seen by James Wilson on 22nd May.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaëtus*. One passed north over the island 25th April. This would almost certainly be the one seen in the Lerwick area between 28th April and 7th May (see para. 9). We can authoritatively deny the persistent rumour that George Waterston was hanging on to its legs.

COMMON CRANE *Grus grus*. Two spent the forenoon of 29th May on the isle, departing S.E. at midday. The first documented record for the island.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*. One, perhaps two, 13th May, one 14th; one 15th-16th June. The fifth and sixth records for the island.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*. A female 7th May, and a male 30th June.

ALPINE SWIFT *Apus melba*. One seen by Gordon Barnes, passing south over the island, on 20th June. Very possibly the one seen in Unst a few days earlier (see para. 9). The first for Fair Isle.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*. One 22nd April (our earliest record), one 11th to 20th May, and one 4th June.

BLUE TIT *Parus caeruleus*. A bird of the typical form trapped on 24th April. Fourth record for Fair Isle, and the first in spring.

BLUETHROAT *Cyanosylvia svecica*. Single males of the Red-spotted typical form were present 11th and 23rd to 28th May, 3rd June. A male White-spotted *C. s. cyaneacula* trapped on 21st May. Females recorded on 20th May, 27th May (two), one until 3rd June.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. One trapped 29th June, seen again 2nd July. Only two specimens have previously been obtained in spring.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. One trapped 28th May.

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa parva*. A female trapped 4th June. The second spring record for Fair Isle.

GREY-HEADED WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava thunbergi*. A male 17th

- to 20th May, with a female 18th to 20th and a second male 19th. Single males 24th May and 2nd-3rd June.
- RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius cristatus collurio*. Single males 22nd to 25th May and 7th-8th June.
- LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea cabaret*. A male 15th-16th June (trapped).
- NORTHERN BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula p. pyrrhula*. A male 18th-22nd April, two females 30th April to 3rd May.
- ORTOLAN *Emberiza hortulana*. A male 21st to 26th May.
- RUSTIC BUNTING *E. rustica*. A male 13th May, two 14th, one to 18th.
- BLACK-HEADED BUNTING *E. melanocephala*. A male 5th to 13th June. A remarkably tame bird, lacking some feathers on the crown. It lived among the hens at Midway, and was frequently heard singing from such vantage-points as the kitchen window-sill. Almost certainly an escape.
- LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*. A male 24th April, a female 4th-6th May, a male 8th May, female 20th to 23rd May, and a male 26th May to 1st June.

3. Passage in late March 1962.

The spring departure of winter-visitors, returning from Britain to Scandinavia, reached Fair Isle in better numbers this year than in any spring since 1958. There were two peaks of movement, on 26th-27th March and on 30th March, with Redwings, Blackbirds and Woodcock dominant in the first fall, Blackbirds and Starlings in the second. The movements were remarkably punctual in view of the late onset of spring, which delayed many other migrants by two weeks or more, compared with normal years.

The 25th March, like its predecessors, was a birdless day on the isle; but late in the evening the wind backed S.E., strong, with the entry of a depression into N.W. Scotland, and there was intermittent rain from an occlusion extending south and south-west to the east of the centre. The rain passed before dawn on the 26th, though conditions remained overcast at Fair Isle. The day's tally included about 100 Woodcocks (30 shot by the islanders), and similar numbers of Redwings and Blackbirds; but only about half of the thrushes were present at dawn, and the rest arrived about noon. Starlings increased slightly, but the only other new records were of about twenty Fieldfares and a Hedge Sparrow. There can be little doubt that this movement originated in western Britain or Ireland, where the cloud-cover was starting to break and the wind was moderate, and the birds were probably disoriented and grounded after entering the overcast zone. The suggested origin of

the movement is supported by the high proportion of Woodcocks. It is an unvarying rule that Woodcock falls always coincide with Blackbird arrivals at Fair Isle, but the ringing-recoveries of Blackbirds have shown that it is only the population which commutes between Norway and the northern and western parts of Britain whose movements are accompanied by comparable Woodcock numbers. Conversely, the Blackbird falls which later produce recoveries in Sweden or England (showing the birds to have been drifted far north of their heading across the North Sea) do not coincide with Woodcock arrivals of any size. Whether this is because fewer Woodcock cross the southern North Sea, or because they are less prone to lateral drift, is not known.

Overnight on 26th-27th March the depression moved S.E. over Scotland, but the wind remained S.E., moderate to light, at Fair Isle until midday. The zone of broken cloud had reached the island by dawn, with long bright periods, and Redwings had increased to over a thousand, Blackbirds to three hundred. The Woodcock situation was obscure, as no gunners went to the hill, but there was no significant change in the numbers seen by us. A greater variety of other migrants arrived, notably Water Rail and Moorhen, six Dunlins, Bar-tailed Godwit, Wood Pigeon, Carrion Crow, two Mistle Thrushes, a few more Fieldfares, three Song Thrushes, a Stonechat, five Hedge Sparrows, a few Chaffinches, two Yellowhammers, and two Reed Buntings; all species which could well be participants in a north-eastward movement out of Britain at this season, though the crow and the Stonechat were overshooting their normal range.

Most of these birds remained on the island during the 28th (a fine day with fresh westerly wind) and although some Redwings were heard flying away to the N.E. at dusk, many were still present on the 29th, a filthy day of continuous rain and strong E. to S.E. wind. There were no new arrivals on either day.

This rain-belt was associated with the warm front of another slow-moving depression to the north of Scotland; it cleared Fair Isle shortly before dawn, and was followed by a cloudy but mild and dry day on the 30th, with the wind moderate S.E. during the morning, veering S.W. at noon. We spent the day near the centre of the depression (with the barograph-pen falling to rest on the lower rim of the drum!), but the bird-situation was anything but depressed. Blackbirds were arriving from first light until well into the afternoon, by which time they were well into four figures (107 ringed). Starlings were even more numerous, over 2000 in addition to the residents. Lapwings increased from under fifty to over 120. Apart from these new arrivals, there were hardly any changes from the previous day. Some islanders went to the hill, but got

only about ten Woodcocks, and these could well have been the remnants of the earlier fall.

Three Blackbird recoveries during April all suggest that this movement had originated further south than the one three days earlier, and its arrival at Fair Isle behind the front and during the day suggests the birds had become disoriented after encountering the rain-belt in the southern North Sea. All three recoveries indicate redetermined movement to the east or south-east after the drift. The first (ringed 30th March) was from Skagen in Jutland on 6th April; the second (also ringed 30th) was from Lesjöfors in W. Sweden, and the third (ringed 31st) from Enköping, near Stockholm, both on 21st April.

Most of the Starlings in this fall departed on the same day. The wind shifted N.W. and suddenly increased to gale force about 1800 GMT, and we actually witnessed the departure soon afterwards, the big flocks being blown, at fantastic speed, out over the sea to the east. The Blackbirds, on the other hand, were grounded during this gale on the 31st (120 trapped), but some two-thirds of them left by the 1st April, after the wind had moderated.

P. D.

4. An Invasion of Robins and Hedge Sparrows.

In a recent paper on Robin recaptures at Fair Isle (*Brit. Birds* 55: 225-9) I stated that the main spring falls of Robins migrating from Iberia to Scandinavia reached Fair Isle at the end of March or in the first days of April, and that the rest of April had never produced a major fall. Before the paper was in print, we had the exception that proves the rule; for in the cold late spring of 1962, the Robins moved north a fortnight later than usual, and the big fall came between 17th and 19th April, with a second wave a few days later. These falls coincided with the largest arrivals of Hedge Sparrows ever recorded on the island.

An anticyclone, centred over N. Scotland in mid-April, moved away N.E. to Scandinavia on the 15th and 16th, and a shallow depression entered the southern North Sea. A light or moderate easterly airstream flowed over the North Sea until the 20th. At Fair Isle the 16th was a relatively quiet day, with a few new Blackbirds, a Black Redstart, two or three Chiffchaffs, and only about ten Robins and three Hedge Sparrows. On the morning of the 17th we saw about 25 Robins and caught six, but no additional Hedge Sparrows were noted, and none trapped. The first of these was caught at 1515 GMT, another at 1700, and with a strong arrival in the next hour, a further twelve were caught before dark. Robins were also

arriving during the evening, and six more were ringed. Nearly all these incomers were at low weights, indicating that they had just completed a lengthy flight. The daily census totals for the day were entered as c. 50 of each species, but this is only an indication of the increase, for we could not go beyond the trapping-area in the evening. Two tired Chaffinches also reached North Haven about 1600, and the first Ring Ouzel of the year had been seen a little earlier.

The invasion seems to have developed more strongly after nightfall, for next morning Robins and Hedge Sparrows were everywhere, to the estimated totals of at least 200 Robins and 150 Hedge Sparrows seen. There must have been many more in the areas we could not cover. Thirty-six Robins and 30 Hedgies were ringed during the day, mostly before noon. Few other species had arrived, less than ten each of Song Thrush, Wheatear, and Chaffinch, single Bullfinch, Brambling and Yellowhammer.

On the 19th, when the hitherto fine weather had been replaced by overcast, Robins had increased further, to over 250 seen, and forty were ringed. This may have been a redetermined movement out of N. Scotland. Hedge Sparrows were unchanged, and only eight were caught. Two Chiffchaffs and a few more Chaffinches and Bramblings were also present. The totals remained similar on the 20th (30 Robins and 4 Hedge Sparrows ringed), but more than half the birds departed by the 21st, in fresh or strong southerly winds associated with a depression moving N.E. over Iceland. .

By the 22nd the Scandinavian High was shifting back SW, and the weather-pattern of the 16th-20th was almost duplicated, apart from extensive cloud persisting through the 22nd. This was another "big day." A hundred Fieldfares, over 30 Blackbirds, about fifteen Song Thrushes, and over thirty Bramblings were in by morning, and during the day the Robins and Hedge Sparrows increased by 50% over the previous day's tally, to 150 and 75 respectively; and at least a dozen Ring Ouzels and eighty Bramblings were on the isle by evening. Most of these departed on southerly winds on the 24th-25th.

The late-afternoon and evening arrivals of the 17th repeat the pattern frequently observed for Robins (and most other small continental birds) in earlier springs, and once more we have the strong probability that they had been flying since nightfall on the previous evening, progressively deflected to the west by crosswinds. The low weights of the arrivals (Robins averaging only about 15 gm., and Hedge Sparrows only about 18.5) reinforce this view. We have so far had no Robin recoveries to confirm the origins of the birds involved, but April movements in earlier years have been proved to concern the Scandinavian stock, and the 1962

falls were unusual only in their late timing, explicable by the prolongation of wintry weather into April, in the whole of western Europe including Iberia. The Hedge Sparrow falls are another problem, in that they are totally without precedent on anything approaching this scale. All those trapped were white-bellied birds of the continental type. The recovery of one ringed on 27th April (but presumably a left-over from the earlier falls) 480 miles SSE., at March in Cambridgeshire on 3rd May, coupled with that of another Hedge Sparrow from Lincolnshire, ringed 19th April and recovered in Holland on 30th, suggests the likelihood that the species was overshooting under the stimulus of the fine anticyclonic conditions, and that the birds subsequently returned south to their home area. The western populations were known to be abnormally high after the 1961 breeding season, and irruptive movements were observed in many areas. This overshooting, if such it was, seems not to have been unprecedented on a smaller scale, for a Hedge Sparrow ringed at Fair Isle on 29th April 1961 was recovered nearly three weeks later on Heligoland.

P. D.

5. The Arctic Skua Colony in 1962.

As foretold in the report on the 1961 season (*antea* Vol. 4, pp. 185-9), the population-study of the Fair Isle Arctic Skua colony was wound-up in 1962. The considerable task of extracting data from fifteen years' detailed records is now in progress. In the final season, the colony increased by three pairs, to seventy; just five times its size when the study began in 1948. The netting-programme this year was restricted to ringed birds which could not be identified with reasonable certainty, and no attempt was made to catch the unringed recruits to the colony. In view of the very poor weather at this time, it is fortunate that the proportion of "single-ringers" in the newcomers was exceptionally small, only a sixth of the total compared with a third or more in the previous three years.

At the close of the 1961 season there were 130 surviving ringed breeders; of these 107 returned in 1962, but one did not breed, so the loss to the effective strength was 24 birds (18.5%), a higher proportion than in any recent year. In addition, the two unringed breeders of 1961 were not detected; it is possible that one of these was present incognito, but the other had distinctive plumage, and probably failed to return. To over-compensate for these high losses, four birds which had bred before 1961, but not in that year, now rejoined the strength, and 30 newcomers arrived; the largest annual increment since 1955. This was probably a reflection of the high level of breed-

ing-success at Fair Isle (and presumably at other local colonies) in 1958, the best year since 1953.

Of the 140 breeders in 1962, only thirteen were survivors of the years up to 1954, when colour-marking began, and almost half the total first bred in 1960 or later. Neither bird of the ancient pair which had bred at Homisdale Springs from at least 1948 until 1961 was seen this year, and their territory remained vacant. The oldest pair was now at Tarryfield, where the Pale x Intermediate mating has been unchanged since 1950. Next in order of seniority were the Eas Brecks South partnership, together since 1954, and the Swey N.E. mating founded in 1955. Five pairs had been united since 1956, two since 1957, four since 1958, five since 1959, seven since 1960, and fifteen continued from 1961. Twenty-nine matings (41.4% of the total) were new in 1962; a high figure, as was perhaps to be expected in a year when high mortality among the breeders coincided with a peak population of young birds reaching maturity. Twenty-six of the 1961 pairs were not reformed, two because of deaths in that summer, fifteen due to the failure of one bird to return after the winter, five because neither came back, and four because although both birds returned they were divorced. Three of the divorces concerned pairs which had been together in two breeding seasons; in the fourth they had been together in only one year. We have now had divorces in most age-groups, though over the years they have proved to be slightly more frequent in pairs with only one breeding-season together.

The "intermittent breeders" which reappeared in 1962 gave us new information on this curious aspect of skua behaviour. Two of the four birds to rejoin were in the now familiar category which misses only one breeding-season (sometimes because the old bird has had the misfortune to remate with an immature individual) and then carries on breeding as a normal member of the stock. Another has had a most chequered career; having bred at Brae East in 1958, lived there as a non-breeder in 1959, bred again in 1960, disappeared into obscurity in 1961, and reappeared to breed in the same area, at Brae Lower, in 1962! The fourth bird had been off the breeding-strength for two consecutive years; it nested for the first time at Homisdale North in 1959, was seen once nearby in 1960, not seen in 1961, but came back and bred at Furse Roadside in 1962. The only other bird known to have had two successive years as an intermittent breeder, at Brae Middle in 1960 and 1961, did not appear in 1962. This year, one 1961 breeder was recognised as a non-breeder; it retained its 1961 ground at Swey Middle Lower, with a presumed immature as mate.

Return of Young birds. Only five single-ringers joined the colony, and only three of these were trapped. One never came

to the eggs during six or seven attempts to net it; another's nest was not located until the eggs were hatching, in a gale which prevented any attempts to catch it. The three trapped birds were a six-year-old and two four-year-olds. They bring the total of ringed chicks retrapped as first-time breeders to 49, of which seven were three years old, twenty-seven were four, eleven were five, and four were six.

For the first time in fifteen years, an Arctic Skua in the first-summer plumage was seen on the isle. This was an Intermediate morph, seen closely at the Brae of Restensgeo on 17th June. The head was like that of the adult, but there was broad buff barring on all the wing-coverts, the flanks and the belly, pale buff tips to the tail-coverts, and scattered buff bars elsewhere on the mantle and breast. The central tail-feathers projected only slightly beyond the rest.

Breeding-Success. The seventy pairs laid 136 eggs (including one replacement), hatched 108, and reared 83 chicks. Breeding-success (young reared from eggs laid) was 61%, a little below the average for the previous thirteen years, but still a good year considering the number of inexperienced birds. Most of the egg-losses were due to infertility or chilling, few were predated; some of the losses of chicks were caused by heavy rain at hatching-time, and only seven, mostly late ones, died after being ringed at twenty days old.

The replacement egg, at Swey East territory, was of unique interest. Hitherto the only records of replacement-laying have referred to birds which lost the first clutch in the early stages of incubation, but this egg was laid after the first clutch had been successfully hatched. Two eggs were found here on 25th May, and these hatched between 15th and 17th June; the chicks were not seen on the 19th but the colour-ringed adults demonstrated as usual. When we came to ring the youngsters on 7th July, both parents reacted strongly, and we were puzzled by the lack of recent droppings or cast fragments of feather-sheath in the area. Eventually Dr Maeve Rusk came across a single egg in a new scrape, barely twenty yards from the first nest, and this evidently belonged to the agitated pair. Neither on this day nor on the several subsequent visits was there any indication of a third bird's having an interest in the egg. It hatched on 27th or 28th July, and must therefore have been laid about 1st July. There were no responses on 6th August or subsequently and the chick probably died in heavy rain on the 4th or 5th.

Three-egg clutches. The female at Brae N.E. which laid three eggs in 1960 and 1961 did so again in 1962, and as before they were incubated past the normal period but did not hatch. A second hen, which bred for the first time at Brunt Brae Upper in 1961, and then produced two eggs (one broken and one infertile), laid three this year at the same

site. By an almost incredible coincidence, her mate had previously had a three-egg female, the bird which showed this unfortunate trait at Brunt Brae Upper from 1954 to 1959. None of this year's eggs hatched, and the male has fathered no offspring in nine years, during which his females have laid 25 eggs! The story of his original mate has a happier ending. She had six unviable clutches at Brunt Brae Upper between 1954 and 1959, then moved to Swey West in 1960, to a mate who had a history of successful breeding since 1950. In 1960 and 1961 she laid only two eggs, but both clutches were infertile. In 1962, still with the same mate, she laid her 23rd and 24th eggs, both hatched successfully, and both chicks were reared.

As a result of this season's record, the "three-egg problem" seems further from clarification than ever. At first it was thought that three eggs never hatched, simply because the birds could not cover them adequately. Then, by 1961, the additional data from Swey West suggested that they might be produced by females incapable of laying fertile eggs; this received support from the 1961-62 record of Brunt Brae Upper, but was contradicted by events at Swey West in 1962. Now we have at least the possibility that the male can influence the clutch-size; the odds against a male having two "three-egg females" in his lifetime have not yet been computed but must be astronomical.

Until now we have avoided experimentation with the eggs in the interests of a natural record of breeding-success, but in 1963 it would be interesting to remove the third egg from any three-egg clutches, to see if the remainder hatch.

P. D.

6. Notes on the Breeding Birds, 1962.

STORM PETREL. Breeding was proved for the first time since 1943, although it is unlikely that there has been any discontinuity during that time. The shell of a newly-hatched egg was found while we were ringing Fulmars in the cliffs of the North Gavel on 2nd August, and the nest, with an adult brooding a tiny chick, was located soon afterwards. Although they were not handled or further disturbed, the burrow was empty on 3rd September. A cracked egg with well-developed embryo was washed ashore on the North Haven beach on 17th August.

FULMAR. Probably continued to increase, as a number of new sites were noticed and it was not remarked that any had been abandoned. Chick-losses were believed to have been higher than usual, as fewer young were available for ring-

ing on the stretches of cliff regularly climbed in recent years.

SHAG. The first eggs were seen on 27th April, a rather late date. Breeding was exceptionally late at Gunnawark, rather late at South Naaversgill, but about normal on the north and east coasts. Many beach-nests were washed out during rough weather coinciding with spring tides in May.

EIDER. The first nest was found on 20th May (about normal) and the earliest ducklings seen on the sea on 12th June. The birds had a rather better season than in the past three or four years for rearing young.

PEREGRINE A pair bred in a new site at Lerness; the pair had changed, as the white-breasted tiercel of recent years was not present. The nest was located on 13th June, when it had two chicks about a fortnight old; both were ringed on 15th June. The chicks were wandering about the cliff-slopes near the nest on 1st July, and were first seen on the wing on the 4th. Both were present through August, and at least one through most of September.

CORNCRAKE. First seen 24th and 26th April, our earliest records at Fair Isle. This was probably a passage-migrant, as regular records did not start until 10th May. Birds were calling in the spring and early summer at Kennaby, Lower Leogh, and Middle Leys-Quoy area, and in late-June and July at Shirva (probably an unmated bird). No nests were found when the hay was cut in early August, but a fledged juvenile was seen at Kennaby when the corn was harvested in mid-September, and an unfledged chick reported from Springfield (where three adults had been flushed during the hay-cutting) as late as the third week of September.

OYSTERCATCHER. The first bird was seen on 1st February, an early date, and birds were regularly present from the second week, although most arrived at the end of the month and in early March as usual. The first nest (2 eggs) was on 5th May, a normal date. The population was about 40-50 pairs, as usual. A bird almost ten years old—ringed as a chick at Sukka Mire on 19th June 1952—was found dead on 6th May.

LAPWING. Continuous records began about 7th February, a fortnight earlier than usual, though most of the breeders probably arrived about the end of the month. The breeding-population was twelve or thirteen pairs, about three or four less than in 1961; presumably a reflection of high mortality in a severe winter. A predator found the first egg before we did—a clifted shell on 17th April. The first successful nest hatched on 14th May, and the last on 17th June. Nearly all the breeders had departed by the last week of July.

RINGED PLOVER. First recorded on 19th February. Two pairs bred, on the stony area at Skervalie, Buness. The first nest, which had four eggs on 29th April, hatched on 23rd May; the second, with four eggs on 22nd May, hatched on 9th-10th June. As in previous years the senior (and earlier) pair laid a second clutch, three eggs which hatched 23rd July. At least three young were fledged.

SNIPE. The increase noted in 1961 was not maintained. A pair bred in Gilsetter, where two small chicks were found on 17th June. Birds were also present for much of the spring in the Pund-Setter area but there was no evidence of breeding.

BONXIE. First seen on 4th April, which is about normal; but the first eggs (two singles) were not seen until 20th May. Twenty-five pairs bred, five more than in 1960, but the islanders' "discouragement" of the birds was intensified, and breeding-success was very low; only eleven chicks were reared from forty-one eggs. A bird ringed as a chick at the Brae of Restensgeo in 1958 was breeding for the first time, within 200 yards of its birthplace. Other single-ringers were seen but not caught. A 1959 chick (probably a non-breeder) was found freshly-dead.

ARCTIC SKUA. (See para. 5). First seen 21st April, and regularly from the 25th, a pattern which hardly changes from year to year. The first egg, at Eas Brecks South, was laid on 15th or 16th May, two or three days earlier than any previous record.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED and HERRING GULLS. Bred as usual.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. First seen 7th April, and regularly from the 14th; a week or two later than is usual. The breeding-population was about fifteen pairs, three or four at Buness and about twelve at Goorn.

KITTIWAKE, RAZORBILL, GUILLEMOT. Razorbills were first seen ashore on 17th March, and the other two species on the 22nd, all unusually late records. The timing of breeding was apparently about normal, however.

PUFFIN. First came ashore on 7th April, about the average date. There were generally fewer chicks available for ringing in the areas habitually covered, than in recent years. One adult was seen at a burrow near the North Light on 1st and 2nd September, fully ten days later than any previously recorded.

TYSTIE. Many nests in boulder-beach sites were destroyed by high seas in May, but some pairs produced single-egg replacements. The latest chick in the nest was noted on 28th August, almost fledged.

ROCK DOVE. Population has decreased in recent years, pro-

bably as the result of intermittent shooting. Certainly less than ten pairs this year.

SKYLARK. First heard in song on 20th February; most of the breeders returned about this time, as usual. The first nest found had c./4 on 9th May. The population remained high, and seems to have had a reasonably good season.

SWALLOW. A pair bred successfully in a wartime concrete building at the lower camp on Ward Hill, a remarkable achievement in such a grey and windy summer, at what must surely be the most exposed site ever used by a pair of Swallows. C. J. Booth found the nest on 15th July; it contained 3 eggs next day and this proved to be the full clutch. There were still eggs on 30th July but small chicks on 6th August. All three were fledged but one disappeared later. The family moved to lower ground at the beginning of September, and were last seen on 11th September. There is no previous documented breeding-record for the isle, though a pair is said to have bred many years ago.

WREN. It was intended to make a dawn census of singing birds, but in the consistently vile weather of late May and early June this was never achieved.

WHEATEAR. The first birds appeared on 5th April, about a week later than average, but there were no more until 14th. The first females were seen on 20th, and the main arrival was delayed until the 23rd to 26th. The breeding population was probably not much more than half that of recent years, and breeding was ten days later than normal, no fledged young seen until the beginning of July.

MEADOW PIPIT. First seen 26th March, about ten days late, and very few seen until the main arrivals on 14th-15th and 22nd-23rd April, but no noticeable decrease in the breeding population. The first nest (with c./4) was not found until 20th May, and breeding was probably a week or so later than usual.

ROCK PIPIT. The population was believed to be smaller than in recent years, and summer trapping of juveniles was much less productive than usual.

STARLING. Apparently less numerous than in recent years. The first nest was found on 10th May, a normal date.

TWITE. Present from 19th March, though few until 14th April, and most arrived 29th-30th April. These dates are about average. The breeding-population was well below that of recent years, however, and success appeared to be low. As in 1960 and 1961, a few birds were seen which were evidently affected by the seed-dressing (dieltrin) on the newly-sown oats; none were found dead this year, but several suffered from loss of co-ordination, falling over when they attempted to fly.

HOUSE SPARROW. Population rather lower than in recent years.
 TREE SPARROW. Seven birds survived the winter until late February, but later only three present. Immigration brought the total up to eight or ten in late May and early June, but so far as is known only the survivors bred. There was one successful nest in the South Reeva (feeding young in the nest from 20th June onwards, juvenile seen 11th July), and the third bird was often there. It may have hybridized with a House Sparrow, as Barry Spence saw a juvenile bird on 14th August which he took to be a hybrid—with greyish crown and "long" head but also the white cheek with black spot. The population was augmented by further immigration in early autumn, and at the time of writing (November) at least a dozen birds are resident.

7. Bird-Notes from Shetland, Spring 1962.

C. J. BOOTH

- GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Colymbus immer*. Maximum 10, Bay of Quendale on 14th January.
- RED-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus stellatus*. Breeding birds first seen on 21st March.
- GREAT-CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*. Two in full breeding plumage on Loch of Tingwall, 15th April.
- SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus*. One in breeding plumage, 7th April.
- LITTLE GREBE *Podiceps ruficollis*. One seen Loch of Tingwall, 15th and 22nd April.
- FULMAR *Fulmaris glacialis*. Dark phase birds seen, Strom Loch, 7th April, Baltasound, 4th May.
- HERON *Ardea cinerea*. Maximum 5, Sullom Voe on 21st January.
- PINTAIL *Anas acuta*. A male, Loch of Tingwall on 21st June.
- SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata*. Pair at Trolla Water, Baltasound on 15th May.
- SCAUP *Aythya marila*. Two males on Loch of Tingwall, 21st June.
- TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*. Three males and two females, Loch of Tingwall, 21st June. (A nest with c./8 found here on 2nd July, and a duck with two young at Houlma Water on 29th July—per J. Peterson).
- POCHARD *Aythya ferina*. Last seen, a male, on 21st June, Loch of Tingwall.
- LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*. Maximum 32 at Uyeasound on 3rd May.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*. Eight, Mid Yell Voe on 7th May.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*. Maximum 7 at Virkie on 18th March.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser*. Six on 25th March at Loch Spiggie.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*. One near Bixter on 27th June.

SPARROW HAWK *Accipiter nisus*. Two at Kergord on 20th January.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*. One, Unst, on 12th May.

RED GROUSE *Lagopus scoticus*. A pair with young at Stromfirth, 19th June. Covey of 6 birds, Vidlin on 30th June.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*. First birds seen on 22nd April. Breeding pairs noted Dunrossness and Unst. Single bird, Whiteness.

COOT *Fulica atra*. Wintering birds on Lochs Spiggie and Tingwall. Last seen 15th April.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*. Maximum 39 on 11th March. Two nests found, Mainland, with c./3 and c./2 on 29th April. Four nests, Unst on 3rd May with c./3, 2, 1 & 2.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*. Maximum 42, Virkie on 18th March. Nests with c./4 and c./3 found on 14th April.

GREY PLOVER *Charadrius squatrola*. One, Virkie on 25th March.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Charadrius apricarius*. Flock of 100, Baltasound, on 14th May. Several of the breeding birds showed plumage characteristic of the Northern race.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*. Maximum, Virkie, 50 on 25th March.

SNIPE *Capella gallinago*. Drumming first heard on 26th February.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus*. Single birds at Whiteness on 6th April and Unst on 19th April.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*. First birds in Unst seen on 2nd May.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*. Birds present Virkie, January to March. Maximum 5 on 7th January, 25th March.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*. One, Unst on 3rd May.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*. A pair with young near Voe on 30th June.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*. Breeding pairs noted in the following localities: Dunrossness, Tingwall, Whiteness, Sandsting and Unst. At least 3 pairs bred in the Whiteness area, where display was first seen on 25th March.

- PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*. Maximum, Virkie, 14 on 25th March.
- DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*. Breeding birds first seen on 6th May.
- GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua*. First bird seen on 11th April.
- GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*. A nest with 3 eggs found in Unst on 2nd May.
- LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*. First noted, 7th April.
- GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*. Single birds at Lerwick on 22nd January, Virkie on 11th March.
- ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides*. Second summer bird, Mid Yell Voe on 7th May.
- BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*. Colonies at Lochs Spiggie and Trondavoe were apparently unsuccessful in rearing flying young.
- WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*. Single birds, Unst, on 17th April and 15th-17th May. Maximum at Kergord Plantations, 24 on 1st June. At least 10 pairs bred. Song first heard on 7th April. Newly hatched young and full grown young seen on 25th July.
- CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*. One near Virkie on 21st June.
- SWIFT *Apus apus*. One Tingwall on 19th June.
- SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*. First birds returned on 6th March.
- SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*. Single birds seen, Mainland 29th April, 6th May, 23rd June; Unst 1st May, 15th May, 17th May. A pair reported to be breeding at Grutness.
- HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*. Three, Unst on 20th May, 1 Sumburgh 28th June.
- SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*. One, Mainland, 30th June.
- RAVEN *Corvus corax*. A flock of over 20 birds feeding on a newly planted cornfield at Baltasound during May.
- ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*. At least 8 nests were built in trees near the house at Kergord, in late March or early April, but were then deserted and about 30 pairs nested in Lindsay Lee plantation. On 5th May one nest held young about a week old and another one newly hatched young and two chipped eggs.
- JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*. Maximum 20 on 20th January. Six pairs nested in Lindsay Lee, Kergord. One nest had 6 eggs on 5th May.
- FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*. Single birds Unst, 11th April, Dunrossness 20th April.
- SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelus*. One, Whiteness 6th and 7th March.
- REDWING *Turdus iliacus*. Arrival noted on 27th March, more

- flocks seen on 29th March, single bird 31st March. A pair present, Baltasound, during May; song hard on 17th May.
- WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*. First noted, Mainland, 15th April, Unst 19th April.
- STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*. A pair bred in an area of thick heather, near Scalloway. The female was seen carrying food on the 6th July. Both adults were observed feeding two fully grown young on 22nd July.
- ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*. One Unst, 19th April.
- BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*. Female, Baltasound on 17th May.
- CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*. One singing, Baltasound on 17th May.
- HEDGE SPARROW *Prunella modularis*. One Tingwall, 6th May.
- MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*. First birds noted on 10th April.
- TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*. One Unst, 17th May.
- PIED/WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*. Single birds, Baltasound 4th and 30th May.
- GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*. One found dead at Baltasound 16th May. One seen by Mr Stephen Saxby at Haroldswick on 18th May.
- CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*. Maximum 50 on 17th March, Stromfirth.
- BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*. One with Chaffinches on 17th March.
- SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*. Last recorded, a male, in Unst on 25th April.
- TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*. Eight pairs breeding in Lindsay Lee plantation, Kergord, and possibly one pair bred in another plantation. Fully fledged young seen 20th July. Nests with very small young and eggs found on 25th July.

8. Notes from Haroldswick, Unst, Spring 1962.

MAGNUS SINCLAIR

- GREAT NORTHERN DIVER. One on 19th March and 13th April.
- RED-THROATED DIVER. First seen were four on 9th March.
- GEESE. Singles flew north during the second week of May.
- WHOOPER SWAN. In small numbers throughout the winter, most leaving during March. One on the sea at Haroldswick on 27th May was very late.
- KESTREL. Seen during the latter half of April.

- OYSTERCATCHER. First two arrived back on 20th February; increases on 23rd and on 8th March.
- GOLDEN PLOVER. A flock of ten on 10th April.
- WHIMBREL. Two flying north on 29th April, and one at breeding-grounds on 9th May.
- KNOT. One at Haroldswick on 17th May.
- DUNLIN. One on 28th April and a few during first week of May; four on 17th May.
- RED-NECKED PHALAROPE. One reported by Duncan Mouat, on the sea near the shore at Skaw, on 20th June.
- ARCTIC SKUA. A few back on the breeding-grounds on 5th May.
- GREAT SKUA. First seen on 13th April, and approximately half the breeding-population at Saxa Vord had arrived by 28th April.
- ARCTIC TERN. Twenty arrived on 13th May.
- WOOD PIGEON. One at Burrafirth on 22nd April.
- TURTLE DOVE. Singles at Haroldswick and Norwick during mid-June.
- OWL *sp.* One on 8th and 9th May.
- SKYLARK. Appeared during the first week of May and again on 27th. Ten at Skaw on 6th June.
- HOUSE MARTIN. Two at Skaw on 6th June.
- REDWING. Reported with Blackbirds during the last week of March at Baltasound. Three April 16th and 19th, one 8th May and three 13th.
- BLACKBIRD. Large numbers arrived during the last week of March, and thirty counted in one small field on 31st; seen all over the island. Most moved out again from 5th to 7th April.
- WHEATEAR. First seen on 11th April, and more on 20th and 22nd.
- ROBIN. One on 17th April, two on 19th and one 22nd.
- WILLOW WARBLER. One on 18th May.
- CHIFFCHAFF. An early one on 13th April, singing from a rose bush; the first time I have heard song from this species in Unst.
- PIED/WHITE WAGTAIL. Whites on 5th to 7th May, and a Pied with more Whites on 8th. Occasional birds seen during June, and at least one pair nested in a quarry again.
- GOLDFINCH. At least three separate birds in Unst during the third week of May. (See also para. 7).
- REDPOLL. Five seen on 8th and 10th March.
- CHAFFINCH. Singles on 16th and 17th April, and four on 24th.
- BRAMBLING. Single birds on 22nd and 23rd April.

SNOW BUNTING. Seen on 7th-8th April, and two 14th. One on 9th May, four on 12th, and three 13th.

9. Rare Birds in Shetland, Spring 1962.

CANADA GOOSE. Three at Hillwell, Dunrossness, for several days in mid-June would certainly be the three that flew north from Fair Isle on the morning of the 6th. They were sentenced to death for attacking the potato-crop (any large and unusual bird seen within half a mile of a potato-field in Dunrossness is automatically suspected of this supreme sin), but it is not known if the sentence was carried out. There is only one previous Shetland record. (J. Peterson).

KING EIDER. A male seen in Yell by K. D. Smith on 8th and 10th June.

OSPREY. One in the Lerwick area from 28th April to 7th May was very probably the one which passed north over Fair Isle on 25th April. (J. Peterson).

COMMON CRANE. Two were reported to J. Peterson from Toft, Delting, about 20th May, and two were said to have spent several days at Arisdale and Westsandwick, Yell, about the same time. Most probably they were the same individuals, as Delting is only a few miles south of Yell. They could well be the same as the two which visited Fair Isle on 29th May.

BLACK TERN. One at the Loch of Tingwall for several days from 17th June, seen by L. W. Smith, W. Macmillan, and others.

GOLDEN ORIOLE. One seen by Mrs G. R. Bennett at Voe on 19th May. Reports of the same or others reached J. Peterson from Catfirth and Stromfirth, about 7 or 8 miles south of Voe, about the same date.

ALPINE SWIFT. One seen in Unst by K. D. Smith on 12th June.

A Map of FAIR ISLE

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A NEW map of Fair Isle, drawn by Peter Davis, and incorporating the results of six years' collecting of the old place-names of the island, has now been reproduced, and may be obtained from the Warden at Fair Isle.

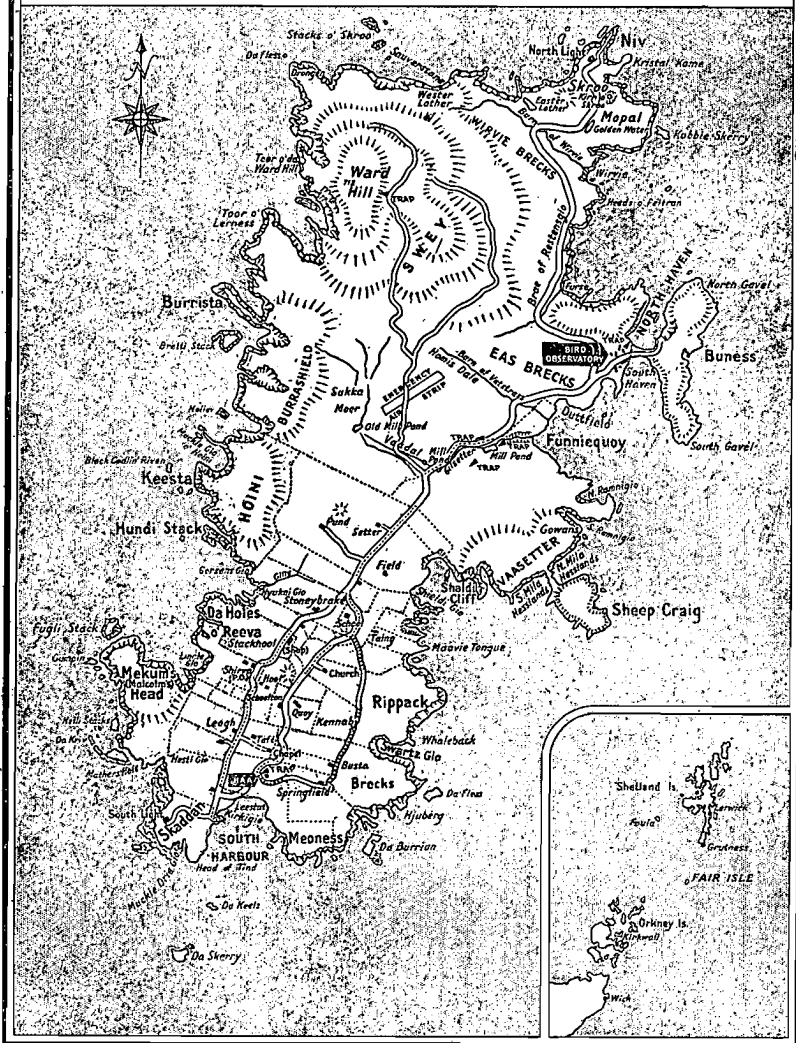
It is printed in monochrome on the scale of nine inches to one mile, the overall size being 35" x 25". All topographical features, including buildings, field-boundaries etc., are fully up-to-date and accurately placed. The map shows several hundred place-names, most of which have not previously been published; they include many names of rigs, former crofts, water-mills etc., that are obsolete or remembered only by the oldest inhabitants of the isle.

If framed, the map would make an excellent wall-decoration. The price is 5/-, plus 2/- packing and postage.

FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

0 100yds. 440yds. 880yds. 1 mile

Roads Bird Trap Boundaries



Matthew

Edm