

# Fair Isle Bird Observatory

## BULLETIN



*Edited by*

**ROY H. DENNIS**

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Vol. 5 No. 7 (New Series)

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# Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust

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# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY BULLETIN

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December 1967

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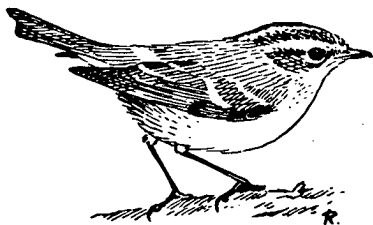
## Editorial

1967 has been a very busy and successful year for Fair Isle Bird Observatory and for the first time ever the number of visitors topped 200. We had more bird-watchers than usual in spring and they were fortunate to partake in one of the most exciting springs for rare birds at Fair Isle. Bird migrants have been rather scarce in the latter part of the autumn, but this has allowed me to catch up, and finish Bulletin 5: 7.

Since the White-throated Sparrow and Bee-eater described in the last bulletin, there have been no fewer than five new species recorded for the island. Spring 1967 was exceptional with Black Tern, Marsh Harrier, Sardinian Warbler and Cretzschmar's Bunting in chronological order; and the Pallas's Warbler, seen in October 1966, is described on the next page (and illustrated by Richard Richardson).

Recent annual reports (the 1966 one was distributed in August) have been larger because we now present a detailed systematic list of birds for each year. This annual list allows one to examine quickly the status of any species at Fair Isle by checking Peter Davis's 1964 Checklist and annual reports since that year. With twenty years of accurate data available at the observatory, I have started to examine the changes in status of various species, and in this issue I have discussed the changes in the arrival and departure dates of seabirds, and the Cormorant as a migrant at the island.

I hope to complete Bulletin 5:8 during the winter and it will include further analyses, Black Guillemot studies, and the 1967 breeding season as well as this autumn's more interesting migrants. As it will be the last issue of volume 5, an index covering volumes 4 and 5 will be added so that the last two volumes may be bound.



67.           **A Pallas's Warbler at Fair Isle**  
                   **A NEW BIRD FOR THE ISLAND**

ROY H. DENNIS

Marina and I went for a walk to Bunes after lunch on 11th October and we found a tiny warbler feeding beside some stunted thistles at the Lighthouse Store. We were very close to it and I identified it as a Pallas's Warbler. It was rather like a Yellow-browed Warbler, but even slightly smaller, and we were immediately struck by the yellow crown stripe as well as the yellow stripe over the eye. When it flew we saw the yellow rump and we also noted two yellow wing bars and yellowish fringes to the tertials. The upper-parts were greener than a Yellow-browed Warbler, but the rest of the plumage and the soft-parts were similar to that species.

I left my wife watching it and ran to the Observatory to fetch David Parkin and Gordon Barnes. We watched it for about five minutes, as it fed close to us on the ground and in the thistles, before it flew off and landed in the cliffs of Hoilie. We searched the cliffs but failed to find it again. This is also the first record for Scotland (a full account appeared in *Scot. Birds* 4: 454), and the nineteenth for Britain. It is the 31st species of warbler recorded on the island and the ninth of the genus *phylloscopus*.

68.           **A Black Tern at Fair Isle**  
                   **A NEW BIRD FOR THE ISLAND**

ROY H. DENNIS

At midday on 6th May, Bill Landells, Miss Lorna Kennedy and I were walking up the east road past the chapel, when we saw a Black Tern fly across the west end of the Busta croft and land on the fields behind Leestat. It was in summer

plumage, having a completely black head and body, except white under the tail and dusky grey wings and tail.

It landed at the edge of a flock of roosting gulls, and was dwarfed by them. Oystercatchers were feeding in the area and several times one would run at it and make it fly. We left it there, but an hour later other observers were unable to find it.

There was a gale force E-SE wind blowing at the time with rain most of the morning. This is the first record for the island and was, by one day, the forerunner of an unprecedented number of Black Terns in Shetland.

## 69. **A Marsh Harrier at Fair Isle**

### *A NEW BIRD FOR THE ISLAND*

ROY H. DENNIS

Gordon Barnes stopped us at Setter in the morning of 9th May and told us that he had just seen a Marsh Harrier fly east across his land towards Vaasetter. Peter Hobby was up there searching for it without luck; so as some of our party had heard Ravens making a noise above the airstrip we went over there. We scanned the hill with binoculars without noting any birds of prey, so I walked up Ward Hill. On my way down the west side, I stopped above Skinner's Glig to look across at the ♀ Peregrine incubating on Lerness. I had watched her for several minutes, when I suddenly noticed a panic among the Fulmars and Puffins nesting nearby and at the same time a large chocolate brown raptor with a bright yellow head sailed in front of the Peregrine's eyrie. It was a female Marsh Harrier; she was a beautiful bird, about the size of a Buzzard, mainly dark brown with paler brown markings on the wings and a yellow crown and throat. After gliding back along the cliff, chivvied all the time by a Hooded Crow, she landed on a ledge near the top and I could see her long, bright yellow legs.

Bill Landells and Peter came running up the hill when I waved, and joined me at the cliff top. We walked over to where she was sitting and at one stage were only twenty-five feet away before she took wing and soared along the high cliffs with hundreds of Fulmars. One time, she swooped low over the Tour o'da Ward Hill and the hundreds of Puffins, which nest there, scrambled over the edge of the cliff in one great terrified swarm.

Later in the day, the harrier was seen soaring over the

North Light with an Osprey; we last saw her on 11th and in this period we saw her several times perched at the top of the Sheep Rock eating a small bird or animal. During the three days, 7th-9th May, we saw eight species of raptors including the Marsh Harrier; the others were Osprey, Hobby, Hen Harrier, several Kestrels, Merlins and Sparrowhawks and the resident Peregrines.

This is the first definite record for Fair Isle, although there is an undocumented sight-record for spring 1932.

## 70. A Sardinian Warbler at Fair Isle

### "TWO LIFERS IN ONE EVENING"

ROY H. DENNIS

At 6.05 p.m. on 26th May 1967, Jimmy Wilson (Schoolton) telephoned the Bird Observatory to tell us that he had just seen a Golden Oriole on the stone dykes at Kennaby. Our evening meal was devoured in record time and we were soon at Schoolton (arriving with a bang as one of my car's tyres punctured!). When we got to Kennaby we could not find the oriole; we searched all the walls as far as the Haa without any luck. Disconsolately, I walked back to Kennaby for one last look; when I went into the old ruined croft-house, the Golden Oriole flew out and landed on a "planticrub" between Kennaby and the Kirk.

We all had good views of it; a rather brightly coloured female, mainly greenish-yellow with bright rump, yellowish underparts, darker wings and a reddish bill. It seemed rather tired and perched low down on the wall, but after ten minutes it flew off over the Kirk and was not seen again.

At dusk (about 2200 hours G.M.T.) Bill Landells and I went into the Observatory garage and I saw a small warbler fluttering against the window. There was little light and we could not see anything more than that it was about the size and shape of a Whitethroat. I caught it by hand and, taking it outside the building, discovered that it had the black head and red eye-ring of a Sardinian Warbler. It was a young male; we showed it to the bird-watchers staying at the hostel before roosting it overnight in the bird-room.

Both species were new for all of us; a very exciting evening even for Fair Isle. The Sardinian Warbler was a new species for Scotland as well as Fair Isle; there is one previous record for Britain: Lundy, Devon, on 10th May 1955. The Golden Oriole was the eighth occurrence for the island.

The Sardinian Warbler was rather like a small Whitethroat,

with a black head, white throat, greyish-brown upper-parts and pale under-parts. The bill was black with pale horn base to lower mandible; legs and feet dirty straw; iris yellow-brown and eye-lids orange-red. Feathering around the eye was pinkish-chestnut. It was seen feeding near the Observatory buildings until mid-afternoon on 27th May. (A full description has appeared in *British Birds* 60: 483-485).

## 71. A Cretzschmar's Bunting at Fair Isle

### A NEW BIRD FOR THE ISLAND

ROY H. DENNIS

In the late evening of 10th June 1967, Bill Landells, Mikael Kristersson and I were trying to tape-record Corncrakes at Gaila. We flushed a roosting bunting from the rye-grass and, as it flew to land on a stone dyke, I gained the impression that the "jizz" was wrong for an Ortolan Bunting. It was very like that species, but, even in the poor light, I noted that the wings were rather uniform, the head was bluish and I could see no green or yellow in the plumage. We were unable to get close to it before it disappeared in a field of oats. I thought it might be a Cretzschmar's Bunting, a species never seen in Britain before.

Although we searched on the following three days we did not find it until the afternoon of 14th, when I flushed it from a ditch about twenty yards from where we first found it. In flight, it gave a call, "*styip*", which was unlike any I have heard from Ortolans. It landed further along the ditch and when I walked there it flew back to the stone dykes surrounding Gaila, about a hundred yards away. This time I thought it was slightly smaller than an Ortolan in flight. I was able to stalk close to it and from a distance of twenty yards obtained a field description. I watched it feeding, flying and perching for about fifteen minutes and then left it feeding in the grass.

Gordon Barnes, Bill Landells and I returned in the evening and we found it in the same area; about twenty minutes later we caught it in a mist-net. It was weighed, measured and ringed at the Bird Observatory. We identified it as a first-year male Cretzschmar's Bunting; the following morning when released, after being photographed, it flew to the nearby cliff-edge. Later, on the morning of 18th, I disturbed it from near the bird-room and it flew off calling "*styip*... *styip*." We saw it several times that day and also on 19th and 20th June, by which time it had been on the island eleven days.



In the field, the bird was rather like an Ortolan Bunting, but it was slightly smaller and more dumpy. Its habits were also similar, except that it was tamer. The most obvious plumage differences from a spring Ortolan were the blue-grey head and breast, the orange throat, the more uniform brown wings and the faint eye-ring. The upper-parts were browner than that species, the mantle was streaked with darker brown and the rump and upper tail-coverts were more rufous. The blue-grey breast was finely streaked with black and there was a moustache formed by fine black and blue streaks; the lower breast and belly were rufous-orange and the flanks and under tail-coverts were buff. The tail was brown with noticeable white outer feathers. The eye was black, the bill pink and the legs and feet flesh-pink.

This record is at present being considered by the Rare Birds Committee and the B.O.U. Records Committee; if accepted it will be a new species for Britain and a full account and detailed description will appear in *British Birds*.

## 72. Fieldfares and Bramblings in Autumn 1966

A Fieldfare which arrived on 30th July 1966, in a strong east to north-east wind, was the earliest one ever for this species on return passage at Fair Isle. It was soon followed by 5 on 4th August in similar weather and the number increased to 14 on 6th and 20 on 7th. Fieldfares were much commoner than usual throughout August and September; they were recorded on 234 bird/days in August as against one in 1965 and 3 in 1964. Table 1 shows the strength of the Fieldfare passage in the last three autumns. The totals are grouped under three ten-day periods in each month (although in October the last period is eleven days) and totals are the sums of the daily totals in each ten-day period.

Table 1

	September			October			Nov.
	1-10	11-20	21-30	1-10	11-20	21-31	1-10
1964	9	11	21	26	250	4800	1750
1965	13	41	1650	3200	2000	3800	750
1966	116	50	760	3900	5550	1200	210

In the last two years the autumn migration of this species has started earlier than in previous years and most of the falls have occurred before November. In spring 1967 Fieldfares were late in returning north and the main passage was between 5th and 10th May, with a record spring total of 1200

on 7th May. It is interesting that a pairs of Fieldfares nested in Orkney in 1967, (the first for Britain), after an early and large autumn immigration and a late and very big fall in spring.

The other species to arrive very early at Fair Isle and to occur in record numbers was the Brambling. The first was a ♀ on 7th and 9th August, arriving in light winds and clear skies, and there was a small arrival, peaking at 5, between 27th August and 5th September with the warblers and chats. Singles were seen on 22nd and 24th September; the first big flock arrived on 27th in light north-east winds and overcast skies. More arrived the next day and there were good numbers until 6th October, when 400 arrived in strong south-east winds along with lots of thrushes.

A record number of 1500 were seen on the stubbles in the crofting area on 7th and numbers were nearly maintained next day, but decreased to 300 on 9th. Table 2 gives the daily totals of Bramblings between 6th and 19th October.

**Table 2**

6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th
400	1500	1000	300	400	300	400	250	250	500	300	300	250	90

The previous best day's total was 500 on 21st October 1955. Like the Fieldfare, this species was also commoner than usual in the following spring and there were 80 on 7th, 150 on 8th and 45 on 9th May. Before 1965 the spring maximum was 80 on 22nd April 1962, but there have been peaks of 150 on 29th and 30th April 1965 and 100 on 11th and 15th April. The 1967 peak was as high as any and rather later than in previous years.

R.H.D.

## 73. My First Pechora Pipit

There have been fourteen acceptable records of this species at Fair Isle: it is one of the island's specialities and I have always wanted to see one in the field. In my fifth autumn of searching for this bird, I flushed a small dark pipit from a patch of turnips at Busta at 1100 hours GMT on 2nd October, 1966. The wind was very strong and in slight rain, I had a brief view of it when it landed in a patch of potatoes. I noted the dark, richly marked upper-parts, with two distinct wing-bars and an obvious "braces" pattern on the back, and a heavily streaked breast. It was certainly a species of pipit which I had not seen before, and I thought it was a Petchora Pipit.

It flew off very soon and I failed to find it for about fifteen

minutes; this time I flushed it from cabbages at Springfield, about a hundred yards away. For the next fifteen minutes I had brief views of it as it flew between these two patches of cover.

Its behaviour was unlike the other small European pipits which I have seen at Fair Isle. It was difficult to flush from the dense cover, but when it did fly, it came straight out and flew off direct to the next patch of cover, where it plummeted straight into the crop, without hovering just above it like the other pipits do. The flight was remarkably direct, with no undulations. A few times it landed in semi-open ground for a brief moment before diving back into the crops and once or twice it landed on a fence or wall, where it perched low down. On one occasion I heard a low, explosive "whit" call, which probably came from this bird.

In these circumstances it was difficult to observe, but I did note the following additional characters. The rump was spotted similar to the back; this was noticeable as it flew away. There was a creamy mark over the eye, and the under-parts were white with heavy black streaks on the breast and long black streaks on the flanks. The tail was noticeably short and gave the bird a distinctive shape; the outer tail-feathers were white on the sides and looked darker at the tip unlike the white-tipped appearance of Red-throated Pipit. I did not see the legs or feet, but the bill looked rather large for the size of the bird.

In the afternoon, Gordon Barnes, Dave Bodley, Nick Dymond, Alan Heath, David Parkin, Keith Robinson and I returned and we flushed it almost immediately from the Busta turnips. Gordon Barnes, who is familiar with the other small rare pipits, was certain it was not a Red-throated Pipit (the other streaked rump species) and confirmed my identification, and the others agreed with this. The white in tail was again noted (although in the hand it was buffish-white) and is of interest as a field character.

We tried to catch it, but failed in the strong wind. We soon lost it, but just before dusk we returned to the turnips and flushed it again. We put up a long mist-net and, somehow, caught it in the wrong side of the net! As it was already getting dark, we roosted it overnight at the Observatory. It was ringed and a full account in the hand was made. When released the following dawn, it gave a distinctive "pwit" call twice, rather low and explosive, as it flew away. In mid-morning it was back in the cabbages at Springfield (two miles south) and I saw the ring as it perched briefly on a stook of oats.

In the hand the bill was dark horn, with paler base of

lower mandible and cutting edges; the legs and feet pinkish; inside mouth pink and iris dark brown. The measurements were wing 79.5 mm; bill 15.5 mm; tarsus 23.5 mm; tail 51 mm; and hind claw 11 mm. The weight at 1600 hours was 24.1 grams.

R.H.D.

## 74. Changes in the Arrivals and Departures of Seabirds at Fair Isle

ROY H. DENNIS

In 1964 Guillemots were present at their breeding ledges on the Sheep Rock between 17th and 23rd December in fine, calm weather. This unusually early return to the island was again proof that the status, especially in winter, of the Guillemots and some other seabirds was changing. Larger numbers of Guillemots were wintering off the island and the breeding colonies of several species, especially Guillemots and Kittiwakes, were increasing on the island.

The first return of Guillemots has been earlier in subsequent years: being 15th November in 1965, 7th November in 1966 and 19th November in 1967. Guillemots and Razorbills were usually first noted ashore in early spring in the 1950s and early 1960s and the major changes occurred since 1963. These changes appear to have been caused by the tremendous increase in small fish off the island, mainly Sand Eels (*Ammodytes* spp.) and Sillocks (*Gadus virens*). This superabundance of small fish has also caused the rapid increase in some of the seabirds breeding on the island. Both Kittiwakes and Guillemots increased about threefold between 1959 and 1966.

Eagle Clark recorded that Guillemots visited the cliffs of Fair Isle in late January at the beginning of the century and gives two instances: many ashore on 20th January 1911 and first visit on 22nd January 1912. It may be that there was a plentiful supply of small fish in those years as well.

Daily records of the arrivals and departures of seabirds have been kept at Fair Isle. I have examined the auk data for the ten years, 1958-1967, which were more fully covered in winter and present them below in Tables 1 to 3. The dates for Puffin are more complete for the whole ten years than in the other species because they nest in view of the Observatory and so day to day variations could be noted more easily. The first three columns give: the first date ashore in each year (this in latter years has been in the last months of the previous year); the date from which auks have been

seen regularly ashore (missing the odd days of strong winds) and lastly, the date when the breeding colonies are up to strength and continuously ashore. The last two dates are sometimes difficult to place within a day or so. The fourth column gives the date last seen ashore.

**Table 1. Guillemot**

Year	First ashore	regularly	continuously	Last ashore
1958	3 Mar	1 Apr	9 May	7 Aug
1959	27 Mar	2 Apr	2 Apr	9 Aug
1960	27 Mar	8 Apr	5 May	27 July
1961	31 Mar	7 Apr	4 May	12 Aug
1962	22 Mar	5 Apr	22 Apr	1 Aug
1963	early Jan	8 Apr	23 Apr	1 Aug
1964	1 Mar	31 Mar	6 Apr	3 Aug
1965	17 Dec	4 Mar	19 Apr	10 Aug
1966	15 Nov	12 Jan	3 Apr	8 Aug
1967	7 Nov	6 Jan	8 Apr	13 Aug

**Table 2. Razorbill**

Year	First ashore	regularly	continuously	Last ashore
1958	18 Mar	1 Apr	8 May	6 Aug
1959	27 Mar	2 Apr	2 Apr	6 Aug
1960	30 Mar	8 Apr	5 May	28 July
1961	31 Mar	7 Apr	3 May	6 Aug
1962	17 Mar	2 Apr	22 Apr	29 July
1963	13 Mar	7 Apr	23 Apr	1 Aug
1964	1 Mar	31 Mar	3 Apr	4 Aug
1965	1 Mar	20 Mar	19 Apr	4 Aug
1966	14 Mar	30 Mar	8 Apr	3 Aug
1967	4 Mar	28 Mar	8 Apr	8 Aug

**Table 3. Puffin**

Year	First ashore	regularly	continuously	Last ashore
1958	11 Apr	11 Apr	17 Apr	19 Aug
1959	8 Apr	12 Apr	28 Apr	22 Aug
1960	8 Apr	16 Apr	3 May	21 Aug
1961	7 Apr	12 Apr	22 Apr	16 Aug
1962	7 Apr	14 Apr	22 Apr	18 Aug
1963	8 Apr	15 Apr	23 Apr	19 Aug
1964	10 Apr	11 Apr	15 Apr	17 Aug
1965	30 Mar	1 Apr	19 Apr	20 Aug
1966	4 Apr	8 Apr	11 Apr	21 Aug
1967	7 Apr	8 Apr	17 Apr	23 Aug

It will be noted in Table 1 that Guillemots have returned earlier each year in the last five years (except in 1964) and they advanced the average date for regular attendance. Continuous attendance at the ledges is sometimes difficult to deduce from some of the record books but it appears that there are variations from year to year depending on the weather, but the breeding season has not advanced noticeably.

This is confirmed by the last column, where the last dates ashore have varied between 27th July and 13th August in the last ten years. Unfortunately it is difficult to give dates when the majority of the breeding birds leave, which is usually several weeks earlier than these last dates.

Guillemots have become more regular offshore in autumn and winter, and more have been recorded by the crew of the Good Shepherd in winter. The first birds come ashore on fine, calm days in winter when the sea is relatively smooth (in fact a spring-like day) but as soon as the next gale arrives they shun the cliffs for weeks at a time. On 19th November 1967, half the birds ashore at the Lang Cole and North Reeva were still in winter plumage, while the rest had already assumed their summer plumage. During these visits in winter, the birds are rather quiet and sit on ledges without much fighting.

Razorbills have not changed so dramatically as Guillemots and they should still be considered rare in Fair Isle waters in winter. They have been ashore several weeks earlier in the last four years and the dates for regular and continuous attendance have advanced slightly, but commencement of breeding varies from year to year depending on weather conditions and has not noticeably changed. The autumn departure has varied between 28th July and 8th August, and like Guillemots, the bulk of the population has left several weeks before the last dates. It is interesting that Razorbill numbers have only increased slightly in the last ten years, unlike the Guillemot, and this may have some effect on the date of return.

The arrival of Puffins at Fair Isle is spectacular and rapid; one day there are none (and none seen on the crossing); the next day they are ashore, often in force. Occasionally they arrive in the evening and postpone landing until early morning the following day. Landings are nearly always in the early morning, or evening. The date of arrival has been remarkably regular, either 7th or 8th April in six years of the last ten; other dates being 11th April, 10th April, 4th April and 30th March. Puffins were early in 1965 but numbers took longer to build up than usual.

The departure dates have also been regular, between 16th and 23rd August, although there was a very late isolated bird on 3rd September 1967. The Puffin population at Fair Isle has probably increased in recent years but not to a great extent as in Guillemot and Kittiwake. There has not been much change in the timings of arrival, breeding or departure.

The breeding population of Kittiwakes at Fair Isle increased from about 2750 pairs in 1959 to about 7900 pairs in 1966 and during the same period I have noted changes in status

outside the breeding season, especially in the last year. Table 4 gives dates (as given in Tables 1-3) for Kittiwakes at Fair Isle.

**Table 4. Kittiwake**

Year	First ashore	regularly	continuously	Last ashore
1958	15 Mar	1 Apr	?5 Apr	6 Sept
1959	27 Mar	?27 Mar	18 Apr	8 Sept
1960	27 Mar	7 Apr	16 Apr	3 Sept
1961	3 Apr	7 Apr	23 Apr	7 Sept
1962	22 Mar	?2 Apr	?14 Apr	4 Sept
1963	13 Mar	21 Mar	?1 Apr	29 Aug
1964	4 Mar	31 Mar	2 Apr	29 Aug
1965	1 Mar	20 Mar	1 Apr	26 Aug
1966	8 Feb	1 Mar	2 Apr	28 Aug
1967	8 Feb	23 Mar	7 Apr	12 Oct

In the last four years, Kittiwakes have returned to Fair Isle cliffs earlier than in previous years and this is especially true in 1966 and 1967. Regular and continuous attendance has also been slightly advanced but the breeding season has not changed noticeably. In all years, except 1967, the last birds have been seen ashore between 26th August and 8th September. In the first five years, birds were not plentiful close to the island after that date and that was also true in the 1950s. In 1962 and 1965 there were quite good numbers offshore in September, and on 11th September 1966 there were 120 ashore. This flock, which was usually on the skerries at the south end, increased to 2000 on 13th October, but decreased after 21st October. Many of these birds were youngsters and most were ashore on non-breeding areas. In 1967, there were strong numbers ashore throughout September and they were mostly sitting on the old nests. This continued in October until 14th and there was even display below Golden Water on 5th. Both adults and young fed just off the island throughout the rest of the month, and in November three adults were on the nests at the Stacks of Skroo on 5th, but the offshore numbers in the rest of the month were much smaller than in October.

Great and Arctic Skuas have also tended to arrive earlier and leave later in recent years. Great Skuas arrived at Fair Isle in the first two weeks of April in the 1950s, mainly in the second week, but since 1959 they have always appeared in the first week, except 9th April in 1963 but on 31st March in 1959 and 1965. The last of the breeding birds (excluding late dates of migrants) were recorded in the second half of September in the first ten years, but in late September or first two weeks of October since 1960. Arctic Skuas have also changed their arrival period from late April, mainly early May in the 1950s to mid and late April in recent years, and

as early as 4th in 1965 and 6th in 1964. The bulk of the breeding birds were on their territories in the first or second week of May in the first decade whereas they are now here in late April. The departure has changed from the first two weeks of September to the second two weeks in the same period. The arrival and departure dates of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls, which nest on the island, have varied annually between 4th and 21st April and 3rd and 24th September and show no change over the last ten years.

## 75. Rare Birds in Spring 1967

GOOSANDER. A ♀ on 22nd April in the Gully and another ♀ in South Haven, 12th to 19th May.

GOSHAWK. Graham Bundy saw one flying north along Burra-shield on 21st May, being mobbed by Arctic Skuas and a Lapwing. It was not seen again.

HEN HARRIER. A ♀ on the hill on 6th and 7th May.

MARSH HARRIER. One 9th-11th May (see para. 69).

OSPREY. One flew south over Bunes on 8th May, seen over North Light on 9th.

HOBBY. One at Hjon and later at the Kirn of Skroo on 7th May and one near the school on 3rd June.

QUAIL. Singles on four dates in May, from 24th and at least one, singing most of June, from 6th; maximum of 3 on 10th.

GREY PLOVER. One over the hill on 20th May.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT. Three on Bunes on 19th, increased to 6 on 20th; they fed on wet turf behind the Lighthouse store, where we clap-netted one; the first ever ringed by the Observatory. Its measurements were: wing 215 mm, bill 90 mm, tarsus 71 mm and tail 78 mm; its weight was 269.3 gms. There were 6 on 21st, 5 on 22nd and 24th and 2 on 25th April.

ICELAND GULL. A 2nd-year bird on the South Green on 23rd April.

BLACK TERN. One 6th May (see para 68).

NIGHTJAR. A ♀ trapped on 4th June at Wirvie was the first ever ringed by the Observatory. Its measurements were: wing 200 mm, bill 9.5 mm, tarsus 17 mm and tail 135 mm; its weight was 64.3 gms. A ♀ was seen at the same place on 10th June and a ♂ was seen at Duttfield on 29th and 30th June.

ALPINE SWIFT. Norman Elkins and Robert MacIntyre saw one fly over the Double Dyke on 29th May.



SHORT-TOED LARK. One at Lower Leogh on 7th May and another at Busta on 11th-13th May.

SHORELARK. 6 on 3rd May at the Rippack (J. Wilson), 3 on 8th, 1 on 10th, 2 on 11th, 3 on 12th and 13th May.

GOLDEN ORIOLE. A ♀ at Kennaby on 26th May.

NIGHTINGALE. One trapped at the Observatory on 8th May and another trapped in the Gully on 14th June. These are the 4th and 5th records for Fair Isle. The weights and measurements of the four recently caught birds are given.

Date	Wing	Bill	Tarsus	Tail	Weight
7.5.65	83.5	17.5	29	65mm	21.1 gms
30.5.65	81.5	17	27	68	21.2
8.5.67	80	17	28	63	18.2
14.6.67	80	16	26	66	19.8

BLUETHROAT. A ♂ Red-spotted on 18th and 19th May, a pair on 22nd, 2 ♂♂ and a ♀ on 23rd, a pair on 24th and a ♀ on 25th and 27th May.

MARSH WARBLER. One on South Haven beach on 31st May (trapped), singing there on 1st June; another bird at Schoolton 4th-6th June.

SARDINIAN WARBLER. One 26th and 27th May (see para. 70).

SUBALPINE WARBLER. A ♂ on 25th May at Setter (trapped), present until 27th, was joined by a ♀ on 26th.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE. Singles on 13th, 18th and 23rd April.

WOODCHAT SHRIKE. A ♂ at Wirvie on 9th June, had moved to Houll by 13th.

SCARLET GROSBEEK. A ♀ on 5th June at the graveyard.

ORTOLAN BUNTING. Seen on 20 bird/days between 7th and 26th May, and a ♂ on 13th and 14th June.

CRETZSCHMAR'S BUNTING. One 10th to 20th June (see para. 71).

RUSTIC BUNTING. A ♀ in the cliffs at Easter Lothar on 25th May and a superb ♂ at Stackhoul on 11th June.

R.H.D.

## 76. Spring Migration in 1967

ROY H. DENNIS

The spring migration in 1967 was clearly divided into two periods; the first two months were exceedingly bird-less but May and June were very exciting, with both large falls of continental migrants and more rarities than usual.

March and the first half of April were very quiet, except for movements of Lapwings and Blackbirds just before we

returned to the island, when Lapwings peaked at 400 on 11th and 500 on 12th, and Blackbirds at 200 on 11th and 12th March. Outwith those few days there were a few stragglers such as Blackbirds, Stonechat, Black Redstart, Great Grey Shrike and Pied Wagtail.

On 15th April, 20 or more Icelandic Redwings and 60 Meadow Pipits arrived in westerly winds; there was a further increase in Redwings on 16th. Three Wood Pigeons and three Black-tailed Godwits arrived on 19th, (the latter increased to 6 on 20th); a Goosander followed on 22nd and an Iceland Gull on 23rd, all in north-west winds. A Whimbrel and a Chiffchaff were new on 25th and there was a flock of 86 Golden Plovers on the hill on 30th, all northern birds in full summer plumage. Wheatears were later than usual; the first were 4 on 12th, increasing to 15 on 14th, 35 on 23rd and 50 plus on 25th. The weather had been mainly westerly and cold, and not suitable for migrants.

Six Shorelarks arrived on 3rd May and when at last the wind veered to south-east on 4th, we saw some continental migrants such as Song Thrushes, Whinchats, Redstarts and Chiffchaffs. The following day in strong south-east winds, we found more Redstarts, Whinchats, Robins and Tree Sparrows, 2 Swallows and single Grasshopper and Garden Warblers. In the afternoon, Corncrake, Green Sandpiper, Ring Ouzels, Black Redstart and Lesser Whitethroat were recorded on this, our first day of real migration since we arrived in March.

The gale-force winds continued and on 6th, we saw 30 Common Gulls, 170 Fieldfares, Sparrowhawk, Hen Harrier, Lapland Bunting and 8 Reed Buntings, and best of all a Black Tern. The 7th was also very good and we recorded a tremendous increase of Fieldfares to 1200, which is over twice the previous record total for spring. Ring Ouzels were also in record numbers at 65 and there were 30 Song Thrushes (but very few Redwings), 5 Wrynecks, 4 House Martins, 25 Tree Pipits, 60 Reed Buntings and 30 Tree Sparrows; scarcer species included Hobby, Ortolan and Short-toed Lark. Next morning, there were no birds in the traps but when I got back to the Observatory a Nightingale flew into the small garden and I caught it in the Observatory trap. Most of the common night-migrants had decreased, but new ones were Scaup, 3 Shorelarks, 25 Willow Warblers, 3 Pied Flycatchers, 5 Blue-headed and 2 Yellow Wagtails, Yellowhammer and late in the afternoon an Osprey flew south over Bunes.

The recent south-east winds veered to south-west on 9th; a Marsh Harrier was found at Setter and seen later on the hill, Fieldfares and Reed Buntings had decreased and we saw several of the semi-rarities. Tree Sparrows increased from 30

to 80 on 10th May but there was little else new except Sand Martin and Red-headed Bunting, probably an escape. There was a general decrease on 11th but 2 Shorelarks were still on the ploughed land and another Short-toed Lark was found, this time at Busta. Collared Doves were still present and Swallows had increased to 50 and Pied Flycatchers to 6.

It was wet and cold, with a north-east wind on 12th May and we found the isle rather empty of migrants although Tufted Duck and Goosander arrived. The wind stayed in that air for the next four days, but backed to westerly on 18th, when surprisingly a handsome male Red-spotted Bluethroat was found on the midden at Schoolton. By the following morning, the wind had gone round to south-east and when the rain stopped at 2 p.m., quite a few migrants arrived, including Shelduck, Reed Warbler, 15 Whitethroats and 10 Tree Pipits. It was anticyclonic weather again on 20th and during the day more continental migrants arrived; notable were Grey Plover, 5 Wood Pigeons, a new Collared Dove, small numbers of Whitethroats, Willow and Sedge Warblers, Redstarts and more hirundines. There was a decrease next day, but we did find 4 Sand Martins, and a Goshawk was seen on the hill. A few stragglers were seen on 21st, such as 2 Bluethroats, several Sedge Warblers, a Wood Warbler and a ♂ Grey-headed Wagtail; Swallows increased to 25 and House Martins to 29. Swallows increased further to 50 on 23rd in south-east winds and there was another Bluethroat and a Cuckoo. Two Scoters, Quail, Sandwich Tern, another Cuckoo and Wryneck arrived on the following day.

The wind was north-east veering to south-east on 25th May, with heavy misty rain all morning; when the front passed over about midday, there was a tremendous arrival of night-migrants in sunny weather. We visited the crops in the morning but saw very little until on our way home we started to see increasing numbers of passerines, especially Garden Warblers. When we drove the plantation about a dozen Garden Warblers flew out, and we caught an Icterine Warbler in the Double Dyke. After lunch another Icterine Warbler and a Red-backed Shrike were on South Haven beach and as we went south Garden and Willow Warblers were plentiful. A ♂ and 2 ♀♀ Grey-headed Wagtails were at Shirva, an Ortolan at Leogh and no less than three Icterine Warblers at Hesti Geo, all of which we caught. Another Ortolan was at Busta and we netted a Reed Warbler at the Minister's Well. After tea, we had time for a rapid tour of the north and west cliffs and we did well, to start with, by finding a ♀ Rustic Bunting at Easter Lother; there was a Black Redstart at Millens Houllan and another Icterine Warbler at Wester Lother. Common passerines were plentiful in the north cliffs

but absent from the back of Ward Hill. Our final tallies for the day were 120 Willow Warblers, 100 Garden Warblers, 60 Whitethroats, 20 Redstarts, 12 Whinchats, 3 Black Redstarts, 20 Spotted Flycatchers, 12 Tree Pipits and 6 Icterine Warblers, as well as other migrants in lesser numbers.

Continued south-east winds on 26th promised another good day and we hoped that the saying "Quantity first day, Quality second day" might apply and it certainly did late in the day when a Golden Oriole at Kennaby was followed by our first ever Sardinian Warbler in the Observatory garage at dusk. Many of the migrants had moved on overnight; Willow Warblers were down to 80 and Garden Warblers to 35, and this change was reflected in most species. This decline continued on 27th, but Icterine Warblers peaked at 8 on that day. It was very wet on the following day and the only noteworthy bird was a Quail.

Fog on 29th curtailed bird-watching and even fewer birds were seen later in the day because a wedding reception and dance was held in the village hall, to which all the bird-watchers were invited. In the evening an Alpine Swift was seen flying over the Double Dyke by two of our non-dancing members. Hirundines were very much in evidence on 30th, our tenth consecutive day of south-east winds, and we noted 100 Swallows, 120 House Martins and 7 Sand Martins; 5 Black Redstarts and 3 Icterine Warblers were also seen. The incoming party, including Richard Richardson, saw a Long-tailed Skua from the Good Shepherd. On the last day of the month, Icterine Warblers were again high at 7, but the best bird was a Marsh Warbler on South Haven beach; hirundines had decreased but we saw 10 Swifts, 5 Carrion Crows and 3 Rooks.

The Marsh Warbler brought in the month by singing on South Haven beach at breakfast time; there were fewer migrants otherwise, except a pale ♀ Red-backed Shrike and nothing of interest was seen on the next two days. Another Marsh Warbler was found on 4th when the wind veered to south-west and increased to nearly gale-force. Other new birds that day were Glaucous Gull, Nightjar, 2 Fieldfares, Reed Warbler and 4 Linnets. A Scarlet Grosbeak arrived on 5th and Tree Sparrow numbers doubled to 16. West to north-west winds from 6th to 8th gave us a quiet spell but they backed to south-west on 9th and surprisingly a Woodchat Shrike arrived at Wirvie. Overnight the wind swung round to easterly and the few resulting migrants included a new species for Britain, namely a Cretzschmar's Bunting, which was seen briefly that evening at Gaila but not satisfactorily identified until 14th.

A superb ♂ Rustic Bunting was found at Stackhoul the

next morning and other new migrants on 11th were 7 Collared Doves and 2 Turtle Doves. There was another small fall of migrants on 14th, including Collared Doves, Cuckoo, 7 Swifts, the 2nd Nightingale of the year, 4 Blackcaps, 2 Yellowhammers and an Ortolan, when the wind returned from south to north-east with high overcast.

The weather in the second half of June was pleasant and there were a few summer migrants straggling through, but nothing of interest until a ♂ Subalpine Warbler at Setter on 25th, joined by a ♀ the next day. Lesser Whitethroat and Spotted Flycatcher arrived on 25th. The last noteworthy migrant of the month, after a thoroughly exciting spring, was a ♂ Nightjar at Duttfield on 29th and 30th.

## 77. Unprecedented Fall of Icterine Warblers at Fair Isle in Spring, 1967

Icterine Warblers are regular but scarce migrants at Fair Isle. The first Fair Isle (and Scottish) record was on 1st June 1908, and since then they have been recorded in spring and autumn, usually singly, but a few times, two or three in a day. The first record for the Observatory was on 25th August 1951, and Table 1 shows the totals recorded in each four-year period since that year.

### Number of Icterine Warblers in each four-year period

1951-54	1955-58	1959-62	1963-66
4	7	10	11

They have nearly always been associated with falls of continental night-migrants, with a bias towards the autumn, see Table 2.

### Monthly totals of Icterine Warblers, 1951-1966

May	June	August	September
8	3	12	9

Some migrant warblers stay on the island for longer periods than others, and Table 3 shows the length of delayed passage of the 32 Icterine Warblers seen on the island between 1951 and 1966.

### Length of stay in days of Icterine Warblers at Fair Isle

Number of days	1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-
Spring	10		1				
Autumn	14	1	2	2			2 (12 and ca 17 days)

This shows that most Icterine Warblers only stay one day on the island, (although of course some of those recorded only on one day may have hidden in the cliffs) and quickly recommence their migrations. Spring birds seem especially keen to move on, whereas proportionately more young birds in autumn have lingered on the island. This species is usually in good condition and active at Fair Isle, and has probably used little of its resources by straying to the wrong side of the North Sea, and consequently can carry on without resting.

The above totals were completely overshadowed by a spectacular arrival of this species in late May and early June, 1967. The wind was north-east veering to south-east on 25th May, and there was a large arrival of continental night-migrants when the heavy rain ceased and the skies cleared at midday. A search for migrants in the morning yielded little, but on our way north from Skadan, we started to see increasing numbers of passerines, especially Garden Warblers. We had brief views of a Hippolais warbler at Hesti Geo and later, caught an Icterine Warbler in the Double Dyke. After lunch, birds were everywhere, and when we revisited Hesti Geo, the rocks were alive with warblers. We saw at least two Icterine Warblers, so we put up a mist-nest and on three drives of the rocks, we caught an Icterine Warbler each time. During the afternoon and evening we found another two, as well as 3 Black Redstarts, 2 Ortolans, a Rustic Bunting and lots of Garden Warblers, Willow Warblers and Whitethroats.

This was the greatest number of Icterine Warblers recorded in one day at Fair Isle, but this record proved to be short-lived, see Table 4.

**Table 4. Number of Icterine Warblers each day in Spring, 1967**

May 25	26	27	28	29	30	31	June 1	2	3	4	5
6	5	8	1	1	3	7	1	3	2	1	1

The birds on 26th were stranded migrants from 25th, but some of them were different birds than those recorded the previous day. Most other passerines had decreased by 27th, but Icterine Warblers were high again at 8, but may have included re-directed migrants from Orkney or Shetland. Single stranded birds were present on 28th and 29th; there were three on 30th and on 31st, in south-east winds overnight there was an increase to 7. Another similar increase associated with other continental migrants occurred on 2nd June. Stragglers were present until 5th June. The bird/days total for this rush was 39 and we thought this included at least 20 individuals, and may be 25.

R.H.D.

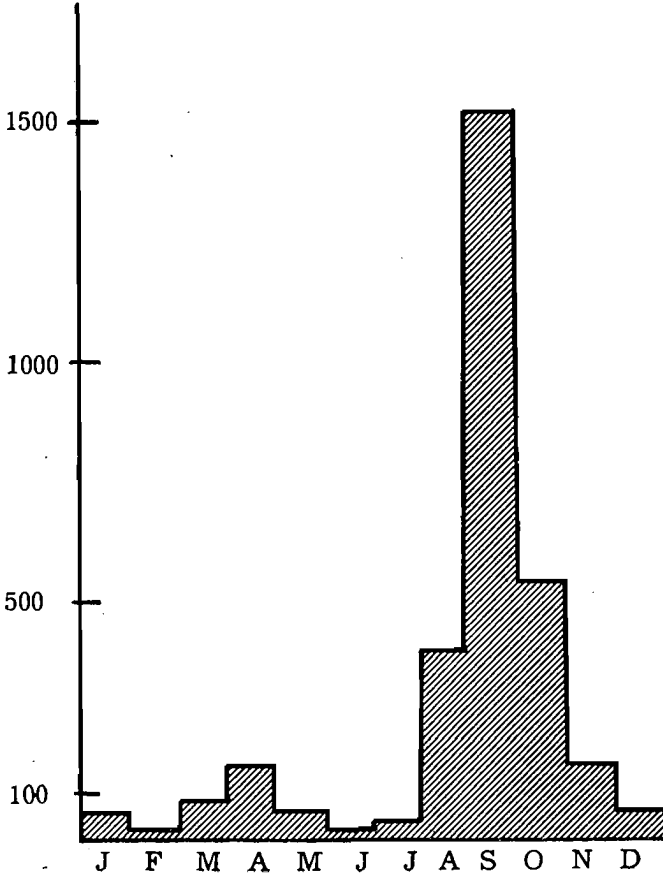
## 78. The Status of the Cormorant at Fair Isle

ROY H. DENNIS

Cormorants are one of the regular, and most obvious, visible migrants at Fair Isle; they do not breed on the island but have been recorded in every month of the year. There are several traditional breeding colonies in Shetland and some of these birds, especially the birds of the year, migrate south in autumn and these flocks are seen passing over Fair Isle.

There is an obvious peak in September, with smaller numbers in August and October; small numbers are recorded in

Fig. 1. Bird/days per month at Fair Isle 1958-67



winter and there is a small return passage in March and April; they are rare in June and July. The daily census books between 1948 and 1967 have been examined and the following data extracted. Monthly coverage was better in the last ten years and Fig. 1 shows the monthly totals of birds/days for Cormorants between 1958 and 1967.

The peak of Cormorants in September is very pronounced, in fact 49.4% of the years total (1958-67) was in this month, with 13% in August, 17.3% in October and 5% each in April and November.

The numbers of Cormorants in August, September and October have been recorded since 1948 and Table 1 compares the data, presented in weekly periods, between the first ten years and the last ten years to 1967.

**Table 1. Cormorant/days per week**

	August				September				October			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1948-1957	1	1	0	36	230	404	450	313	219	99	81	28
1958-1967	11	12	48	326	235	462	534	280	170	128	77	154

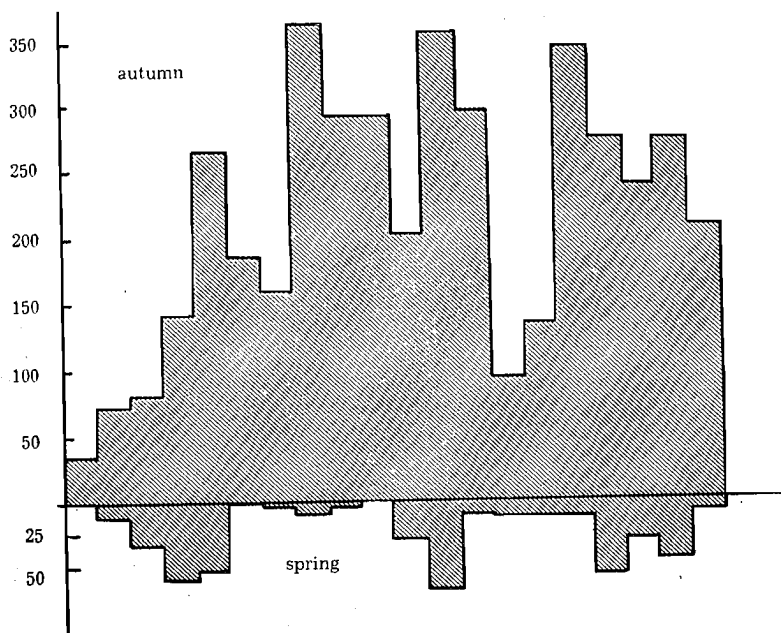
In Table 1 1st, 2nd etc. refer to calendar weeks, and so the 4th week is two or three days longer. Even so it will be noticed that the passage in the first ten years was concentrated in September and the first week of October, whereas in the last ten years it has been more protracted. The peak weeks are still the 2nd and 3rd of September, but passage has increased in August and October.

Considerable annual variations in the numbers of Cormorants visiting Fair Isle have been noted. The lack of winter records in the first ten years make the annual totals for those years rather low, so I have taken the totals for the three autumn months when 80% of the year's total occurs. These totals for 1948 to 1967 are presented in Fig. 2 and we get a clear picture of these variations, which may provide data on the annual strength and success of the Shetland breeding population. Spring totals (March-April) are plotted below the base line.

It will be noted from Fig. 2 that the Cormorants were scarce at Fair Isle as a migrant until 1952, and this probably reflects a period after the war when Cormorants and Shags were still being shot and exported south as "Black Ducks." 1952, 1955, 1959 and 1963 were peak years, with an interval of four years between the three best seasons: 1966 was higher than 1965 or 1967 and is only three years after the peak of 1963. In 1967, I visited Muckle Roe, one of the major colonies, and



Fig. 2. Annual Cormorant/days totals for spring (below base line) and autumn 1948-67



found it greatly depleted from the previous year. After peak years of passage at Fair Isle, the lowest totals have been recorded two or three years later (1954, 1958, 1961 and 1965), and there is then a rapid increase in the fourth season.

Fig. 2 shows variations in the return spring passage but as these totals are much smaller, there is a greater likelihood of a mistake, because if one big flock was missed passing over the island the year's spring total would be drastically reduced.

Migrant flocks at Fair Isle are nearly always observed in the early morning, and they usually fly at about two and five hundred feet above sea-level and pass directly from the direction of Shetland towards Orkney. The majority of these birds are white-bellied juveniles and sometimes the flocks have one or two adults mixed in and they usually head the formation. Unfortunately details of age-compositions of the flocks have not usually been recorded. I have examined the weather conditions when migrant flocks have been observed passing over the island in autumn and table 2 shows the number of flocks (size may indicate one flock or day's aggregate) migrating in various wind directions.

**Table 2. Cormorants passing over Fair Isle in autumn**

Wind direction	Number and size of day's flock(s)
E	50 30 32 21 14 14
NE	40 30 29 25 15 14 11 8 3
N	80 40 35 25 24 20 20 18 18 17 16 15 14 14 13 13 11
NW	50 40 28 25 25 25 24 20 20 20 20 15 15 10 19
W	80 30 29 25 25 12 7 7
SW	70 49 25 18 17 17 15 9
S	65 28 16
SE	15

Table 2 shows that Cormorants prefer to migrate from Shetland to Orkney in north or north-west winds; the wind on days of Cormorant passage is nearly always very light, with very good visibility; high cloud cover does not deter them as long as visibility is good between the island groups. It appears that flocks of Cormorants probably congregate in the south mainland voes of Shetland and set off just after dawn on fine days and rapidly complete their inter-island hops.

Five Cormorants have been ringed at the island; all were young birds in autumn and usually ones which have become semi-residents. None of these have been recovered but a bird found dead in April 1963 had been ringed at Gairsay, Orkney as a chick the previous year.

## 79. Local Recaptures in 1966

**STORM PETREL.** Five adults ringed in 1965 were retrapped on the cliffs in 1966, as follows: Millens Houllan, May at same place, July; Millens Houllan, July at Malcolm's Head, August; Malcolm's Head, August at same place, August (2) and Millens Houllan, July. Six birds ringed in 1966 were retrapped between three nights and 7 weeks later on the island, and they showed a similar interchange between Millens Houllan, Slogar and Malcolm's Head.

**FULMAR.** A chick ringed at Duttfield in July, 1961 was fledged at Duttfield on 10th September; two chicks ringed at Roskilie on 1st August 1962 were fledged at their natal cliff on 23rd and 24th August, but another retrap caught at Roskilie on 23rd August had been ringed as a chick at Duttfield in 1963. Two incubating adults ringed at South Gunnawark on 30th June 1965 were occupying similar nests in July 1966.

**SHAG.** Twenty-three retraps were noted in 1966, twenty of these were of birds caught at their nests. Table 1 shows the

number of retraps, grouped under year and age at ringing, (A—Adult, P—pullus).

Table 1

Year of ringing	1958	59	60	61	62	63	64	65
Age at ringing	A	A	A	2A	2A	2A	A	2A
					3P	4P	3P	P

Of the twenty birds caught at their breeding colonies, 18 (5 ringed as pullus) were retrapped in the colony where they were ringed: the two exceptions were a 1962 chick which moved from South Naaversgill to South Ramnigeo and a 1963 chick from East Lothar just round the corner in Lericum. This again illustrates how very faithful Fair Isle seabirds are to their natal colonies.

**EIDER.** Three incubating ducks were retrapped; two of them were old faithfuls on Bunes, one had been ringed in 1964 and was nesting again in the same place. The other was a very tame duck, which allows us to read her ring number as she sits on the eggs and just nibbles our fingers when we move her leg to see the ring. She has nested successfully in the same place since at least 1958. A duck ringed at her nest at the North Light on 18th May 1961 had moved to Eas Brecks in 1966.

**ARCTIC SKUA.** An adult ringed at Brae N.W. on 24th June 1960 was found dead at Restensgeo on 7th September and a chick ringed on 12th July 1962 at Swey N. was found dead in Homisdale on 10th July.

**HERRING GULL.** AJ 52694 nested on the Landberg again; originally ringed in 1952 (see last *Bull.*) A bird dazzle-netted in a gull flock on South Gavel on 16th November had been ringed as a chick on the High Holm in 1962. These flocks are usually comprised of foreign birds (see recoveries) as many of our breeding birds desert the island in winter.

**PUFFIN.** Six retraps in 1966; the list below shows age, date and place of ringing and recapture.

Pullus, South Naaversgill, 17.7.61, at Hoini, 22.7.66

Adult, South Naaversgill, 2.7.62, at South Naaversgill, 26.6.66

Pullus, Burrista, 18.7.62, at Hoini, 15.7.66

Adult, Easter Lothar, 3.7.63, at Easter Lothar, 11.5.66

Pullus, Johnny's Peats, 13.7.63, at South Haven (dead) 18.8.66

Adult, Troila Geo, 22.7.63, at Troila Geo, 11.7.66

**RAZORBILL.** Ten birds ringed as adults were retrapped in 1966; they had been ringed in 1958, 1961 (2), 1962, 1963 and 1964 (5). None had changed colonies.

**GUILLEMOT.** Twenty-nine birds ringed as adults were retrapped in summer; they had been ringed in 1959 (4), 1960 (4), 1961 (2), 1962, 1963 (5), 1964 (6) and 1965 (7). None had

changed colonies and a chick ringed in 1961 also returned to its natal colony.

**BLACK GUILLEMOT.** Adults retrapped at their nests had been ringed in 1963, 1964 (2) and 1965 (7). All had been ringed as adults and none had changed colonies, or nest sites in the case of isolated pairs.

**RAVEN.** A chick ringed at South Ramnigeo on 21st May 1966 was shot at Sukka Mire on 19th October.

**BLACK-BELLIED DIPPER.** A first-year bird was ringed at the Gully on 5.12.65; it wintered on the island and was retrapped on 1.4.66, when its weight had gone up from 49 grams to 54.8 grams. It was seen until 9th April.

**WREN.** A first year bird ringed at North Haven, 2.9.62 was retrapped twice in September, 1962, twice in April, 1965 and on 30.3.66. Weights range from 13.4 to 14.6 grams.

**BLACKBIRD.** A first-year ♂ ringed on 8.11.65, was retrapped twice in November, 1965 and three times in 1966, last date 17th April. Its weight increased from 83.2 to 104.1 grams.

**WHEATEAR.** An adult ♀ ringed at the Double Dyke on 26.5.64 was retrapped there on 18.6.66. Seven birds ringed in 1965 were retrapped in 1966; six had been ringed as juveniles in July or August and an adult ♂ ringed in July at the Gully was retrapped in May at the Roadsides.

**MEADOW PIPIT.** Two 1965 juveniles were retrapped, one breeding at the Roadsides and the other in August at the Double Dyke.

**ROCK PIPIT.** Eight reportable retraps from the following years, 1962, 1963 (2), 1964 (2) and 1965 (3). They include a pullus ringed in 1965 at the Gully and caught four times at the Observatory.

**STARLING.** Fifty-one birds retrapped during the year had been ringed as shown in Table 2, where A means ringed as adult and J as juvenile or first-winter.

**Table 2**

Year of ringing	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965
Age at ringing	2J		2J	11J	9J	16J
	A			2A	A	7A

The three 1960 retraps were an adult ♂ ringed on 1.5.60, retrapped in 1961, 1963, 1965 and 11.9.66; a juvenile ringed on 22.6.60, retrapped in 1961, 1962, 1965 and 1.4.66 as adult ♂ and a juvenile ringed on 18.8.60, retrapped in 1961, 1962, 1963, 1965 and 25.8.66 as adult ♀.

**TWITE.** A 1st year ringed on 5.8.64 was retrapped as adult ♂ on 4.6.66 and a juvenile ringed on 13.8.65 was retrapped as adult ♀ on 5.5.66.

HOUSE SPARROW. A full-grown ♀ mist-netted at Midway, 30.9.61 was retrapped at Quoy on 2.5.66.

## 80. Recoveries, 1966

Sixty-nine recoveries of ringed birds were received in 1966, and full details of these are given below. The international code of symbols for the method of recovery is employed: v—caught or trapped and released with ring; †—shot or killed by man; x—found dead or dying; xA—found long dead; ()—caught alive and not released or released without ring; /?/—method of recovery unknown. Where the exact date of recovery is unknown, the date of the finder's report is given in brackets. Ringing details of each bird (ringed at Fair Isle unless otherwise stated) are given on the first line, and recovery details on the second.

### FULMAR

AT 64522 pull. 3.8.59

v 8.3.66 North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 30 miles WSW. Re-ringed SS 40244.

### SHAG

1033692 pull. 21.6.64

x 3.1.66 North Ronaldsay, 30 miles WSW.

1052262 pull. 8.6.65

x 3.2.66 Shapinsay (Orkney), 60 miles SW.

1052338 pull. 10.6.65

x ca. 3.7.66 Copinsay (Orkney), 60 miles SW.

1052405 pull. 12.6.65

x (6.4.66) Auckingill, Keiss (Caithness), 85 miles SW.

1052425 pull. 12.6.65

x-oiled 16.2.66 Papa Westray (Orkney), 45 miles WSW.

1052571 pull. 30.6.65

x (5.5.66) Veness, Eday (Orkney), 50 miles SW.

1052621 pull. 2.7.65

xA mid.1.66 Muness, Unst (Shetland), 90 miles NNE.

1052647 pull. 5.7.65

x 7.4.66 Kirkabister, Nesting (Shetland), 60 miles NNE.

1052747 pull. 6.7.65

xA 2.4.66 near Lerwick (Shetland), 50 miles NNE.

1052786 pull. 6.7.65

x 27.2.66 Heliness, Cunningsburgh (Shetland), 40 miles NNE.

1052928 pull. 27.6.65 Fetlar (Shetland).

xA (4.5.66) Urie Lingey, off Fetlar, local.

1053513 pull. 21.6.66

- v 19.9.66 Lerwick (Shetland), 50 miles NNE.  
 1055513 pull. 26.6.66 Sumburgh Head (Shetland).  
 v 7.12.66 Loch Grosebay, Isle of Harris (Outer Hebrides),  
 240 miles SW.  
 No Fair Isle Shag has been recovered in the Outer Hebrides.  
 1055598 pull. 4.7.66  
 v 3.9.66 North Sea, west of North Friesian Islands, 54°35'N  
 8°10'E.  
 1055610 pul. 4.7.66  
 x 31.8.66 Burra (Shetland), 40 miles N.  
 1055610 pull. 4.7.66  
 x (20.9.66) Hamar Voe (Shetland), 70 miles N.  
 1055663 pull. 6.7.66  
 v-sick 14/16.9.66 Lerwick (Shetland), 50 miles NNE.  
 1055743 pull. 13.7.66  
 x (5.10.66) Roker, Sunderland (Durham), 320 miles S.

## GANNET

- 1057694 pull. 31.7.66 Hermaness (Shetland).  
 v 4.10.66 off Pointe des Chats, Isle de Croix (Morbihan)  
 France, 47°32'N 3°25'W.

## GREY LAG GOOSE

- 1042498 1st Y. 27.11.65  
 † 5.1.66 Fearn, Tain (Ross-shire), 145 miles SW. This bird  
 left the island between 2nd and 4th January 1966!

## MALLARD

- AJ 45929 Ad. ♂ 28.10.65  
 /?/ 17.12.66 near Thurso (Caithness), 90 miles SW.

## SPARROWHAWK

- EC 43433 1st Y. ♀ 26.10.65  
 v-caught in empty house, (11.4.66) Trondra, Scalloway  
 (Shetland), 45 miles NNE.

## MERLIN

- 2030929 pull. 23.7.65 Mid-Yell (Shetland)  
 x-entangled in roll of fencing wire (3.3.66) Orrock Quarry,  
 Kirkcaldy (Fife), 320 miles SSW.

## OYSTERCATCHER

- AT 90056 pull. 22.6.62  
 x 29.4.66 St Ninians Isle (Shetland), 30 miles N.  
 SS 39485 pull. 28.6.66  
 † 4.9.66 Ile de Noirmontier (Vendee) France, 47°00'N 2°15'W.

## WOODCOCK

- EC 43424 FG. 23.10.65  
 † 6.4.66 Stenbjerg (Jutland) Denmark, 56°52'N 8°21'E.

## GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

419353 pull. 20.7.65

x 7.10.66 Sands of Forvie (Aberdeen), 155 miles S.

## LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

GM 40125 pull. 11.7.66

x 9.12.66 Ondarroa (Vizcaya) Spain, 43°19'N 2°25'W.

## GREAT SKUA

HW 07432 pull. 23.7.66 Hermaness (Shetland)

† 11.11.66 off Nazare (Estremadura) Portugal, 39°36'N 9°04'W.

## ARCTIC SKUA

2044340 pull. 8.7.62

x (19.9.66) Henck, Grangemouth (Stirling), 255 miles SSW.

2044364 pull. 29.7.62

xA 0.6.66 Troswick, Dunrossness (Shetland), 30 miles N.

3075775 pull. 15.7.60

x 20.8.66 Sandwick Bay (Shetland), 35 miles NNE.

## RAZORBILL

SS 05946 pull. 30.6.64

† 25.11.66 San Sebastian (Guipuzcoa) Spain, 43°19'N 2°00'W.

This is our second Razorbill recovery in Spain, both in the last week of November.

SS 50590 pull. 4.7.66

† 28.10.66 Oslo Fjord (Norway), ca 59°05'N 10°40'E. This is our thirteenth recovery of a pullus in Norway; 2 were in September, 9 in October and 2 in November. An adult was recovered in Norway in January.

## GUILLEMOT

AT 67208 pull. 8.7.60

xA? 0.8.65 Boknfjorden (Rogaland) Norway, 59°10'N 5°55'E.

GM 40187 pull. 12.7.66 Sumburgh Head (Shetland)

x (29.11.66) Vik, Helgeland (Nordland) Norway, 65°19'N 12°10'E.

GM 40194 pull. 12.7.66 Sumburgh Head

† 28.10.66 Bomlo (Hordaland) Norway, 59°45'N 5°15'E.

SS 36088 pull. 3.7.65

x (18.1.66) Gildeskal (Nordland) Norway 67°05'N 14°05'E.

It appears that the young Sumburgh Head birds winter in Norway with the Fair Isle ones.

## BLACK GUILLEMOT

EC 43278 pull. 31.7.65

x 4.4.66 Westray (Orkney), 50 miles WSW.

EC 94166 pull. 18.7.66

x 13.8.66 Stronsay (Orkney), 45 miles SW. This bird left its nest in Busta Geo about 8.8.66!

## SONG THRUSH

CX 46740 1st Y. 27.9.65

x 28.2.66 Tondela (Beira Alta) Portugal, 40°31'N 8°05'W.

## REDWING

CV 59375 PJ 1.10.66

† 27.10.66 Bordeaux (Gironde) France, 44°50'N 0°35'W.

CV 59887 1st Y. 18.10.66

x 6.11.66 Glendale (Isle of Skye), 230 miles SW.

CX 16345 FG. 13.10.63

† (7.1.66) Kadirli (Adana) Turkey, 37°22'N 36°05'E.

CX 33800 FG. 15.10.64

/??/ 0.11.65 Vila Verde (Minho) Portugal, 41°39'N 8°26'W.

CX 46422 Ad. 20.4.65

† 17.2.66 Avercairry, Crieff (Perthshire), 230 miles SSW.

CX 46673 FG. 3.10.65

† 27.1.66 Portalegre (Alto Alentejo) Portugal, 39°17'N 7°26'W.

CX 46738 FG. 27.9.65

† 6.11.66 Echalar (Navarra) Spain, 43°15'N 1°37'W.

CX 46768 FG. 1.10.65

x early.1.66 Mount Pilon, Magnisia, Greece, 39°25'N 23°05'E.

CX 46869 FG. 2.10.65

† 13.11.65 Laje, near Vila Verde, Portugal, 41°37'N 8°28'W.

CX 46940 FG. 9.10.65

x ca. 1.7.66 Sauvamaki, Hankasalmi (Keski-Suomi) Finland 62°18'N 26°07'E.

The recoveries from Turkey and Greece are the furthest east for Fair Isle Redwings in winter. The Finnish recovery is our first Redwing from that country and just further east than a Redwing recovered in Estonia on 15.4.60. There was a strong movement of Redwings through Fair Isle in late September and early October 1965 and it is noted that five of the recoveries are from that period.

## BLACKBIRD

CK 00297 1st Y. ♀ 8.10.61

x 19.4.66 Anderstop (Jonkoping) Sweden, 57°17'N 13°47'E.

CX 14686 Ad. ♂ 23.3.63

† 14.3.66 Balestrand (Sogn &amp; Fjordane) Norway, 61°12'N 6°32'E.

CX 16615 1st Y. ♂ 18.10.63

x 7.3.66 Scaniport (Inverness), 175 miles SW.

CX 46014 Ad. ♂ 30.10.64

† 23.3.66 Ullensvang (Hordaland) Norway, 60°19'N 6°40'E.

CX 95118 Ad. ♀ 24.10.65



- x 11.10.66 Notteroy (Vestfold) Norway, 59°15'N 10°25'E.  
 R 78783 1st Y. ♂ 21.3.60  
 x 18.4.66 Onnekop (Malmohus) Sweden, 55°47'N 13°55'E.  
 Our oldest Blackbird recovery.

## WHEATEAR

- BA 52159 1st Y. 2.8.64  
 † 10.3.66 Aoulef el Arab (Tidikelt) Algeria, 27°00'N 1°04'E.  
 This is our third North African recovery of a Wheatear;  
 the other two were in Morocco and this bird which was  
 killed in a Saharan Oasis was about 500 miles further SE.  
 BC 14444 Ad. ♂ 24.4.66  
 † against wires, Vidlin (Shetland), 65 miles NNE.  
 BC 74088 1st Y. 20.8.66  
 † 25.9.66 near Sanlucar de Barrameda (Cadiz) Spain, 34°46'N  
 6°21'W.

## WHINCHAT

- HC 45756 1st Y. ♀ 9.9.66  
 † 30.10.66 Puerto de Santa Maria (Cadiz) Spain, 36°36'N  
 6°12'W. Our first foreign Whinchat recovery.

## ROBIN

- HB 82640 PJ. 14.4.66  
 x (26.11.66) Vejer de la Frontera (Cadiz) Spain, 36°15'N  
 5°58'W.

## MEADOW PIPIT

- N 96979 Ad. 28.8.65  
 v 14.9.66 Spurn Point (Yorkshire), 410 miles S.

## STARLING

- CX 16070 Ad. ♂ 10.4.63  
 v 25.8.65 Foula (Shetland), 45 miles NNW.  
 CX 46613 Juv. ♂ 30.8.65  
 v, came down chimney, 8.8.66 Shapinsay (Orkney), 60 miles  
 SW.  
 R 78231 Ad. ♂ 8.9.59  
 x 22.5.66 Pilsworth, Bury (Lancs), 410 miles S. This bird  
 was at least 8 years old.

## CROSSBILL

- BC 73595 PJ ♀ 6.9.66  
 /?/ (21.9.66) Heskestad (Rogaland) Norway, 58°28'N 6°22'E.  
 This bird was one of the second wave of Crossbills which  
 occurred at Fair Isle between 1st and 12th September;  
 the earlier movements were between 12th June and 5th August.  
 Note that it returned very rapidly to Norway.

R.H.D.

## 81. Ringed strangers in 1966

### STORM PETREL

London 649804 Ad. 14.8.64 Foula (Shetland)  
v 3.7.66 Fair Isle, 45 miles SE.

London 653106 Ad. 23.7.65 Foula  
v 4.7.66 Fair Isle

London 653395 Ad. 17.8.65 Foula  
v 19.7.66 Fair Isle

London 653677 Ad. 24.8.65 Foula  
v 4.7.66 Fair Isle

London 653807 Ad. 14.8.65 Foula  
v 8.7.66 Fair Isle

London 653976 Ad. 25.6.66 Foula  
v 4.7.66 Fair Isle

London 653977 Ad. 25.6.66 Foula  
v 4.7.66 Fair Isle. Note that 653976 and 653977 were mist-netted on the same day at the Ley of Millens Houllan.

London 656571 Ad. 16.7.65 Foula  
v 6.7.66 Fair Isle

### ROBIN

Denmark 9028589 Juv. 7.10.65 Blavandshuk, Jylland, 55°33'N  
08°05'E  
v 6.7.66 Fair Isle.

The co-ordinates of Fair Isle are 59°32'N 1°37'W.

R.H.D.

## 82. A night at Mousa Broch

In the late evening of 1st July 1967, Dr Ian Brooker took Bill Porteous and me to catch Storm Petrels; we went in his boat from Levenwick and his brother Bill was the fourth member of our party. We anchored the boat off the point near the Broch and rowed ashore. In the couple of hours before dawn we caught 86 Storm Petrels in three nets between the Broch and the south end of the storm beach. The noise made by the birds churring in their burrows was very great; a noise I have never heard while trapping petrels at Fair Isle, which indicates that Fair Isle is not a big breeding colony like Mousa.

Of the 86 birds trapped, 27 were already wearing rings but two of these were so worn that they were illegible. All the remaining birds had been ringed on Mousa, except 658899 which had been ringed at Foula on 8th August 1966. The ringing and recovery data for Foula is rather similar to Fair

Isle, unlike Mousa, and suggests that these two islands are mainly night-time meeting places for non-breeders and off-duty birds. The 24 Mousa recaptures had been ringed in August 1958, August 1959 (3), June 1961 (3), August 1961, July 1962 (2), July 1963 (2), July 1965 (10) and July 1966 (2).

R.H.D.

### 83. Squat Lobsters and Spider Crab at Fair Isle

During the spring of 1967, while the islanders were lobster-fishing, they found two interesting species in their creels and gave them to me. The first was a red squat lobster about eight inches long, which was identified by the Torry Marine Laboratory as *Munida bamffica*. It was caught off the Sheep Rock on 8th April. On 12th April, a small spider crab was caught off the Keels at the south end and I identified it as *Inachus dorhynchus*. Neither species is rare but we had not caught them before, although the islanders have caught another species of squat lobster in recent years—*Galathea dispersa*.

R.H.D.

