



FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

Report for 2019





Plate 1. Chris Dodd (front left), Max Hellicar, Tom Gale and Richard Cope monitoring Puffin burrows, Green Holm, 24th July. © David Parnaby



Plate 2. David Parnaby, Maver's Geo, 20th January 2019. © Susannah Parnaby



Plate 3. John Calladine retrieving a geolocator tag from Arctic Skua 'AAN', airstrip, 17th June 2019. © Sarah Harris



Plate 4. Chris Dodd with a Black Guillemot, South Mila Hesslands, 27th June 2019. © David Parnaby



Plate 5. Max Hellicar ringing a Shag, South Mila Hesslands, 27th June 2019. © Chris Dodd

FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY REPORT NO. 71 (2019)

Editor - Ian Andrews assisted by Barry Nightingale

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Cover photograph. Hawfinch, Haa, 18th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Published in August 2020 by: Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland ZE2 9JU.

Typeset by: H. Scott, PicaDesign (picades@ifb.co.uk). Printed by: Swallowtail Print Ltd, Norwich

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Plate 6. Sheep Rock from the Obs, 1st January 2019. © David Parnaby

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ISSN 0427-9190

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Douglas Barr

10th March 2019. This date will be forever etched in the memories of everyone who has a connection with Fair Isle Bird Observatory for all the wrong reasons.

Fire swept through the Obs levelling it to a pile of ashes and destroying absolutely everything within it. However, and most importantly, David, Susannah, Grace and Freya were all uninjured.

We will be forever indebted to all the Islanders for their support they have provided to us, from tackling the fire itself, in assisting us in continuing the work of the Obs and in starting the rebuild process. Community is an often-misused word but, as regards Fair Isle, it epitomises the true meaning of the word.

The list of people and organisations is far too lengthy for me to acknowledge individually with regards to the assistance they provided to us both in fighting the fire and its aftermath. We are

extremely grateful to you all. However, it would be remiss of me not to thank some in particular: the members of Friends of Fair Isle, the worldwide birding community, all the services involved in fighting the fire, Shetland Isles Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish National Heritage and our elected representatives Alastair Carmichael and Tavish Scott. Your support was greatly appreciated.

The National Trust for Scotland have been invaluable to us in their support throughout. Specifically, in allowing us the use of a flat at the South Light and the Puffinn for our staff and volunteers we have been able to continue our ornithological work.

Needless to say, the loss of the Obs has dominated our time in 2019. We decided it was important to continue our ornithological work. We therefore employed our normal Assistant Warden and Ranger to ensure this happened, supple-



Plate 7. South Light (the home of the Assistant Warden and Ranger in 2019), 27th July 2019. © Max Hellicar

17:43 hrs
10th March 2019



12:59 hrs
10th March 2019



13:36 hrs
10th March 2019



14:22 hrs
10th March 2019



14:33 hrs
10th March 2019



17:42 hrs
10th March 2019





13:13 hrs
11th March 2019



17:15 hrs
10th March 2019



SP

16:05 hrs
10th March 2019



15:26 hrs
10th March 2019



SP

10:29 hrs
11th March 2019



SP



Plate 19. The FIBOT Board of Directors, Lerwick, Shetland, 8th June 2019 (left to right): Ian Cowgill, Roy Dennis, Pete Ellis, Ian Andrews, Dave Okill (Vice-Chairman), Paul Harvey, Alexander Bennett, Fiona Mitchell, Mike Wood (Director of Finance), David Parnaby (Warden), Susannah Parnaby (Administrator), Karen Hall and Douglas Barr (Chairman). © *Grace Parnaby*

mented by a number of excellent volunteers. They, together with David and Susannah and a number of islanders, allowed us to keep the impact of the fire to a minimum.

As ever, thanks to the diligent work of David and his team, various rares and scarces were unearthed which kept those birders who still managed to visit the Isle still entertained. One particularly memorable afternoon saw both Eastern Olivaceous Warbler and River Warbler trapped and ringed; another striking example of the magic of Fair Isle!

Various long-standing research programmes were continued as well and some new ones were also initiated. This work is fundamental to the objectives of the Obs and we aim to continue these as uninterrupted as we can. In addition, a new PhD study was commenced by Vicki Dale which will build upon on the work previously undertaken on our migration data. It will be interesting to see what that reveals.

Not unsurprisingly, the majority of the Directors' work was focused upon the task of starting the rebuilding process for a new Obs (which has been christened 'Obs 5'). This will be, by its

nature, a lengthy process but we are determined to build upon and improve the excellent platform Obs 4 afforded us.

For David, Susannah and their children this was obviously a most difficult year to say the least. Losing their home, all their possessions and having to move into Schoolhouse, we realise cannot have been easy for them. It is therefore a testament to their skills and devotion to the Obs that we were able to continue to operate as well as we did and we thank them for that.

Can I thank my fellow Directors, and in particular Mike Wood, for all the work they have undertaken on behalf of the Obs. The amount of work, all of which is voluntary, that they have undertaken has obviously increased considerably with the need now to build a new Obs. I am confident that thanks to them we will come out of these dark days better and stronger.

A new Obs was not envisaged for a good number of years to come. However, we are, and I believe rightly so, taking this as an unexpected opportunity which I'm sure we'll capitalise upon. I look forward to welcoming you all to Obs 5 in due course and I'm sure you won't be disappointed.

WARDEN AND ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

David and Susannah Parnaby

Whilst there is no doubt that 2019 will be remembered foremost for the events of Sunday 10th March, it is important to remember that the ornithological work of the Observatory continued as close as possible to normal. A huge amount of thanks is due to a large number of people, but the immediate 'front line' work of the Obs was only possible thanks to 'Team Phoenix' - Assistant Warden Richard Cope, Ranger Chris 'Doddy' Dodd and a volunteer team of Nina O'Hanlon, Glen Tyler, Max Hellicar, Tom Gale, Sarah Harris and Rob Hughes, with Logan Johnson and Allan Perkins also helping out during their visits to the Isle. Karen Hall and Hannah Bell also helped out with a couple of ranger jobs. We'd also like to thank the domestic team and Hannah who were a few weeks away from starting their seasonal contracts and were incredibly understanding and supportive when they were left without jobs.

Both Richard and Doddy were returning for their fifth seasons (Doddy also helped out for spells in 2012 and 2018), making them the longest-serving holders of their respective posts in FIBO history. The volunteers had all previously worked or volunteered at FIBO, and between them the team provided invaluable experience that saw us through the year. Chris left before the end of the season to take up a role as Kiwi Ranger in New Zealand (his winter home for several recent years), and Richard moved on at the end of the season. Doddy went out rangering to the end, pointing out Risso's Dolphin's to tourists on the NorthLink ferry as he sailed south past North Light and Dronger! They both remain close friends of the Parnabys and FIBO, and we're sure we'll see them both back as visitors to Fair Isle and, in the meantime, we wish them all the best in their new roles and thank them again for all their efforts over the years.



Plate 20. Log on tour (left to right: Logan Johnson, Allan Perkins, Richard Cope and David Parnaby), Quoy, 29th August 2019. © David Parnaby

We sadly said goodbye to Florrie Stout of Skerryholm in the summer, who passed away after a short illness that she bore with the grace that was typical of her. Florrie left us all with many good memories and she will be missed. Our thoughts and condolences go to Jimmy, her children and the rest of the family.

The birding year saw a breeding season for seabirds that could perhaps be best summed up as ‘mixed, but reasonable’, with numbers of most species remaining fairly stable, although the Fulmar productivity plots showed their highest numbers since 1996 and the Shag plots rose to their highest level since 2010. Whilst Bonxies, and to a lesser extent Fulmars, Gannets and Common Guillemots, had a poor breeding season, it was a very good year for Arctic Skuas and Arctic Terns, which both recorded their highest productivity since 2006. Razorbill and Puffin productivity dropped slightly compared with 2018, although remained good.

In an interesting year all round for Arctic Skuas, one found dead in Brazil set a new distance record for a Fair Isle-ringed bird. There were also two tags recovered from nesting Arctic Skuas that gave details of their wintering grounds during the previous two years. Technologies continue to open up new ground in discovering more about the birds of Fair Isle and we were also pleased to recover a number of tags from Common Guillemots and Razorbills as part of Professor Bob Furness’s study into the wintering areas of these auks. We’re delighted to help out with such studies and we hope FIBO can continue to support such research in the future. It was also fascinating to follow the progress of one of Fair Isle’s most-loved, but least well-known seabirds, with a joint RSPB, SNH and FIBO study finding breeding Storm Petrels at a number of sites. Hopefully more will be discovered about their distribution, numbers and the potential threats of predation as the study continues.

Amongst the land birds, Red-necked Phalaropes bred successfully again, as did Dunlin and Swallow, whilst Peregrine and Carrion Crow were again territorial, although without breeding.

Aside from the Arctic Skua already mentioned, there are a number of interesting ringing recoveries and controls detailed in the ringing report, including a couple more movements of House Sparrows to Shetland; even our seemingly resident species can provide some interesting information from ringing. Indeed, the ringing of migrants in traps and mist nets still provides an interesting insight into populations and migration, with some species (e.g. Chiffchaff and Pied Wagtail) showing long-term increases, whilst others are only ringed at a fraction of the number they were a few decades ago. This has been perhaps most pronounced in some of the long-distant migrants, with Garden Warbler, Pied Flycatcher, Redstart and Whinchat amongst those seeing vastly decreased numbers, and Tree Pipit recording only their fifth blank year for ringing records in FIBO history.

Migration saw some decent numbers of rare migrants in the spring, with Eastern Olivaceous and River Warbler in the Obs mist nets at the same time in mid-June providing a fine cap to the season. A record-breaking Two-barred Crossbill influx, an Arctic Warbler, three Icterine Warblers, Marsh Warbler and a couple of Hawfinches were amongst July’s highlights, proving again that you can never let your guard (or your binoculars) down on Fair Isle! The autumn saw a good spread of migration, and an epic spell of birding in October saw several days of some of the best of Fair Isle; every day was different with a variety of quality national rarities, year-ticks and a phenomenal thrush fall.

The year’s rarities were headlined by Fair Isle’s:

- 1st** Franklin’s Gull
Black-winged Stilt
- 2nd** ‘Continental Cormorant’
Brown Shrike
- 3rd** Black Kite
- 4th** Lesser Yellowlegs
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler
Mandarin Duck
- 7th & 8th** Little Ringed Plover
- 9th** Radde’s Warbler
- 10th** Firecrest

Additional good birds included four Quails, Red-necked Grebe, two Honey-buzzards, three Marsh Harriers, White-tailed Eagle, three Buzzards, Corncrake, two Dotterels, Curlew Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, two Pomarine Skuas, Nightjar, Hoopoe, eight Wrynecks, two Hobbies, ten Red-backed Shrikes, Great Grey Shrike, seven Waxwings, Woodlark, five Shore Larks, Red-rumped Swallow, 42 Yellow-browed Warblers, Pallas's Warbler, Dusky Warbler, Arctic Warbler, Greenish Warbler, two Blyth's Reed Warblers, two Marsh Warblers, Melodious Warbler, nine Icterine Warblers, River Warbler, Lanceolated Warbler, 14 Barred Warblers, 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' (and another unidentified Subalpine Warbler), 'Northern Treecreeper', at least 20 Bluethroats, Thrush Nightingale, Nightingale, five Red-flanked Bluetails, Red-breasted Flycatcher, 'Eastern Stonechat', 'Black-bellied Dipper', four 'Grey-headed Wagtails', three Richard's Pipits, Tawny Pipit, two Olive-backed Pipits, Pechora Pipit, Red-throated Pipit, 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll' and a record-breaking 22 Two-barred Crossbills.

The final year list of 215 species was one of the highest on record, although, as ever, there were a few expected species that failed to put in an appearance, including (with the last blank year in brackets): Osprey (1997), Little Stint (2009) and Brent Goose (2014), whilst Short-toed Lark recorded its third consecutive blank year following an unbroken run of occurrences from 1963 to 2016.

Although visitor numbers were obviously greatly reduced, a number of crofts offered bed and breakfast and so there were still several birders around at the main migration time in the autumn at least. It meant that Log was still a social event, with the Hall being the default venue, although several homes opened their doors to 'Log on Tour' and we got to enjoy an informal 'Bake Off' competition around the various households!

As ever, there was so much more happened during the year than we can fit in this summary, but hopefully you'll find everything you want to know about in this report. By the time you are reading this, plans will be well advanced on the rebuild of the Obs and so, on that note, let's look forward to the future and see what the coming year brings...



Plate 21. Preparing the River Warbler for release, Obs, 16th June 2019 (left to right: Max Hellicar, Deryk Shaw, a visitor, Nick Riddiford, another visitor, Richard Cope, Chris Dodd and David Parnaby). © Sarah Harris

A personal thanks from the Parnabys

The events of 10th March 2019 were not the most pleasant for us, but there were a number of 'small mercies', including the timing of the whole incident - it didn't happen before or during the holiday we had just returned from, it didn't leave us with an Obs full of guests to deal with and the kids were down the Isle, so never saw their home on fire or had to dash from the building.

There was also the huge positive of the support we received, which helped us to get through the whole experience.

Pat and Neil Thomson in particular need our grateful thanks. Anybody who knows them will be the least bit surprised at how they helped, but the way that they took us into their home and provided somewhere to stay, food and friendship whilst we made the move into Schoolhouse was something that Susannah and I will forever be grateful for. There is no doubt that the birds, wildlife and stunning beauty of Fair Isle are all big bonuses to living here, but it is the people that make it a truly special place.

As the fire started, we were immediately helped by several people who provided kind words and hugs when needed, despite it being a very



Plate 22. Articles recovered after the Obs fire, Schoolhouse, 27th March 2019 © David Parnaby

difficult situation for everyone on the Isle. Hollie Shaw spent a lot of time chatting to Susannah at the scene (and Deryk was one of the fire crew at the site), although it was very tough for them to witness. They put a lot of hard work into ensuring the Obs building that was destroyed was built and became a much-loved holiday destination, workplace and home to so many people. They can be very proud of that and the fact that the new building will be based on so much that they achieved is testament to that.

The whole fire crew put in a magnificent effort, and it was pleasing that questions raised by Alistair Carmichael MP and MSP Tavish Scott saw their efforts acknowledged in Westminster and Holyrood by Prime Minister Teresa May and First Minister Nicola Sturgeon respectively. Thank you to the Fair Isle crew who attended the incident: Watch Manager Fiona Mitchell, Crew Managers Kenny Stout and Iain Stout and firefighters Ian Best, Deryk Shaw, Mati Ventrillon, Joe Butler, Marie Bruhat and Chloe Frita, as well as the crews from Shetland who were brought in as support. The fire crew had dragged our picnic bench (a Kenaby-made one that was a present for Susannah's 40th birthday) and a driftwood log the kids used as a seat away from the fire, so these now get regular use in the Schoolhouse garden. We even got some bulbs that were rescued, placed in a salvaged plant pot and presented to us with the hope that 'something good could grow out of this', a true indication of the spirit in which the Fair Isle community faced this new challenge. Most of the community were involved in the operation that day and night, providing and transporting fuel, food, water and other supplies to the site, providing beds for the visiting fire crew and much else besides.

Although we were able to retrieve work computers and a few personal items, we obviously lost many of our possessions. These included items of sentimental value such as beloved cuddly toys, over 30 years' worth of birding notebooks, various family keepsakes as well as all our clothes other than what we were wearing. Thankfully, within hours of the fire starting, a string of Islanders had called round

with clothes, toiletries, gifts for the girls and other items, with Pat also taking many phone calls with offers of help. Within a couple of days, so many people responded to the fire, it was truly staggering. Boxes of donations started arriving from Shetland and beyond on the next plane to make it to the Isle. Some were from friends and family, some from anonymous donors and many were from people we had no direct connection with but who were keen to help. It makes the situation so much easier to deal with on a personal level. The kindness of so many people was brought home to me a few months later when Freyja was discussing the aftermath of the fire. Her overriding memory was not one of sadness, loss or distress, instead she remembered opening all the parcels that came in over a period of weeks and the fun that brought. I think Jenny Atkins (my former boss from the RSPB), is now viewed by Freyja in the same category as Santa Claus!

Remarkably, whilst looking at the site prior to clearance beginning, it became clear that a few things had somehow survived. Amongst the possessions we retrieved, were a stone coaster the girls had got me for Father's Day, a china teapot that had been my nana's, a Stewart Wilson Fair Isle jug, a Chameleon ornament that had survived from the upstairs living room, and a brick we'd got for Christmas from Kenaby (there's a bit more of a story behind that, suffice to say we were delighted to find it)!

Hollie and Eve Eunson set up an online 'giving page' and we cannot thank everyone enough for their donations to that, as it enabled us to quickly go about turning the Schoolhouse into a 'home'. We're also very thankful for the donations given to us directly by Islanders, in one case complete with an instruction to spend it on 'frivolous things' as a reminder that, just because something serious had happened, we weren't to forget that life was still something to be enjoyed. A lovely sentiment and one that fitted so well with the strong feeling that we were left with of the way in which people are overwhelmingly kind and positive, whatever the bad news you hear, remember that the good people are all still out there.

We'd also like to thank FIBOT directors Dave Okill, Mike Wood, Douglas Barr and Karen Hall for their support in the immediate aftermath of the fire and for replying to endless phone calls and emails from us, whilst at the same time working with the other directors towards ensuring the future of FIBO. Several organisations were also very supportive: Shetland Isles Council were quick to offer help with running Obs operations and getting us rehomed; the BTO helped to get us up and running with ring stocks, whilst Spurn Bird Observatory and Porzana both helped with donations of ringing equipment. There also were many bird observatories, bird clubs, SOC branches and RSPB members' groups who made donations, both to the Obs and Susannah and I, whilst the number of individuals who sent donations of money and toys, books, clothes and other items was really humbling. I have thanked the staff elsewhere in this report, and we also want to mention our families, who had to support us from a distance, which was obviously very tough on them. There obviously isn't space to acknowledge everyone by name, but rest assured, every message, every donation and everything that was done to help was appreciated.

Catching a Robin and Blackbird in the Helgoland traps three days after the fire was the start of Obs work getting back to normal and completing the ornithological work during the year was even more satisfying than usual. As a final way of moving on from the fire, we booked a trip for spring 2020 that would see us looking for Tigers and other exciting wildlife, so from now on, 10th March would be known in the family as the anniversary of us arriving in India.

Thank you once again to everyone for all their help.

David, Susannah, Grace and Freyja

Eileen Thomson, Houll

2018 had been a very busy year with many positive changes in the Isle. As the new year begins you never know what will take place, but one thing can be said with sureness - there will be ups and downs, but friendship and community will always be present in this lovely peerie place.

The year certainly started as it should, with the Fair Isle tradition of guising taking place on Hogmanay and into the wee/small/peerie hours! For anyone who hasn't experienced New Year here, it is quite a sight. The tradition of first footing gets ramped up; groups of folk in varying degrees of fancy dress visit all the houses portraying famous and more local faces, telling stories, singing songs and making everyone laugh!

January was a fairly quiet month - the visiting family and friends returned home and the students headed back to their studies. Some Isle folk like to use the end of winter as a good time to find some sun, ourselves included, spending six weeks in Argentina seeing family. We had a good week or so of snow in late January, many days when flying was not an option, so thank goodness we have the ferry service to fall back on. Many visitors and Isle folk alike do not relish the sea journey between here and Grutness, but when fog or ice hamper the planes, it never seems as bad!

February marked a golden wedding anniversary for Triona and Stewart Thomson of Quoy. Many Obs visitors will know Stewart for his knowledge of birds - he must have a highly enviable list of sightings here in the Isle. Triona also has an Obs connection, working there as a cook in the late 1960s when she met Stewart. They married and moved to Quoy where they raised their family and continue to live and work, even though they should probably be retired!

A Japanese film crew visited the Isle in the spring to film a documentary of life here. They were well received by folk and seemed to thoroughly enjoy their stay, regardless of the February weather.

I come to March and of course we cannot write anything about Fair Isle without mentioning the devastating fire. I am sure this will be covered elsewhere but from an Isle point of view, to paraphrase David Parnaby in a piece for our *Fair Isle Times*, there was a realisation that the rest of the season would not be how any of us expected. The importance of our highly skilled and dedicated fire crew was shown by their incredible work and attitude. They protect us all and for that we are grateful. Of course, the most important thing was that no one was hurt and David, Susannah and the girls were safe and well looked after by everyone here. If anyone ever doubted that the Obs and the Isle community worked well as one, now was the time to see it. On a much lighter note, us southern Isle folk have definitely enjoyed the Obs family living *south of the Hill Dyke* for a change...

Easter holidays started a month before Easter this year, again a time for much needed rest and welcome visits from friends and family. When we moved home from Edinburgh in 2017, one of the Fair Isle traditions I wanted to reinstate was the Easter egg hunt and coffee morning which was always held by John and Betty Best at Utra. At a time when crofters are rather bleary-eyed due to late-night lambing checks, a pleasant social event with lots of sugar and caffeine is a good thing. We always look forward to welcoming the Obs staff and guests at the start of the season and the Isle certainly was a quieter place and we missed the chance to meet old and new friends. It was great to see the returning bird staff though and we enjoyed a few good evenings of watching football and catching up.

Fair Isle proved to be a very popular stopping-off point for cruise ships in 2019 and we had around 20 booked to visit, although as expected some were not able to land due to our ever 'interesting' weather conditions. As usual, the visitors were welcomed to the Hall with tea and home bakes and a chance to peruse the knitwear and other souvenirs. The guided walks were busy, as was the museum. It is always nice to have cruise ships here, but I think we felt it more this year owing to the understandably fewer numbers of visitors. That said, the B&Bs were certainly the busiest yet and did their best to ensure some people could still get to the Isle and have a bed to sleep in.

Obs Ranger 'Doddy' (we have heard some people calling him Chris but assume they are mistaken) is a through and through Tottenham Hotspur fan. He was treated to an excellent run in the Champions League until the final. Thank goodness he likes birds too.

June saw a joint 20th and 40th birthday in Fair Isle giving the perfect excuse for a fancy-dress party. Fair Isle folk did themselves very proud indeed and many folk were still dancing into the small hours of the *simmer dim*.

The school year was brought to a close with a fantastic art exhibition by the children, who were proud to show off their year's work and newly printed cards for sale.

In July, Kenaby's Tom Best, new wife Lill and baby son Vinjar came to celebrate their *hamefaring* having married in Norway in the spring. The party was meant to be a much larger affair with many folk coming from Norway to stay at the Obs, so plan B was put into action and as many who could still come arrived to visit and celebrate the young family. Sadly, thick fog meant that some family members only made it as far as Sumburgh - I suppose that is the true experience of Shetland in July. Though it wasn't a great summer for weather generally, we were treated to some spectacular high temperatures of over 18°C in July. There is no more beautiful place than Fair Isle in sparkling sunshine.

Summer brought the usual tasks of caa'ing the Hill to shear the sheep, a day which many bird staff and visitors will have joined in and helped in the past.

Fair Isle did not just lose the Obs in 2019. The summer was tinged with the great sadness at the illness and then passing of Florrie Stout of Skerryholm. Florrie was a true gem, someone who was fun, kind, loyal and dedicated and her untimely loss was a terrible blow to the Isle, but of course much more so to husband Jimmy and their sons Iain and Bryan and their families. Another time for folk to rally round and support the family through a very difficult time.

In September, the *Good Shepherd* has a very important cargo of lambs to take to market in Shetland. It happens over various trips as you cannot take 300 in one go! There was good weather for the first few trips which makes life much easier for the boat crew and I dare say the animals too.

Some of our newer residents Amy Stout with partner Andy Davidson proved to be very successful in their first year as crofters, beating their own family at lamb sales and even winning a prize for their top lambs which is no mean feat. "All in the breeding" we heard it said.

Many of the older stone walls or dykes in the northern half of the Isle have collapsed in places and we had a visit from a National Trust for Scotland Workcamp in September who came to repair and rebuild the most affected walls. They did a great job and it will be helpful once we come to gathering the sheep this coming summer. Shetland has a new major attraction - Wool Week is now a huge boost for the Shetland economy with many hundreds of visitors coming to the Isles from all over the world for a week of knitting and wool crafts. Blessed with a fabulous week of weather, we had three daytrips full of keen knitters into the Isle. The groups visited local knitters, the museum and were treated to a traditional Fair Isle lunch at Quoy. One group alone had people from the Netherlands, Canada, USA and Argentina - a long way to come.

Autumn brought the Harvest celebration with a lovely communal afternoon in the Hall, with a bounty of local produce and crafts, along with games and the usual good company.

Scottish Water has started a major improvement project to the waterworks system in the Isle. Work commenced in October and will continue well into 2020. The local accommodation providers will be busy looking after the work force as with the electricity project last year, and work opportunities also arise for local people so it is a welcome boost to the economy here.

There was a social evening and book sale in November after kind donations to the community following the Obs fire. Florrie and Jimmy Stout had

the idea to make it into a social event for the whole Isle to enjoy, which was very successful. The event was originally planned for earlier in the year but the sad events of the summer meant we could not celebrate the event while Florrie was still with us. Hopefully, it was an evening she would have been proud of - young and old together enjoying music, good company, a quiz and a dram or two.

And we reach the end of the year, when Christmas brings us together again to celebrate the good things in life: family, friendship and our community. The Obs will be rebuilt and we look forward to the next chapter. Fair Isle benefits from so much due to the Obs and all the great people who run it, so we hope that 2020 brings lots of exciting times and progress for us all.

PETER EDWARD DAVIS 1928–2019

Compiled with the assistance of Dr Jeremy Davis

Peter Davis was a proud Yorkshireman, born in the Bradford suburb of Idle in October 1928. After school, he undertook his National Service with the RAF, then attended the University of Leeds graduating with a BA in geography in 1951. His overriding passion being nature and ornithology, later that year he accepted the post of warden on Lundy, Devon. While resident on Lundy in 1952 he tragically lost his first fiancée, Wendy Mitchell. She was amongst a party manning a rope supporting Peter, who was undertaking a seabird count, and losing her footing fell over the cliff to her death. In 1954, Peter moved to Skokholm Island off the Pembrokeshire coast, where he met his future wife Angela, a summer visitor. After a courtship conducted mostly by letter, they married in 1955.

Then Peter went on to become FIBO's second warden (after Ken Williamson) and was in post for seven seasons between 1957 and 1963. When Peter and Angela arrived in May 1957, their remit was clear. The Obs, then in the old army huts at

North Haven, had been running at a loss and even in their first season, their hard work and effective organisation turned this around much to the delight of the Directors. Prices were reduced to £1 per night (including the use of a bike!) and cost-saving ideas picked up whilst on Skokholm were introduced such as guests helping with 'light domestic chores.' Visitor numbers also improved with 1,778 bed-nights in 1961. Peter worked with a single assistant warden each year; Pat Adams was in charge of the kitchen and Angela juggled housework and secretarial duties with rearing a young family. The only link with mainland Shetland at that time was with the twice-weekly *Good Shepherd II*.

During Peter's tenure, Fair Isle recorded three UK 'firsts' - Song Sparrow (1959), Sykes's Warbler (1959) and River Warbler (1961) whilst Western Bonelli's Warbler and Dusky Thrush (both 1961) were Scottish 'firsts.' Influxes of Lapland Buntings and Parrot Crossbills to the Isle also sparked interests that resulted in papers. He also



Plate 23. Peter Davis with Kittiwake, date unknown. © FIBO archives

contributed the 45-page systematic list that formed a significant part of Ken Williamson's *Fair Isle and its Birds* published in 1965.

A non-avian highlight of Peter and Angela's stay on Fair Isle occurred in August 1960 when they were heavily involved with the Queen's visit to the Isle.

Peter left Fair Isle when appointed BTO's 'Migration Officer' at Tring in Hertfordshire in late 1963. But, not settling in a desk job, after three years he, Angela and their three young children moved to Ceredigion in west Wales with the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC).

Shortly after, a promotion which included an in-depth study of the then-critically-endangered Red Kite, led to an association that would

dominate the rest of his life. The UK kite population was still vulnerable at around 23 breeding pairs in 1968. However, through active fieldwork, nest protection, landowners 'successful nesting' payments, public education and action against illegal poisoning and shooting Peter made a massive contribution to Red Kite population growth with over 100 breeding pairs recorded in 1993. Peter retired in 1988 after a long and distinguished career with NCC in Wales.

Peter's interest in Red Kites and Welsh birds never waned and he went on to author numerous articles and several books, and was active in many voluntary roles. In 2007, he was appointed MBE in the New Year's Honours List for his work with the Red Kite.



Plate 24. Peter Davis with Citrine Wagtail, Obs, 19th September 1964. © Richard Butler

Peter died on 28th October 2019 aged 91, after a short illness borne with great fortitude in keeping with his character. A gentle, kind man of sharp intellect and a keen sense of humour, he was inspirational to generations of naturalists particularly in his adopted country of Wales, through his

wide knowledge of wildlife, its protection, and of the Red Kite in particular.

He is survived by wife Angela, children Jeremy, Jillian and Paul, and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

FLORRIE STOUT 1944–2019

Charles Grieg and Eileen Thomson

Fair Isle mourned the loss of a dear member of our community in 2019. Too often the phrases 'pillar of the community' and 'salt of the Earth' are used, but in Florrie's case, they applied perfectly.

Florrie was born and raised in Exnaboe in the south end of Shetland. She was a bright and able pupil who went on to study at the Anderson Educational Institute (now Anderson High School) in Lerwick. It was while she was at school that she met and fell in love with Jimmy and that was the start of their life together. After school, Florrie went on to study at Aberdeen College of Education. Upon graduating, she taught at a rural school near

Lockerbie (Dumfriesshire) before moving to Kemnay, near Aberdeen. Jimmy and Florrie married in 1967 in the Ness Kirk in Shetland and they were very much settled in Aberdeenshire where their first son Bryan was born. But life was to change for them when the National Trust for Scotland approached Jimmy and asked him to consider moving back to Fair Isle to take over a vacant croft. Jimmy was reluctant to consider the offer for they were happy where they were, but Florrie loved the idea and was very positive about moving to Fair Isle. So, in 1969, they moved north and settled at Skerryholm. Their second son Iain was born the following year.

As well as bringing up her family and helping with the croft, Florrie taught music at the school and would deputise for the teacher. From the beginning, she was involved in the production and distribution of the *Fair Isle Times*. Florrie was also instrumental in setting up Fair Isle Crafts - a community co-operative which did so much over the years to promote the production and sale of Fair Isle's famous knitwear.

For many years, Florrie organised the cruise ship visits and did all she could to ensure that visitors to the Isle were well catered for and given a very warm welcome.

Florrie was very much part of everything that went on at Skerryholm. She was open, honest and straightforward - always genuine and full of common sense and wisdom. She loved meeting folk and getting to know them, forming many close friendships which lasted a lifetime. Skerryholm is famous for its warm welcome and Florrie was an excellent cook and superb hostess.

Florrie was a good friend to many and she did so much to promote the welfare of our community here in Fair Isle. These qualities were recognised

when she was voted on to the Board of the National Trust for Scotland. She believed then in the ethos of how the Isle operated with its landlords.

Among her interests, Florrie loved music and playing her piano at home and the organ in the church. She sang in the choir and she enjoyed all the social gatherings. One special event was Florrie and Jimmy's 40th wedding anniversary which was a great occasion, bringing extended family together and enjoyed by the whole community. Their golden wedding was celebrated in Spain with family and close friends.

At home, Florrie liked reading and doing crosswords, puzzles and Sudoku - to keep her mind active she said. She was very fond of her garden and she took great pride in her plants and flowers. The grape vine and plum tree at Skerryholm will always make us think of Florrie and the bunches of little red grapes always commanded a grand price at the Isle Harvest Festival each year. Florrie's greatest interest in life, however, was her family. She and Jimmy were a close couple who were devoted to each other and to all their family. They were very proud of their sons, Bryan and Iain, and very fond of daughters-in-law Lindsey and Ruth and of their four grandchildren.

Florrie spent her final months at her family home in Shetland, where she was as equally a valued member of the community just as she was here in the Isle. It was there she passed away peacefully after a short illness, which she handled with the true stoicism and dignity we all knew Florrie for, surrounded by and cared for so well by her close family.

Florrie is sorely missed by all who knew her, but she has left a legacy of wonderful memories: her love of family and friends, her loving nature and care for all the peerie ones here in the Isle. Her talent was wide ranging and she created many beautiful things whether in her garden, in music, in her kitchen or in her knitting. She was caring and honest and gave so much, a true example to us all.



Plate 25. Florrie Stout, 2018. © J.W. Stout

ORNITHOLOGICAL MONTHLY SUMMARY

Max Hellicar



Plate 26. Shags, South Harbour, 24th January 2019. © David Parnaby

January

Species Recorded: **55**
Year List at end of month: **55**
Birds Ringed: **2**
Species Ringed: **2**

A modest start to the year kicked off with 42 species recorded on New Year's Day, which included a few lingering birds, headlined by Tundra Bean Goose (remaining until 21st) and Coot (lingering throughout the month), along with four Glaucous Gulls, Whooper Swan (until 19th), 'European White-fronted Goose', Pink-footed Goose (remaining throughout the month), wintering Common Scoter and Kestrel, plus 307 Greylag Geese and three Carrion Crows. At least two Iceland Gulls were seen in the first week of the year and a Great Northern Diver on 2nd stayed for two weeks. Five Glaucous Gulls on 8th were followed by the month's only records of 'Mealy Redpoll' and Long-eared Owl on 9th and 10th respectively, with an Iceland Gull on 12th. A Cormorant was present

from 10th–14th and the year's first Oystercatchers were four on 12th with smaller numbers for the rest of the month along with a couple of Lapwings. Glaucous Gulls continued to be seen regularly until 20th and a Red-necked Grebe from 24th–27th was the first island record since 2011. A single Long-tailed Duck remained from 2018 until 28th, while wintering Water Rails were noted throughout the month with a minimum of six present. January's only Meadow Pipit was on 17th and three Woodcocks were present during the second half of the month. The year's second 'European White-fronted Goose' was present from 21st–28th and Iceland Gulls were seen on 22nd and 27th, while Twite numbers reached 30 on 24th.

A relatively uneventful month saw ten species added to the year list. Gannets returned to ledges from 5th when a Moorhen arrived, and an arrival of thrushes on 7th brought at least 30 Fieldfares and 50 Redwings to the Isle. A Stonechat on 14th was Fair Isle's joint-earliest record, while the year's first Skylarks (seven) were recorded and the first Ringed Plover of the year was on 15th. The year's first Woodpigeon on 19th remained for the rest of the month when Reed and Snow Buntings (two) also made their way on to the year list. The month's only record of Glaucous Gull related to an adult on 20th and the first Pied Wagtail of 2019 was on 22nd. The lingering Pink-footed Goose from 2018 remained until 25th when a Whooper Swan was present, as were two Stonechats. Blackbird numbers peaked at 25 on 27th and Guillemots were back on the cliffs by the same date. Ringed Plover numbers had rapidly increased to 31 on 28th and a minimum of six Water Rails remained on the Isle through the month, as did the wintering Coot on Da Water.

February

Species Recorded: **52**

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

Birds Ringed: **2**

Species Ringed: **20**



Plate 27. Red-necked Grebe, South Harbour, 24th January 2019. © Deryk Shaw

March

Species Recorded: **72**
Year List at end of month: **79**
Birds Ringed: **17**
Species Ringed: **8**

It was a mild start to the month with light south-westerly winds, switching to northerlies towards the end of the first week. A Glaucous Gull was present from 1st–9th and a lone 'European White-fronted Goose' was seen on 5th, when Greylag Goose numbers peaked at 184. At least 50 Purple Sandpipers were noted on 7th and a Common Scoter on 8th was thought to be synonymous with January's individual. Snow Buntings peaked at 12 on 8th and mild conditions turned to snow the following day, when a Great Northern Diver was offshore, and an Iceland Gull was seen on 10th–11th. Thrushes were rather scarce on the ground (and in the air) during the month, with Fieldfares peaking at 15 on 13th. At least two Stonechats roamed the Isle during the first half of the month and small numbers of Razorbills were noted on 14th. An adult 'Greenland White-fronted Goose' was present on 17th and the year's first Grey Heron was on the following day, with four Whooper Swans passing through on 20th as winds originated from a north-westerly direction. The year's first Lesser Black-backed Gull was on 21st (increasing to four by 29th) and Red-throated Diver added itself to the year list on 22nd, with two Glaucous Gulls on the same date. Rooks made their first appearance of the year with two on 22nd and the year's only Shoveler was present from 22nd–24th, with the latter date bringing an Iceland Gull and seven Whooper Swans. The year's first Puffin arrived on 27th and the wind switched to south-westerlies towards the month's end, with a few new arrivals involving Goldcrest on 24th (increasing to three by 29th), two Woodcocks on 28th, along with two Chaffinches, Brambling, Chiffchaff and Sparrowhawk during the same period. Four Dunnocks and a Linnet were recorded on 31st, while the wintering Coot remained for the entirety of March.



Plate 28. House Sparrows, Obs, 15th March 2019. © David Parnaby

The month started with the year's first Great Skuas returning to the Isle, and a few new arrivals on 3rd involved the first Hawfinch, Shelduck and Wheatear of the year. Things started to get interesting on 4th, with north-easterly winds and the first full census of the season producing the year's first Blackcap, Ring Ouzel, Mistle Thrush and Greenfinch, along with 12 Goldcrests, eight Chiffchaffs, 'Mealy Redpoll' and a whopping eight Stonechats. However, the undoubted highlight of the day came in the form of Fair Isle's 40th record of 'Black-bellied Dipper' in Gilly Burn; the first BBRC rarity of the year. The 5th delivered the year's first Tufted Duck, Red-breasted Merganser, Grey Wagtail and Siskin, along with two Moorhens, 43 Chiffchaffs, 85 Robins, 25 Dunnocks and an increase in Mistle Thrushes to five. The 6th produced two Shore Larks on Hoini, the first 'White Wagtails' of the year (two) and a Hawfinch, the latter of which had increased to four by the following day. Black Redstart made its way on to the year list on the 8th, with new arrivals on 9th involving the year's first Great Grey Shrike (until 11th) and a frosty 'Northern Treecreeper' on the Skadan, becoming the second BBRC rarity of the year and the 11th Fair Isle record, moving to South Raeva the following day and remaining until 12th. The 'Black-bellied Dipper' remained until 9th, staying faithful to Gilly Burn, as Meadow Pipits reached a peak passage count of 402, while the two Shore Larks remained until 10th, commuting between Hoini and South Green. The north-easterly airflow continued until 10th at which point it switched to south-easterlies for the remainder of the month. The wintering Coot was last seen on 11th, with new arrivals the following day manifesting in the form of three Jackdaws, Sand Martin and Swallow, all of which were additions to the year list, along with three Long-eared Owls (having increased from one on 10th–11th), while Redwings reached a peak of 124 with relatively small numbers present through the rest of the month. The year's first Bluethroat involved a very early male on 13th, which appeared to lack any form of spot so was presumed to be of a 'white-spotted' subspecies. Willow Warbler joined the year list on the same date as Snow Bunting numbers peaked at 17. Additions to the year's avifaunal diversity continued to flood in, with singles of Short-eared Owl (14th), Jack Snipe and Common Sandpiper (both 15th), Redstart and Goldfinch (both 16th) leaving the wardening team optimistic as to what arrivals the following days would bring. A steady passage of Robins throughout the month peaked at 143 on 17th, with Chaffinch passage also recorded through the month, peaking at 21 on the same date. A Tree Pipit on 17th was followed by Whimbrel, Green Sandpiper, Greenshank and three House Martins, all on 18th, continuing the relentless accumulation of the year list, with the year's highest counts so far of Woodpigeons (11), Sand Martins (14), Swallows (18), Willow Warblers (20), Chiffchaffs (44), Blackcaps (seven), Black Redstarts (six), Wheatears (158)

April

Species Recorded: **121**

Year List at end of month: **132**

Birds Ringed: **298**

Species Ringed: **23**



Plate 29. 'Black-bellied Dipper', Gilly Burn, 9th April 2019. © Richard Cope



Plate 30. 'Northern Treecreeper', Skadan, 9th April 2019. © Richard Cope



Plate 31. Snow Bunting, Dronger, 15th April 2019. © Max Hellicar

and Rock Pipits (51, including two 'Scandinavian' individuals) certainly adding to the excitement of spring migration and the hope of a big rarity waiting to be uncovered; however no scarcities had arrived for five days. The 19th saw that change, with continued south-easterlies bringing Fair Isle's third record of Black Kite to the north of the Isle, observed for just 20 minutes (with presumably the same bird having relocated to Unst by the following day), while the island's second record of 'Continental Cormorant' completed a protracted loop of the island on the same date, being observed for an even-shorter window of time than the Black Kite! A single Shelduck was also present on 19th and another high-quality island rarity arrived the following day in the form of Fair Isle's seventh Little Ringed Plover wading through Boini Mire. A Long-eared Owl was seen on the same date and a period of corvid passage culminated in five Rooks and ten Carrion Crows the next day. The year's first Arctic Skuas (two) arrived on 21st and also noted were Great Northern Diver, three Tufted Ducks and 19 Goldcrests. The 22nd saw another four species making their first occurrences of the year, with Curlew Sandpiper (remaining until 26th), Sedge Warbler, Grasshopper Warblers (two) and Yellow Wagtail all present, whilst Wheatears reached a peak of 221. The following day saw some pleasant new arrivals in the form of the Isle's 42nd Hoopoe, on Buness, Little Bunting in Hjukni Geo, and the year's first Lesser Whitethroat and Whinchat. Three Pied Flycatchers and Collared Dove on 24th were new for the year and six Black Redstarts were also present, while Ring Ouzels were seen throughout most of April, peaking at ten on 24th–26th. There was a steady passage of Willow Warblers throughout the second half of the month, with a peak count of 77 on 24th, and a steady passage of Blackcaps

was recorded during the same period, peaking at 22 on the same date, along with the first Whitethroat of the year. Song Thrushes also peaked on 24th with 56 recorded, and the following day produced five 'Mealy Redpolls', 20 Reed Buntings and Shelduck, the latter lingering to the month's end and being joined by a second bird on 27th, while a steady passage of Fieldfare peaked at 249 on 26th. A Lapland Bunting and 21 Barnacle Geese continued to add to the year's species total on 27th, when the Isle's earliest-ever Red Admiral was recorded. The 28th saw the Black Kite (presumably the bird from the 19th) return to the Isle after a foray to Shetland, much to the delight of those who missed it by a matter of minutes during its first appearance! Also on 28th was the year's first Wryneck, along with eight Yellow Wagtails. The island's earliest-ever Hummingbird Hawk-moth and Tiger Hoverfly were recorded on 29th during a mild spell of weather, while the Wryneck lingered and Tree Pipit numbers peaked at 15. The year's first Garden Warbler was also on 29th and Lesser Whitethroat passage peaked at five on three dates towards the month's end. Both the Black Kite and Hoopoe remained until the end of the month while the wind remained south-easterly, and the 30th also brought the year's first Tree Sparrow along with 54 Bramblings, one of which was watched circling the *Good Shepherd IV* on its way out of Fair Isle waters, and Whimbrel peaked at nine, including a singing individual. The Long-eared Owl from 20th remained and was joined by another on 30th, and at least one Short-eared Owl was present at the month's end.



Plate 32. Hoopoe, Bunness, 23rd April 2019. © Max Hellicar

May

Species Recorded: **149**

Year List at end of month: **170**

Birds Ringed: **213**

Species Ringed: **37**

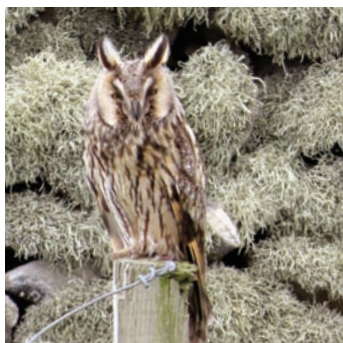


Plate 33. Long-eared Owl, Leogh,
30th April 2019. © Richard Cope

May started with the airflow switching to north-easterlies following a prolonged period of south-easterlies, with this change in direction perhaps giving the two lingering island rarities a prompt to depart the island, with both the Black Kite and Hoopoe last seen on 1st, the latter of which ventured to the Raevass having not previously been strayed from Buness. Black-tailed Godwits (four) and Sanderling both made their first appearances of the year on 1st, with Wryneck and, more notably, the Isle's first-ever spring record of Yellow-browed Warbler in the Gully, also on this date. Linnet numbers peaked at 14 on 1st and the next day brought more delights with a Little Ringed Plover in Walli Burn and a Shore Lark at Gunnawark, both the second records of the year for their species, and a late Glaucous Gull passed through on 3rd. The 7th saw a Marsh Harrier grace the Isle along with the reappearance of the Shore Lark, while the following day produced the year's first Arctic Tern and the month's highest count of Wheatears (219). Four Ring Ouzels on 8th included a singing male and the year's first Lesser Redpoll was on the same date, while 'Mealy Redpolls' peaked at five and up to three Long-eared Owls were present through the same period. Singles of Wood Sandpiper and Wryneck were recorded on 9th, the latter remaining until 12th during a light, predominantly north-westerly airflow, with Carrion Crows reaching an annual peak of 25 on 12th. A touch of south-easterly wind on 13th was enough to initiate the start of a pleasant period of migration, bringing an interesting 'Subalpine Warbler sp.', most closely resembling an 'Eastern' bird, which unfortunately failed to show its tail pattern or vocalise, when the year's first Red-necked Phalarope and 'Grey-headed Wagtail' were recorded. A stunning male Citrine Wagtail roamed the Isle on 14th when a Buzzard also passed through. The 14th also brought more year ticks in the form of Hen Harrier, Stock Dove, Cuckoo, Swift and Spotted Flycatchers (two), along with nine Collared Doves, an impressive 274 Swallows, 'Blue-headed Wagtail' (to 15th), 11 Red Admirals, and the year's first Minke Whale and Peacock butterfly. More good birds which arrived during a light easterly airflow on 15th involved Ortolan Bunting, Honey-buzzard, Bluethroat, Common Rosefinch and 'Grey-headed Wagtail', along with the month's third Wryneck and eight Sedge Warblers. The 16th produced Bluethroat, Hawfinch, 'Grey-headed Wagtail', Greenshank, the year's only Canada Goose and first Yellowhammer, while Cuckoos increased to three. The first Goosanders (two) of the year were on 17th as Bluethroats increased to seven and Tree Sparrows numbered four, along with lingering Hawfinch, 30 House Martins and five Minke Whales on the same date. Fair Isle's fourth-ever Lesser Yellowlegs graced Da Water and Utra scrape on 18th, while Bluethroat numbers skyrocketed with an incredible minimum count of 16 present on the Isle, along with the year's first two Wood Warblers, a 'Blue-headed Wagtail', and

the Common Rosefinch remaining during a spell of light north-easterly winds. A foggy day on 19th still produced ten Bluethroats including a fine 'White-spotted' male, the remaining Lesser Yellowlegs and the year's first Red-backed Shrike and Knot, along with 15 Spotted Flycatchers which increased to an impressive 29 the following day, being the highest count since 2012. Better visibility and a slight switch to easterly winds on the 20th resulted in a decent supply of common migrants to sift through. The pick of the bunch were an Icterine Warbler, two Common Rosefinches, nine Bluethroats, and an impressive splash of colour provided by 47 Redstarts, along with two Wood and 43 Willow Warblers, Wood Sandpiper, two Greenshanks and nine Swifts. It proved to be a good day for *Sylvia* warblers too with monthly peak counts of Blackcap (16), Lesser Whitethroat (32) and Whitethroat (22), while Pied Flycatchers and Whinchats numbered ten and 12 respectively. A north-westerly breeze and the first rain in over a week coincided with a clear out of common migrants on 21st, yet more high-quality birds were found with a Rustic Bunting at Burkle (remaining until 23rd) and a Red-rumped Swallow also in the south. Two new Red-backed Shrikes, four Tree Sparrows and 42 Barnacle Geese were also present,



Plate 34. Citrine Wagtail, Walli Burn, 14th May 2019. © Ian Poxton

while Bluethroats maintained their presence with seven on the Isle. Tree Pipit passage was consistent in small numbers through most of the month, with the highest day-count being 11 on 22nd, with three Bluethroats and two Common Rosefinches remaining on the same date. The following day saw a new 'Grey-headed Wagtail' arrive and a Red-backed Shrike remain on the Isle. The 24th continued to produce during light westerlies, with a Thrush Nightingale found in the Plantation, and singles of Dotterel and Pomarine Skua and another two Common Rosefinches on the same date continuing the theme of fine spring birding, while a Hen Harrier and at least 200 Diamond-back Moths also arrived on the Isle. The *Good Shepherd IV* produced the first Manx Shearwaters (two) and Storm Petrel of the year on 25th, when a male 'Grey-headed Wagtail' was present ashore. Both the Thrush Nightingale and Dotterel remained until 26th which proved to be a relatively calm day of migration yet still turned up Fair Isle's 19th record of Tawny Pipit on the Rippack, which lingered to the following day. Very few new birds on 27th did include two nice raptors; a White-tailed Eagle which steamed south down the Isle and the spring's second Buzzard. Two Pink-footed Geese arrived on 26th (which would remain into June) and the first chicks of both Gannet and Shag were seen on 27th. Migration calmed down towards the end of the month with fewer numbers of both common and scarce migrants recorded, though a Quail heard on 28th added to the annual species total. Bluethroat numbers dropped off during the last third of the month with two on 24th and separate singles recorded on 25th and 26th, with the final record of the spring being on 30th. Another Dotterel was present on the same date, as was a Lapland Bunting, while the wardening team completed their first Puffin monitoring visit of the year on Green Holm to initially check burrows, and two Long-eared Owls were present towards the month's end. May proved to be the best month of the year for ornithological diversity, with a respectable 149 species racked up.



Plate 35. Rustic Bunting, Burkle, 22nd May 2019. © Philippe Botte

June

Species Recorded: **114**
 Year List at end of month: **178**
 Birds Ringed: **550**
 Species Ringed: **36**

June saw eight species added to the year list but it was certainly a case of quality over quantity with some superb birds among the pick of the bunch. A few new common species arrived in small numbers at the start of the month, as expected for the time of year, and a few cruise ships made it ashore during the same period. The 1st produced Common Rosefinch (joined by another on 3rd–5th, with one remaining until 7th), two Wood Sandpipers (until 4th), two Cuckoos (which led to reasonably regular sightings over the coming two weeks, probably involving a new bird or two), Woodcock and 75+ Diamond-back Moths. The 2nd produced Hobby, which remained to the following day, when a Marsh Harrier arrived in the north of the Isle, being seen daily until 7th. A reasonably steady House Martin passage during the first few days of the month peaked at 27 on 3rd and two Long-



Plate 36. Long-eared Owl, Lower Leogh, 1st June 2019. © Max Hellicar

eared Owls remained during the same period, one of which would go on to linger until 17th, with Short-eared Owl present from 5th–8th. Some quality Columbidae passage on 3rd involved eight Woodpigeons and, best of all, a Turtle Dove, which was a very pleasant sight following an absence in 2018. The 4th brought Melodious Warbler to the south of the Isle (which reappeared in the Plantation on 7th–8th) and Grey Wagtail on the same date, with Blyth's Reed Warbler in the Plantation on 5th (finding its way on to the year list before Marsh Warbler!), and Black Redstart also present. An imminently arriving cruise ship on 6th produced a first for Fair Isle in rather remarkable circumstances, with a Franklin's Gull departing the ship a couple of kilometres off Fair Isle's south coast (within Isle waters), being relocated near Chalet a few hours later, much to the relief of the wardening team! A Hawfinch on the west cliffs on 7th moved to Brecks on 8th (remaining in the south until 10th), and new arrivals on 8th included Icterine Warbler (until 12th) and Red-backed Shrike (until 9th). An 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' at Lower Leogh on 9th reappeared on 11th and 19th in the south of the Isle, evidently doing well at evading the wardening team between seabird duties! Also on 9th were Hobby (seen intermittently until 15th as it roamed the Isle), Great Northern Diver, four Black-tailed Godwits and the year's first Razorbill chick. As spring migration reached its end and the wardening team shifted their attention to seabird monitoring, the last census of the spring was on 10th, producing a new Red-backed Shrike. The lingering Pink-footed Goose duo remained until 13th when they decided an Isle summer wasn't for them and an Arctic Tern nest count on 14th revealed 286 nests across the Isle and the year's first chick,



Plate 37. River Warbler (left) and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Obs, 16th June 2019. © Sarah Harris

as well as the first Guillemot chicks, the first Crossbill of the year, and an arrival of 113 Painted Ladies which were the forerunners to a decent spell of passage during a predominantly calm and sunny period. Light to moderate south-easterly winds for a few days did produce the hoped-for 'big' rarity (two actually!) on 16th, which proved to be an incredible day and one which won't be forgotten. The Obs was the place to be with a River Warbler glimpsed in the morning, being nowhere to be seen again until the arrival of an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler in the afternoon, when both were trapped and ringed. Two Cuckoos were also new arrivals and a Quail was at the Obs too, with one of the latter species at Chalet the following day proving to be twitchable for a few minutes. A Common Rosefinch arrived on 17th with two the following day, when the River Warbler re-appeared in the Gully and a new Red-backed Shrike was present. Three Killer Whales off the north of the Isle the following day were sadly not twitchable, being the first record of the year during a strangely quiet spring for cetaceans, and Painted Ladies peaked at 204. The Eastern Olivaceous Warbler had ventured to the south of the Isle where it remained, roaming, rather elusively, until 20th. On the 19th, two Quails were heard at either end of the Isle and a singing Redwing was somewhat of an oddity, with a Yellowhammer the following day present until 22nd. Seven Red Admirals and ten SilverYs were seen on 25th and the following day brought Common Rosefinch and the first Arctic Skua chick of the year in what would go on to be a successful breeding season for the latter species relative to recent years. Calm conditions on 27th provided the wardening team with a good opportunity to undertake seabird monitoring by boat on the east coast, giving the Administrator an even better opportunity to find a decent bird, turning up a male Citrine Wagtail on Da Water, which stayed to the following day.

The 1st brought a Gadwall to the Isle which remained until 6th, while a Moorhen on 3rd was an unusual mid-summer arrival and ended up remaining until 26th. The wardening team completed the annual all-day Guillemot feed-watch at Pietron on 6th and a typically mobile Hawfinch on 7th stayed to the following day when a Quail was seen. The wardening team completed the yearly all-day Puffin feed-watch at Roskillie on 9th as eight Crossbills passed overhead, with singles of Willow Warbler and Blackbird on the same date; however rarer birds were waiting to be found. The recent and dramatically increasing invasion of Two-barred Crossbills through north-western Europe had reached Shetland. It was surely only a matter of time before Fair Isle got a slice of the action, then one arrived at Guidicum on 9th, calling a further three birds down from the sky shortly after! By the end of the day numbers had increased to seven, which settled around Troila the following day, by which time there were ten, adding a very welcome splash of colour to the Isle. The first Purple Sandpipers of the autumn (three) arrived on 11th (and increased to 44 by 20th) and a Fieldfare on 11th was an unseasonal arrival which went on to remain on the Isle for over two months. By 11th there was an impressive total of 16 Two-barred Crossbills on the Isle, dropping to 14 the following day, with six remaining until 17th and one the following day. At the peak there were nine around Troila, five around South Raeva, and a pair which wandered the west coast being most regularly (yet

July

Species Recorded: **87**

Year List at end of month: **184**

Birds Ringed: **1084**

Species Ringed: **29**



Plate 38. Arctic Skua, juvenile, Airstrip, 23rd July 2019. © Max Hellicar



Plate 39. Two-barred Crossbills, Troila, 11th July 2019. © Max Hellicar

irregularly) seen around North Naaversgill. The wardening team completed their annual descent down Tor o' da Ward Hill to collect Puffin food samples on 12th, followed by a sheep round-up in the north of the Isle on the same day. An Arctic Warbler arrived at the Obs on 13th, remaining to 16th, with Short-eared Owl on the former date and Leach's Petrel heard in the early hours of the latter date, when 33 Storm Petrels were trapped, with a further 38 trapped the following night. Five Knots on 22nd were the first of the autumn, with Short-eared Owl on the same date and six Crossbills the following day. A petrel-ringing session in the early hours of 25th produced a Leach's and 253 Storm Petrels and the following day brought six Common and two Green Sandpipers, with Black Redstart and Cuckoo (which would peak at three on 29th) also being new arrivals. Eight Risso's Dolphins were in Fair Isle waters on 27th as young Arctic Skuas took to the wing and Common Gull passage reached a peak of 345, while the night of 27th/28th brought a Bedstraw Hawkmoth to the Lower Stoneybrek moth trap. Hints of autumn migration on 28th involved an early Icterine Warbler and the month's second Hawfinch, both in the Plantation (the latter remaining to the month's end), along with the autumn's first Sedge Warbler, two Crossbills and a first for Fair Isle which unfortunately did not manifest itself in avian form but involved an Eyed Ladybird in the North Haven. Migration continued on 29th with a different Icterine Warbler and Marsh Warbler around the traps while the autumn's first Spotted Flycatcher and Garden

Warbler arrived, and two Bedstraw Hawk-moths were seen 'in the field' with one hurtling across Homisdale and the other near Aesterhoull. The earliest autumn arrival of Reed Warbler since 2008 involved one on 30th and a petrel-ringing session in the early hours of 31st produced two Leach's and 188 Storm Petrels, while two Shelduck and the year's first Ruff appeared, and a recently fledged Linnet confirmed successful breeding on the Isle for only the second-ever time. Painted Lady passage continued steadily through the month, peaking at 176, also on 31st, and an Icterine Warbler lingered until the same date, when a new bird arrived, being the third individual during July!

Early migrants continued to arrive in small numbers at the start of the month, with census re-commencing from 1st, on which date the year's first Storm Petrel chick was located, as were two Barred Warblers, being the joint-earliest arrival date for the latter species. Also on 1st were the year's first Bar-tailed Godwit and the autumn's first two Willow Warblers. A Bedstraw Hawk-moth was trapped at Burkle overnight on 1st/2nd and late July's Hawfinch remained until 2nd. The Marsh Warbler remained and a Greenshank was present on 3rd. However, the day was dominated by Painted Ladies with a colossal 961 recorded across the Isle! A swing to north-easterly winds on 4th brought more trumpeting goodies to the Isle with the arrival of three Two-barred Crossbills; a male and, separately, two juveniles which were accompanied by a Crossbill. The two Barred Warblers remained

August

Species Recorded: **106**

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

Birds Ringed: **805**

Species Ringed: **29**



Plate 40. Willow Warbler (left) and Wood Warbler, Midway, 18th August 2019. © Max Hellicar

and a Leach's Petrel was heard in the early hours. A singing male Common Rosefinch provided a splash of colour on 6th and a Cuckoo remained from July, with two on 7th. Following recent sightings at various locations across the Isle, suspicions of two male Two-barred Crossbills were confirmed on 7th, with both males joining the two juveniles which had reappeared in the South Green and Malcolm's Head area, with a third male seen on 8th building up the flock to number five, the same day as Ruffs peaked at nine. Intriguingly a Leach's Petrel was heard over Busta Brecks in the early hours of 9th, and the four Two-barred Crossbills remained in their favoured area the following day, when Common Rosefinch, Wood Warbler and Pied Flycatcher arrived. Two Two-barred Crossbills were seen over Vaasetter on 12th, being the last sighting of this wave of arrivals. That was also a



Plate 41. Painted Ladies, North Haven, 2nd August 2019. © Max Hellicar

good day for cetaceans with an impressive minimum of 20 Risso's Dolphins off the Isle, with various sightings from land and sea, along with seven Harbour Porpoises. For the remainder of the month, between seabird monitoring and census, the wardening team also lent a hand with baling the crofts, ensuring the Isle's sheep weren't to go hungry during the coming winter. The 13th brought a stunning arrival in the form of Fair Isle's 4th Mandarin Duck, a juvenile female on Da Water, which would be last seen on 18th. Common Rosefinch and at least ten Risso's Dolphins were seen on 14th and the following day brought more new arrivals to the island, with Barred and two Icterine Warblers (the former of which would go on to linger until 25th) being the pick of the bunch, along with the autumn's first Lesser Whitethroat and Whinchat. On the 16th, a count of 81 Knots was the highest for the Isle since 1969 and a Red-backed Shrike arrived the following day, which would remain faithful to the south of the Isle until 23rd. Southerly winds on 18th made it a very pleasant day to be birding on the Isle, producing Blyth's Reed Warbler (until 20th) and a stunning Wood Warbler which proved to be very confiding at times, with then sightings of the latter species, involving at least four individuals, until the month's end. Two Black-tailed Godwits on 21st had increased to three by 25th, while two new Barred Warblers arrived in the south of the Isle in the evening of 23rd, when the year's first Sooty Shearwater was offshore and the autumn's first Goldcrest made landfall. A presumed Nathusius's Pipistrelle the following day was the only bat of the year, with a Black Redstart on the same date. The 25th was another pleasant and calm day, with the north of the Isle producing Honey-buzzard, Corncrake and a new Barred Warbler. A Citrine Wagtail arrived in the south which remained frustratingly mobile and elusive, only allowing brief flight views, with Crossbill, eight Ruffs and four Whinchats also present, the latter increasing to 12 by 28th. Also on 25th, 11 Peacock butterflies were the highest-ever count for the Isle, outnumbering Painted Ladies (nine). The following day produced a new Red-backed Shrike and 21 Risso's Dolphins, while the Citrine Wagtail was pinned down for a short while in the evening, having given everyone the run-around across the length and breadth of the Isle during the day. Continued south-easterlies on 27th produced a Greenish Warbler at Midway while the Citrine Wagtail appeared in the Obs wagtail roost after spending the day in the south, along with the autumn's first Sparrowhawk and Grey Wagtail, whilst 200 Swallows became the highest-ever autumn total for the Isle. Ten Pied Flycatchers increased to 11 on 28th when an Icterine Warbler was a new arrival and Garden Warblers peaked at nine. An impressive count of 54 Storm Petrels was made on the west cliffs overnight, with the 29th bringing Lapland Bunting, Common Rosefinch and Convolvulus Hawk-moth to the Isle, Wheatears peaking at 320, and Marsh and Barred Warblers on the following day.



Plate 42. Barred Warbler, Quoy, 17th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

September

Species Recorded: **134**

Year List at end of month: **199**

Birds Ringed: **159**

Species Ringed: **26**

The first day of September brought a Buzzard (the third of the year and an individual which was also seen over mainland Shetland on the same day) and a very early Ring Ouzel to the Isle, with Marsh and Wood Warblers lingering. The earliest autumn arrival of Pink-footed Geese since 2005 involved 34 heading south on 2nd, when two Crossbills passed through. The year's final Two-barred Crossbill arrived at Lower Leogh on 3rd, continuing the record-breaking year for this species on the Isle, which wandered the Isle the following day. Singles of Common Rosefinch and Barred Warbler also arrived on 3rd and the autumn's first Wryneck was on 5th. The Common Rosefinch remained until 6th (with two from 8th–10th, one of which stayed to 11th) and at least ten Risso's Dolphins were in Isle waters on 8th while the autumn's first Little Bunting arrived, as did three Wrynecks (one until 10th) and 31 Willow Warblers, as the wind began to originate from a south-easterly direction. Also arriving on 8th were 12 Pied Flycatchers, the Barred Warbler remained, being joined by two more on the same date, dropping to two by 10th, with the original bird staying until 16th. Lapland Buntings numbered ten on 9th, while Marsh Harrier and Icterine Warbler arrived, the former of which went on to roam the Isle until 16th. The 10th produced Red-backed Shrike (to 11th) and Wood Warbler (to 15th), whilst a Common Seal the following day was the first in two and a half years, with Common Tern on the same date constituting the year's only record. Three Sooty Shearwaters passed South Light on 12th, with six the following



Plate 43. Barnacle Geese, Skadan, 23rd September 2019. © Sarah Harris

day. The 13th saw 365 Pink-footed Geese pass the Isle, being the forerunners of a steady passage in smaller numbers through the rest of the month. A Nightjar at the Obs was a most welcome addition to the year list on 18th, as was Slavonian Grebe, while three Sparrowhawks and 21 Linnets (the highest autumn count since 1995) were on the Isle. All eyes were shifted towards the sea on 19th as a group of four Killer Whales toured the coast, representing just the second record of the year. A Pintail arrived on 20th, which would go on to linger into early October, and a swing to south-easterly winds the following day brought the year's first Richard's Pipit and the autumn's first Yellow-browed Warbler (but the second of the year); a charismatic species characteristic of a Fair Isle autumn, indicating the birding calendar had, at last, properly reached autumn... Stonechat and Lesser Redpoll also arrived on 21st, with Little Bunting, 15 Lapland Buntings and the month's first Barnacle Geese (ten) the following day. A Red-flanked Bluetail at the base of Wester Lothar on 23rd was the 18th record for Fair Isle, with the year's only Red-breasted Flycatcher in the same place, as south-easterly winds continued, switching to a more easterly origin, while a second Little Bunting arrived and Yellow-browed Warbler numbers rose to eight, making them the commonest warbler of the day. Barnacle Goose numbers increased to 952 and the autumn's first Goldeneye and Jack Snipes (two) arrived, along with three Bar-tailed Godwits (increasing to four on 27th, with two remaining into October). Fresh arrivals on 24th included Red-backed Shrike (to 25th) and Common Rosefinch, with five Grey Wagtails, one of the Little Buntings, Short-eared Owl and Siskin also present, while Yellow-browed Warblers increased further to ten, and then back down to eight on 25th. Barnacle Geese continued to make their presence known with 905 on 25th, and a Pectoral Sandpiper made landfall on Easter Lothar Water on 26th, constituting the Isle's 36th record. The 27th brought Grey Plover (becoming the 200th species on the year list, with presumably the same bird on 29th), Wryneck, Hen Harrier, lingering Little Bunting, nine Ring Ouzels, 16 Redstarts, 12 Chaffinches and 13 Lapland Buntings, while Yellow-browed Warblers numbered 12 across the Isle, down to seven the following day. That day produced ten Tree Pipits, 18 Goldcrests, 30 Robins, two Spotted Flycatchers and 17 Lapland Buntings, demonstrating some passage movements. An incredible 1,429 Barnacle Geese passed during the morning of 28th, mostly moving south prior to 9am, setting a new record day-count for the Isle, but a rather dramatic decline in numbers saw none recorded the following day. The Pectoral Sandpiper had relocated to Kirki Geo by 29th where it lingered into October, with a new Little Bunting arriving on the same date, increasing to two the following day, when Yellow-browed Warbler numbers decreased to two and Snow Buntings numbered 80.



Plate 44. Red-flanked Bluetail, North Gunnawark, 15th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

October

Species Recorded: **138**
 Year List at end of month: **215**
 Birds Ringed: **530**
 Species Ringed: **33**

October proved to be an eventful month which, despite a relatively slow start, produced some top-quality avian delights. The Pectoral Sandpiper remained, with a single Yellow-browed Warbler on the first day of the month and a Little Bunting remaining to the following day. A Slavonian Grebe on 3rd was joined by another the next day (one of which would remain to 11th). The 3rd also produced a Barred Warbler and two Yellow-browed Warblers, the latter of which had increased to nine on 4th with a clear arrival also involving 74 Goldcrests, which had increased to 97 on 5th. One 'Siberian Chiffchaff' on 4th increased to three the following day and a Hen Harrier from 4th–6th was joined by another on 5th, when a sheep round-up added to the excitement as birds continued to arrive. The 6th brought a new Red-flanked Bluetail to exactly the same spot as the autumn's first, hunkering down in Wester Lothar, while Yellow-browed Warbler numbers were down to two and the autumn's first Glaucous Gulls (two 1cys) made landfall. On the 6th, there were 19 Jack Snipes present and one 'Siberian Chiffchaff' remained to 7th, when an arrival of birds on the west cliffs was evident. However, gale-force winds and heavy rain made finding anything rather challenging. The Pectoral Sandpiper lingered in the south until 8th, making it the longest-ever staying individual of the species on the Isle, with three Goosanders and 31 Ring Ouzels on the same date. What was initially anticipated to be a quiet day with strong south-westerly winds on 9th produced an unexpected addition to the Fair Isle list with a rather out-of-place Black-winged Stilt feeding on the North Haven beach. There were 13 Short-eared Owls on 9th which increased to a rather

impressive 23 the following day (but then down to 11 on 11th). Yellow-browed Warbler numbers were back up to three by 10th as 'Siberian Chiffchaffs' numbered two, while a Greenshank and 18 Ring Ouzels were also present. The year's first Waxwing toured the Isle on 12th and four Yellow-browed Warblers were also seen along with two 'Siberian Chiffchaffs'. Autumn birding went crazy on 13th with a 'classic Fair Isle' autumn day, being the best day for additions to the year list (four) since mid-May, during a light north-easterly breeze. An 'Eastern Stonechat' at Schoolton appeared to be a very good candidate 'in the field' for Stejneger's Stonechat but a faecal sample unfortunately failed to produce any DNA results, meaning this species won't be making its way on to the Fair Isle list just yet. This shouldn't detract from the excellence of the bird however, which gave rise to further rarities being found with a Brown Shrike at the same location, just the second record for the Isle and somewhat overdue since the first in 2000. A mobile Red-throated Pipit was in the south of the Isle on the same date, with Little Auk at North Light also being a new bird for the year while a Glaucous Gull and seven Rooks were also present. A switch to south-easterlies ensured the 14th was another brilliant day, with two Red-flanked Bluetails found (one each at the Obs and South Raeva), as well as Fair Isle's 20th record of Dusky Warbler and 43rd record of Pallas's Warbler in the south, the latter being another overdue species, being the first since 2005. The Red-throated Pipit remained while Yellow-browed Warbler numbers had increased to nine and 'Siberian Chiffchaffs' numbered four, along with singles of Glaucous Gull, Pied Flycatcher and the remaining Waxwing. Things didn't stop



Plate 45. Pechora Pipit, Upper Stoneybrek, 17th October 2019. © Steve Arlow



Plate 46. 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll' (right) with 'Mealy Redpoll', School Brae, 21st October 2019. © Steve Arlow

there however, with 15th bringing even more rarities, continuing the excellent spell of birding! A further three species were added to the year list, all of which were of high quality, with a Pechora Pipit at Upper Stoneybrek, Lanceolated Warbler in Gilsetter (the latest arrival since 2013 and the 98th record for the Isle, creeping ever closer to triple digits), and yet the rarest bird of the day, in Fair Isle terms, was the 10th island record of Firecrest at Kroga Geo, during an arrival of Goldcrests which numbered 69. Incredibly, a new Red-flanked Bluetail was found in North Gunnawark, being the fifth individual of the autumn, while the Pallas's Warbler remained in the south, where singles of Bluethroat, Hawfinch and Marsh Warbler also arrived. Topping off an incredible day were 35 Blackcaps, eight Yellow-browed Warblers and three 'Siberian Chiffchaffs'. South-easterly winds continued on 16th, which proved to be a good day for pipits, with the Pechora remaining and two each of Olive-backed and Richard's Pipits being new arrivals. The Firecrest lingered and two Shore Larks headed south along the west cliffs, while two Hawfinches roamed the Isle, Blackcap numbers rose to 54 and Goldcrests numbered 136. More impressive, however, was the complete plastering of the Isle with thrushes, producing totals of 15 Ring Ouzels, 296 Blackbirds, 327 Fieldfares, an astonishing 12,820 Redwings (the highest count since 2000), 686 Song Thrushes and eight Mistle Thrushes, along with 407 Robins, five Black Redstarts, 112 Bramblings, Yellowhammer (to 18th) and 13 Reed Buntings. A Radde's Warbler arrived in Klinger's Geo on 17th (remaining into the following day), when other new arrivals involved two Barred Warblers and a Common Rosefinch (to 19th), while five Yellow-browed Warblers, 53 Chiffchaffs

(including a 'Siberian' individual) and nine Short-eared Owls were present. Lingering goodies included the Pechora, Richard's and two Olive-backed Pipits, Firecrest and two Hawfinches while Redwing numbers dropped to 5,253, Song Thrushes to 547 and Robins to 399, while Long-eared Owl sightings from 17th–26th probably involved at least four individuals. Highlights of 18th involved single Olive-backed and Richard's Pipits, Hawfinch, two Yellow-browed Warblers and ten Mistle Thrushes, with the following day producing Glaucous Gull, Hawfinch, 'Siberian Chiffchaff', Hen Harrier and 19 Jack Snipes, while the 20th brought two Waxwings and a Glaucous Gull, with the Richard's Pipit remaining. With numbers of new arrivals tailing off, it felt like the best of the autumn was coming to an end, though not without one more rarity. With redpoll numbers snowballing up to a peak of 25 'Mealies' during northerly winds on 20th, they were joined by singles of 'North-western', Lesser and, best of all, a cracking 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll' on School Brae, which lingered until 24th, often providing good views. Redwings numbered 1,570 on 24th and 18 Whooper Swans were present the following day when also a Shelduck arrived (which would linger to the month's end, with another on 26th). Migration then slowed as the best of the season drew to a close. However, 724 Greylag Geese and five Great Northern Divers on 27th were the highest counts of the year, when the autumn's first Iceland Gull was off South Light, as was a Little Auk. A Pomarine Skua passed the same location the following day, when a new 'Siberian Chiffchaff' and 13 Long-tailed Ducks were present, while another sheep round-up took place. A Woodlark was the best bird of 29th, when 16 Rooks were also present. Four 'Siberian Chiffchaffs' demonstrated an arrival (increasing to six on 30th–31st), while Little Auks were offshore on 29th and 30th (two) and 'blue' Fulmars peaked at eight on 29th. The island's record count of Siskins was set on 30th with 512 passing through, with a Goldfinch also present.



Plate 47. Redwings, Hoini, 17th October 2019. © Steve Arlow



Plate 48. Little Auk, North Haven, 13th November 2019. © David Parnaby

November

Species Recorded: **83**
 Year List at end of month: **215**
 Birds Ringed: **44**
 Species Ringed: **14**

The start of the month brought Glaucous Gull and Long-eared Owl while the 2nd produced two Iceland Gulls as Glaucous Gull numbers increased to three, along with singles of 'Siberian Chiffchaff', Short-eared Owl and Mistle Thrush. The 3rd saw one of each Iceland and Glaucous Gulls, Waxwing (until 9th), Slavonian Grebe, Ring Ouzel and 188 Fieldfares. A spell of north-easterlies at the beginning of the month saw effort invested into seawatching from South Light, producing a group of seven Killer Whales (including two bulls) on 3rd which toured the island and tracked up the east coast before putting on a good performance in the north of the Isle, with Common Scoters on 3rd (two) and 4th, and up to 14 'blue' Fulmars from 3rd–6th (peaking at ten on 4th), while 4th also produced two Glaucous Gulls, two 'Siberian Chiffchaffs', 17 Woodcocks and a Black Redstart. Five Little Auks were seen on each 4th and 6th, with Great Northern Divers on 4th and 5th, and Pintail on 5th, when daily sightings of Snow Buntings peaked at 137. A very late Sooty Shearwater was recorded on 6th, when 'Siberian Chiffchaff' numbers peaked at five (with three on 9th–10th, one of which would remain until 26th). The 6th also brought Hen Harrier (which would remain until 12th), and at least two Killer Whales were seen on 7th. The 9th produced two Mistle Thrushes (one of which would stay for a further ten days), and a Grey Wagtail arrived on 11th. The 12th

saw two Little Auks, with singles recorded on the subsequent two days, along with three Goldfinches on 13th. Single Great Northern Divers were recorded on three dates mid-month and single Iceland and Glaucous Gulls were present on 19th, as were two Little Auks, Short-eared Owl, two Blackcaps and Chaffinch. A Glaucous Gull was seen on 23rd and an arrival of thrushes on 25th saw minimum counts of 30 Blackbirds, 140 Fieldfares and 125 Redwings, with another arrival on 28th seeing Redwings totalling at least 300. The 26th brought a Scaup which remained until 30th, being joined by another on 27th. Singles of Iceland Gull and Waxwing were also recorded on 27th, with three Common Scoters the following day and a Mistle Thrush on 29th. Four 'European White-fronted Geese', consisting of three adults and a juvenile, also arrived on 28th and would remain into 2020. Following an extended refit, the *Good Shepherd IV* made it back to the Isle at the month's end.

Singles of Long-eared and Short-eared Owls were present during the first week of December, with an Iceland Gull from 12th–16th and a Glaucous Gull from 18th–19th. A rather unseasonal Mistle Thrush and two Common Scoters were present on 19th, with one of the latter species remaining to the year's end. A ringtail Hen Harrier arrived on 24th and looked set to attempt to overwinter, with a Glaucous Gull on the same date, Short-eared Owl on 25th, and a final flurry involving the arrival of two Waxwings on 26th (to 28th, with one lingering until 30th). Two Woodcocks were also seen on 26th when an Iceland Gull was in the north, with the same or another in the south on 27th, whilst an adult Glaucous Gull on 29th had increased to three by the following day. The four 'European White-fronted Geese' from November remained until the year's end, as did a single Pink-footed Goose.

The final two months of 2019 saw no new additions to the year list, with a respectable 215 species notched up through the course of the year, one short of 2016's total and just four species off the all-time record of 219, set in 2014. The Isle's most 'regular' species omissions in 2019 included Velvet Scoter, Osprey, Sandwich Tern, Rose-coloured Starling and Short-toed Lark. It proved to be a decent spring with an enjoyable spell of birding producing good numbers of common, scarce and a few rare migrants through the period, including Fair Isle's first Franklin's Gull. Autumn was relatively slow to get going, with a Two-barred Crossbill on 3rd–4th September being the only BBRC rarity until an 'Eastern Stonechat' on 13th October, though it did produce the Isle's second 'first' of the year in the meantime, with a Black-winged Stilt on 9th October. A steady stream of headline birds followed, which included the Isle's second Brown Shrike, accompanied by a plethora of common and scarce migrants, before tailing off into winter. Onwards into 2020!

December

Species Recorded: **58**

Year List at end of month: **215**

Birds Ringed: **2**

Species Ringed: **1**



Plate 49. Merlin, Bull's Park, 16th December 2019. © David Parnaby

SYSTEMATIC LIST 2019

David Parnaby

The species order and taxonomy are taken from the 'British List' published by the BOU in January 2020. Species names are from the BOU 'vernacular name' list.

Status Categories

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

Breeding Categories

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

Abbreviations used in the text

1cy	first-calendar-year bird (i.e. hatched in that year)
2cy	second-calendar-year bird (i.e. hatched in the previous year)
3cy	third-calendar-year bird (i.e. hatched two years earlier)
AON	Apparently Occupied Nest
AOS	Apparently Occupied Site
AOT	Apparently Occupied Territory
n/c	No count
Obs	Fair Isle Bird Observatory
*	Indicates record(s) requiring assessment by the relevant records committee



Plate 50. Barnacle Goose, Skadan, 23rd September 2019. © David Parnaby

Quail

Coturnix coturnix

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

One heard near Kenaby on 28th May was the first of the year, with a cluster of records in mid-June involving one flushed from the Obs net rides on 16th, one at Chalet the following day then two on 19th, with one singing at Busta and another at Yellow Head. One near Da Water on 8th July was the first record for this month since 2014.

Canada Goose

Branta canadensis

Rare visitor; 36 previous records of 89 individuals, mostly spring (predominantly May and June, with three records in April and singles in March and July), five winter records and one in October. All records have been of feral European stock, other than a 'Todd's or Lesser Canada Goose' B. c. interior/parvipes in December 2018 and one that arrived with Pink-footed Geese (October 1997), which was possibly also a transatlantic vagrant.

A quiet year for the species saw just one record - a single that roamed the south of the Isle on 16th May.

Barnacle Goose

Branta leucopsis

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring and winter

A strong spring passage began with 21 on 27th–28th April, with 20 still on 29th. A single on 12th May was followed by 41 on 21st May (the highest spring count since 2009) with 40 remaining during 22nd–23rd, and another single on 26th May. Autumn passage was largely restricted to an amazing week in late September, with ten on 22nd rising to 952 the next day, the third-highest count for the Isle, as strong south-east winds grounded birds on the Skadan throughout the day. Although counts for the next three days were lower at 810, 905 and 686 respectively, observations of ringed birds suggested that there was considerable turnover in the flock. Only 53 remained on 27th, but an early morning watch from South Light on 28th saw several large flocks moving south before 09:00 hrs and, with a small group lingering on Meoness, a new record count of 1,429 was recorded. There were none at all the following day, 35 on 30th September, then one lingered until 11th October, being joined by two more on 3rd, although one of these was downed and killed by a Bonxie as it approached South Light.



Figure 1. Distribution of Barnacle Goose records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Greylag Goose

Anser anser

Common spring and autumn migrant

Table 1. Maximum monthly counts of Greylag Goose on Fair Isle in 2019.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
307	180	184	171	20	15	6	2	185	724	142	114

Following an arrival in early December 2018, good numbers remained in the early part of the year, but counts declined throughout January. The wintering flock was consistently around 180 throughout February and March and started declining in early April, with less than 100 recorded after 11th and no more than 20 from 22nd. There was a little movement in May, although after the first week, most records were of three lingering birds. One remained until 25th June, and there were scattered records of up to 15 passing during through the month. Six on 1st and one on 6th were the only July records and August sightings were restricted to one on 23rd and two on 27th. Sightings were more regular from 3rd September then daily from 15th until the end of the year, although they remained low (11 or less) until 185 on 30th September. Movement increased from 10th October, although the first three- figure count wasn't until 19th, with the bulk of passage in the last week of the month, peaking at 742 on 27th. A small movement was recorded throughout November, although the wintering flock remained at around 120, a relatively low figure compared to most recent years.

Pink-footed Goose

Anser brachyrhynchus

Common autumn migrant, with smaller numbers in spring and winter

The lingering bird from 2018 remained until 25th February and there was little spring passage, with just a single from 6th–11th April and two from 26th May to 13th June. The earliest autumn arrival since 2005 saw 34 move through on 2nd September, but there were no more until 365 on 13th September, the highest count of the year. There were counts of between nine and 225 over the following five days then no more than 40 for the rest of the autumn, with passage largely over by 3rd October, after which most records referred to 14 lingering birds. Five remained into early November, with just one from 10th until the end of the year.



Plate 51. Pink-footed Goose and Greylag Goose (right), Lower Leogh, 1st June 2019. © Max Hellicar

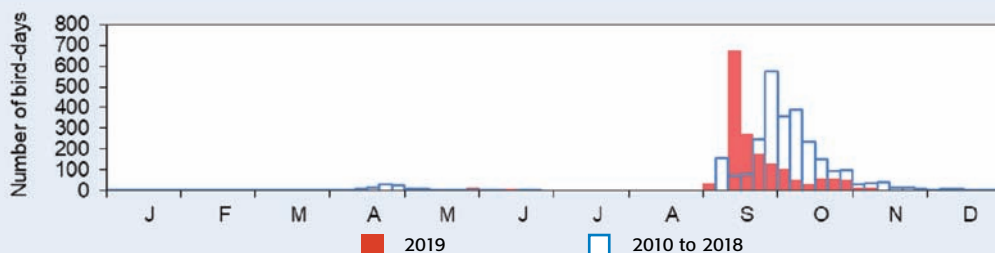


Figure 2. Distribution of Pink-footed Goose records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Tundra Bean Goose

Anser serrirostris

Rare migrant; 12 confirmed records of this species involving at least 146 individuals. Four autumn records (October and November), including large influxes in 2011 and 2014, seven winter (January, February and December) arrivals and one March record. In addition, there are 21 records of unidentified Bean Geese, involving 63 individuals, eight in winter, four in spring (mostly March, but one in June) and seven in autumn (September and October).

One found on 22nd December 2018 lingered in the Greylag flock until 21st January.

White-fronted Goose

Anser albifrons

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter

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

One remained from 2018 until 2nd January, with the third year in a row to produce a January arrival seeing one present from 21st–28th. Spring (March to May) passage records are not regular, with one on 5th March the first to arrive in this season since 2005. A group of four (consisting of three adults and a juvenile) arrived on 28th November and remained until the end of the year.

'Greenland White-fronted Goose' *A. a. flavirostris*

This subspecies of White-fronted Goose seems slightly more prone to spring occurrences than its Eurasian relatives, and an adult was noted on 17th March, the fourth occurrence in this season in the last decade, although the first in any season since 2017.

Whooper Swan

Cygnus cygnus

Frequent autumn migrant, scarce in spring and winter

One wintering bird remained until 26th February and passage in March saw four move through on 20th and seven on 24th–25th. Two on 15th September saw the start of an underwhelming autumn passage, with the only record for the month seeing five move south on 30th. Two arrived on 2nd October, with one remaining throughout the autumn, during which time there was another on 13th October and a total of 18 on 25th October. Three remained until 5th November, with two until 9th and one stayed until the end of year. During this time further individuals were noted on 25th–26th November, 6th–19th December (juvenile) and 13th–14th December (adult).



Plate 52. Whooper Swans, Furse, 25th October 2019.
© Richard Cope

Shelduck

Tadorna tadorna

Scarce spring migrant, rare in autumn

A decent spring showing saw birds on 3rd, 19th and 25th April, with the latter lingering until 1st May, during which time it was joined by a second on 27th April. Two on 31st July, then one from 25th–31st October, with a second on 26th, were typical autumn occurrences.

*Mandarin Duck

Aix galericulata

Vagrant; three previous records (two in April and one in September to October)

A 1cy female on Da Water from 13th–18th August was an unexpected early autumn occurrence and the third record in six years. What was thought to be the same individual was observed on Loch of Hillwell in the south of Mainland Shetland on 26th August.



Plate 53. Mandarin Duck, Da Water, 14th August 2019. © Richard Cope

Shoveler

Anas clypeata

Scarce and irregular spring and autumn migrant

A male on Da Water and Boini Mire on the early dates of 22nd–24th March was the only record of the year.

Gadwall

Mareca strepera

Rare spring and autumn migrant, three winter records; total of 57 records of 86 individuals

A moulting male on Golden Water on 1st July relocated to Da Water on 3rd, where it remained until 6th. The first record since 2017 and the first-ever July occurrence for Fair Isle.

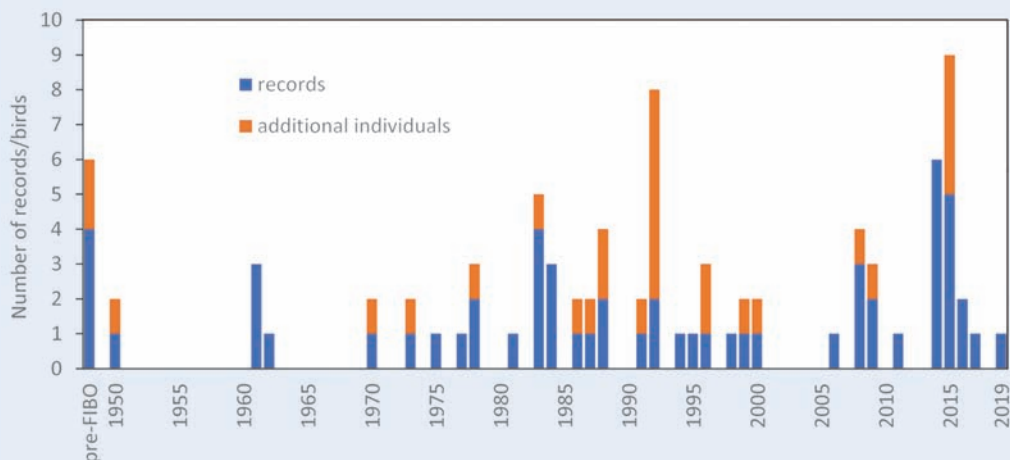


Figure 3. Gadwall records by year on Fair Isle. An erratic visitor.

Wigeon

Mareca penelope

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

Wintering numbers were unremarkable, with maximum counts of 14 in January, 18 in February and 13 in March. Although present virtually daily in April, no more than five were recorded and sightings in May were restricted to up to two until 5th and up to four from 22nd until 1st June. An eclipse male was present from 1st–5th July then in August sightings were regular, increasing to five by the end of the month. Daily sightings in September saw numbers gradually rising to an annual peak of 53 on 25th. Numbers in October were generally low, with no more than 31 and from mid-November to the end of the year there were no more than four until eight on 31st December.

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

Present year round and small numbers breed, also regular autumn migrant

Following the good numbers present at the end of 2018, up to 30 were counted in the first winter period. Copulation was first noted on 16th March and two females hatched young, with ducklings first seen on 24th June at both Da Water and the Vaadal. Only a small number of presumed migrants were seen in the autumn and wintering numbers were low, with no more than 15 seen in December.

Pintail

Anas acuta

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; female raised hybrid ducklings with Mallard in 2018

A quiet year saw just two records, with one lingering on Da Water from 20th September to 2nd October and another that passed South Light on 5th November.

Teal

Anas crecca

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, scarce in winter

There were regularly 12 in January, with counts rising to 16 throughout the following two months and into early April. Counts for the rest of the month were generally in single figures, with scattered records of up to five throughout May and up to 18th June. The next sighting was 3rd August and numbers gradually built up during the month, with an arrival of 24 on 28th. In September, counts were low until the end of the month when there was an annual peak of 47 on 25th. Most counts in October were of less than 15, although 22 were seen on 16th, and there were no more than 11 during the last two months of the year.

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

Regular migrant, commoner in spring than autumn

A strong spring showing began with a male from 5th–9th April (that was then found dead), with further April records involving two females on 11th, three on 21st and a male on 25th that was joined by another the following day. These two remained until 2nd May, with one until 13th May. There was a further male on 22nd–28th May, a female on 1st–5th June and an eclipse male on 30th June. Autumn passage began early with one on 9th August and was followed by two on 25th September, with one remaining until 28th, then further singles on 6th and 15th October.

Scaup

Aythya marila

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

Recorded for the second consecutive year after a three-year absence prior to that, with one on Da Water on 16th–18th October then a female at the same place on 26th November, which was joined by a young male on 27th. The female lingered to 30th, although was found in a very sickly state on the road near Meadow Burn on the latter date.

Eider

Somateria mollissima

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

The only spring count was 111 (53 males and 58 females) on 28th April, a 15% decrease on the peak spring count in 2018. The first incubating females were noted in Steensi Geo on 20th May and several broods of ducklings were noted around the Isle on 26th June. An autumn count on 17th August produced a total of just 109, including 34 juveniles.

Common Scoter

Melanitta nigra

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

Occasional sightings in the Furse area in the first part of the year until 8th March probably related to a single lingering individual from 2018. As in 2018, the first of the autumn were not seen until November, when two passed South Light on 3rd followed by a single the next day. Up to two were regularly found around the Isle from 27th November to the end of the year, with three also passing South Light on 28th November.

Long-tailed Duck

Clangula hyemalis

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

One bird remaining from 2018 was seen around Ditfield until 28th January and the only spring sighting was on 28th March in Furse. A male was in South Harbour on 30th September then regular sightings from 8th October until the end of the month were usually of three or less, but included peaks of eight on 10th and 13 on 28th (one of which joined a flock of Rock Doves as they migrated off South Light!). Two then lingered throughout November and December, usually in South Harbour.

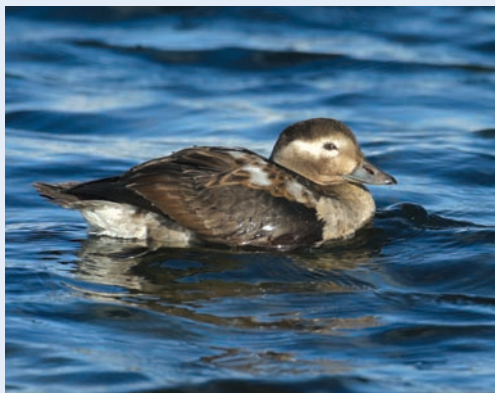


Plate 54. Long-tailed Duck, North Haven, 13th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Goldeneye

Bucephala clangula

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

Although usually scarce in winter and spring, a total blank in the first half of the year was the first recorded since 1990. One was off Hjukni Geo from 23rd September then five were present from 4th–6th October with up to three regularly until 4th November and the only later records involving one on 19th November and two on 1st December.

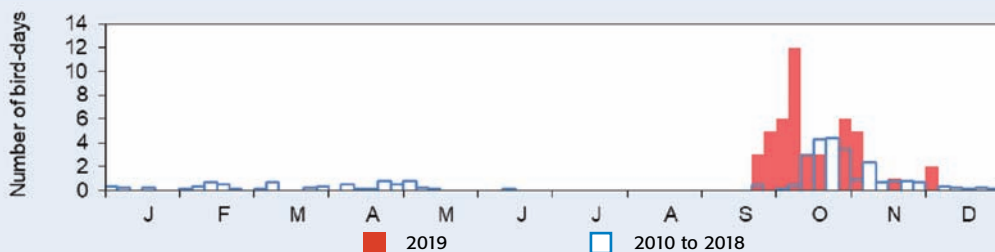


Figure 4. Distribution of Goldeneye records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Goosander

Mergus merganser

Scarce migrant in winter, spring and late autumn; 107 previous records of 149 individuals

A pair flew north over Bunness on 17th May, a typical record, with the only other occurrence involving three on 8th October.

Red-breasted Merganser

Mergus serrator

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

Unusually there were none in the winter, with the first not recorded until 5th–8th April. After this there were up to two from 24th–26th April, a maximum of three on four dates in May, up to two on four dates in June and records on six dates in July, peaking at four on 6th. Sightings were more regular throughout August until the last of the year on 4th November, with counts of just one or two, other than five on 20th and 25th October and three on 3rd November.

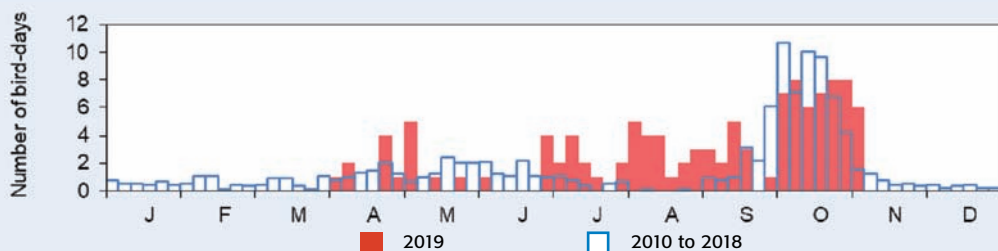


Figure 5. Distribution of Red-breasted Merganser records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

*Nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus

Vagrant; 30 previous records, 21 in spring (mostly May), three in July, five in autumn (August–October) and one undated

One flew around the Obs garden and Landberg at dusk on 18th September before heading towards Roskillie. The first autumn record since 2013.

Swift

Apus apus

Frequent migrant, most in summer and early autumn

Two on 14th May was an average first arrival date, with the only other May record involving nine on 20th with one remaining on 21st–22nd. In June there were two on 7th, one on 18th–21st and then one on 29th increasing to three the following day. A typical increase in records in summer saw regular sightings from 12th–27th July, although the peak was of just three on 25th. Two on 17th August were followed by three from 25th–30th that were then joined by a fourth on 26th, with one still on 2nd–4th September.



Plate 55. Cuckoo, Hill Dyke, 20th May 2019. © David Parnaby

Cuckoo

Cuculus canorus

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

Sightings from 14th–21st May peaked at three on 16th, the highest count since 2009, and there were records of up to two from 1st–17th June that probably involved at least five individuals in a very good spring for the species. It was also a very strong autumn showing, with almost daily records from 26th July to 11th August. Whilst most of these referred to a lingering 1cy, there were three on 29th July and two on 7th August.

Rock Dove

Columba livia

Resident, breeds in small numbers

There were no winter counts, although a flock at the Obs was noted as being of up to 24 in January. A juvenile was at the Schoolhouse on 7th May, three days earlier than the first juvenile was noted in 2018. Although there were no specific counts in the autumn, around 40–50 were regularly in the Brecks and Burkle areas. Interestingly, seawatching in late autumn produced a number of records of flocks heading south out to sea off South Light, including totals of three, 14 and four on 28th–30th October respectively and 35 on 4th November.

Stock Dove

Columba oenas

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

There was just the one record, with a single at Burkle on 14th May.

Woodpigeon

Columba palumbus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After one on 19th February, there were then regular sightings that increased to two from 15th and three from 22nd March. Similar numbers were then recorded until heavier passage in mid-April, with 11 on 18th and 12 from 21st irregularly until 2nd May. Although this group had all moved on by 9th May, another arrival saw 18 on 14th May, with up to four persisting until the end of the month. There were eight in early June, then just scattered sightings of one or two after 5th, with one remaining until 9th July. There were two on 27th August, then one in the Haven from 16th–28th September before the main autumn passage that covered 6th October to 6th November and peaked at eight on 16th October. One later bird was present on 14th–16th November.

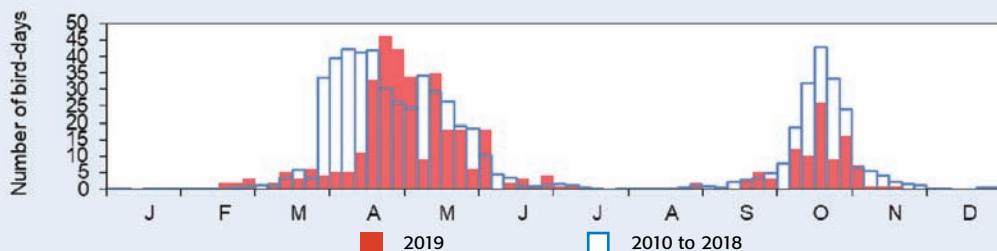


Figure 6. Distribution of Woodpigeon records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Turtle Dove

Streptopelia turtur

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Following the second blank year in FIBO's history for this species in 2018 (the first was in 2014), one was at the North Grind then near Stackhoull on 3rd June.

Collared Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

One at Schoolton on 24th April was a very late first arrival date followed by occasional ones and twos until nine on 14th May, after which there were regular records of up to five until 2nd July. Autumn was typically quieter, but with records on just 28th July and 26th August, it was still below average.

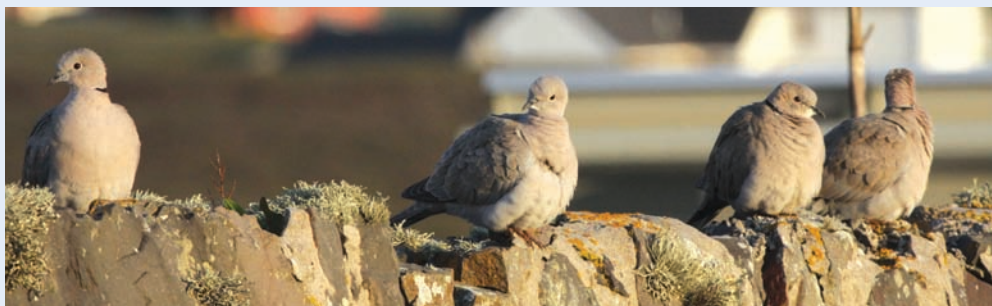


Plate 56. Collared Doves, Schoolhouse, 4th June 2019. © David Parnaby

Water Rail

Rallus aquaticus

Regular spring and autumn migrant; overwinters in small numbers

During January and February, sightings from the area around Schoolton, Quoy and Houll (two), Burkle (two), Haa and Skerryholm (two), Chalet, Kenaby, Shirva and Utra suggested a minimum of six and possibly as many as ten overwintering birds. Sightings decreased throughout March, presumably as wintering birds departed, with spring passage noted from 4th April when one was at Double Dyke. There were sightings of up to two on nine further dates during the month, with singles on 1st and 11th May the last of the spring. Autumn passage began on 24th September but there were no more until one came in off the sea over the Gully on 6th October. Sightings were then regular throughout the rest of the month and included a few in less-than-usual locations, including South Light and in the Fire Station! By November, birds were apparently established in wintering territories at regular sites including Burkle, Chalet, Haa, Quoy and the Obs with occasional sightings elsewhere, with the former three sites at least holding birds throughout December.



Plate 57. Water Rail, Ditfield, 9th October 2019.
© Brendan Doe

Corncrake

Crex crex

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

For the third consecutive year, there were no spring occurrences, with the only record being one flushed from Wirvie Burn on 25th August, making it the quietest year for this species since 1993.

Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

Scarce spring and autumn migrant, rare in winter; formerly bred (1933 and 1943)

One was around Meadow Burn on 5th–6th February. Although one was present in the same area in December 2018, it was not seen after mid-month, so this individual seems likely to have been an early migrant rather than a wintering individual. Strong passage in April involved two in the Schoolhouse garden on 5th, with singles at Quoy and Da Water during 9th–11th, one at the Obs on 17th, one around Da Water from 18th–30th, with others during this time at the Gully (22nd), Walli Burn (23rd) and Burkle (25th) but there were no more in the spring until one at Burkle on 14th May. One in the Gully on 3rd July was presumably the bird that took up residence in Da Water from 4th–26th July, the first-ever arrival in this month. In contrast to the spring, the only other autumn migrant was in the Schoolton area on 27th–30th September.

Coot

Fulica atra

Rare visitor; 94 previous records, most in spring, also late autumn and winter, has summered

The individual that arrived on 26th November 2018 remained on Da Water until 11th April, surviving some harsh conditions to do so.

*Red-necked Grebe

Podiceps grisegena

Vagrant; 22 previous records of 24 individuals; 11 in February (including five in 1979), 11 in autumn (August to November) and singles in April (that lingered until June) and December

One in South Harbour on 24th–25th January was also seen off South Light on 27th. The first record since 2011, just the third since 1996 and, perhaps surprisingly, the first January record for the Isle.

Slavonian Grebe

Podiceps auritis

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and rare in winter

The first of the year wasn't found until 18th September, when one was in South Harbour. The only other records involved one in the Haven from 3rd–11th October and further singles in South Harbour on 4th October and 3rd November.

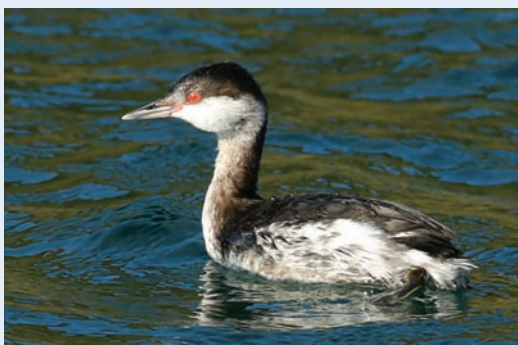


Plate 58. Slavonian Grebe, North Haven, 11th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Oystercatcher

Haematopus ostralegus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

There were four on 12th January, the first sign of birds moving back north, with higher numbers in February seeing counts rise to 20. There were up to 71 by the time census started in April, with peaks later in the month of 114 on 21st and 115 on 30th. In May, counts were fairly consistently around 95–110, and the highest count of the year was 120 on 5th June. An estimated breeding population of 20–30 pairs, and a non-breeding flock around the Stackhoull area accounted for the majority of birds recorded through the late spring period. The first egg was seen on 7th May, with the first chicks noted at North Light and Buness, on 14th June, seven days earlier than in 2018, with one of the North Light birds fledging on 18th July and a generally productive season being recorded. The non-breeding flock built up at Meadow Burn and by the time census recommenced in August there were 118 recorded on 2nd. Numbers gradually declined throughout the month with no other counts over 100, other than 107 on 17th. There were maxima of ten in September and four in October with up to two recorded until the end of the year.



Plate 59. Oystercatcher, Bunes, 15th April 2019. © Max Hellicar



Plate 60. Black-winged Stilt (left) and Oystercatcher, North Haven, 9th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

*Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus

Vagrant; no previous records

One of the more unexpected additions to the Fair Isle list of recent years was this leggy creature on the beach of North Haven on 9th October, where it was found in the early afternoon and remained for the rest of the day (although disappearing for a short while at one stage). A 1cy, it was thought to be the same individual that had arrived in East Yorkshire on 28th August and wandered the UK before last being seen in Berkshire on 8th October. Write-ups of the occurrence can be found on pages 158–160 and in Parnaby (2020).

Lapwing

Vanellus vanellus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

There were up to two in January then a few more arrived in late February, rising to 13 by 5th March but there was no real spring passage, with a peak count of just 15 in April as birds settled onto territories. Five pairs were present, with two around Pund and three in the Da Water, Kirki Mire and Boini Mire areas. At least two of the latter fledged youngsters, and the count of 24 on 7th July in Kirki Mire may have been made up largely of Fair Isle birds. They largely dispersed in late July, with small numbers moving through in the autumn until 20th October, although there were monthly peaks of just eight in September and three in October. Small numbers then arrived in early November and there were up to six lingering until the end of the year.

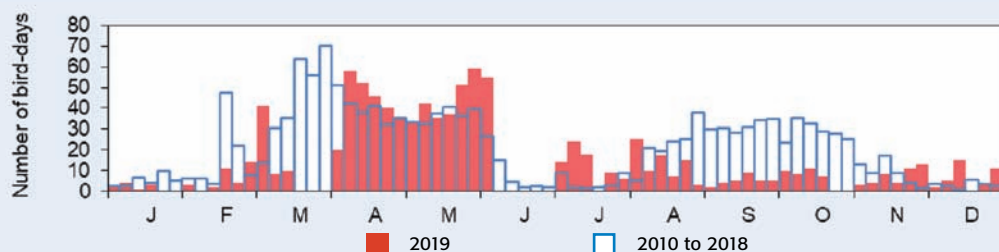


Figure 7. Distribution of Lapwing records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18. Breeding birds are present annually in June (including 2019) but are not included in the migration census data presented here.

Golden Plover

Pluvialis apricaria

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

The first were two on 2nd–3rd February, with just a couple more records until one displayed around Chatham's Land on 20th–22nd March. There were regular records throughout April, increasing to 19 at the end of the month, with a spring peak of 25 on 4th May. There were then regular records of five or less through to 20th June, but despite occasional sightings in suitable habitat (including Swey and Ward Hill), there was no suggestion of breeding taking place. From 6th July there were a few more records as birds started heading south again and regular sightings in August built to 17 on 25th. The heaviest autumn passage was during mid-September, with the peak of just 46 on 16th. October saw up to 11 throughout and two remained during November with a single still present in late December.

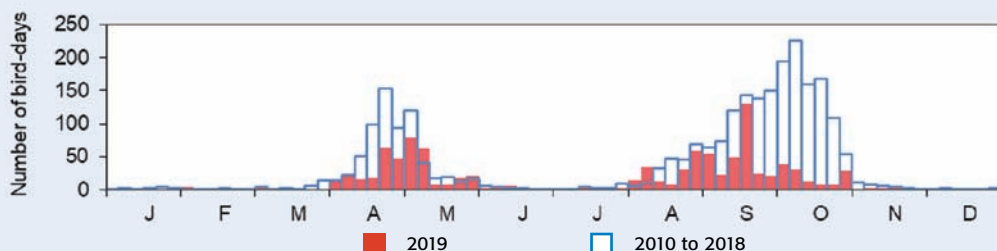


Figure 8. Distribution of Golden Plover records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Grey Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

Rare migrant, mostly in autumn, with fewer in spring and winter

One over Swarzie Geo on 27th September and presumably the same individual over the Gully on 29th was the first since 2017.

Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

There was one on 15th–19th February, then two on 27th and 31 on 28th, with similar numbers for the rest of the spring, with a peak of just 35 in April. Occasional flocks in late May showed migrants were still on the move, although by then the breeding population on Fair Isle was well established. An estimated 12–20 pairs bred, with the first eggs noted on 5th May on Buness, chicks seen in Muckle Uri Geo from 21st May and the first fledged birds seen on Buness on 14th June (three days earlier than in 2018). Autumn migration was rather quiet, with a peak of just 38 on 2nd September and regular records through to 17th October, with a rather late migrant in North Haven on 19th November.



Plate 61. Ringed Plover, Skadan, 21st June 2019.
© Sarah Harris

***Little Ringed Plover**

Charadrius dubius

Vagrant; six previous records (four in May and singles in July and September)

The remarkable recent run of records for this species continued with a further two individuals, both probably females. The first was in Boini Mire on 20th April, becoming the earliest-ever Fair Isle record, with the second in Walli Burn on 2nd May. With previous records in 1965, 1969, 1975, 2016 (two) and 2017 it will be interesting to see whether Little Ringed Plover becomes an expected spring scarcity.



Plate 62. Little Ringed Plover, Boini Mire, 20th April 2019. © Max Hellicar

Dotterel

Charadrius morinellus

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; 107 previous records of 201 individuals

A very quiet year saw just two records; a female on Ward Hill on 24th May that relocated to the Pund area on 25th–26th and another female on Ward Hill on 30th May.

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

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

The first was three days earlier than 2018, when one went over Hoini on 18th April, with daily records thereafter to 10th June. Numbers had built up to nine by the end of April (including a singing bird on 30th), and peaked in mid-May with 21 on 15th. Sightings on four further dates in June included seven on 26th, which probably involved returning birds and there were up to four regularly throughout July. Sightings on 12 August dates included the autumn peak of nine on 26th and there were five singles in September up to the last of the year on 20th.

Curlew

Numenius arquata

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

There were up to 26 in the first winter period, with a spring peak of 21 on 9th April, although on most days, counts were largely just of the breeding birds. Displaying was first recorded on 4th March and of the four pairs that held territory, only one reached chick stage; a pair on the Rippack, that was incubating four eggs by 19th May. Their chicks were first seen on 15th June, but one was predated by a Lesser Black-backed Gull the following day. After 31 on 4th July, there were no more than 22 recorded during the rest of the autumn, until a small arrival towards the end of November saw numbers increase to 27, with similar numbers remaining until the end of the year.

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

The first was a breeding-plumaged adult in the Meadow Burn on 1st August, with regular sightings from 13th–29th August probably involving one individual. Three then appeared on 23rd September (the highest count since six on 23rd September 2012), rising to four from 27th–29th with the group dwindling until just one remained on 11th October.



Plate 63. Bar-tailed Godwit, South Green, 23rd September 2019. © Sarah Harris

Black-tailed Godwit

Limosa limosa

Scarce spring and autumn migrant, very rare in winter

A fairly good spring passage saw four on 1st May then singles on 11th and 18th May before another group of four on 9th June. Autumn passage was rather quiet, with up to three from 21st August to 1st September then a single from 13th–20th September.

Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

Common winter, spring and autumn migrant

Table 2. Maximum monthly counts of Turnstone on Fair Isle in 2019 compared with previous ten-year average in brackets.

2019 count											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
41(150)	150(116)	235(130)	101(133)	75(71)	4(17)	44(50)	157(102)	150(147)	314(201)	100(170)	200(162)

Winter numbers were high at both ends of the year, with scattered records occurring through the summer, with daily records from 16th July until the end of the year. The peak count for the year was an impressive 314 on 27th October.

Knot

Calidris canutus

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring, rare in winter

A quiet spring, with just a single in Muckle Uri Geo on 19th May. Five on 22nd July preceded occasional sightings until 5th August when there were regular records until 27th September. Counts in this period were generally in single figures, other than a period in mid-August when heavier passage peaked at 81 on 16th, the highest total since 1969. Later individuals occurred on 17th–18th and 25th October.

Ruff

Calidris pugnax

Regular autumn migrant, rare in spring

Autumn passage began on the classic date of 31st July, with regular records then following until 30th August, including high counts of nine on 8th and eight on 25th. A late spell of passage saw daily records from 23rd–28th September, peaking at three on 24th.



Plate 64. Ruff, Chatham's Land, 23rd August 2019. © David Parnaby

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

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

The only record of the year was a non-breeding plumaged bird on Bunes on 22nd April that settled on Da Water until 26th April, the earliest-ever Fair Isle record by some margin. With previous spring occurrences in 1956, 1981, 1999 and 2018, to get another so soon seems remarkable and there has to be a chance it was a returning bird.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

Spring passage was very subdued, being restricted to sightings on five dates between 1st May and 1st June, all singles apart from two on 15th May. There was one on 27th June then no more until 17th July, after which scattered sightings in the next four weeks peaked at 12 on 26th July. From mid-August, sightings were virtually daily until the last on 27th September, with a peak of 13 on 30th August.

Dunlin

Calidris alpina

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

After one over North Light on 21st April there were regular sightings throughout the spring until the first week of June. Records were largely of less than 20, although there were 24 on 26th May. There were sightings from the Mire of Vatnagaard area throughout the summer, with behaviour suggesting that breeding was likely to have taken place. After one on 4th July in Muckle Uri Geo, records of migrants became more regular through the month. In August, numbers peaked at 17, with 19 on 6th September the autumn's peak. Sightings in single figures continued through to the last of the year on 25th October.

Purple Sandpiper

Calidris maritima

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, also overwinters in small numbers

The highest count in the first winter period was 28 on 21st January, until at least 50 were seen on 7th March, signifying the start of spring passage. Numbers then dropped to single figures again until 90 on 4th April, with fluctuating counts until the spring peak of 134 on 18th April and up to 82 for the rest of the month. Numbers gradually dwindled through May, with a peak of 60 on 5th, with the last of the spring being four on 31st May. Small numbers started to move again from 11th July, with single-figure counts during the rest of the month other than 44 on 20th. August counts peaked at 66 on 17th, which proved to be the autumn peak, with high counts of three in September and 15 in October before late passage saw 41 on 2nd November, then just single figures until the end of the year.

*Pectoral Sandpiper

Calidris melanotos

Rare visitor; 35 previous records, most from August to October, but four in spring

A 1cy at Easter Lother Water on 26th September was still there the following day before it moved down the Isle and lingered in the South Harbour area until 8th October, making it the longest-staying Pectoral Sandpiper in Fair Isle's history.



Plate 65. Pectoral Sandpiper, Easter Lother Water, 27th September 2019. © Max Hellicar



Plate 66. Woodcock, Setter, 17th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Woodcock

Scolopax rusticola

Frequent late-autumn migrant, smaller numbers in spring and winter

A couple of sightings in January suggested either small numbers wintering or possibly hard weather movements. Two around the traps on 28th March indicated the start of spring passage, which was rather quiet with just singles on five dates in April, three dates in May and 1st June. Autumn passage began on the same day as in 2018, with two on 5th October preceding regular sightings for the rest of the season. Numbers were generally low though, peaking at 18 on 16th October, with the highest count in November of 17 on 4th, and just small numbers moving during the rest of the month. December sightings were restricted to 16th and 26th (two).

Jack Snipe

Lymnocyrtus minimus

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

For the first time since 2015, there were no overwintering birds in the first half of the year, with spring passage also quiet, consisting of sightings on 15th, 19th and 28th April. Two on 23rd September was the latest start to autumn passage since 2009, and preceded a virtually daily presence to 5th November, including peak counts of 19 on 6th and 19th October. The only later record was one flushed from the Skadan crop strip on 30th November.

Snipe

Gallinago gallinago

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

There were 55 on 10th April, but otherwise counts were generally less than 40 throughout the first part of the year. A maximum of 32 in May and similar numbers into June suggested that counts were largely of the breeding population by this time. There was no estimate of the breeding population, although displaying birds were noted at a wide variety of sites as usual. Numbers remained relatively low until late September, with no counts above 50 until 69 on 23rd, rising to 85 on 25th. Most days in October saw around 40–50 recorded, with a peak of 91 on 16th.

Red-necked Phalarope

Phalaropus lobatus

Former vagrant, with 25 individuals recorded prior to 2017 (11 in spring, 14 in autumn), with breeding occurring in 2017 (two individuals fledging three young) and 2018 (four individuals fledging two young, with another juvenile predated shortly before fledging), with a further four migrants recorded during this time (two in spring, two in autumn).

A returning bird was on Da Water on 13th May, a day earlier than the first date in 2018. Two were recorded by 20th May, although birds were generally elusive at first. Sightings became more regular in June, with three on 10th, 18th and 26th and four on 27th. It seems likely that three birds summered, with successful breeding confirmed for the third consecutive year when a male was seen with a chick on 8th July. There were still two adults on Da Water on 19th July, with the last sighting of adults involving two off South Light on 21st, when a fledged juvenile was on Da Water, where it was last seen on 25th July.

Common Sandpiper

Actitis hypoleucos

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One on Bunes on 15th April was the earliest arrival since 1989 and there were records through the spring on a further 21 dates until 25th May, with the heaviest passage taking place in mid-May and peaking at four on 20th. After an isolated record on 16th June, a flock of six in Muckle Uri Geo on the evening of 26th July marked the start of autumn passage, with up to four recorded regularly until 10th August, when there were five. The only later record was a well-scrutinised bird in the Haven on 27th–30th September.

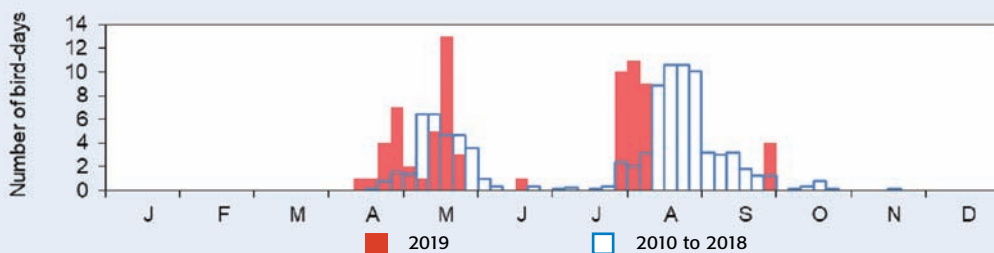


Figure 9. Distribution of Common Sandpiper records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Green Sandpiper

Tringa ochropus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage saw the latest arrival date since 2015, with almost daily records over 18th–29th April, all singles apart from two during 25th–28th. Two on 26th July kicked off autumn for the species, with regular records until 1st September including an autumn peak of nine on 29th July (the highest count since 2014) and seven on 15th August. The last of the year was seen on 10th–11th September.



Plate 67. Lesser Yellowlegs, Utra scrape, 18th May 2019. © Deryk Shaw

*Lesser Yellowlegs

Tringa flavipes

Vagrant: three previous records; two in May and one in September

One on Da Water briefly on 18th May was relocated on Utra scrape, where it showed well, and remained until the following day. With waits of 43 and 46 years respectively between the first to third records, a gap of only 20 years for the fourth was an improvement!

Redshank

Tringa totanus

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

There were up to 50 in the early part of the year, with 60 on 21st March likely to include some spring migrants. Numbers declined thereafter, with generally less than 20 from 7th April, although there were 31 on 21st April. A singing bird was recorded at Wirvie on 28th April, but there was no suggestion of breeding. There were just single-figure counts throughout May then sightings on six dates in June, with four of these in the last five days of the month. Numbers rose to 30 on 5th July, although they were generally low in the early autumn. Fluctuating counts in August peaked at 72 on 19th and in September counts were mostly over 30, with a peak of 75 on 6th. Generally high numbers in October reached an annual peak of 78 on 11th. Counts were lower as winter came around, although 75 on 30th December was an impressive number for the time of year.

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

One flying south over the Kirk on 9th May was the first of the year and was followed by one on 20th May that flew over the Plantation then settled on Golden Water. Two were then on Golden Water on 1st June and remained on the Isle until 4th June.

Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Regular autumn migrant, scarce in spring

A typical spring passage saw one on 18th–20th April that was singing on the last date, another on 28th–29th April and one from 16th–20th May that was joined by a second on the last date. In what was the quietest autumn for the species in FIBO history, there was just a single record, on 3rd August.

Kittiwake

Rissa tridactyla

Common passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers

Typically, there were just single-figure counts in the first three months of the year, with the first bird returning to the cliffs on 4th April, and many doing likewise the following day. Numbers in the population plots rose slightly in comparison to 2018 to 36 AON, although a rise of two nests does little to make up for the fall from 1,446 nests in the same plots in 1987. The Holms and Dog Geo is the only plot to now hold breeding birds, with Shaldi Cliff abandoned in 2007, South Gunnawark and Strom's Heelor in 2010, Lericum and Da Swadin in 2011, Trottie Kame in 2013, Johnny's Peats in 2015, Bergaroo in 2017 and Da Nizz in 2018. Copulation was noted from 25th April, with the first chicks seen at Green Holm on 28th June. It was the best breeding season since 2016, with 0.67 chicks fledging per AON, and fledging was noted from the Holms on 27th July. Birds rapidly dispersed and by 26th August there were none present. Thereafter, there were variable small numbers through the autumn, although some interesting large counts in October saw 310 pass South Light on 10th, 122 the following day then counts of between 124 and 170 on 28th–30th. Large numbers were seen again in early November, with 151–338 recorded from 3rd–6th, the peak falling on 4th. Thereafter, there were typically just scattered records of ten or less until the end of the year.

Black-headed Gull

Chroicocephalus ridibundus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After three records of up to two in February from 12th and two on 6th March, there were regular sightings of up to five from 21st March. There were more throughout the following three months, with up to ten in April, and peaks in May of 15 on 14th and in June of 11 on 19th. Regular sightings continued throughout July, including the first passage juvenile on 12th with a peak of 14 on 24th, but there were just single figures throughout August and then slightly fewer sightings throughout September and October, with a peak of ten on 26th October. A disappointing autumn ended with singles on 1st and 4th November and the only December records on 13th and 30th (two).

*Franklin's Gull

Leucophaeus pipixcan

Vagrant; no previous records

The wait on the morning of 6th June for the arrival of the *MV Hondius*, a cruise ship calling at Fair Isle *en route* to Svalbard, was enlivened somewhat when a tweet emerged showing stunning photos of an adult Franklin's Gull taken from a boat 'with Fair Isle in sight'. It was quickly established that the sighting was indeed from the approaching *Hondius* and that the bird had been seen approximately 3 km to the south of the Isle, putting it firmly in the Fair Isle recording area, and that it had continued north ahead of the ship. Although the crew and passengers of the *Good Shepherd IV*



Plate 68. Franklin's Gull, Chalet, 6th June 2019.
© Laurens Steijn

en route to Shetland were put on alert in case it had continued its journey, it was relocated at Mansie's Pund, just south-west of Chalet, in a small group of large gulls at approximately 10:00 hrs. It remained in the field for around 45 minutes before leaving the flock, drifting out to the east coast and heading north out of sight. That had been enough time for all the birders on the Isle to connect with it, including some cruise ship passengers who were disappointed at having missed the sighting from their own vessel. A first for Fair Isle, as a species with six previous Shetland records (all from May to July), it was perhaps one that could have been expected to call through at some point, although the finding circumstances probably wouldn't have been predicted.

Common Gull

Larus canus

Common spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers

There were around six seen regularly in early winter, rising to 16 by the end of March. Although most counts in April were between ten and 40, a large roost in Furse on 7th April saw a total of 164 present. Most counts in May were of 27 or less, although there were 47 on 25th. Five pairs bred, although productivity appeared low. Return passage was noted from mid-July, with the first juveniles seen on 21st and numbers building to 215 by 25th. Counts varied wildly in August, starting with 324 on 1st but often being between 30 and 60, with further high counts of 113 on 18th and 212 on 28th. September counts peaked at 79, with a maximum of 86 in October, and other than 25 on 2nd, there were no more than six in November, with around four recorded regularly until the end of the year.

Great Black-backed Gull

Larus marinus

Common migrant, breeds in small numbers

There were just three breeding pairs located again; on Goorn, Da Burrian and Green Holm, with chicks first noted at the latter site on 30th May. There were the usual gatherings of several hundred during the late autumn and winter when windy weather caused them to take shelter on the Isle top.



Plate 69. Great Black-backed Gull eating a Puffin, 11th July 2019. © Carol Jefferies

Glaucous Gull

Larus hyperboreus

Regular migrant in spring, late autumn and winter

Four on 1st January started a good run of sightings in the first three weeks of the month, with a peak of five on 8th and at least seven individuals involved. There was just one record in February and sightings on five days in March, including two on 22nd, with the only other record of the spring involving a 2cy on 3rd May. The first returning birds were two 1cys on 6th October, with four further sightings of single 1cys during the month. Daily sightings from 1st–4th November peaked at three on 2nd and involved at least four individuals, but there were just two more recorded during the month. In December there were none until 1cys on 18th–19th and 24th, an adult on 29th and three adults on 30th.

Iceland Gull

Larus glaucooides

Scarce migrant in winter, late autumn and spring

Singles were seen on six dates in January with a 2cy, 3cy and adult all noted, but the only other sightings in the first part of the year were of 2cys on 10th–11th and 24th March. The first returning bird of the autumn was a 1cy on the typical date of 27th October and there were two 1cys on 2nd November, with one remaining the following day. A further seven sightings of single 1cy birds followed until the last of the year occurred on 27th December in a fairly quiet winter for white-wingers.

Herring Gull

Larus argentatus

Common migrant, breeds in small numbers

Although present throughout the year, there were no notable records in the winter or spring. A total of 46 pairs bred, the majority on Goorn. Eggs were first seen on 20th May and chicks were noted as having fledged during a monitoring visit to Goorn on 22nd July, although productivity was very poor. 'Scandinavian Herring Gulls' *L. a. argentatus* were noted as being present from 24th September and it is likely that they represented a significant percentage of the birds in the large flocks that were occasionally noted throughout the rest of the autumn and winter.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Larus fuscus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The first returning bird on 21st March was the latest arrival since 2014 and numbers remained low, with just single figures of migrants noted throughout the spring, although by 21st April there were 20 in total on the Isle, including 11 on Goorn. There were similar numbers in May, then 57 arrived on 4th June, with counts rapidly dropping away again after this. Four pairs bred on Goorn, with the first fledged juvenile seen on 22nd July. Small numbers of non-breeding migrants were occasionally loafing around the Isle during the summer, but autumn passage never really got going, with a maximum of just ten throughout August and September and records on only six dates in the latter month, with an adult from 5th–8th October.

Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

Regular summer visitor, formerly bred in small numbers (until 2005, with one pair in 2012 and 2014–15)

Since it stopped breeding on the Isle, Common Tern has proved rather difficult to catch up with in some years, and 2019 saw just a single record; one in Furse on 11th September (the latest record since 2013), making it the worst year in FIBO history for this species.

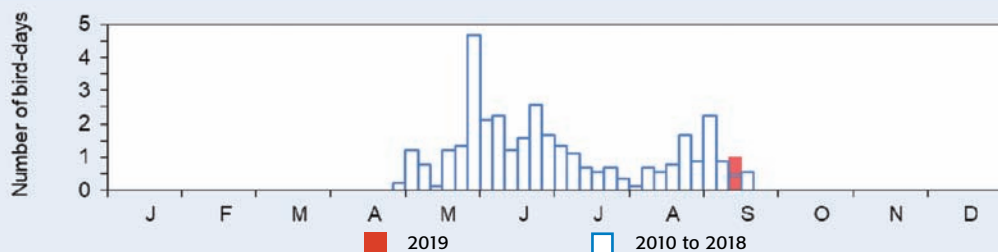


Figure 10. Distribution of Common Tern records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Arctic Tern

Sterna paradisaea

Frequent summer visitor, breeds in small numbers

One at South Light on 8th May was two days later than the first arrival in 2018, with dozens then arriving from 12th and 156 recorded on 14th May, including 68 seen from the *Good Shepherd IV*. Numbers continued to build, with approximately 1,000 on the North Gavel of Buness on 1st June. The first eggs were found on 27th May, with 286 nests recorded on 14th June (273 on Buness and 13 on Shalstane) when the first chick had also just hatched. In July there was a noticeable increase in 2cy birds, with 12 off South Light on 2nd. The first birds fledged at Buness on 8th July, with a productivity of 0.28 chicks fledged per AON, the highest since 2006, although the Shalstane colony failed entirely. Numbers often build up around South Light in late summer, and over 100 were recorded on 22nd July, but they then dwindled rapidly, with fewer than 20 recorded from 14th August. By September there were just single figures remaining, with regular sightings up to 12th followed by the latest record since 2015 when one was present on 26th.

Great Skua

Stercorarius skua

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in moderate numbers

One on 1st April was a day later than the 2018 first arrival date, although the main arrival didn't take place until the third week, when the bulk of the breeding population arrived. It was another good year for breeding numbers, with 490 AOT located across the Isle, the vast majority in the north. The first egg was seen on 15th May, with the first chick noted on 11th June and the first fledgling seen on 26th July in Suka Mire. It was a terrible breeding season however, with just 71 chicks fledging, the productivity of 0.14 chicks per AOT being 60% lower than 2018 and the worst since 2005. Less than 40 remained around the Isle by early October, as the population rapidly dispersed and by early November the only sightings were off South Light where up to four were seen, until the last two of the year on 6th.

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 103 previous records (of 133 individuals), 46 individuals in spring (May–June), 82 in autumn (mostly September–October, with fewer in July–August and November), one in January and four undated

The previous three years had seen records from the *Good Shepherd IV* but none from land, so an adult over Burkle on 24th May and an immature from South Light on 28th October were welcome sightings.

Arctic Skua

Stercorarius parasiticus

Frequent passage migrant, breeds in small numbers

Two dark-phase birds on the 21st April were the first to return and were just a day later than in 2018. Although present daily thereafter, it was 6th May before double figures were reached. In total, 28 pairs settled into territories, the same as 2018 and 25 of these are known to have laid eggs, with the first seen on 3rd June. Although seven pairs failed at egg stage and a further five failed at chick stage, 13 pairs fledged a total of 18 chicks, with the first of these seen on 26th June and the first taking to the wing on 27th July. The 0.6 chicks fledged per AOT was the highest productivity since 2006. The last of the breeding population left the colonies by mid-September, with the last of the year seen on 20th September.



Plate 70. Arctic Skua, juvenile, Roskillie, 26th August 2019. © Richard Cope

Little Auk

Alle alle

Regular late autumn migrant and winter visitor in smaller numbers

The first of the year was found on 13th October (the earliest autumn arrival since 2011) when it was flushed from the North Lighthouse compound and flew off towards Dronger. More typical records involved birds passing South Light on 27th, 29th and 30th (two) October, with five off there on both 4th and 6th November. There were further November records on 12th (two past South Light), 13th (an approachable individual in North Haven), 14th (past South Light) and 19th (singles off South Light and in Furse).

Common Guillemot

Uria aalge

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

There were occasional sightings of single figures in the first few weeks of the year, with numbers returning to the cliffs on 27th February. By late March, large numbers were starting to be seen more regularly, with the population eventually settling on breeding ledges by 18th April. Copulation was first noted on 7th May, with the first egg not seen until 20th May. Early June sees counts at the population plots, with the average from the five plots across ten dates equating to 1,224 individuals, exactly the same as 2018. The first fledged bird was seen just off the Isle from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 9th July, but productivity fell 52.5% from 2018 to just 0.28 chicks fledged per egg laid. Birds were present around the Isle until 4th August and there were just a couple more sightings during the month. The trend for just scattered sightings of small numbers continued through the autumn until late November, when hundreds reappeared, including birds ashore on 30th, and December was again quiet until 24th, when birds were again ashore in good numbers.

Razorbill

Alca torda

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

Small numbers returned on 14th March but many were present by the end of the month, although it was mid-April before significant numbers settled in the colonies. Copulation was noted in Dog Geo on 20th April and the first chick was seen at Kristal Kame on 9th June. Although the population plot recorded a 7% decline from 2018, it was another good breeding season, with 0.78 chicks fledged per egg laid, with the first recorded fledging from Easter Lothar on 2nd July. After 2nd August there were none seen until 29th August and low numbers were recorded throughout the autumn (usually passing South Light) until 2nd November.

Black Guillemot

Cephus grylle

Resident, breeds in moderate numbers

The only count was of 174 breeding-plumaged adults in the monitoring plot on 21st April, a 12.6% decrease on the 2018 count, but given the lack of suitable weather for counts during the early spring period, it may be best to treat that figure with some caution. The first fledged youngster was noted in the North Haven on the early date of 29th July.



Plate 71. Black Guillemot, North Haven, 13th October 2019.
© Steve Arlow

Puffin

Fratercula arctica

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

One off Ditfield on 27th March was the first of the year, with the first birds seen on land on 30th. Larger numbers started to appear regularly in early April and were settled by mid-month. Food was observed being brought in on 2nd June, with a lot being carried by 16th indicating that the bulk of chicks had hatched out by this time. It was another successful breeding season and, although productivity dropped by 5.6% from 2018's record, there were still 0.85 chicks fledged per egg laid. Numbers started to decline throughout August and, whilst there were still several hundred offshore on 17th, there were only smaller numbers thereafter and by 28th, none at all. The only later sightings were in early September, with two on 1st and 2nd and a single on 5th.

Red-throated Diver

Gavia stellata

Regular migrant, mainly late spring and autumn

One past South Light on 22nd March equalled 2018's arrival date and there were further singles off the same location on 7th and 12th April. One then lingered off Linni Geo from 13th–24th April, being joined by two others on 18th. May produced a total of 12 individuals over ten dates, with the final spring records on 1st–3rd and 17th June. July saw three singles from 9th and there were also three in August. September typically saw the peak passage, with 24 individuals recorded on 12 dates, including a peak of nine on 16th (the highest count since 20 on 23rd September 1998). After one in North Haven on 14th October, there were late records from South Light involving three on 27th and singles on 28th and 29th October.

Great Northern Diver

Gavia immer

Scarce autumn migrant, occasional in spring and winter

One lingered around South Harbour and Mid Geo from 2nd–16th January before very light spring passage saw singles on 9th March and 21st April and a later bird on 9th June. Autumn passage began late with records on 14 dates from 3rd October to 19th November, all singles other than five on 27th October (the highest count since 2011).

Storm Petrel

Hydrobates pelagicus

Common summer migrant, breeds in small numbers

The first record of the year was from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 25th May, with other sightings of up to three in Fair Isle waters from the crossing on four dates in June, four dates in July and 1st and 12th of August. Unfortunately, the other early records were of predated birds, with remains found at Hoini, the Obs and the Gully in June. The start of a project looking at Storm Petrels on Fair Isle detected breeding birds at 20 sites during the summer, with locations from South Raeva up the west coast and along the north coast as far as Kim o' Skroo. The first attempt at ringing non-breeding birds was unsuccessful, with a blustery night on the Skadan on 11th July drawing a blank, although one was seen around the nets. Further ringing took place at the Haven with eight sessions between 16th July and 31st August, producing a total of 985 birds; 923 new and 62 recaptures. The peak session was in the early hours of 25th July, when 253 were caught, including 238 new individuals.

Leach's Petrel

Oceanodroma leucorhoa

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

The first of the year was heard around the Haven during a nocturnal petrel-ringing session on 16th July, with records later in the month involving trapped birds on 25th and 31st (two). No more were trapped, but August saw two records; one heard at the Haven on 4th and a chance encounter with one calling over Brecks at 01:30 hrs on 9th.

Fulmar

Fulmarus glacialis

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

There was an increase of 17.9% in the population plots compared to 2018, giving a total of 428 AOS, the highest count in the plots since 1996. The first egg was seen being incubated on Ward Hill on 16th May, with the first fledged juvenile on 20th August, the same date as in 2018. Productivity dropped by 14.8% in the plots to 0.46 chicks fledged per pair in comparison to 2018, the lowest total since 2008. A good spread of 'blue' Fulmar records saw birds lingering around the cliffs in the north on 21st April, 2nd May and 5th June, with birds passing at sea on 2nd and 4th May. Singles were off the south coast on 2nd and 30th August, then in September there were two on 18th and one from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 28th. Heaviest passage was, typically, later in the autumn with records on 2nd, 3rd (five), 6th and 12th October then 13 dates from 17th October to 6th November, with a total of 43 recorded and a peak of ten on 4th November. The only later records were on 14th and 26th November, with two on the latter date.



Plate 72. Blue Fulmar, Bergaroo, 2nd May 2019. © David Parnaby

Sooty Shearwater

Ardenna griseus

Regular autumn migrant

The latest first date since 2010 saw none recorded until August, when there were records on 23rd, 27th and 30th (two). A generally quiet autumn saw records on 6th, 12th (three) and 13th (six) September, 2nd and 10th October and a very late bird on 6th November, just the second record for this month since 1997.

Manx Shearwater

Puffinus puffinus

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

Two from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 25th May were the first of the year, with only six other singles recorded; 18th June, 1st and 4th July and 11th, 13th and 15th September in a rather uninspiring year for the species.

Gannet

Morus bassanus

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

Birds had returned to their breeding ledges on the cliffs by 5th February, with the first chick seen on 27th May at Yellow Head and fledging recorded by 4th August, 15 days earlier than in 2018. Productivity was the lowest since 2002, with 0.64 chicks fledged per AON. A full island count on 19th June (with sections only visible from the sea counted on 23rd June) produced a total of 4,211 AON, just 80 nests (1.9%) less than in 2018. Birds were present offshore all year round, although only small numbers were seen at the start and end of the year.

Shag

Phalacrocorax aristotelis

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

A rise in the numbers in the monitoring plots (South Ramnigeo, North Ramnigeo, Lericum, South Naaversgill and South Gunnawark) saw 36 occupied nests recorded, the highest total since 2010, although still a long way short of the 240 that nested in the same plots in 1987. The first eggs were seen on 19th April and the first chicks were noted on 27th May in Easter Lothar, nine days earlier than 2018. Although productivity dropped by almost 10% from 2018, it was still reasonable at 0.8 chicks fledged per AON (although there are now only 11 nests in the productivity plot).

Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

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

A 2cy was in South Harbour from 10th–14th January but there were no more until three on 10th and two on 17th April and further spring passage of one to three on four dates in May up to 21st. After summer records on 2nd July and 4th August there were records on 26 dates from 25th August to 13th October, with a peak of five on 3rd September and later singles on 27th October and 19th November.

'Continental Cormorant' *P. c. sinensis* *Vagrant; one previous record (May 2014)*

An adult was photographed flying north near Linni Geo on 19th April, the timing of which coincided nicely when birds return to colonies in Sweden and northern Denmark, suggesting an overshooting bird (perhaps brought to Fair Isle by the same weather that saw a Black Kite arrive on the Isle on the same day).

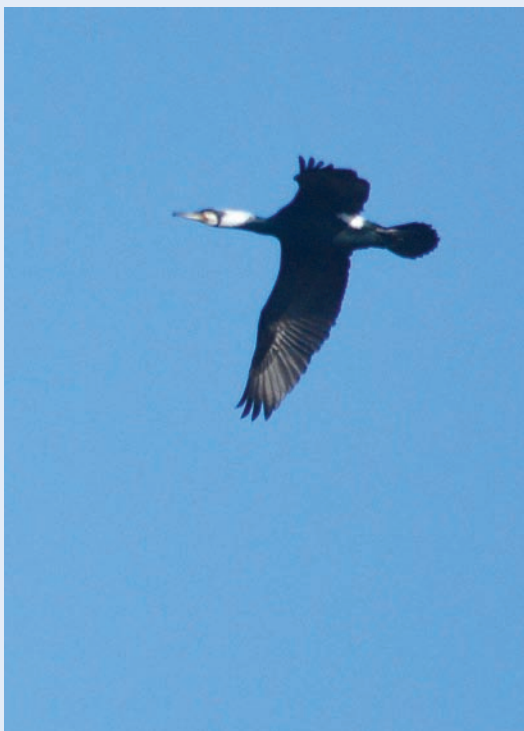


Plate 73. 'Continental Cormorant', Linni Geo, 19th April 2019. © Max Hellicar

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in winter and spring

There were no wintering birds, so one going north over the Haven on 18th March was the first of the year. Spring passage saw records on 23 dates from 3rd April to 20th May, with a maximum of four on 4th May. There were up to two on nine dates in June from 9th and occasional summer records became more regular from 16th July, with up to four from then until early September. Peak autumn passage then saw a rise in numbers to a maximum of 13 on 26th September followed by regular sightings in October, usually of one or two, but there were seven on 20th. Occasional singles were seen until 22nd November with just one more sighting, on 17th December.

*Honey-buzzard

Pernis apivorus

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 61 previous individuals; 11 in May, 19 in June, 11 in July, one in August, 17 in September and two in October

An adult male on 15th May was the earliest record for Fair Isle (the previous earliest were on 21st May 1966 and 2009). An adult female was seen on 25th August, just the second August record for the Isle following one in 1971. The seventh consecutive year of records for the Isle makes this the best run for the species in FIBO history.



Plate 74. Honey-buzzard, Hill Dyke, 25th August 2019.
© Max Hellicar

Sparrowhawk

Accipiter nisus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A protracted spring passage saw records on 31 dates from 28th March to 30th May, all singles other than two on both 16th April and 30th May, with a late bird then from 8th–10th June. The first returning bird was on 27th August and then one to three were recorded on 14 dates in September. A quiet October saw no more than two on 12 dates until the last of the year on 26th.

Marsh Harrier

Circus aeruginosus

Rare migrant; 57 previous records, with 45 in spring (mostly April–May but three in both March and June) and 12 in autumn (mostly in August and September, with two October and one in July)

An immature male on 7th May was a day later than the first record in 2018, whilst a female on 3rd–7th June was the sixth record for this month (following the fourth and fifth in 2018). The third autumn record in four years involved an immature present from 9th–16th September.

Hen Harrier

Circus cyaneus

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Single 2cy males passed through on 14th and 24th May, a good showing for the spring. It was also a very productive autumn with a ringtail on 27th September followed by another on 4th–6th October that was joined by a male on 5th. Further ringtails followed on 19th–20th October, 6th–12th November and on 24th December. The latter individual was present until the end of the year and, although there are occasional winter records, this appears to be the first to attempt to overwinter on the Isle.



Plate 75. Hen Harrier, Pund, 5th October 2019. © Brendan Doe

*Black Kite

Milvus migrans

Vagrant; two previous records (May and June)

One seen over Ward Hill on 19th April at around 10:40 hrs was present for less than 20 minutes before departing high to the north-east, with presumably the same bird being relocated on Unst, Shetland on 20th April. Having been reported on Mainland Shetland on 22nd and 24th April, what was almost certainly the same individual then reappeared on Fair Isle on 28th April where it was last seen at 05:15 hrs on 1st May. During its stay, it was seen apparently eating a Rabbit near Hunds Heelor and appeared to avoid the ever-present threat of Fulmar oiling that befalls many visiting large raptors.

White-tailed Eagle

Haliaeetus albicilla

One pair formerly bred until sometime between 1825–40 and an unsuccessful reintroduction attempted (1968), but now vagrant; 15 records (12 in spring, three in autumn); in 1935, 1949 then 13 since 1981, at least four of which have known to have been birds released as part of Scottish reintroduction projects

An untagged immature bird moved south on 27th May, a beautiful day with excellent visibility, with Shetland and Orkney both clearly visible from Fair Isle. In contrast to the usual panic caused by these 'flying barn doors' this individual attracted the attention of just a single Great Black-backed Gull as it circled over North Light, before seemingly gaining too much height as it moved over the Isle to bother any of the Isle's other birds.

*Buzzard

Buteo buteo

Rare spring and autumn migrant

One moved north over Landberg on 14th May and one was at Ditfield on 27th May. A moulting adult on 1st September had previously been seen over Shetland earlier in the day. Sightings have become scarcer on Fair Isle in recent years and these three represent the best annual total since 2011.

Long-eared Owl

Asio otus

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

The first January record since a wintering bird in 2016 saw one in the Chapel Plantation on 10th. Spring passage began on 10th–12th April, with three on the latter date, then from 20th April to 9th May there were almost daily sightings of up to two, involving at least three individuals. Two late spring migrants involved one in the Shirva area from 22nd May to 8th June and another at the Obs from 30th May to 17th June. Autumn passage was rather quiet, being restricted to up to two regularly from 17th–26th October, probably involving at least four individuals, a single on 1st–2nd November and a late bird on 1st and 6th December.

Short-eared Owl

Asio flammeus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A scatter of spring sightings involved singles on 14th and 24th–30th April, eight dates in May and 5th–8th June. Summer records are not unusual and there were sightings on 13th and 22nd July. A strong autumn showing saw virtually daily sightings from 24th September to 2nd November, with numbers rising throughout early October to a peak of 23 on 10th, the highest count since the record of 33 in October 2015. A late migrant was at the airstrip on 19th November, then birds on 5th–7th and 25th December provided the second consecutive year of records for this month.



Plate 76. Short-eared Owl, Roskillie, 5th October 2019. © Brendan Doe



Plate 77. Hoopoe, Bunes, 23rd April 2019. © Max Hellicar

*Hoopoe

Upupa epops

Vagrant; 41 previous records (26 in spring, 15 in autumn)

One was on Bunes from 23rd–30th April, with presumably the same bird at the Raevas on 1st May. It was the first since 2016, the ninth to arrive in April (most records are in May). It was one of the highlights of the early spring period as it often showed well feeding on the short turf of the north and mid-sections of Bunes, in contrast to this species' reputation for often being elusive and tricky to catch up with on Fair Isle.

Wryneck

Jynx torquilla

Regular spring and autumn migrant

The earliest spring arrival since 2014 involved one at Quoy and Midway on 28th–29th April, with presumably the same bird at Taing on 1st May. One lingered around the Obs on 9th–12th May, with a new individual trapped in the Gully on 15th May. An average autumn passage began with one at Ditfield on 5th September, with three more arriving on 8th; at North Shirva, Skadan and Haa, and singles on 9th–10th probably involving at least one of these individuals. The fifth of the autumn was present around the traps on 27th–28th September.

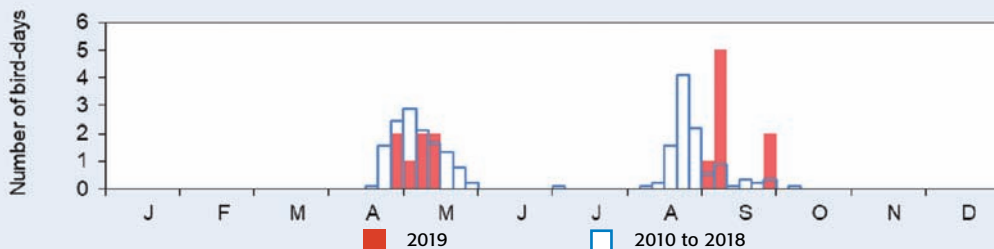


Figure 11. Distribution of Wryneck records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Kestrel

Falco tinnunculus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

The bird that arrived on 11th November 2018 was probably responsible for all sightings until 23rd March and became the first to successfully overwinter since 2005/06. It favoured the north of the Isle, where it was obviously able to find enough food to survive, despite the fairly barren appearance of this area in the winter months. A male on 4th–6th April was the first spring migrant, with another on 23rd April, then irregular sightings through to 17th June, usually of singles, but there were two on five scattered dates. Autumn passage began on 1st August, with singles on seven further dates through the month. Regular sightings followed in September, with peaks of seven on 10th and 27th and up to four were seen in October until the last on 15th.



Plate 78. Kestrel with Starling, Meadow Burn, 27th September 2019.
© Sarah Harris

Merlin

Falco columbarius

Regular spring and autumn migrant, small numbers overwinter

A typical scatter of records in the first three months of the year suggested at least two birds had overwintered. Up to two in April until 25th were the last of the spring until a late bird on 8th–10th June. Autumn passage began slightly early, with one on 14th August, with up to two by the end of the month. There were scattered records in September until the end of the month when sightings became more regular and numbers rose to four. There were almost daily records of up to four throughout October and into early November, with at least two remaining until the end of the year.

*Hobby

Falco subbuteo

Rare visitor; 65 previous records, 52 in May–June, six in July and seven in autumn (August–September)

The third year in a row to produce two spring occurrences saw one linger around Meoness on 2nd–3rd June and another wide-ranging individual on 9th–15th June.

Peregrine

Falco peregrinus

Regular spring and autumn migrant; bred regularly until 1973 then again in 2008–09 and 2013–14 and suspected to have attempted in 2015

There were just occasional sightings in the first three months of the year, with sightings becoming more regular from early April as a pair appeared to establish territory on the west coast, being seen to eat a Puffin together and carry out a food pass on a separate occasion. The female appeared oiled from 21st April however, and sightings became less regular after this, although they continued throughout the summer. More regular sightings from late August suggested migrants moving through and the peak count for the year was three from 8th–13th October. At least two were still present in November and an adult male was observed occasionally in December.



Plate 79. Brown Shrike, Midway, 13th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

***Brown Shrike**

Lanius cristatus

Vagrant; one previous record

The previous Fair Isle record, on 21st October 2000, was just the second for the UK, but by the end of 2018 there had been a total of 25 British records amassed, so one at Schoolton on 13th October was arguably overdue. It was found whilst observers tried to relocate an 'Eastern Stonechat' and eventually went on to show well.

Red-backed Shrike

Lanius collurio

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A relatively quiet spring saw six birds passing through; a female at the Gully on 19th–20th May, a male at the Obs on 21st–23rd May, and females at Ditfield on 21st May, Vaadal on 8th–9th June, Quoy on 10th June and the Parks on 18th June, with ringing helping to establish the numbers involved. A reasonable autumn showing saw August sightings at Skerryholm on 17th–23rd and Setter on 26th, and September records at Bull's Park on 10th–11th and Swarzie Geo on 24th–25th, all of which were 1cy.

Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring

The first spring record since 2016 (there were no records at all in 2018, the first blank year since 2009) involved one found at Pund on 9th April, which roamed the south of the Isle until 11th April.

Jackdaw

Corvus monedula

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

Records were restricted to the spring, with a reasonable passage seeing three at Barkland on 12th April and further singles on 20th April, 1st–6th May and 21st–23rd May.

Rook

Corvus frugilegus

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

Decent spring passage began with two from 22nd–24th March, with one still on 25th. There were then records on 18 dates from 7th April to 2nd May, with a maximum of five on 20th, although probably at least eight birds were involved. Further sightings in May were of three on 9th, up to two from 14th–16th and a single on 24th. Autumn passage was restricted to two dates, but the seven on 13th and 16 on 29th October were unusually large counts, the latter being the most seen in this season since 1977.



Plate 80. Rook, Barkland, 24th March 2019. © David Parnaby

Carrion Crow

Corvus corone

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

The three seemingly resident birds remained, two around South Light and another in the Pund area. The first migrants were noted from 11th April, rising to ten on 20th. Small numbers of migrants continued to be noted, increasing to 25 on 12th May then dropping to five before rising again to 21 on 21st. Up to four lingered through the summer, including a pair still holding territory on Malcolm's Head. The presence of summering birds made detecting the occasional autumn migrant difficult, although up to five birds were recorded on a couple of occasions in September and there were an additional five migrants from 19th October. By the end of the year, a familiar pattern was observed with two birds around South Light and another around the airstrip area.

Hooded Crow

Corvus cornix

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

There were 15 noted in January and spring passage saw up to eight migrants in May. The breeding pair at Busta were on eggs by 14th May and three or four other territories appeared to be occupied across the Isle. With roaming family parties present in the autumn, detecting migrants was difficult, although a flock of 16 in September may have come from outwith the Isle, and in December there was a count of 21 on 24th.

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

The only records were on 23rd April and 1st (two), 7th and 23rd May.

Raven

Corvus corax

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

Although present all year, there were no migrants noted, although some may have slipped through undetected. Two pairs were displaying in the spring, but the only nesting attempt was at Gunnawark, where four chicks fledged on 3rd June. An unusual feature of the late autumn and winter period was a family party that took up residence in the south of the Isle, regularly feeding around South Light and sheep-feeding troughs.

Waxwing

Bombycilla garrulus

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

There was just a scatter of records in the autumn, with the first, an adult male on 12th–14th October, the earliest arrival since 2004. Further records followed on 20th October (two), 3rd–9th November and 27th November. Two then arrived on 26th December and settled into the Schoolhouse garden where they fed on apples until 28th, with one raising hopes it would stay for the 2020 year list as it lingered until 30th, but unfortunately it was not seen after this date.



Plate 81. Waxwing, Haa, 12th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

*Woodlark

Lullula arborea

Rare migrant; 56 previous records since 1948 (23 in spring, 33 in autumn)

One was found at Hoilgoini on 29th October before moving to Busta then being refound on top of Ward Hill. After a run of four in the seven years from 2006 to 2012, this was the first record since then.

Skylark

Alauda arvensis

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

Seven on 14th February were the first of the year, with numbers rising rapidly a week later to approximately 100 on 23rd, with singing birds first noted two days later. By 5th March there were at least 220, with passage seeing some large flocks building up at the end of the month, including 180 at Barkland on 27th, on a day when around 400 were estimated to be present across the Isle. Census counts rose to 418 on 10th April and generally fluctuated during the month between 200 and 350. Counts in May were all less than 100, with numbers settling at around 40–60 into June, as just the breeding population remained. There was no formal count of breeding numbers, but they remained

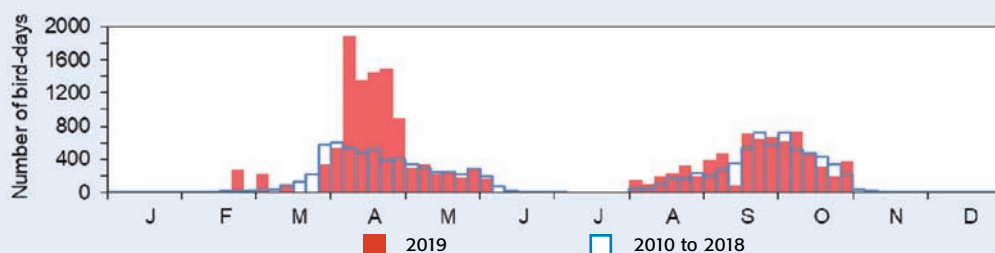


Figure 12. Distribution of Skylark records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

widespread across the Isle, and the first fledged youngsters were seen on 16th June, ten days later than in 2018. August counts were generally around 40 at the start of the month, increasing slightly during the month but not passing 100 until 5th September. Numbers climbed gradually through the month, reaching an autumn peak of 220 on 27th September. A gradual decline was noted through October, counts dropping to less than 100 after 11th, other than 104 on 21st and 100 on 27th, when birds were seen heading south off South Light. Around ten remained through the first half of November, with two or three occasionally until the end of the year.

*Shore Lark

Eremophila alpestris

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

Two found on Hoini on 6th April were the earliest spring occurrence since 1983. They remained on the Isle until 10th April, commuting between Hoini and South Green. Another individual at Gunnawark on 2nd May was on a more expected date, with presumably the same bird seen between Gunnawark and Troila on 7th May. Two flying south on 16th October with Snow Buntings was a typical autumn record.

Sand Martin

Riparia riparia

Regular spring migrant, less common in autumn

A reasonable spring passage began with one on 12th April (the latest arrival date since 2015), then 14 on 18th April, with smaller numbers regularly until 1st May. Another small arrival from 9th–21st May peaked at 11 on 14th and there were then three on 3rd June with one remaining until 7th. A couple of typical mid-summer records saw singles on 12th and 24th–25th July. One from 10th–12th August was joined by a second on the latter date and there were further singles from 28th August to 3rd September and 10th September.

Swallow

Hirundo rustica

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

Spring passage began a day later than 2018, on 12th April, although it remained light until the second week of May, when numbers started to rise to a peak of 274 on 14th, the second highest Fair Isle count, after 350 on 15th May 1997. There were smaller numbers for the rest of the month and, after 53 on 3rd June, numbers dropped away to largely just summering birds. Nest building was observed at the Water Treatment Works and School, with just the start of a platform at the latter site, but with a complete and lined nest at the former. However, the only nest which was actually utilised

was in the old stone shed in Bull's Park, from which four young fledged on 21st August, the first successful breeding since 2017. The summering birds made detecting the start of autumn passage trickier, but 200 on 27th August was the largest-ever autumn count for the Isle. There were no more counts of over 19 for the rest of the year though, with the last seen on 12th October.

House Martin

Delichon urbicum

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

After up to three from 18th–20th April, there were no more until 8th May, which saw the start of regular sightings through to 22nd June, with peaks during this time of 30 on 17th May (the highest count since 2011) and 27 on 3rd June. Mid-summer sightings involved one from 1st–15th July and two on 21st July with autumn records restricted to up to three from both 28th–29th August and 25th September to 1st October.

*Red-rumped Swallow

Cecropis daurica

Vagrant; 12 previous records, 11 in spring, one in autumn

One at the base of Malcolm's Head then South Harbour on 21st May showed well at the latter site and made it four consecutive springs to produce a record.

Wood Warbler

Phylloscopus sibilatrix

Regular spring and autumn migrant

The only records in the spring involved two from 18th–20th May, including one singing at the Obs on the latter date. One in South Raeva on 10th August kicked off autumn passage that continued with regular sightings from 18th August to 1st September involving at least two birds around the middle of the Isle, with the last of the year around Houll on 10th–15th September.



Plate 82. Wood Warbler, Midway, 18th August 2019.
© Max Hellicar

Yellow-browed Warbler

Phylloscopus inornatus

Regular autumn migrant

One in the Gully on 1st May was a probably overdue first spring record for the Isle, although interestingly, it came after a poor autumn passage in 2018. Autumn passage began on the latest date since 2012, with one in Easter Lothar in the evening of 21st September. It preceded sightings through to 18th October, with only four blank days in this period. The heaviest passage was during 23rd–27th September, with numbers peaking at 12 on the latter date. In October, there were high counts of nine on 4th and 14th. An overall estimate of 42 individuals was higher than 2018, but still well short of the 'glory days' of 2015 and 2016.

*Pallas's Warbler

Phylloscopus proregulus

Rare autumn visitor; 42 previous records, most in October, apart from two in November

What had to have been the most overdue bird on the Fair Isle list finally made its first appearance since 2005 when one was found in Dog Geo on 14th October. The following day it was at Haa and Burkle before heading up the Chapel Brae and vanishing somewhere on the island top.



Plate 83. Pallas's Warbler, Dog Geo, 14th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

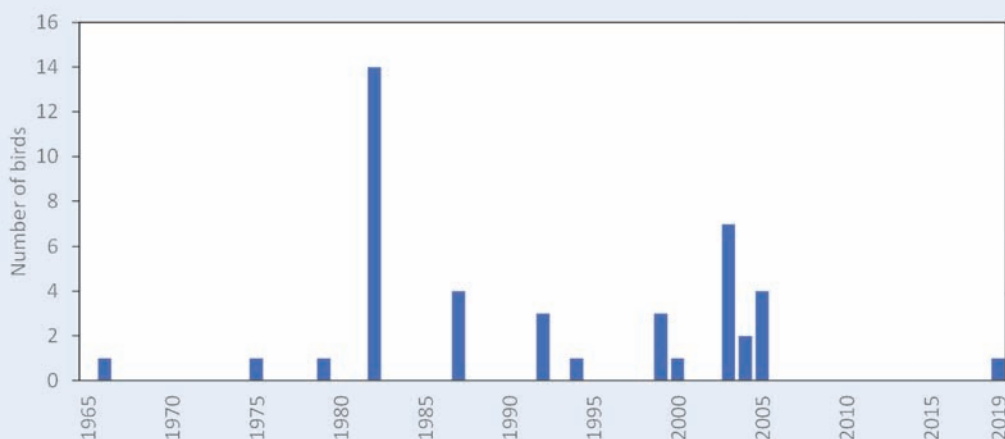


Figure 13. Annual occurrences of Pallas's Warbler on Fair Isle. Although always an erratic visitor, the 13 blank years since the previous bird is the longest gap in records since the first Pallas's Warbler for Fair Isle was found in 1966 (which at the time was only around the 20th British record).

*Radde's Warbler

Phylloscopus schwarzi

Vagrant; eight previous records, all in autumn (one in September, seven in October)

One was in Klinger's Geo on 17th–18th October, the latest arrival date for Fair Isle (one previously lingered until 19th October), although two-thirds of Fair Isle records have arrived in the period 10th–17th October. This is a species seemingly going through a purple patch on Fair Isle, with this representing the third record in five years.



Plate 84. Radde's Warbler, Klinger's Geo, 18th October 2019. © Kevin Kelly

*Dusky Warbler

Phylloscopus fuscatus

Vagrant; 19 previous records, 18 in autumn (September to November) and one in spring (May)

An initially elusive individual was around Shirva on 14th October, leading observers a merry dance as it moved from field to field favouring long grass, before good views were eventually obtained. There have now been seven records in the last seven years.

Willow Warbler

Phylloscopus trochilus

Common spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage spanned 13th April to 7th June, with the largest numbers in April, including peaks of 77 on 24th and 64 on 27th. Counts in May were generally in single figures other than a spell in mid-month that reached a peak of 43 on 20th. Autumn passage began with an adult and juvenile on 1st August, with numbers generally in single figures through the month until the last week when counts rose to 22 on 27th. The peak autumn count was in September, with 31 on 8th rising to 32 the following day but there was then a rapid decrease until the last on 17th October. Most remained unraced, but birds resembling 'Northern Willow Warblers' *P. t. acredula* were noted on 29th April (three), 18th–20th May (up to three), 8th September and 6th October.

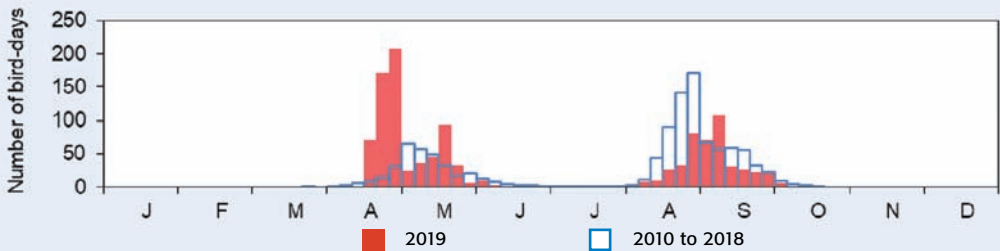


Figure 14. Distribution of Willow Warbler records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After the first of the year in the Gully on 29th March, there then followed two on 3rd April, eight the following day and an impressive early arrival of 43 on 5th. Fluctuating counts through the month included the spring peak of 44 on 18th and, although there were still 26 at the end of April, there were no more than 11 throughout May, with spring migration petering out in early June. There were at least four birds lingering throughout the summer (the tenth consecutive year of summering on the island) and, although singing was noted, there were no signs of any breeding attempt taking place. Migrants started to trickle through from the end of August, with the first double-figure count not until 26th September. Totals remained 14 or less until mid-October, when an arrival over 14th–18th saw counts rise to a peak of 53 on 17th, before they dropped back down to single figures from 21st. Up to five were present in early November with one lingering until 26th November.

‘Siberian Chiffchaff’ *P. c. tristis*

Regular autumn and rare spring migrant

Although the totals in the main Chiffchaff section include all birds, attempts are made to subspecifically identify as many individuals as possible. ‘Siberian’ birds (including those not heard to call, but which match the expected appearance of the subspecies based on several individuals confirmed by DNA analysis) were noted almost daily from 4th–23rd October, with a maximum of four on 14th. A further arrival from 28th October saw numbers climb to six during the last two days of the month, with smaller numbers into November and five (including three presumed new arrivals) on 6th, with one vocal bird lingering around the Stackhoull area until 26th November.

‘Scandinavian Chiffchaff’ *P. c. abietinus*

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

A bird on 5th April was thought to be one of the ‘eastern’ subspecies, but didn’t appear to be a classic *tristis*, so may have been of this taxon. There were others in the autumn that matched the appearance associated with ‘Scandinavian Chiffchaff’, including one on 9th, four on 15th and three on 29th October.

***Greenish Warbler**

Phylloscopus trochiloides

Rare migrant; 55 previous records with 44 in autumn (August–September) and 11 in spring (eight in June, two in July and a single in May)

A smart individual was discovered feeding in the Wild Angelica around Midway on the typical date of 27th August; it showed well as it moved between here and Shirva.



Plate 85. Greenish Warbler, Midway, 27th August 2019. © Max Hellicar

***Arctic Warbler**

Phylloscopus borealis

Rare migrant; 97 previous records, most in August and September, also recorded in June (two), July (four) and October (seven)

An adult at the Obs from 13th–16th July was the first in this month since 2002. It was the first individual in the UK since the species was removed from the BBRC list at the end of 2018 (although it had been seen on Foula the previous day), and it seems quite fitting that it came to the location that has been responsible for almost a quarter of the British records to date.

Plate 86. Yellow-browed Warbler, Schoolton,
13th October 2019. © Steve Arlow



Plate 87. Willow Warbler, Midway,
18th August 2019. © Max Hellicar



Plate 88. 'Northern Willow Warbler', Pund,
20th May 2019. © David Parnaby



Plate 89. 'Siberian Chiffchaff', Wester Lothar,
6th October 2019. © Brendan Doe



Plate 90. Arctic Warbler, Obs,
13th July 2019. © David Parnaby



Plate 91. Raddé's Warbler, Klinger's Geo,
17th October 2019. © Steve Arlow



Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

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

Spring passage saw up to four daily from 22nd April to 2nd May, one on 6th May then daily census records from 12th–26th May, peaking at eight on 15th May, with scattered records of one or two until 12th June. The first July record since 2011 involved one in the Meadow Burn from 28th until 3rd August, with the rest of autumn passage restricted to up to two from 17th–19th August and a single on 4th September.

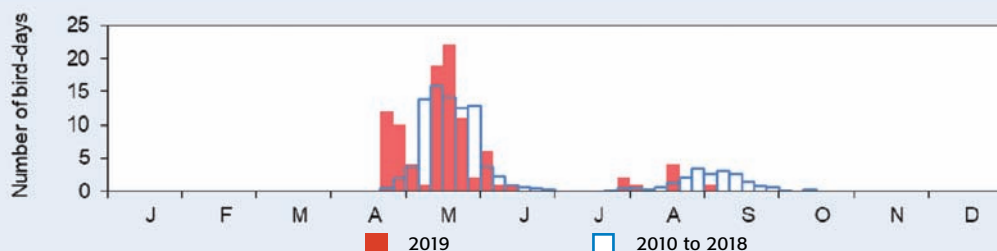


Figure 15. Distribution of Sedge Warbler records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

*Blyth's Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus dumetorum

Rare migrant; 51 previous records, 36 in autumn (August–October) and 15 in spring (May–June)

The third consecutive year with a spring record saw one trapped in the Plantation on the typical date of 5th June. There was just one in the autumn, an initially elusive bird at Shirva on 18th August (the third-earliest autumn arrival date) which went on to show well in the Schoolhouse garden on 20th–21st.

Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Regular migrant, more common in autumn

One on 26th April at Quoy was the earliest Fair Isle record by two days, with more typical spring records falling on 15th May at Burkle and a singing male in the Plantation from 7th–11th June. The earliest autumn arrival since 2008 was in the Meadow Burn from 30th July and preceded regular sightings throughout August and September that peaked at three on 7th, 17th and 30th August and 1st September. There were October records on 6th and two from 15th–17th, with one remaining until 18th, the latest record since 2005.



Plate 92. Reed Warbler, Walli Burn, 15th October 2019.
© Steve Arlow

Marsh Warbler

Acrocephalus palustris

Scarce migrant, mostly in spring (typically late May and June, occasionally July), rarer in autumn (mostly August and September with fewer in October)

Although the species has been showing a trend for increasing numbers in the spring, 2019 provided the first blank in this season since 1993. There were two in the autumn, with an adult in the Plantation and Gully from 29th July to 3rd August and one around Schoolton and Quoy from 30th August to 1st September.

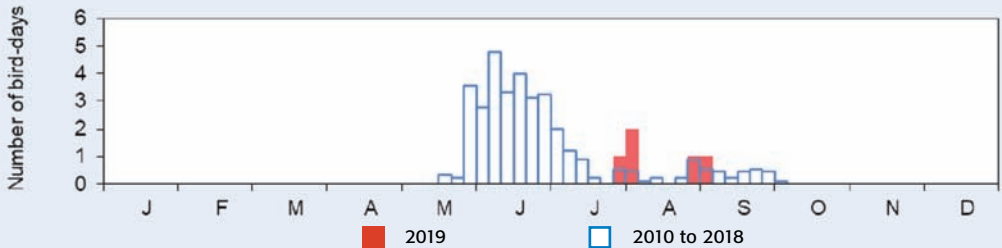


Figure 16. Distribution of Marsh Warbler records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

*Eastern Olivaceous Warbler

Iduna pallida

Vagrant; three previous records, two in June and one in September

One at the Obs on 16th June was trapped to confirm the identification. Remarkably, it was found whilst trying to relocate the River Warbler at the same site. Although the bill width was greater than expected for this species, and plumage wear meant some other identification features were more ambiguous than ideal, DNA confirmed the in-the-hand identification. It moved to Schoolton the following day and remained there until 20th June, although usually elusively. Previous records were in 1995, 2009 and 2011, with the previous June records arriving on 5th and 21st.



Plate 93. Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Obs, 16th June 2019. © Sarah Harris

***Melodious Warbler**

Hippolais polyglotta

Vagrant; 19 previous records, six in spring (one in May, five in June) and 13 in autumn (August and September)

Only the second spring record since 1990 involved one at Stackhoull and Lower Stoneybrek on 4th June, which was trapped and ringed to confirm the identification. It then reappeared in the Plantation on 7th–8th June.

Icterine Warbler

Hippolais icterina

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A very quiet spring saw just two records, with one at Setter on 20th May and another trapped in the Plantation on 8th June (alongside the Melodious Warbler) that was then at Stackhoull and Schoolton on 11th–12th. Autumn passage began early with an adult trapped at the Plantation on 28th July, another adult trapped there the following day (which went on to linger at Chalet until the end of the month) and a 1cy trapped at Burkle on 31st July. There have been a handful of previous July records (including individuals in 2015 and 2018), but three in a year is unprecedented. More expected autumn records involved two on 15th August (on Bunes and in South Harbour), one in the Gully on 28th August and one at Chalet on 9th September.

***Lanceolated Warbler**

Locustella lanceolata

Scarce autumn migrant; 97 previous records (between 4th September and 1st November)

An elusive *Locustella* in Gilsetter on 15th October was trapped to establish the identification and proved to be the only Lanceolated Warbler of the year. The latest arrival since 2013, it was in good condition, weighing 10.9 g, and was aged as a 1cy.

Grasshopper Warbler

Locustella naevia

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Two on 22nd April were slightly earlier than average, although ten days later than the first in 2018, with further April records on 23rd and 27th. Records of one or two on nine dates in May included one at the Obs that lingered until 1st June. One in the Wirvie Burn on 28th August and one in the Walli Burn on 29th–30th August saw the start of autumn passage, but there were no more until 22nd September, with sightings around the Meadow Burn area on four further dates until the end of the month possibly relating to the same individual.

***River Warbler**

Locustella fluviatilis

Vagrant; 17 previous records, nine in May–June (one lingering until July) and eight in September–October

The first record since 2013 was found at the Obs on 16th June, where it was seen briefly in the morning before being trapped in the afternoon. The only later sighting was on 18th June when it was seen in the Gully, as it was typically elusive. It maintained Fair Isle's excellent record for this species, with over a third of the UK's 47 accepted records (to the end of 2018) coming from the site that provided the first two.



Figure 17. Annual and seasonal occurrence of River Warblers on Fair Isle.



Plate 94a–b. River Warbler, Obs, 16th June 2019. © Max Hellicar

Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Common spring and autumn migrant

A male at Schoolton on 4th April was relatively early, with regular records steadily increasing to 22 on 24th, the highest spring count since 2015. Almost daily records in May rose to 16 on 20th and scattered records continued to 21st June. Records throughout September from 3rd didn't rise to double figures until 12 on 29th, then dropped again to less than ten throughout early October, until the main autumn arrival from 15th–20th, which peaked at 54 on 16th. Regular records of up to five continued through the rest of the month and scattered singles were seen in November until two on 19th, which were the last of the year.



Plate 95. Blackcaps, Haa, 18th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Garden Warbler

Sylvia borin

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage started on the earliest date since 2012, with one on 29th April and there were then just scattered records from 8th May until 18th June, all singles apart from two on 24th May and 11th June. Although autumn passage began in July in the last two years, one at Stackhoull on 29th was the earliest arrival since 2006. Records on 16 days in August included four on 10th before a more concerted arrival at the end of the month that peaked at nine on 28th. Regular records continued through to the last of the year on 3rd October, all of three or less other than an arrival in mid-September that peaked at nine on 10th.

Barred Warbler

Sylvia nisoria

Regular autumn migrant, vagrant in spring (four records)

One at Schoolton on 1st–8th August and another at the North Haven then the Obs from 1st–5th August were the joint earliest-ever records for Fair Isle. Another arrived at Schoolton on 15th August and roamed gardens until 25th. Two more arrived in the evening of 23rd, at Burkle and the Obs and another new arrival was at Troila Geo on 25th, with the last of the month on 30th at Burkle. September saw another four birds, with individuals at Stackhoull on 3rd–16th, Lower Leogh on 8th, Schoolton then Haa on 8th–10th and Chalet on 9th and October saw records at Schoolton on 3rd and 17th, with another also at Quoy on the latter date, bringing the autumn total to 14 individuals.

Lesser Whitethroat

Sylvia curruca

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

An early arrival saw up to five in late April from 23rd and there were then regular occurrences to 15th June. Although there were just singles in early May, a concerted arrival in the second half of the month saw the highest spring count since 2008, when 32 were present on 20th. Numbers dropped to single figures from 22nd and there were no more than three seen in June. Records on nine dates in August from 15th were of singles, other than two on 26th, and regular sightings in September peaked at five on 8th. In early October there were regular records until 6th, peaking at four on 3rd, up to two from 14th–18th and a single on 29th–31st, which was the last of the year.

‘Siberian Lesser Whitethroat’ *S. c. blythi*

Individuals on 1st and 29th–31st October were identified as this subspecies. It is likely that many of the Lesser Whitethroats recorded in the autumn are of this form, particularly those later in October, when they may well make up the majority of records.

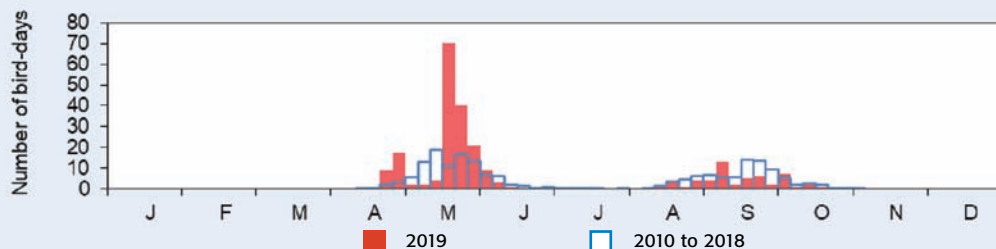


Figure 18. Distribution of Lesser Whitethroat records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Whitethroat

Sylvia communis

Frequent spring migrant, less common in autumn

Spring passage began relatively early with up to two from 24th April to 1st May. There were then regular sightings from 8th May through to 4th June, mostly just one or two, but a mid-May arrival peaked at 22 on 20th, the largest spring count since 2009. A later migrant was seen on 16th June. Autumn passage was restricted to one or two on ten dates from 17th August to 9th September, other than two on 2nd October.

*Subalpine Warbler

Sylvia cantillans

Rare migrant; 99 previous records (95 in spring and four in autumn). Most currently unraced, although at least 18 thought to be 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' S. c. cantillans/albistriata

'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'

S. c. cantillans/albistriata

A male of this subspecies at Lower Leogh on 9th June put in two more appearances as it lingered elusively down the Isle, being seen on 11th June at Lower Stoneybrek and 19th June at Schoolton.

Unidentified Subalpine Warbler

A male showed well at Haa on 13th May and was considered to probably be an 'Eastern' bird. However, it refused to show its outer tail pattern and remained silent, so it was considered safest to leave it as a 'subalpine warbler sp?', especially as the evening light made it difficult to judge the exact tone of the underparts.



Plate 96. 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler', Lower Leogh, 9th June 2019. © Chris Dodd

*Firecrest

Regulus ignicapilla

Vagrant; nine previous records (three in April–May, six in October–November)

A very smart individual (as all Firecrests surely are) was found on the clifftop at Kroga Geo on 15th October before heading inland and wandered around the Isle until 17th. Half of the Fair Isle records of this species have occurred in the last eight years and more can hopefully be expected as the species spreads north.



Plate 97. Firecrest, South Raeva, 17th October 2019. © Kevin Kelly

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A relatively quiet spring passage began on 24th March with then a small arrival in early April seeing numbers rise to 13 on 5th and another wave later in the month seeing a spring peak of 19 on 21st, and then scattered records until 9th May. Small numbers started to move south from 29th August, although regular records throughout September didn't reach double figures until 24th September. The two main arrivals saw 97 on 5th and 136 on 16th October, although numbers tailed off rapidly and after 22nd the only other record was a single on 30th October.



Plate 98. Goldcrest, Schoolton, 13th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes

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

The first record of singing was at the Obs on 21st March and mapping singing birds resulted in a total of 34 territories being identified, four less than in 2018. At least eight of these fledged chicks (although the actual total will presumably have been higher), with the first noted on 16th June at Finnequoy (four days earlier than 2018). Most of the fledged broods were noted in August and September, possibly suggesting first broods may have been less successful. Presumed migrants were noted on 28th April and 24th–25th September, although there were no specific counts.

*Treecreeper

Certhia familiaris

Vagrant: ten previous records; seven in October and singles April, September and December, all thought to have been the nominate race 'Northern Treecreeper' C. f. familiaris

Just the second spring record for the Isle concerned an individual of the subspecies *C. f. familiaris* feeding on the golf course at the Skadan on 9th April. It relocated to the more typical habitat (for Treecreepers on Fair Isle at least!) of South Raeva from 10th–12th. Although still a very rare bird on Fair Isle, this represents the third record in six years.

Starling

Sturnus vulgaris

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

The first fledged young were noted on 3rd June, a day earlier than 2018, and mass fledging was noted across the Isle on 7th June. Active migration was noted on several dates in late autumn, with flocks seen moving south off South Light on 12th, 13th, 27th and 28th October and 4th November.

Ring Ouzel

Turdus torquatus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A male in Gilsetter on 4th April marked the start of a protracted spring passage with birds recorded regularly until 8th June. Counts were of up to four, other than a spell of heavier passage in late April that saw a maximum of ten from 24th–26th. A singing male in Gunnawark on 8th May was a pleasant addition to the usual spring sounds of the west cliffs. The first of the autumn was in the Wirvie Burn on 1st September, the earliest arrival since one on the same date in 1963. The next were singles on the more expected dates of 24th–26th September, then nine on 27th. The main autumn passage was, typically, in October with two waves of arrivals. From 6th–12th numbers peaked at 31 on 8th, then up to 15 were recorded from 14th–26th, with the last of the year a tired male at Barkland on 3rd November.



Plate 99. Ring Ouzel, Hoini, 8th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Blackbird

Turdus merula

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

There were maximum counts of 17 in January and 25 in February as reasonable numbers overwintered, with counts dwindling in March, when no more than nine were recorded. Numbers started to creep up in April, but with a spring peak on 12th of just 47, and just single figures in May until 21st, including a male singing at the Obs on 16th. An arrival in late May peaked at five on 31st but after 3rd June, the only other summer records were singles on 19th June and 9th July. Autumn passage was very slow to get started, with one on 23rd September the only record of the month. Three on 5th October had risen to 63 on 8th and then, after a lull, climbed again to the year's peak of 296 on 16th, with numbers dropping away rapidly after this. Small arrivals continued into early November and by the end of the month, at least 30 were regularly recorded in the south of the Isle, although numbers in December had dropped to generally less than 20.



Plate 100. Fieldfare, Homisdale, 19th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Fieldfare

Turdus pilaris

Common spring and autumn migrant, often overwinters

Scattered counts in January peaked at 13 and there were at least 30 on 7th February, suggesting a winter arrival. There were no more than 15 in March and April started very quietly, before a fall saw 58 on 12th, with smaller numbers until another fall in the last week of the month that peaked at 249 on 26th. There were still 49 on 1st May, then just single-figure counts during the month until a rather late individual lingered to 10th June. One at Schoolton then the Obs from 11th July was an unusual summer arrival, and it continued to be seen irregularly throughout August. The first returning migrants were seen from 21st September, with double-figure counts from 10th October rising to 61 by 6th then dropping away again before 327 arrived on 16th. There were no more than 62 for the rest of the month and arrivals in November included 188 on 3rd and 140 on 25th. Reasonable numbers continued to be seen to the end of the year, peaking at 60 on 8th December.

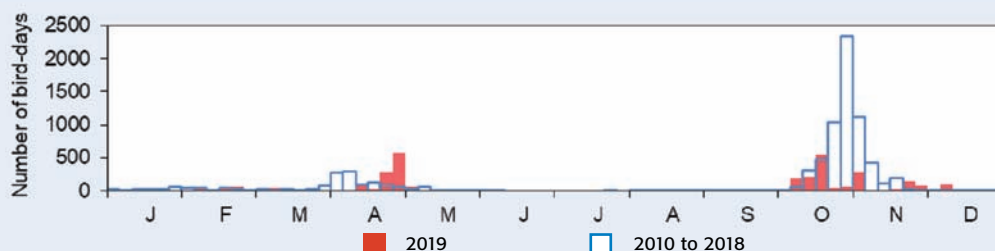


Figure 19. Distribution of Fieldfare records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Redwing

Turdus iliacus

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

There were regular counts of up to 30 in January and mostly up to 20 in February, but an arrival of Icelandic birds, *T. i. coburnii* in the first week of the month saw a peak of 50 on 7th. Numbers dwindled from mid-month and there were records of up to three on just 12 dates in March. Spring passage saw birds regularly recorded from 2nd April to 28th May, with a clear peak in the second week of April peaking at 124 on 12th. Birds moved through rapidly after this, with no more than

27 seen during the rest of the month and just single figures from 22nd April. One appeared singing in the Gully on 19th June, which was the only sighting of the summer. After six on 23rd September, numbers rose to 113 by the end of the month and a larger wave of arrivals in early October saw up to 628 by 6th. Numbers dropped as low as 158 on 12th before rising steadily to 830 on 15th, then a whopping 12,820 on 16th, the highest count since 2000, with the sheer number of birds across the south of the Isle being quite something to behold. Numbers dropped to 5,253 the following day, then 2,200 on 18th as they rapidly moved through, although there were still 1,570 on 24th, with 420 on the last day of the month. Although there were few island-wide counts in November, around 120 were present for most of the month, with a further arrival on 28th seeing 300 in total. There were still up to 120 in early December, and 40–70 were regularly recorded until the end of the year as larger numbers than usual overwintered.

Song Thrush

Turdus philomelos

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

There were up to four recorded through January and no real spring passage was noted until early April, when fluctuating numbers continued to increase towards a peak later in the month and a high of 56 was recorded on 24th. There were just scattered sightings throughout May, until the last of the spring on 28th. Small numbers began moving from 18th September, with a large fall in the last week of the month seeing a high of 192 on 27th. Numbers dropped to 20 by the start of October, but the month saw several waves of arrivals, including high counts of 186 on 8th and 686 on 16th (the highest count since 2014), after which numbers gradually declined until a smaller arrival on 30th saw numbers rise again to 208. Counts were higher than expected during November, including a count of 46 on 19th and, although numbers had declined by December, at least five were regularly recorded in the south of the Isle, suggesting a larger wintering population than usual.

Mistle Thrush

Turdus viscivorus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A reasonable spring passage saw records on 16 dates from 4th–28th April, with a maximum of five on 5th and 9th and a late single on 20th May. As with other thrushes, there was strong passage in October, with singles on 6th and 8th before daily sightings from 15th–31st, with a peak of ten on 18th, the second highest-ever autumn count. After one on 2nd November, there were two on Hoini on 9th, with one remaining there until 19th. A late migrant was at Burkle on 29th November, then one on School Brae on 19th December was the first record for this month since 2004.

Spotted Flycatcher

Muscicapa striata

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

The first two on 14th May were a day later than the first arrival in 2018 and there were then regular sightings throughout the rest of the month, all of seven or less other than 19th–20th, with numbers rising to a spring peak of 29 on the latter date, the highest count since 2012. Up to three were seen in June until 26th. Autumn passage was typically light, with one on 29th July the earliest autumn arrival since 2015, then up to two during 26th–29th August with singles on 8th–10th and 20th September, before two on 28th September, with one remaining the following day.

Robin

Erithacus rubecula

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

Three were present through the first winter period, with a couple around the traps in early March suggesting some light movement. The main spring passage took place in April, with 47 arriving on 4th, increasing to 85 the following day. Counts fluctuated throughout the rest of the month with further arrivals indicated by 85 on 10th, 143 on 17th (the highest count of the spring) and 96 on 24th. Numbers dwindled rapidly through May, with no more than ten after 11th and two or three summered, although there were no signs of breeding activity. One at Steensi Geo on 5th September was probably the first autumn migrant, with a fall from 23rd seeing numbers rise to 30 on 28th, before dropping back down to single figures. October saw an increase to 60 on 8th and then another wave of arrivals brought 251 on 15th, rising to 407 the following day, the highest autumn count since 2000. There were still 399 the following day, then counts dwindled throughout the month, although there were still 60 on 31st. Reasonable numbers remained scattered across the Isle throughout November, although without daily census there were no exact counts. At least six remained throughout December.

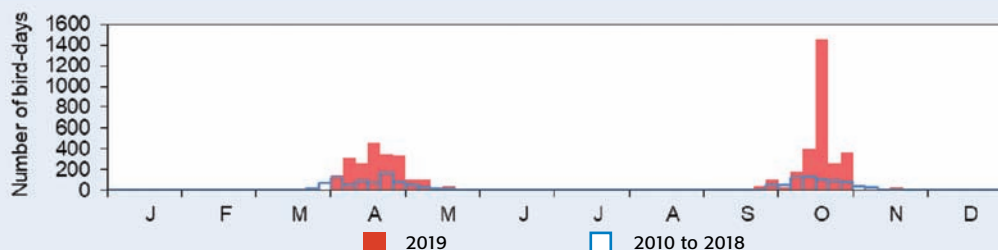


Figure 20. Distribution of Robin records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Bluethroat

Luscinia svecica

Regular migrant, commonest in spring and scarce in autumn. Most that are identified to subspecies are 'Red-spotted Bluethroat' L. s. svecica, although there are 15 previous records of 'White-spotted Bluethroats' presumed L. s. cyanecula. These include 11 males, 2 females that arrived at the same time as white-spotted males and two females whose arrival dates suggested this subspecies, which tends to arrive in March or April

A good spring for the species began with a male at Chalet on the very early date of 13th April. It appeared to lack any spot at all (a feature shown by some *L. s. cyanecula*), so was presumably a 'white-spotted' subspecies, although the presence of an obvious male 'Red-spotted Bluethroat' on North Ronaldsay on 19th April shows that date alone isn't enough to establish subspecific identity (the earliest record of male 'Red-spot' on Fair Isle is 30th April 2014). The next records were a series of daily census sightings from 15th–26th May. Beginning with a singing male in South Harbour on 15th, there was a male around the Gully the next day, then a total of seven (including five males) on 17th that rose to 16 on 18th (including eight males), the highest count since 1988. There were still ten the next day, including a male 'White-spotted Bluethroat' photographed at the Walli Burn (male 'White-spotted' birds have also been seen on 21st May 1962 and 22nd May 1985, so the late date is not without precedence, although whether these birds involve *L. s. cyanecula* or perhaps other races such as *L. s. volgae*, which breeds in north-east Ukraine and southern European Russia,

Plate 101. Bluethroat, Double Dyke, 16th May 2019.
© Richard Cope



Plate 102. Robin, Barkland, 18th October 2019.
© Steve Arlow



Plate 103. Red-flanked Bluetail, North Gunnawark,
15th October 2019. © Steve Arlow



is not clear). Nine still on 20th included three trapped at the Obs in the morning (with another caught in Hjon Dyke, whilst two more were caught at the Obs on 21st). Numbers continued to decrease, although they included a fine singing male at Burkle on 24th–25th, with the last of the spring being a female in Gilsetter on 30th May. In similar fashion to 2018, a strong spring showing was followed by a single autumn record, with one at Lower Leogh on 15th October.

*Thrush Nightingale

Luscinia luscinia

Rare migrant; 65 previous records, 53 in spring (May–June) and 12 in autumn (August–September, with one in October)

A 2cy bird was seen briefly in the Plantation on 24th May and later trapped (alongside a Bluethroat) in the Vaadal. It lingered in the Plantation until 26th May, occasionally showing well, although at times being incredibly elusive despite the relatively small amount of cover.

*Red-flanked Bluetail

Tarsiger cyanurus

Vagrant; 17 previous records, most in September and October with one in March–April

After 2018 produced the first blank year since 2013, the species returned to the Isle in style, with a record-breaking annual haul of five. The first two were in the same location, with records from Wester Lothar on 23rd September and 6th October. There then followed a concentrated arrival, with a bird trapped at the Obs in the morning of 14th October that lingered there for the day and another found on the same date in South Raeva. Another on 15th October in North Gunnawark was unringed and sufficiently different from the South Raeva bird to be identified as a new individual.



Plate 104. Red-flanked Bluetail, Obs, 14th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

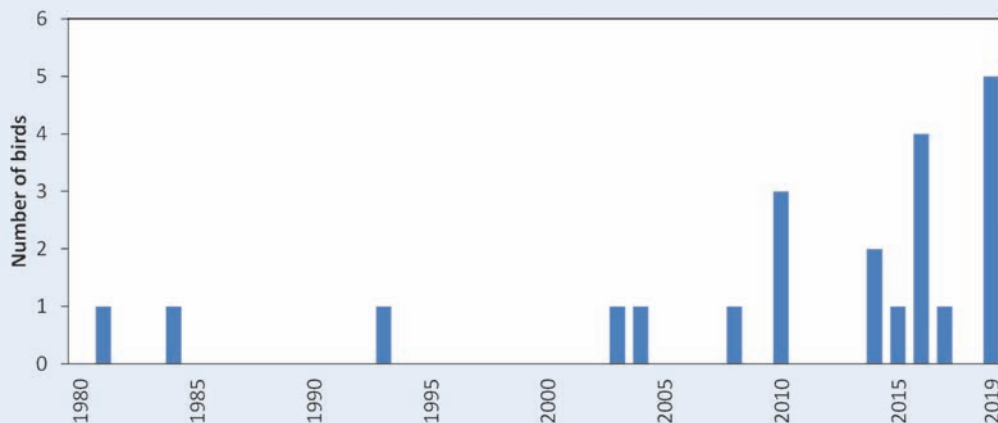


Figure 21. Annual occurrences of Red-flanked Bluetail on Fair Isle. The recent increase is clear, with half of all Fair Isle records occurring in the last five years.

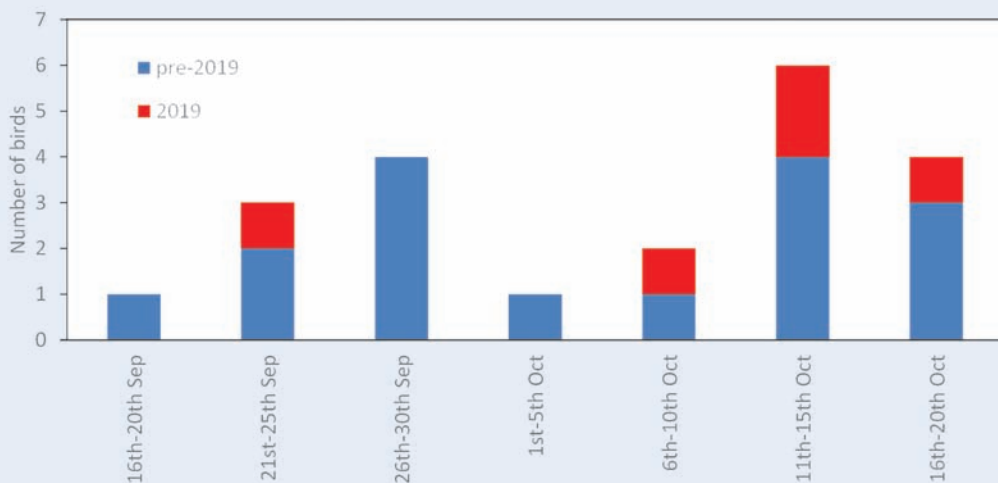


Figure 22. Autumn occurrences of Red-flanked Bluetail records on Fair Isle by five-day spells. There are apparent peaks in late September then again in mid-October, with records from 2019 broadly falling into this category.

Pied Flycatcher

Ficedula hypoleuca

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Three on 24th April were the earliest arrivals since 1996 and there were further records in the month on 25th and 27th–28th. Sightings on ten dates in May from 8th–22nd peaked at ten on 20th, the highest spring count since 2013, with the last of the spring on 4th and 9th June. A reasonable autumn passage began with one on 10th and two on 12th August, then sightings on 11 dates between 25th August and 10th September, mostly of single figures, but including peaks of 11 on 28th and 13 on 9th. Up to three were present from 21st–25th September and a late bird was in Steensi Geo on 14th October.



Plate 105. Pied Flycatcher, Mast, 9th June 2019. © Max Hellicar

Red-breasted Flycatcher

Ficedula parva

Rare in spring (37 records), scarce autumn migrant

One in Wester Lothar on 23rd September was the only record of the year.

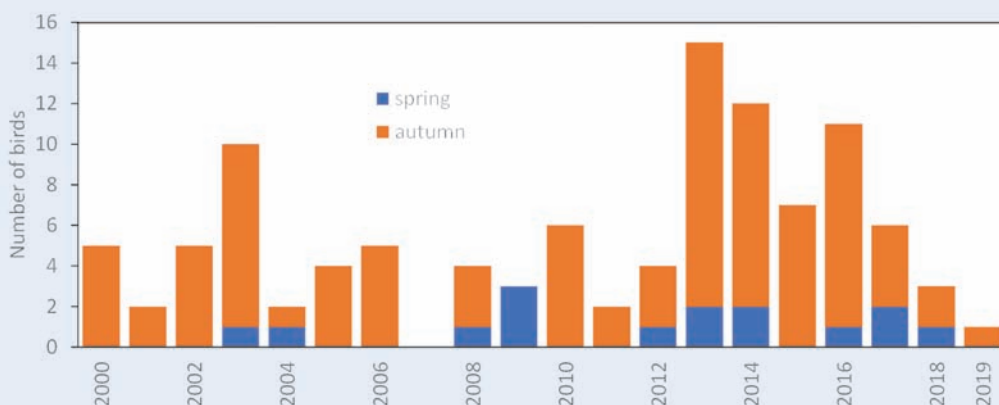


Figure 23. Seasonal occurrences of Red-breasted Flycatcher on Fair Isle 2000–2019. Although at best a rare spring visitor (albeit occurring with increasing frequency in this season), the number of autumn records varies wildly from year to year.

Black Redstart

Phoenicurus ochruros

Regular spring migrant, scarce in autumn

Spring passage saw virtually daily sightings from 8th April to 2nd May, with peaks of six on 18th and 24th April, then a later bird on 5th June. July sightings are not unusual and one was in North Raeva on 26th, but the next autumn record was not until 24th August. Another long gap followed, before singles on 8th and 11th October, then daily records from 15th–19th October that peaked at five on 16th, with one in Mid Geo on 4th November the last of the year.

Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

Spring passage came in two waves, with sightings from 16th–29th April seeing a maximum of three on 21st and 26th. In May there were singles on 6th and 10th May, then daily sightings from 15th to 25th, during which numbers rose rapidly to 47 on 20th, the highest spring count since 2009, before dropping back down to single figures. There were later singles on 30th May and 3rd June. After one on 10th September, regular sightings from 20th September to 18th October saw numbers rise to 16 on 27th September, with no more than four during October.



Plate 106. Redstart, Milens-houllan, 23rd April 2019.
© Max Hellicar

Whinchat

Saxicola rubetra

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A male at Chalet on 23rd April was an early migrant, with up to three from 26th April to 2nd May. After two on 9th May, the main spring passage took place from 15th–28th May, with a peak of 12 on 20th. The next was in Bull's Park on 15th August, then from 25th August to 29th September the species was a daily fixture on census. Counts rarely exceeded six, with an autumnal peak of 12 on 28th August and counts of ten on 3rd and 10th September. The only later records were one from 3rd–5th and two on 11th October.

Stonechat

Saxicola rubicola

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

It was a very good spring for the species, beginning with records from 14th February, the joint-earliest occurrence for Fair Isle. There were two by 25th February, then regular sightings from 2nd–13th March (a daily maximum of two, but at least three individuals) and 24th–28th March. After one on 3rd April there were eight on 4th April, the highest count since 1977, then virtually daily sightings until 20th April. It was difficult to judge turnover in this time, but at least three new birds were suspected on 13th April. Autumn, by contrast, was quiet, with a dark individual on 21st–23rd September and one on 15th October.

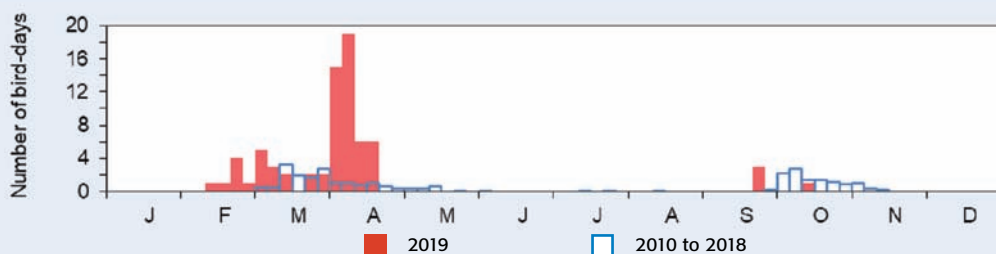


Figure 24. Distribution of Stonechat records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

*'Eastern Stonechat'

Saxicola maurus/stejnegeri

(Siberian/Stejneger's)

Vagrant; 46 records, mostly in autumn (13 in September, 27 in October and three in November) with three in spring (April/May). Only two of these have been accepted as specifically identified; a 'Caspian Stonechat' S. m. hemprichii (April 2014) and a Siberian Stonechat S. m. maurus (identified from DNA) in October 2016

One around the Schoolton area on 13th October most closely resembled Stejneger's Stonechat in plumage, but unfortunately a faecal sample failed to yield any DNA results, which are currently a requirement for acceptance to species level for this recently split pair.



Plate 107. 'Eastern Stonechat', Schoolton, 13th October 2019. © Steve Arlow



Plate 108. Wheatear, juvenile, Double Dyke, 22nd June 2019. © Max Hellicar

Wheatear

Oenanthe oenanthe

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

A male at the Restengeos on 1st April was a day later than the first in 2018 and there were then daily records from 4th, with numbers rising to 49 by 10th, 158 by 18th and 221 on 22nd. Numbers dropped away to around 100 by early May, but an arrival towards the end of the first week of the month, bolstered by 'Greenland' birds, *O. o. leucorhoa*, saw counts climb to 219 on 8th. By the end of May, counts had dropped to 40–70, presumably largely breeding birds. There was no count of breeding numbers and the first fledged birds were seen on 19th June, four days later than in 2018. The first census of the autumn on 1st August saw 136, but numbers had risen to 250 on 4th. Numbers fluctuated between around 170 and 230 until mid-month when they tailed off slightly but a large arrival of birds including 'Greenland Wheatears' on 29th August saw the autumn peak of 320. Counts dropped away rapidly in September, with around 50–60 by mid-month and 20–30 after that. There were just single figures in October, until the last record on 23rd (the earliest last date since 2012).

*Dipper

Cinclus cinclus

Vagrant; 39 previous records, 23 in spring (primarily March and April, with one in May) and 14 in autumn (October and November) with two December arrivals. There are currently 13 accepted records of 'Black-bellied Dipper' C. c. cinclus, although all bar three records (May 1946, April 1963 and April 1971) are thought to be this subspecies.

A six-year gap in records after 2011 was ended by two in spring 2018 and another followed this year, with a 'Black-bellied Dipper' in the Gilly Burn from 4th–9th April.

House Sparrow

Passer domesticus

Resident, breeds in small numbers

There was no estimate of the breeding population this year, although numbers appeared to be stable. The first fledged youngsters were noted on 3rd June, the earliest recorded date since 2014. A count on 18th September produced 123 individuals, the lowest autumn peak since 2015.

Tree Sparrow

Passer montanus

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

A fairly uneventful year saw one on 30th April to 1st May then up to four on six dates from 12th–23rd May.

Dunnock

Prunella modularis

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

Spring passage was unremarkable, beginning on the typical date of 29th March and continuing until 28th May. The majority passed in early April, with a peak of 25 on 5th and no more than 13 after that, with a maximum of two in May. Occasional sightings from 6th–20th June were probably all related to a single lingering bird, but unlike 2017 and 2018, none summered. After an early migrant on 29th August, there were regular records in early September, although probably all relating to a lingering bird. The main autumn passage was from 26th September to 19th October, although the maximum count was just five on 14th, and there were later records from 29th October to 2nd November.



Plate 109. Dunnock, Setter, 18th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Yellow Wagtail

Motacilla flava

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

'Yellow Wagtail' *M. f. flavissima*

One on 22nd April was the first *flava* wagtail of the year and preceded regular sightings until 1st May, during which time numbers peaked at eight on 28th April, the highest *flava* count since autumn 2010 and probably the highest-ever count of this subspecies. The final record in a good spring for 'Yellow Wagtail' was of two on 19th May.

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

The only two records in a quiet year for this subspecies were 14th–15th May at Wirvie Burn and a male from 18th–19th May in South Harbour.

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

A male was on Bunness on 13th May, with another at Lerness on 15th May, with possibly the same bird at North Light on 16th May. A female-type was on the Skadan on 23rd May and the last of the year was a male at Pietron on 25th–26th May, in an unremarkable year for this subspecies.

Unidentified *flava* wagtail

A fly-over on 17th May was the only unidentified *flava* wagtail in the spring. All records in a quiet autumn were of unidentified subspecies, with records on 10th (two), 15th, 25th and 29th September.



Plate 110. Citrine Wagtail, Easter Lother Water, 14th May 2019. © David Parnaby

*Citrine Wagtail

Motacilla citreola

Scarce migrant; 77 previous records, 74 in autumn (August–October) and three in spring (April–May)

A completely blank year for the species in 2018 was compensated for with a stunning male briefly at Walli Burn on 14th May that moved to Easter Lother Water where it showed well. Considering the rarity of the species in spring on Fair Isle, the discovery of another, duller, male on Da Water on 27th–28th June was a real surprise. Previous spring records were found on 26th April 1996, 29th April 2005 and 11th May 2008. A more expected migrant was a 1cy present from 25th–27th August, initially elusive around the south of the Isle, before it was finally pinned down at Hesti Geo before coming in to roost at the Obs on its last night.

Grey Wagtail

Motacilla cinerea

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

Spring passage was restricted to 5th–18th April, when there was a maximum of two on 8th, one in the Gully on 22nd–23rd May and a female in South Haven on 4th June. After an early autumn migrant on 27th August, there were virtually daily records from 21st September to 20th October, with a maximum of five on 24th September. Two records in late October were followed by November records on 11th–12th and 16th.

Pied Wagtail

Motacilla alba

'Pied Wagtail' *M. a. yarrellii*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, breeds in small numbers

One on 22nd February was early and there were two on 28th before scattered records in early March, then daily sightings from 24th. Singing was noted in North Haven from 25th March as early sightings may have largely involved returning territorial birds and there were then up to 15 in April, although by May sightings had returned to largely just the breeding birds. At least four pairs bred; at the Haven, Wirvie, Easter Lother and Linni Geo, with the first fledged chicks noted from the latter site on 12th June. Passage recommenced in early August, with 21 on 8th but there were just single figures noted after mid-month and throughout the rest of the autumn until the last of the year on 19th October.

'White Wagtail' *M. a. alba*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, formerly bred occasionally, but last pure alba pair bred in 1986, although occasional mixed pairings have been recorded since

Two on 6th April were a typical arrival date for this subspecies, and there were regular sightings of up to nine until the end of the month, with the peak spring day for *alba* wagtails on 18th when there was a total of 23 (11 'Pied', eight 'White' and four unidentified *alba*). The peak in May was seven on 9th, which also had the highest *alba* count of the month with 18, and occasional ones or twos continued to be noted until 22nd June. Autumn passage was noted from 3rd August, although the largest numbers were later in the month, with 41 on 28th (from an *alba* wagtail total of 67 on that day the highest count of the month). Numbers continued to rise to a peak autumn count on 3rd September when there were 98 *alba* wagtails (78 'White', 16 unidentified *alba* and four 'Pied'), with numbers tailing off rapidly after this, and by October there were just counts of up to four 'White Wagtails' until 18th. The only later records were on 4th and 12th November, continuing the recent trend for 'White' and 'Pied' wagtails to occur at the extreme ends of the migration seasons.

Richard's Pipit

Anthus richardi

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

The first of the year was at North Naaversgill on 21st September, with presumably the same bird relocated later in the day at Upper Stoneybrek. Two then arrived on 16th October, with one at Wester Lothar and one at Stackhoull, with the latter remaining in the south of the Isle until 20th October. The third consecutive year of three occurrences.

***Tawny Pipit**

Anthus campestris

Vagrant; 18 previous records, 14 in spring (mostly May) and four in autumn (September–October)

One on the Rippack on 26th May had relocated to the area behind Sma' Trinket Geo the following day. The first record since 2015, and just the third since 1993.



Plate 111. Tawny Pipit, Sma' Trinket Geo, 27th May 2019.
© Richard Cope

Meadow Pipit

Anthus pratensis

Common spring and autumn migrant; breeds in small numbers

The only record in the first part of the year was on 17th January, with occasional sightings from 14th March, then large numbers noted from 30th, with 338 on census on 5th April. By 9th, numbers had risen to 402, with variable numbers throughout the rest of the month, rising again to 325 on 27th. In early May, counts were generally around 150–200, but dropped from mid-month and were mostly between 30–50 during the latter half of the month. Singing was first recorded on 4th April, eggs were found on 17th May and the first fledged youngster was seen on 15th June, four days later than in 2018. The start of census on 1st August produced 135, with counts rising through the month to 537 by 27th. Numbers typically climbed in early September, with regular totals of over 600 and peaked at 889 on 16th. In October, counts were usually under 200, except for a day of passage on

11th during which 246 were recorded, and in the second half of the month there were mostly less than 40. Just single figures remained into November and occasional sightings in December suggested one or two overwintering individuals remained.

Tree Pipit

Anthus trivialis

Regular spring and autumn migrant

After the first on the relatively early date of 17th April, there were regular sightings through to 25th May. Only two spells saw double-figure counts, with a maximum in late April of 15 on 29th then a late May arrival peaking at 11 on 22nd. After singles on 8th–9th and 12th September, autumn passage was slow to kick on, with the next not until 24th, after which numbers built to an autumn peak of ten on 28th. There were relatively regular records of up to four in October until the last on 17th.

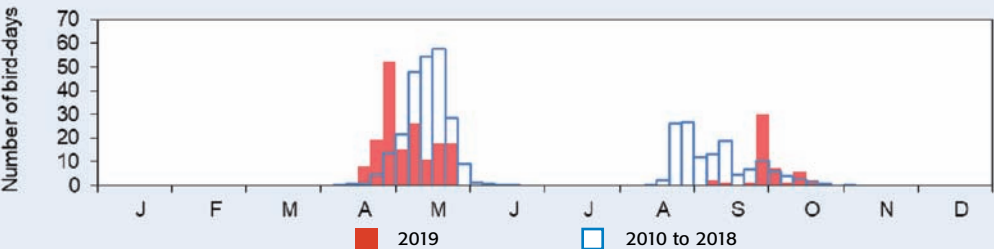


Figure 25. Distribution of Tree Pipit records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.



Plate 112. Tree Pipit, Quoy, 13th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

*Olive-backed Pipit

Anthus hodgsoni

Scarce migrant; 112 previous records, 110 in autumn and two in spring

For the third consecutive year there were two records, both of which were found on 16th October. The first was at Easter Lothar and lingered until 17th, with the second present around Boini Mire until 17th before relocating to Field Ditch on 18th.



*Pechora Pipit

Anthus gustavi

Rare autumn migrant; 44 previous records, all in September or October

One at Upper Stoneybrek on 15th–17th October was elusive at times, although sometimes showed well as it fed along the edge of the road. With the five most recent records in 2016, 2012, 2009, 2006 and 2003, the species shows a remarkable tendency to turn up around every three years.



Plate 114. Pechora Pipit, Upper Stoneybrek, 17th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

*Red-throated Pipit

Anthus cervinus

Rare migrant, 91 previous records; 52 in spring (most in May, but ten in June) and 39 in autumn (most in September, but 14 in October and one in August)

One found at Haa on 13th October moved to Meadow Burn where it remained the following day; the first record since 2017.

Rock Pipit

Anthus petrosus

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

Counts from census in April were largely around 20–50, although a peak of 81 on 21st during a Black Guillemot census probably gave a more accurate picture of numbers present. May counts remained between 20 and 55, in a quiet spring for the species. There was no count of breeding birds, although the first fledged youngster was noted on the early date on 31st May. With the resumption of census in August, counts were generally over 100, with peaks in the month of 178 on 4th and 165 on 18th. A suggestion of passage in the second week of September, saw the autumn peak of 196 on 10th. After 144 on 8th October, numbers declined rapidly, with counts of 32–72 from 15th onwards.

‘Scandinavian Rock Pipit’ *A. p. littoralis*

Scarce spring passage migrant, occasionally recorded in summer and has apparently bred. Records at other times of year likely to be overlooked due to identification difficulties

There were sightings of one or two on seven dates between 18th April and 6th May, with further singles on 17th and 31st May.



Plate 115. Rock Pipit, Roskillie, 11th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Chaffinch

Fringilla coelebs

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A male at the Obs on 20th–21st March preceded regular records from 29th March to 1st May. The main arrival took place in mid-April, with 25 on 12th the peak count of the year, with another wave of arrivals later in the month peaking at 18 on 24th. Later spring records involved three on 5th and one from 10th–14th May and a singing male around Burkle from 31st May to 3rd June. After a female at Lower Leogh from 3rd–5th September there were regular sightings from 23rd September to 31st October, with the main arrivals occurring in late September, peaking at 12 on 27th, and mid-October when 18 on 14th was the highest count of the autumn. A late male at Barkland on 19th November was the last of the year.

Brambling

Fringilla montifringilla

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After one on 24th March there were virtually daily records from 2nd April until the end of the month, peaking at 54 on 30th. Smaller numbers continued to move through in May until the last of the spring on 13th. After singles on 24th and 29th September, there were daily census records in October from 3rd. There were no more than 33 until 15th, when counts over the next week ranged between 56 and the year's peak of 114 on 20th. There were just single figures from 27th October until 6th November and the last of the year was a male on 13th–16th November.



Plate 116. Brambling, Haa, 18th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

Hawfinch

Coccothraustes coccothraustes

Scarce spring and autumn migrant; 140 records of 155 individuals

One over Utra on 3rd April was presumably the male that was relocated at Brecks on 6th, with four (two males and two females) then present on 7th–8th with one lingering until 10th. A female was then at Koolin on 16th–17th May before another female was present on the late dates on 7th–10th June (the first June record since 2015), being first seen at the west cliffs before relocating to Brecks. Brecks was also the location of an unusual record on 7th–8th July, just the third record for that month, although the fourth soon followed with a female trapped in the Plantation on 28th, which went on to linger until 2nd August. More expected autumn records involved daily sightings from 15th–19th October, with two on 16th–17th.

Common Rosefinch

Carpodacus erythrinus

Regular spring and autumn migrant

A 2cy around the Burkle area from 15th–18th May was singing on the last date and was the earliest arrival since 2002. There were then two from 20th–22nd and another two on 24th May (including an adult male), with the 2cy male remaining to 25th. June produced records on 1st–7th, with a second bird present on 3rd–5th, 17th–19th, with a second on 18th, and 26th, with a spring total of ten being considerably better than recent years. Autumn passage began unusually, with a singing adult male on 6th August, with further birds on 10th, 14th and 29th–30th. More individuals followed in September, with birds on 3rd–6th, two from 8th–10th (with one remaining to 11th) and 24th before a relatively late migrant was in the Schoolton area on 17th–19th October, taking the autumn total to nine.



Plate 117. Common Rosefinch, Quoy, 18th October 2019.
© Steve Arlow

Greenfinch

Chloris chloris

Regular spring and autumn migrant

Recent years have seen a large decline in Greenfinch records and it is probably now best classed as a 'scarce' rather than 'regular' visitor. Records from 4th–14th April peaked at two, with probably three individuals involved and another was present from 20th–28th April. The latter record was the last of the year, meaning there has now been only one bird in the past three autumns.

Twite

Linaria flavirostris

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, small numbers breed and overwinter

Table 3. Maximum monthly counts of Twite on Fair Isle in 2019.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
30	50	20	55	44	30	n/c	183	228	238	11	2

A very similar year to 2018 in many respects, with an arrival in early winter, followed by only a slight spring passage. There was no count of breeding birds, with the first fledged young noted on 18th June, a day later than 2018. Autumn passage typically started to pick up in late August, and large numbers in late September reached 228 on 30th. More passage was noted in October, and flocks moving south on 11th preceded the highest count of the year the following day when 238 were recorded. Flocks moving south off South Light were noted on several late October seawatches and numbers typically dwindled to just a handful of winter sightings.

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

Spring passage began on 31st March and up to five were seen almost daily throughout April. May began with 14 on 1st, the highest spring count since 1994, with up to five throughout the rest of the month. Although there was turnover throughout the spring, it was difficult to judge the extent of passage as it was masked by a couple of lingering pairs. Copulation was noted at the School on 21st and a pair was then regularly seen around the Single Dyke area, with breeding proved when a recently fledged juvenile was confirmed amongst the three lingering around the traps from 24th July. Up to five throughout August and early September including some migrants, then 21 were recorded on 18th September, the highest autumn count since 1995, with up to five recorded until the end of the month. The only later records were singles on 3rd–4th, 11th–13th and 28th October.

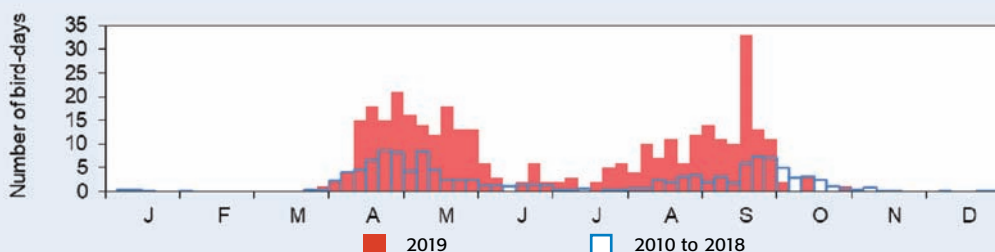


Figure 26. Distribution of Linnet records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

Common Redpoll

Acanthis flammea

'Mealy Redpoll' *A. f. flammea*

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

One on 9th January was the only record in the first part of the year. Spring passage began in April with sightings on 4th–6th, (including two on the latter date), two on 12th, then up to five from 22nd to the end the month. There were regular sightings in May, all singles other than five on 8th and two on 30th that preceded records of up to three until 9th June. As usual, there were a few summer records, with singles on 23rd and 29th June and 15th–16th July. There were none in autumn until October, with arrivals from 3rd preceding virtually daily records throughout the month, with counts of ten or less other than 25 on 20th. Up to three lingered in November until 20th and there was an unidentified Common Redpoll subspecies on 24th December.

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

Rare autumn migrant, occasional spring sightings

A single was on the School Brae from 12th–20th October, with two on 18th and another in the same place on 9th–10th November.



Plate 118. 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll', School Brae, 21st October 2019. © Steve Arlow

*Arctic Redpoll

Acanthis hornemanni

*Rare migrant; 94 previous records, most in autumn (September–November) but ten in spring and has also occurred in July (two) and winter (four). Although historically *A. h. exilipes* is the commoner of the two Arctic Redpoll subspecies recorded on Fair Isle (with 55 accepted records), many of them have occurred in major influx years.*

'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll' *A. h. hornemanni*

Around 28 of the accepted records of Arctic Redpoll have been assigned to this subspecies, including three in spring (two in April and a single in June)

A fine, frosty specimen of this arctic finch was on School Brae (a classic redpoll location, where the seeds of Yellow Sedge *Carex demissa* are a major attraction) in a small, mixed redpoll flock on 20th–24th October. In the last 15 years, 11 of the 16 Arctic Redpoll records accepted to subspecies have been of *A. h. hornemanni*.

Lesser Redpoll

Acanthis cabaret

Scarce migrant in spring, summer and autumn

A quiet year saw just two spring sightings, both in May, when singles were present on 8th and 25th–26th. Autumn was only slightly better, with one on 21st–27th September and singles on four dates in October between 3rd and 20th.

Crossbill

Loxia curvirostra

Irregular irruptive summer and autumn migrant

One at the Mast on 4th June was the only record for that month, then a scatter in July saw records on nine dates from 7th–28th, all involving three or less other than eight on 9th and six on 23rd. The expected invasion never arrived however, and there followed sightings in August of singles on 3rd–4th and 25th before two on 2nd September, the last of the year. For most of the summer, Crossbills were outnumbered by their rarer Two-barred cousins.

*Two-barred Crossbill

Loxia leucoptera

Irruptive vagrant; 28 previous records of 59 individuals (most July and August, although six in September and singles in June and October)

A record-breaking year began with a male at the Gannet monitoring plot watch point on Guidicum on 9th July, the fifth earliest arrival date for Fair Isle. It was later joined by another male and two females, and by the end of the day, a flock of seven was at Burrashield. It was assumed that all sightings during the day (there were others seen in the Lerness area) related to birds that eventually joined this flock, although given the scale of arrivals, it is certainly possible that some birds moved straight through. The following day, the Burrashield flock had increased to nine (another male and female joining the original



Plate 119. Two-barred Crossbill, Troila, 11th July 2019. © Max Hellicar

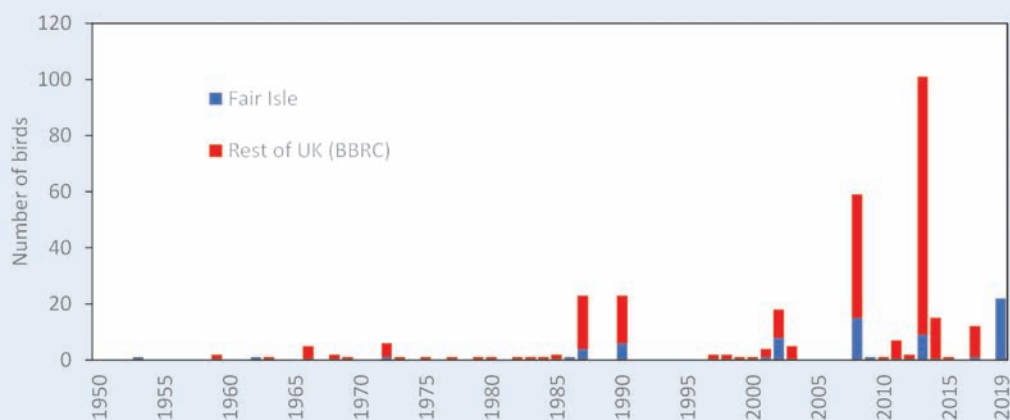


Figure 27. Two-barred Crossbill records from Fair Isle (blue), with additional UK-wide BBRC records (orange). Note that BBRC statistics from 2019 have yet to be published, so are not included. Also note that there were ten FIBO and 63 other BBRC records prior to 1950. All FIBO records except singles in 1953, 1962, 1986 and 2009 have occurred as part of a larger arrival to the UK. Larger influxes have become more regular recently, but the only years to produce more than six birds in the UK but none on Fair Isle have been 2011 and 2014. BBRC data taken from: www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/statistics

Plate 120. Two-barred Crossbills, Troila,
11th July 2019. © Max Hellicar



Plate 121. Two-barred Crossbills, Troila, 11th July 2019.
© Max Hellicar



Plate 122. Two-barred Crossbill, juvenile, South Green,
4th August 2019. © Max Hellicar



Plate 123. Two-barred Crossbill, female, Troila, 11th July 2019.
© Max Hellicar



seven), with an additional male at Troila, with the flock remaining in situ until 12th. On 11th, two females were in Linni Geo, with two males and a juvenile in South Raeva, with all five birds remaining until 17th. Also on 11th, a pair was at North Naaversgill, which was assumed to include the lone Troila male from 10th, with the female then being seen on Lerness on 14th, Linni on 17th and South Raeva on 18th, giving a minimum total of 16 birds in this first wave of arrivals. Another five birds were found in August: two juveniles at South Green from 4th–10th, a male over the Walli Burn on 4th that wandered as far as the Obs and Koolin over the next two days before joining the juveniles at South Green on 7th–8th and 10th, a male at Gorson's Geo and Hoini from 5th–10th (that was presumed to have joined the South Green flock on 8th and 10th) and an additional male around South Green and Malcolm's Head on 8th. Two at Vaasetter on the 12th August (including at least one juvenile) were presumed to involve some of these birds. The last of the year, and 22nd individual of the year, involved a rare autumn occurrence, when a juvenile was at Lower Leogh on 3rd September, which then strayed as far north as Bull's Park before roaming the south on 4th.

Goldfinch

Carduelis carduelis

Regular spring and autumn migrant, has overwintered

Spring passage was quiet with a single from 16th–20th April and one on 28th April to 1st May that was joined by a second on 29th. Autumn passage was also unremarkable, with one from 30th October to 3rd November, then three on 13th November, with at least one still present on 16th.

Siskin

Spinus spinus

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

A quiet spring saw one on 5th April, then records from 18th–26th April that peaked at six on 22nd, with the only other sightings on 9th and 12th May and 18th June. There was one on 24th September, then daily census records from 3rd October until the end of the month. There were counts of up to 20 until 59 on 24th, with numbers then declining until a remarkable 512 on 30th October, a record count for Fair Isle. By the next day, there were only 86 remaining and there were sightings on just five dates in November, with the last being four on 19th.



Plate 124. Siskin, Gilsetter, 9th October 2019. © Brendan Doe



Plate 125. Lapland Bunting, Hoini, 16th September 2019. © Tom Gale

Lapland Bunting

Calcarius lapponicus

Frequent autumn migrant, less common in spring

A quiet spring was restricted to one on 27th April and a smart male at Field on 30th May. Autumn passage began on the earliest date since the record-breaking passage of 2010 with one at Schoolton on 29th August. Unfortunately, it wasn't the precursor of a large movement, with regular sightings from 3rd September to 30th October peaking at just 17 on 28th September and no more than five in October.

Snow Bunting

Plectrophenax nivalis

Frequent spring and autumn migrant, often overwinters

The species was largely absent in the early winter period, with the only records involving two on 19th and one on 28th February. A maximum of 12 was seen during 11 dates in March, with more concerted passage in April that saw almost daily records from 3rd–27th, with a peak of 17 on 13th. A scatter of records in May saw a male lingering around Easter Lothar Water on 6th–13th, two on Dronger on 16th–17th and a male on Ward Hill on 18th–20th. Singles from 15th–18th September were the start of autumn passage, although there were no more until 28th, when 12 arrived and counts climbed rapidly to 126 on 3rd October. Counts fluctuated in the rest of the month, with usually less than 70, but higher numbers including 110 on 12th and the autumn peak of 156 on 20th. By November, counts were generally of less than 40, although there were 137 on 5th and 82 on 10th. Although there were still 21 in early December, after the first week the only sighting was nine on 23rd.

Yellowhammer

Emberiza citrinella

Scarce spring and regular autumn migrant

There were singles in spring on 16th and 20th–21st May and 20th–22nd June, the first June record since 2012, in a reasonable showing. Autumn, however, was very quiet with just a single around Utra on 16th–18th October.



*Ortolan Bunting

Emberiza hortulana

Scarce spring and autumn migrant

The first spring record since 2016 was in the upper Wirvie Burn area on 15th May.

Little Bunting

Emberiza pusilla

Scarce autumn migrant, rare in spring (30 previous spring records)

The almost constant westerly winds in autumn 2018 meant that one in Hjukni Geo and Gilly Burn on 23rd April was the first record since 2017. A relatively quiet autumn by recent standards saw five in total beginning with an early record as one flew past Wirvie Burn and was then relocated at Furse on 8th September. One then lingered around the Schoolton and Houll area on 22nd–26th September, during which time another was found at Field Ditch on 23rd, with probably the same bird seen there on 27th. One in the Busta crop strip on 29th September was probably responsible for sightings at scattered locations across the south on 30th and then School Brae on 2nd October, whilst another individual was at Bull's Park on 30th September.

*Rustic Bunting

Emberiza rustica

Rare spring and autumn migrant; 137 previous records (72 in spring, mostly in May and June with three in April and one in July and 65 in autumn, mostly September and October with one in November)

Recorded for the fifth consecutive year, when a smart male was located at Burkle on 21st May, where it remained until 23rd.



Plate 127. Rustic Bunting, Burkle, 23rd May 2019. © Deryk Shaw

Frequent spring and autumn migrant

After an early male on 19th–20th February, the only records in March were on 23rd–24th and 29th. Scattered sightings in early April built up to a heavier passage in late April and early May, peaking at 20 on 25th (the highest spring count since 2012) with smaller numbers lingering until 1st June. Autumn passage took place from 24th September until 24th October, with waves of heavier passage bringing counts of seven in late September and the autumn peak of 13 on 16th October.

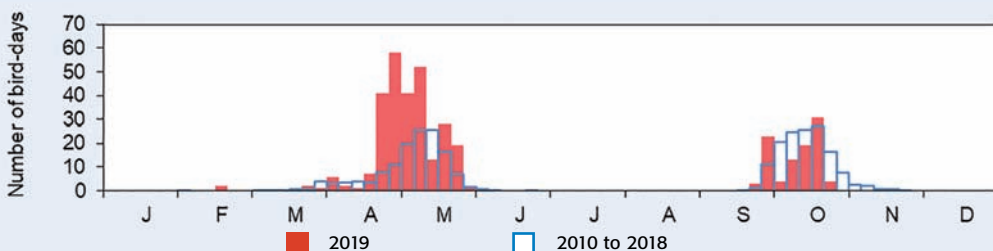


Figure 28. Distribution of Reed Bunting records by 5-day periods, 2019 compared to 2010–18.

References

Parnaby, D. 2020. Black-winged Stilt, North Haven, 9 October 2019 - the first record for Fair Isle. *Scottish Birds* 40(2): 170–171.

Corrections to previous Annual Reports

2017 Thrush Nightingale (page 85)

The bird at Utra on 16th May was previously accepted by BBRC, but is now considered not proven after review. Also delete mentions on pages 9 and 18.

Nightingale (page 85)

Add a second record: one Utra on 16th May. Re-label Plate 72 as Nightingale.

2018 Marsh Harrier (page 50)

The bird present from 18th–19th June (Plate 47) was a 3cy+ (not 2cy) male.

Black Kite (page 51)

The bird was present until 12th June.

'Coues's Arctic Redpoll' (page 108)

Delete the record of one at the airstrip on 30th October. Also delete mention of it on page 33. Re-label Plate 92 as redpoll sp. (left) with 'Mealy Redpoll'.

All rarity decisions for 2018 are listed on page 170–171.

RINGING SUMMARY

David Parnaby

Table 1. Summary of ringing activity per month in 2019

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Birds ringed	2	2	17	298	213	550	1084	805	159	530	44	2	3706
Species ringed	2	2	8	23	37	36	29	29	26	33	14	1	88

The total of 3,706 new birds ringed in 2019 ranked 61st in FIBO's history of annual ringing totals. The total was obviously effected by the disruption caused by the fire in March. In particular spring repairs to the traps were unable to be carried out and the traps were run less often as the wardening team were based in the south of the Isle, so didn't go through them on the way to and from the Obs. Traps were still run daily during the migration seasons (when weather allowed), usually at least three times.

Although some species had particularly good spells of passage, this was not always reflected in ringing totals, largely due to a lack of visitors meaning there were not enough people available for trap rounds and running mist nets when birding was very busy. The seabird season was successful for many species and a few productive ringing trips were made into the colonies.

Once tools and materials were replaced, there were extensive trap repairs carried out. These included the majority of the Vaadal wiring being replaced, along with replacement of part of the frame (this did result in the Vaadal being out of action for a while), fitting new panels on most of the Gully roof and repairing several panels on the sides and roof of the Plantation.

Although the total number of birds caught in the Helgoland traps fell to 1,305, in comparison to 1,759 in 2018, the 'league table' remained in the same order and the 'big three' again produced more than 80% of the birds caught in the traps. The Double Dyke trap is in need of repair and

also suffered from census routes not starting and finishing at the Obs, and saw a larger percentage fall in numbers caught than any other trap.

Trap	Number of birds in 2019 (Number of species)	Number of birds in 2018 (Number of species)
Plantation	469 (42)	591 (45)
Gully	462 (39)	502 (47)
Vaadal	189 (30)	323 (36)
Hjon Dyke	92 (17)	144 (17)
Double Dyke	49 (14)	123 (18)
North Grind	14 (7)	20 (7)
Single Dyke	24 (9)	42 (12)
Roadside	6 (2)	14 (4)

Although there was nobody based at the Obs for most of the year, there were still 427 birds of 44 species ringed there (the corresponding figures in 2018 were 464 birds of 48 species). All birds caught at the Obs were in the mist nets in the garden, with some good *alba* wagtail roosts aiding the total. Ringing at Burkle (largely using a mist net in the garden) produced 111 new birds of 25 species, but the mist net at Chalet was only used in the autumn, resulting in just nine new birds of four species being caught. New sites were set up at Schoolhouse, where a mist net and spiral trap were occasionally used and produced 13 birds of ten species, Chapel Plantation and Lower Leogh, although both of the latter were set up too late in the year to successfully catch any birds.

No species were added to the ringing list in 2019, but unusual species ringed during 2019 included the Observatory's third Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, fourth Red-flanked Bluetail, eighth Citrine

Wagtail, 14th Melodious Warbler, 30th Blyth's Reed Warbler, 41st Thrush Nightingale and 47th Lanceolated Warbler.

A new ringing record was set for Pied Wagtail, with the 93 caught representing an increase of 29 on the previous record set in 2012. The only other species (with a total of more than ten ringed previously on Fair Isle) to register totals in their top ten years were Chiffchaff (90 ringed being the 5th best year) and Lesser Whitethroat (26 ringed being the 6th best year).

A number of species recorded poor years for ringing totals. In some cases, these were likely to be related to the lower number of trap rounds; with Rock Pipit (nine caught) recording their lowest ever total, Wheatear (43 caught) recording their lowest total since 1948 and Meadow Pipit (83) their lowest since 1987. Poor productivity saw especially low numbers ringed for Herring Gull (12) and Great Skua (150, the lowest total since 2013). Many of the long-distant migrants continued to record low totals compared to previous decades, with some examples including the nine Garden Warblers being the lowest total since 1949, Tree Pipit recording its fifth ever blank year (the previous

were in 1948, 1993, 2014 and 2018) and Subalpine Warbler seeing its first blank year since 2010. There were also poor years for Collared Dove (the first blank year since 2009) and Woodcock (five caught, the lowest total since 2010).

Two colour-ringing projects continued, with 79 Great Skua chicks fitted with white darvics with black four-digit alphanumeric codes and 34 Shags (five adults and 29 chicks) fitted with blue darvics with three-digit white letter codes.

Although rarities aren't targeted for ringing, individual birds are sometimes trapped to establish the identification, and in 2019 there were four birds caught for this reason: Lanceolated, Eastern Olivaceous and Melodious Warblers, and a Thrush Nightingale.

Storm Petrel remains the most frequently ringed bird on Fair Isle for its ninth consecutive year. Meadow Pipit and Twite drop out of the top ten, with a reasonable Blackcap passage seeing them appear at number nine in the list, whilst the combination of good breeding numbers and some determined chick-ringing saw Fulmar make it in at number five.

Table 2. Ten most-commonly ringed species on Fair Isle in 2019, with species totals (2018 totals in brackets for comparison)

Species	2019	
Storm Petrel	923	(1,212)
Starling	350	(176)
Robin	264	(159)
Arctic Tern	226	(118)
Fulmar	202	(102)
Great Skua	150	(330)
Puffin	144	(126)
Redwing	140	(324)
Blackcap	119	(74)
Blackbird	114	(300)

Table 3. Ten most-commonly ringed species on Fair Isle in 2018

Species	2018
Storm Petrel	1,212
Great Skua	330
Redwing	324
Blackbird	300
Meadow Pipit	183
Starling	176
Robin	159
Twite	131
Puffin	126
Arctic Tern	118

RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total 1948-2018	Average/year								Ringed 2019		Highest/ lowest	Since	Year ranking (out of 72)
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010-18	adult	pulch	Total		
Cuckoo	115	0	2.1	2.3	2.5	1.9	1.5	0.6	0.7	2	2	2	highest	2013
Rock Dove	327	0	0	0.2	0.9	1.1	4.8	7.9	19.8	7	7	7	lowest	2011
Water Rail	362	5	6.6	5.4	7.4	4.6	4.4	4	3.1	3		3	=	2018
Oystercatcher	1618	18	24.7	27.6	33.1	32	25.8	8.9	6.8		11	11	highest	2012
Lapwing	396	0	8.5	12.7	1	4.5	5.5	4.1	3.7		2	2	lowest	2016
Ringed Plover	880	0	7.5	14.3	11.7	15.4	16.9	11.9	11.4	2	4	6	highest	2017
Sanderling	132	0.5	2.7	3.6	1.4	1	0.4	2.9	1.2	3	3	3	highest	2013
Dunlin	684	0.5	5	16.7	17.3	4.3	10.2	7.1	8.6	1	1	1	lowest	2011
Woodcock	681	2	4.7	6.9	9.2	9.6	8.4	11.1	19.8	5	5	5	lowest	2010
Jack Snipe	165	0	0.8	1.4	8.7	0.7	1.7	1.8	1.6	1	1	1	=	2018
Snipe	636	0	2.8	8.1	14.3	7.8	10.9	10.7	10.0	11	3	14	highest	2015
Green Sandpiper	64	0	0.2	1.4	0.8	1.5	1.7	0.3	0.6	1	1	1	highest	2017
Redshank	304	0	1.3	8.7	10.1	2.7	4.8	1.2	1.8	2	2	2	highest	2016
Great Black-b Gull	2898	0.5	8.8	39.1	92.2	51	92	2.2	4.9	1	1	2	highest	2015
Herring Gull	4829	8	12.1	64.9	163.6	140.8	34.8	34.6	33.9		12	12	lowest	2011
Lesser Black-b Gull	1489	5	10	25.7	49.7	40.4	13.8	5.7	2.9		1	1	lowest	2017
Arctic Tern	12447	0	0.1	0.4	0	16.4	954.8	216.5	62.8		226	226	highest	2017
Great Skua	5784	4	16.9	13	19	51.5	110.8	134	258.2		150	150	lowest	2013
Arctic Skua	4145	8	71.7	38.2	131.8	61	67.7	27.3	16.9	1	25	26	highest	2016
Common Guillemot	38346	0	7.9	82.6	468	1268	1314.8	588.8	116.1	1	2	3	=	2018
Razorbill	12085	0	6.5	60.9	173.5	231.6	412.5	281.8	46.3	9	58	67	highest	2014
Black Guillemot	1697	0	11.3	45.6	52.1	25.2	26	6.7	3.1	3	1	4	highest	2016
Puffin	14773	19.5	128.2	277.3	318.8	294.8	216.9	131.7	117.2	35	109	144	highest	2016
Storm Petrel	45124	1	3.7	160.5	575.4	446.6	1640	301.5	1538.3	923		923	lowest	2012

RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total 1948–2018	Average/year								2010–18		Ringed 2019		Highest/ lowest	Since	Year ranking (out of 72)
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–18	adult	pullus	Total				
Leach's Petrel	146	0	0	0.3	1.2	0.5	5.2	2.7	5.2	2		2	highest	2017	joint 18th	
Fulmar	18554	13.5	50.7	346.3	363.5	641.3	244.2	99	119.7	21	181	202	highest	2014	29th	
Gannet	650	0.5	0.2	1.3	1.2	11.5	20.4	17.4	14.3	1		1	highest	2016	joint 34th	
Shag	23928	9.5	87.5	579	383.5	674.5	375.9	267.2	25.9	4	34	38	highest	2014	52nd	
Sparrowhawk	480	1	3.3	2.9	6	8.7	12.5	6.6	8.7	3		3	=	2018	joint 47th	
Long-eared Owl	295	0.5	1.4	3	7.6	5.8	5.7	2.7	3.6	5		5	highest	2015	joint 20th	
Wryneck	278	0	2.3	4.4	7.1	4.8	2.2	4.2	3.1	1		1	=	2018	joint 54th	
Red-backed Shrike	390	1.5	2	4.4	11.5	7.8	4.2	5.4	3.8	3		3	lowest	2017	joint 37th	
Waxwing	254	0	0.3	1.1	1.9	0.3	0.1	3.1	20.7	1		1	highest	2016	joint 14th	
Skylark	1458	6.5	16.6	22.4	27.4	7.4	48.4	15.2	7.9	2		2	=	2018	joint 59th	
Yellow-browed Warbler	345	0	1.1	2.3	3.3	1.9	2.8	5.2	19.9	7		7	highest	2017	joint 15th	
Willow Warbler	4741	3	44.2	80.9	94.6	66.6	56.3	65.8	72.3	58		58	highest	2017	42nd	
Chiffchaff	2329	0.5	4.9	16.6	24.7	30.9	32.5	44.9	87.0	90		90	highest	2017	5th	
Sedge Warbler	701	5	7	9.5	7.8	11.2	5.5	14.1	15.6	13		13	lowest	2013	joint 19th	
Blyth's Reed Warbler	29	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.6	0.6	1.8	1		1	lowest	2017	joint 10th	
Reed Warbler	408	0.5	1	4.9	4.8	4.4	7.5	10.9	8.0	7		7	lowest	2017	joint 18th	
Marsh Warbler	188	0	0.8	1.7	2.1	3.2	2.9	4.3	4.2	1		1	lowest	2016	joint 46th	
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler		2	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.0	1		1	highest	2009	
joint 1st																
Melodious Warbler	13	0	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0	1		1	highest	2006	joint 2nd	
Icterine Warbler	157	0	1.5	2.6	1.5	1.7	3	2.9	2.8	4		4	highest	2015	joint 10th	
Lanceolated Warbler	46	0	0.1	0.2	0.9	1	0.7	0.9	0.9	1		1	lowest	2017	joint 12th	
Grasshopper Warbler	178	0	0.8	2.4	3.6	2.1	2.2	3.5	3.6	5		5	highest	2011	joint 8th	
River Warbler	11	0	0	0.2	0	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	1		1	highest	2012	joint 4th	

RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total 1948–2018	Average/year							Ringed 2019		Highest/ lowest	Since	Year ranking (out of 72)	
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–18	adult				pullus
Blackcap	7325	0.5	15.2	59.8	158.7	149.4	105.1	115.5	143.0	119	119	highest	2016	21st
Garden Warbler	4088	3.5	30.7	78.1	74.6	88.2	59.2	50.4	29.9	9	9	lowest	1949	joint 70th
Barred Warbler	512	0	5.3	9.6	12.9	4.8	5.8	6.4	7.1	3	3	lowest	2017	joint 53rd
Lesser Whitethroat	1004	3	7.4	11.9	19.7	12.1	13.4	20.3	16.7	26	26	highest	2012	6th
Whitethroat	1176	2.5	19.7	28.8	17.7	10	14.7	14.8	12.7	12	12	highest	2017	joint 44th
Goldcrest	2193	16	17	28.7	47.9	28.7	33.9	31.4	31.7	19	19	highest	2018	joint 45th
Wren	1179	17.5	20.8	15.7	15.6	8.1	15.6	19	21.8	12	12	lowest	2011	joint 48th
Starling	33461	140.5	269.2	337.4	662	746.9	445.8	424.3	480.4	195	155	highest	2017	47th
Ring Ouzel	573	0	1.4	16.8	12.7	13.1	4.6	3.6	5.7	6	6	highest	2014	joint 33rd
Blackbird	27441	76.5	414.7	591.2	464	384	277.3	306.1	323.9	114	114	lowest	2013	70th
Fieldfare	725	2.5	7.9	33.6	12	5.7	2.7	3.7	7.1	3	3	highest	2017	joint 50th
Redwing	11610	34.5	139.1	184.1	231.3	143	144.4	121.8	211.6	140	140	lowest	2016	38th
Song Thrush	3570	7.5	19	76.6	72.1	52	53.1	40.1	47.3	84	84	highest	2014	joint 12th
Spotted Flycatcher	932	2.5	7	16.6	15.6	13.2	19.9	10.4	11.1	10	10	highest	2015	joint 38th
Robin	10946	14	64.3	196.1	196.9	199.7	143.8	132.2	176.3	264	264	highest	2014	12th
Bluthroat	330	0.5	5.4	4.6	5.3	6.4	4.2	4.5	2.8	7	7	highest	2009	joint 14th
Thrush Nightingale	40	0	0.2	0.2	1	0.8	0.9	0.4	0.6	1	1	lowest	2017	joint 13th
Red-flanked Bluetail	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.2	1	1	highest	2014	joint 1st
Pied Flycatcher	1074	5	16.2	23.1	24	14.3	12.6	9.1	7.9	4	4	lowest	2017	joint 68th
Redstart	1968	5	36.6	41.4	51.4	20.4	24.7	14	8.1	11	11	highest	2013	54th
Whinchat	709	1.5	14.7	14.4	11.5	13.5	7	6.6	3.2	1	1	=	2018	joint 64th
Stonechat	53	0	0.6	1.1	2.1	1	0.7	0.6	0.4	2	2	highest	2016	joint 9th
Wheatear	19395	108	505	407.8	284	229.8	142.8	212.8	150.8	38	5	lowest	1948	71st
House Sparrow	2490	83	46.7	31.4	11.8	22.2	18.3	35.3	74.1	30	30	lowest	2013	joint 30th

RINGING SUMMARY

Species	Total 1948–2018	Average/year								Ringed 2019		Highest/ lowest	Since	Year ranking (out of 72)
		1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010–18	adult	pullus			
Dunnock	3130	1.5	11.2	50.2	67.8	65.7	41.1	35.3	46.0	22	22	lowest	2017	joint 46th
Citrine Wagtail	7	0	0.2	0.1	0.2	0	0	0.1	0.1	1	1	highest	2011	joint 2nd
Grey Wagtail	80	0	0.4	0.2	0.5	1.3	0.5	2.7	2.7	2	2	lowest	2016	joint 12th
Pied/White Wagtail	1119	14	13	15.5	10.7	10.7	14.6	18.8	28.7	93	93	highest	ever	1st
Meadow Pipit	12887	64.5	214	243.3	191.1	162	140.6	183.9	156.6	76	7	lowest	1987	70th
Rock Pipit	10243	69.5	208.6	187.8	221.4	171.6	108	82.6	33.8	9	9	lowest	ever	72nd
Chaffinch	3637	10	26.4	30.4	69.5	103.6	59.1	40.1	36.2	14	14	lowest	2011	joint 46th
Brambling	5272	2	15.1	29.6	139.1	79.5	72.1	63.6	142.0	54	54	lowest	2011	joint 36th
Hawfinch	50	0	0	0	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.9	2.8	2	2	lowest	2017	joint 9th
Common Rosefinch	307	0	1	1.2	3.4	5.9	6	6.3	7.7	3	3	lowest	2013	joint 37th
Greenfinch	559	0	0.2	2.3	4.8	8.2	9.1	28	3.7	1	1	lowest	2017	joint 48th
Twite	7668	59.5	114.1	69.1	162	96.5	96.6	110.3	118.1	65	5	lowest	2013	50th
Linnet	252	0	0.2	2.7	7.2	2.9	1.9	4.5	6.4	1	1	lowest	2016	joint 32nd
Common Redpoll	1051	1	7	6.4	34.2	8.2	6.5	17	28.4	8	8	lowest	2011	joint 28th
Lesser Redpoll	78	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7.6	3	3	=	2018	joint 9th
Goldfinch	49	0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.6	1	3.1	2	2	lowest	2015	joint 8th
Siskin	746	0	3.6	9.4	7.3	7.7	11.4	19.6	17.3	2	2	lowest	2011	joint 56th
Total: (of all species ringed)		883	2934	5095	6799	7493	8229	4733	5211	2713	993	lowest	2011	61st

RINGING SUMMARY

Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed in 2019:

Quail	8	Turnstone	123
Brent Goose	1	Knot	117
Barnacle Goose	5	Ruff	42
Greylag Goose	104	Curlew Sandpiper	6
Pink-footed Goose	21	Temminck's Stint	2
Tundra Bean Goose	1	Purple Sandpiper	193
White-fronted Goose	3	Baird's Sandpiper	1
Whooper Swan	53	Little Stint	124
Shelduck	5	White-rumped Sandpiper	1
Shoveler	1	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	1
Wigeon	58	Pectoral Sandpiper	5
Mallard	32	Semipalmated Sandpiper	1
Pintail	2	Great Snipe	2
Teal	92	Red-necked Phalarope	5
Pochard	3	Grey Phalarope	3
Ring-necked Duck	1	Common Sandpiper	78
Tufted Duck	26	Wood Sandpiper	19
Scaup	8	Spotted Redshank	3
Lesser Scaup	1	Greenshank	16
Eider	174	Kittiwake	7197
Velvet Scoter	23	Black-headed Gull	52
Common Scoter	1	Little Gull	1
Long-tailed Duck	21	Common Gull	342
Goldeneye	23	Glaucous Gull	40
Goosander	3	Iceland Gull	1
Red-breasted Merganser	3	Common Tern	488
Nightjar	8	Pomarine Skua	1
Swift	19	Little Auk	15
Great Bustard	1	Red-throated Diver	1
Woodpigeon	84	Swinhoe's Petrel	2
Turtle Dove	85	Cormorant	7
Collared Dove	439	Grey Heron	25
Corncrake	45	Goshawk	2
Little Crake	1	Marsh Harrier	1
Baillon's Crake	1	Hen Harrier	3
Spotted Crake	20	Scops Owl	2
Moorhen	113	Snowy Owl	1
Coot	18	Short-eared Owl	20
Little Grebe	10	Hoopoe	3
Red-necked Grebe	1	Great Spotted Woodpecker	34
Great Crested Grebe	1	Kestrel	58
Slavonian Grebe	3	Red-footed Falcon	1
Golden Plover	30	Merlin	203
Grey Plover	1	Peregrine	6
Little Ringed Plover	1	Brown Shrike	1
Dotterel	4	Red-tailed/Daurian Shrike	2
Whimbrel	18	Lesser Grey Shrike	7
Curlew	223	Great Grey Shrike	128
Bar-tailed Godwit	9	Woodchat Shrike	13
Black-tailed Godwit	1	Golden Oriole	9

RINGING SUMMARY

Other species on the FIBO ringing list that were not ringed in 2019 (continued):

Jackdaw	16	Black Redstart	176
Rook	13	Rock Thrush	1
Carriion Crow	4	'Eastern Stonechat'	13
Hooded Crow	52	Eastern/Western Black-eared Wheatear	3
Raven	29	Pied Wheatear	1
Coal Tit	1	Dipper	18
Blue Tit	5	Tree Sparrow	153
Great Tit	16	Yellow Wagtail	11
Woodlark	3	Richard's Pipit	15
Shore Lark	5	Blyth's Pipit	2
Short-toed Lark	8	Tawny Pipit	3
Sand Martin	8	Tree Pipit	687
Swallow	339	Olive-backed Pipit	12
House Martin	150	Pechora Pipit	10
Wood Warbler	125	Red-throated Pipit	9
Western Bonelli's Warbler	2	Bullfinch	314
Hume's Warbler	1	Arctic Redpoll	27
Pallas's Warbler	4	Parrot Crossbill	37
Radde's Warbler	1	Crossbill	581
Dusky Warbler	7	Two-barred Crossbill	7
Green Warbler	1	Citril Finch	1
Greenish Warbler	27	Lapland Bunting	106
Arctic Warbler	39	Snow Bunting	681
Great Reed Warbler	8	Corn Bunting	4
Aquatic Warbler	25	Yellowhammer	81
Paddyfield Warbler	12	Pine Bunting	3
Thick-billed Warbler	2	Ortolan Bunting	21
Booted Warbler	8	Cretzschmar's Bunting	1
Sykes's Warbler	2	Chestnut-eared Bunting	1
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	14	Little Bunting	49
Savi's Warbler	4	Yellow-browed Bunting	1
Subalpine Warbler	45	Rustic Bunting	17
Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler	2	Yellow-breasted Bunting	6
Sardinian Warbler	1	Black-headed Bunting	4
Firecrest	3	Pallas's Reed Bunting	2
Treecreeper	1	Reed Bunting	596
Rose-coloured Starling	4	Song Sparrow	3
White's Thrush	1	White-crowned Sparrow	2
Grey-cheeked Thrush	2	White-throated Sparrow	1
Hermit Thrush	1	Savannah Sparrow	2
Eyebrowed Thrush	1	Tennessee Warbler	2
Black-throated Thrush	2	Blackpoll Warbler	1
Dusky Thrush	1		
Mistle Thrush	25	Species ringed on Fair Isle that were later considered to be escapes:	
Asian Brown Flycatcher	1	Daurian Starling	1
Rufous-tailed Robin	1	Pallas's Rosefinch	5
Nightingale	32	Chestnut Bunting	1
Siberian Rubythroat	2	Red-headed Bunting	2
Collared Flycatcher	2		
Red-breasted Flycatcher	69		

RINGING RECOVERIES AND CONTROLS

David Parnaby

During 2019 there were 48 controls (birds ringed elsewhere and found on Fair Isle) of 14 species. This total involved nine birds trapped, 35 that had colour-rings read in the field, three that had metal rings read in the field and one found dead. There were 2,789 'new' birds ringed on Fair Isle in 2019, meaning that a control was caught for roughly every 310 birds ringed, compared to a control for every 191 new birds caught in 2018 (note that all these figures exclude Storm Petrels, of which there were 62 controls and retraps from earlier years amongst 923 caught in 2019). Foreign-ringed birds involved 36 from Norway (32 Barnacle Geese, Ruff, Grey Wagtail, Chiffchaff and Blackbird). The other controls were from the United Kingdom and comprised of five from Shetland, three from our neighbours at North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory, one from the Isle of May Bird Observatory and two from England.

There were 33 birds (of 18 species) ringed on Fair Isle and found elsewhere during 2019 (that have been reported so far). It was again exciting to receive several reports of darvic-ringed Great Skuas that had been photographed in a variety of locations, whilst amongst the other interesting recoveries were an Arctic Skua in Brazil, an 'Icelandic Redwing' in France and a Song Thrush in Portugal. Note that all the above figures exclude Storm Petrels, for which details on a wide variety of movements can be seen in the report below.

Fair Isle longevity records were set for Greylag Goose and Rock Dove and, as usual, a number of the seabirds seen or handled during monitoring work were considerably older than the volunteers who reported them!



Plate 128. Barnacle Geese, Skadan, 23rd September 2019. © David Parnaby

Order of data for each record:

Ring number - age (and sex if known) of bird - date of record - location, with duration (years, months and days) between ringing and recovery/control, distance (km) and direction (compass point and °).

The co-ordinates of Fair Isle are 59°32'N, 01°38'W.

Ages of birds:

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

- 1 = pullus (nestling or chick)
- 2 = fully grown, but year of hatching quite unknown
- 3 = definitely hatched during calendar year of ringing
- 3j = definitely hatched this calendar year and still partly or completely in juvenile body plumage (passerines only)
- 4 = hatched before calendar year of ringing, but exact year unknown
- 5 = definitely hatched during calendar year previous to year of ringing
- 6 = hatched before calendar year previous to year of ringing, but exact year unknown
- 7 = definitely hatched in the calendar year two years previous to the year of ringing
- 8 = hatched three or more calendar years previous to year of ringing, but exact year unknown

Sex: M = male, F = female

Condition at recovery:

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

Statistics given are taken from the BTO online ringing report (Robinson *et al.* 2019).

Barnacle Goose

An increasingly regular phenomenon in recent years has been large number of Barnacle Geese being grounded by poor weather on their autumn migration on Fair Isle. When this happens, they often land on the Skadan, where it is sometimes possible to read their ring details. A record-breaking passage in late September 2019 saw a very good number of rings read, and the details are provided in the table below:

Ring	Colour (black letters)	Date ringed	Date last seen on Solway (or Svalbard)	Date seen on Fair Isle
AF	Yellow	20 Jul 2015	2 Oct 2018	23 Sep 2019
BS	White	24 Jul 2015	19 Feb 2019	23 Sep 2019
B6	Yellow	20 Jul 2015	16 Dec 2018	23 Sep 2019
BC	Yellow	20 Jul 2015	13 Mar 2016	23 Sep 2019
BUL	Yellow	2018?	2019 Svalbard	24–25 Sep 2019
BX	White	24 Jul 2015	2 Nov 2018	23 Sep 2019
C6	White	24 Jul 2015	11 Oct 2018	23 Sep 2019
CV	Yellow	20 Jul 2015	2019 Svalbard	24–25 Sep 2019
DS	Yellow	20 Jul 2015	30 Jan 2018	23 Sep 2019
DU	Yellow	20 Jul 2015	10 Feb 2019	25 Sep 2019

FHB	Orange	3 Aug 2012	6 Mar 2018	24 Sep 2019
FLI	Orange	25 Jul 2012	24 Oct 2019	24 Sep 2019
HJ	Yellow	20 Jul 2015	Not since ringing	23 Sep 2019
HP	Yellow	20 Jul 2015	6 Mar 2018	25 Sep 2019
IF	Yellow	20 Jul 2015	16 Dec 2018	23 Sep 2019
LH	White	25 Jul 2015	Not since ringing	23 Sep 2019
LLH	Green	31 Jul 1997	6 Apr 2016	24–25 Sep 2019
NC	White	25 Jul 2015	2 Mar 2019	23 Sep 2019
NU	White	25 Jul 2015	2019 Svalbard	23 Sep 2019
PS	Yellow	21 Jul 2015	8 Feb 2018	23–25 Sep 2019
PV	White	27 Jul 2015	25 Nov 2018	24 Sep 2019
TT	White	27 Jul 2015	2019 Svalbard	23–25 Sep 2019
TUU	Green	4 Aug 2005	2017 Svalbard	23–25 Sep 2019
TX	White	27 Jul 2015	25 Nov 2018	24 Sep 2019
VA	White	30 Jul 2015	Not since ringing	23 Sep 2019
XSF	Green	4 Aug 2007	20 Jan 2016	23–25 Sep 2019
XYT	Green	18 Jul 2008	25 Feb 2019	24–25 Sep 2019
YAH	Green	18 Jul 2008	21 Nov 2016	23–24 Sep 2019
YAV	Green	18 Jul 2008	2014 Norway	24–25 Sep 2019
ZDT	Green	31 Jul 2008	2012 Norway	23 Sep 2019
ZHN	Green	5 Aug 2008	2019 Norway	24 Sep 2019
ZL	Yellow	25 Jul 2015	26 Oct 2015	23 Sep 2019

Greylag Goose

5201573	4	22 Oct 2008	Fair Isle	
	+	26 Jan 2019	Shapinsay, Orkney	10y 3m 4d, 91 km, SW (234°)
5201598	3	28 Oct 2016	Fair Isle	
	X	8 Sep 2019	ICELAND: Miðfjarðarnes, Langanesströnd 2y 10m 11d, 994 km, NW (317°)	
5201592	3	20 Oct 2009	Fair Isle	
	+	22 Nov 2019	Howe, Orkney	10y 1m 2d, 97 km, WSW (242°)

Ringing recoveries of this species suggest that the Fair Isle wintering flock is Icelandic in origin. It appears that the larger numbers noted in autumn are also passing through from the same area and go on to winter further south in the Northern Isles or mainland Scotland. 5201573 sets a new longevity record for a Fair Isle-ringed Greylag. In addition, 142709 (orange collar 'LUA') which was ringed in Iceland on 21st July 2017 and was on Fair Isle from 13th January to 25th April 2018, was seen on the Isle of Arran (Ayrshire) on 3rd April 2019, apparently having decided to spend its second winter further south.

Mallard x Pintail hybrid

GR37729	3	2 Sep 2018	Fair Isle	
	+	18 Oct 2019	Shapinsay, Orkney	1y 1m 16d, 90 km, SW (232°)

Sadly, we won't get to see what the sole surviving duckling from this 2018 mixed pairing will turn out to look like.

Rock Dove

A number of Rock Doves were retrapped or had their rings read in the field, including birds ringed in 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014 and EW19830, which had been ringed on 9th May 2012 and was seen in the Obs garden on 2nd March and the Schoolhouse garden on 20th July (7y 2m 11d).

EW19830 is obviously a resident on the Isle (and clearly happy feeding in gardens, having followed the Parnaby family down the road!), and was also recorded in 2014, 2017 and 2018. It was already the oldest-known Fair Isle Rock Dove and its sighting in July meant it was just six months short of the national longevity record for the species.

Oystercatcher

FP98847	8	18 Oct 2008	Snettisham, Norfolk	
	X	29 Jul 2019	Fair Isle	10y 9m 11d, 750 km, N (351°)

FP17319 was ringed as a chick on Eas Brecks on 5th July 2010 and was seen at North Light on 12th June (8y 11m 7d)

Movements have been recorded between Fair Isle and 29 other recording areas in Britain and Ireland, along with France, Iceland and Spain and this is the first to have come from Norfolk, although four Fair Isle-ringed birds have moved there. FP17319 was a breeding bird at North Light and was also recorded there in 2016 and 2018.

Ruff

7607693	3F	17 Aug 2019	NORWAY: Makkevika, Giske, Møre & Romsdal	
Orange/ Lime flag	'PMN'	23 Aug 2019	Fair Isle	6d, 528 km, WSW (235°)

This colour-marked individual (which was also present on 24th August) was only the second recorded movement of a Ruff involving Fair Isle, with the first having been ringed on the Isle in August 1968 and found dead in Spain in October of the same year.

Herring Gull

GR11019 was ringed on 20th July 2010 and was seen again on 5th January (8y 5m 16d)

Having been caught in the Axell trap as an adult, this bird has become a regular year-round visitor to the Obs garden for food where it was still noted in early 2019. What was probably the same bird was noted at the Schoolhouse during the summer, although the ring number was never confirmed.

Arctic Tern

SX92427	1	8 Jul 1996	Fair Isle	
	X	2 Jul 2019	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	22y, 11m, 25d, 49 km, WSW (248°)

There were no retraps or ringed adults found dead on the Isle this year, although a few chicks from the Buness colony were found dead before fledging and the rings of two chicks also appeared in gull pellets on Goorn in August.

It is possible that SX92427 was breeding on North Ronaldsay when it succumbed, whereupon it became the fourth-oldest-known Fair Isle-ringed Arctic Tern.

Great Skua

MA45003	1	3 Aug 2018	Fair Isle	
2E71	WV	22 Feb 2019	GERMANY: Langeoog, Ostfriesische Inseln	6m, 10d, 849 km, SE (140°)
MA40462	1	1 Aug 2018	Fair Isle	
2D56	X	22 Mar 2019	DENMARK: Vildbjerg, Ringkøbing	7m 21d, 720 km, ESE (122°)
HT62462	1	22 Jun 1996	Fair Isle	
	X	30 May 2019	Noss, Shetland	23y 11m 8d, 75 km, NNE (27°)
MA42210	1	28 Jul 2018	Fair Isle	
2D12	X	1 Jun 2019	GERMANY: Meldorfer Hafen - Speicherkoog, Schleswig-Holstein (mainland)	10m 4d, 882 km, SE (134°)

White 'BF'	1	2014	Handa, Sutherland	
	VV	1 May 2019	Fair Isle	
	VV	21 Jun 2019	Fair Isle	
MA40071	1	23 Jul 2016	Fair Isle	
	+	20 Jul 2019	FAROE ISLANDS: Rókin, Sørvág Vága	2y 11m 27d, 413 km, NW (313°)
MA40127	1	21 Jul 2017	Fair Isle	
2A47	VV	6 Aug 2019	FRANCE: Port Navalo, Brittany	2y 16d
MA40221	1	23 Jul 2017	Fair Isle	
2A13	VV	24 Sep 2019	Fair Isle	2y 2m 1d
MA40490	1	3 Aug 2018	Fair Isle	
2E60	VV	15 Oct 2019	PORTUGAL: Sagres, West Algarve	1y 2m 12d (c.4 miles offshore)
HT62348	1	4 Jul 1995	Fair Isle	
	X	22 Oct 2019	FRANCE: Plage, Pas-de-Calais	24y 3m 18d, 978 km, SSE (167°)
MA45014	1	13 Aug 2018	Fair Isle	
2E84	X	3 Nov 2019	FRANCE: Tréguennec, Baie d'Audierne, Bretagne	1y 2m 21d
MA53267	1	21 Jul 2019	Fair Isle	
2H08	X	11 Nov 2019	FRANCE: Dune du Pilat, Gironde	3m 21d, 1662 km, S (180°)
MA45461	1	9 Aug 2019	Fair Isle	
2G32	VV	22 Dec 2019	FRANCE: Pointe de l'Herbaudière, Noirmoutier	4m 13d

Another fantastic set of movements, with the darvic-ringing project really coming into its own. It is especially interesting to see the locations of some of the immature birds. Some of the youngsters were perhaps further north than would have been expected (2D12, 2D56 and 2E71 for example, the latter of which incidentally was seen to kill a Herring Gull), whilst birds off the Biscay coast (2G32) were more expected. There have been no previous records of Fair Isle Bonxies from Portugal and the two listed here were both only recorded due to the darvic rings being photographed from boat trips. It seems likely that this is a regular location for Fair Isle birds and hopefully there will be further sightings in future years. Some of the older birds included HT62462 and MA40071, both of which had possibly been recruited into the breeding populations of other colonies. The latter was the second Fair Isle bird to be found in the Faeroes, with one bird having moved in the opposite direction (the only foreign-ringed Great Skua to be found on Fair Isle). BF from Handa appears to be a Fair Isle breeding bird now (being present for its second year), although its breeding attempt appeared to fail in 2019. In many ways, the most exciting record was 2A13: the first darvic-ringed Bonxie to return to Fair Isle. Interestingly, it arrived late in the season and perhaps a year or two earlier than might have been expected, and was seen to harass Barnacle Geese on the Skadan. HT62348 becomes the second-oldest Fair Isle Great Skua, although it is still well short of the national longevity record of 38 years.

Arctic Skua

ES60872	1	28 Jun 2000	Foula, Shetland	
(orange 'AEV')	VV	22 Jun 2019	Fair Isle	18y 11m 26d, 68 km
	VV	7 Aug 2019	Fair Isle	19y 1m 10d
ET75036	1	1 Jul 1998	Fair Isle	
	X	9 Oct 2019	BRAZIL: São Simão, Rio Grande do Sul	21y 3m 8d, 11,058 km

There were also eight birds previously ringed on the Isle that were recorded in 2019. There were sightings of two ringed in 2018, four ringed in 2017 and ET83551 that was ringed as a chick on 27th June 2002 and was still present until at least 9th July (17y, 12d), having been darvic-ringed in 2017. The oldest bird recorded was ES18486, which was found dead in the Parks on 16th June and which had been ringed as a chick on 4th July 1994. At 24y, 11m and 12d it was the third-oldest Fair Isle Arctic Skua, and less than a year short of the record.

Although the third record from Brazil of a Fair Isle ringed Arctic Skua, ET75036 was found over 2,000 km further south than the previous records and claims a new record as the furthest distance from Fair Isle that a FIBO-ringed bird (of any species) has been found. AEV was breeding on the Isle, and had been darvic-ringed in 2018.

Common Guillemot

X30297	1	26 Jun 1994	Sumburgh, Shetland	
	R	23 Jun 2019	Fair Isle	24y 11m 29d, 41 km, SSW (210°)

There were also birds seen or recaptured that had been ringed on Fair Isle in previous years, with individuals from 2017 (two), 2015 (two), 2014 (three), 2005 and R50244. That was ringed as a chick (with the ring X45679, which was replaced in 2009) on 17th June 1996 and retrapped on 23rd June 2019 (23y, 6d).

Most of the recaptured birds were found in the same place they were ringed and, although most were ringed as adults, it was pleasing to see two chicks from 2014 that had apparently been recruited into the breeding population. One of these had been ringed as a chick in South Ramnigeo and was seen at Pietron. Both X30297 and R50244 are a decent age, although the oldest-known Fair Isle Guillemot was 32y 2m when it was found dead in 2011 and there have been several birds over 25 years old.

Razorbill

A number of birds ringed on Fair Isle in previous years were recaptured in 2019, with birds ringed in 2017, 2015, 2012, 2011, 2007, 2005, 2004, 2003 (three), 2002, 1998 and 1997 (two). Also: K12006 was ringed as a chick on 23rd June 1994 and recaptured on 2nd July 2019 (25y 9d) M77755 was ringed as chick on 22nd June 1992 and seen on 27th May 2019 (26y 11m 5d)

K12006 (which was ringed as a M81746 before having its ring replaced in 2015) is a regular breeding adult in Easter Lothar and is seen there most years. M77755, also seen at the Easter Lothar colony, is now the fourth-oldest Razorbill known from Fair Isle.

Puffin

A number of birds ringed previously on Fair Isle were recaptured or sighted on the Isle during the year, including birds ringed in 2016, 2015, 2014 (two), 2011 (two), 2010, 2009 (three), 2008, 2006 (two), 2005, 2003, 2002, and ET75340. That was ringed as an adult on 20th July 1999 and was seen on Buness on 10th July (19y 11m 20d).

With several Fair Isle birds known to have lived over 25 years, none of these birds were of a particularly remarkable age. It was very pleasing however, that the two birds from 2014 were both ringed as chicks on Green Holm, where they were recaptured as breeding adults in 2019. A strong degree of site-fidelity is noted amongst Fair Isle Puffins, with birds invariably recaptured or seen at the same colonies as they were ringed.

Storm Petrel

Table 1. Storm Petrel movements from birds trapped on Fair Isle in 2019. Key: ringed on Fair Isle and recovered elsewhere/ringed elsewhere then caught on Fair Isle.

Trapped in 2019		Year of ringing							
Site	Total movements	2019 2018	2017 2016	2015 2014	2013 2012	2011 2010	2009 2008	2007 2006	2005
Fair Isle	31	18	7 1	1 1	1 1	2			
Sumburgh, Shetland	6/6	2/1	2/4 1/1		1/0				
Mousa, Shetland	6/0	2/0	1/0 3/0						
North Ronaldsay, Orkney	1/7	0/2	1/2 0/2	0/1					
Sule Skerry, Orkney	0/1		0/1						
Birsay, Orkney	2/1	1/1		1/0					
Swona, Orkney	1/0		1/0						
Kirkhouse Point, Orkney	1/0		1/0						
Eilean nan Ron, Highland	13/1		4/0 5/0	2/0 1/0	1/0		0/1		
Score, Highland	1/0	1/0							
Portknockie, Moray & Nairn	1/2	0/2							1/0
Isle of May, Fife	1/0		1/0						
Lunga, Treshnish, Argyll	1/0		1/0						
Faeroes	5/1		0/1 3/0	1/0					1/0
Norway	0/2	0/1	0/1						
Portugal	4/0		4/0						

Only one control (a bird from Sumburgh) was caught more than once on Fair Isle during the year. There was a total of 24 controls on Fair Isle in 2019 (although details are awaited from the BTO for three of these), with 43 birds ringed on Fair Isle then caught elsewhere, reported during the year. The locations involved formed a familiar set of movements, although there were a few older birds than would usually be expected to be lured into the trapping areas.

Fulmar

AT67504	1	3 Aug 1960	Fair Isle
	X	14 Dec 2019	GERMANY: Hambergen, Lüneburg

Although this initially looked to be an outstanding record, it turned out to be a ring which had been collected 'several years previously'; found in someone's house! The Fair Isle longevity record therefore remains the bird ringed in 1977 as a chick that was found dead in The Netherlands in 2017.

Gannet

1427012	1	14 Jul 2010	Fair Isle
	X	2 Nov 2019	PORTUGAL: Praia de Francelos, Vila Nova de Gaia, Porto
			9y 3m 19d, 2110 km, SSW (194°)

There have been 11 Fair Isle-ringed Gannets found abroad, with singles from Spain, Morocco, Ceuta (Spain) and now two from Portugal all having been found dead in November or December. Other foreign controls (from Denmark, Germany, Norway and three from France) have been found between April and August.

Shag

1427206	1	14 July 2015	Fair Isle	
Green 'FSW'	W	1 July 2019	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	3y 11m 17d, 50 km, WSW (244°)

There were several darvic-ringed birds from previous years observed, with birds seen that had been ringed in 2018, 2017, 2016 (five), 2015 (two), 2014 (six), 2013, 2012 and 2000.

FSW has previously been seen on North Ronaldsay, in May–June 2017, but has not yet been sighted back on Fair Isle. Most of the sightings on the Isle involved birds that had previously been observed on Fair Isle after their ringing date, but one (1427115, red 'HBR') was seen for the first time since having been ringed as a chick in 2014. Two birds ringed as chicks in 2014 (1427123, red 'HSE' and 1427143, green 'FRW') were still present on the Isle, having both previously gone wandering. Red 'HSE' had been to Toft, Shetland in June 2015 and hadn't been seen since returning to the Isle in summer 2016, whilst green FRW spent May to November 2017 on North Ronaldsay, but was present again on the Isle in 2018.

Sparrowhawk

DD55606	3M	19 Aug 2018	Isle of May, Fife	
	R	25 May 2019	Fair Isle	9m 6d, 377 N (9°)
DT69856	3M	9 Oct 2019	Fair Isle	
	R	11 Oct 2019	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	2d, 49 km, WSW (248°)

DT69856 was presumably a newly arrived migrant moving quickly south, whilst DD55606 appears to have been caught as it arrived in the UK and was recaptured on its way back to its breeding grounds. With five movements between Fair Isle and Norway, it seems likely that a lot of the Sparrowhawks seen on the Isle are moving to and from northern European breeding grounds. This is our second Isle of May-ringed Sparrowhawk and the first was found in very similar circumstances (albeit it over 60 years ago) having been ringed on 23rd September 1957 and caught on Fair Isle on 7th May 1958.

Skylark

TR34226 was ringed on 17th March 2017 and seen on 2nd March (1y 11m 13d)

A typical record of an early spring bird using the Obs garden, although it's not clear whether these records refer to birds that carry on to breeding grounds further north or stay on Fair Isle for the summer.

Chiffchaff

LU9519	4	3 Apr 2019	NORWAY: Revtangen, Klepp, Rogaland	
	R	4 Apr 2019	Fair Isle	1d, 416 km, WNW (283°)
HDK565	4	16 Apr 2016	Woolston Eyes, Warrington, Cheshire & Wirral	
	R	14 Jun 2019	Fair Isle	3y 1m 29d, 686 km, N (5°)
	R	18 Sep 2019	Fair Isle	3y 5m 2d, 686 km, N (5°)

JTA641 was ringed on 27th May and was still present on 8th June and may have been one of the birds that went on to summer on the Isle.

LU9519 was the first Norwegian-ringed Chiffchaff for the Isle, although two have gone in the opposite direction, and was proven by DNA analysis to be a nominate P. c. collybita. HDK565 was an interesting bird as it showed that summering birds on the Isle are not necessarily birds in their first full summer that have decided not to breed. It is the second movement between Fair Isle and Woolston Eyes, with a bird ringed on Fair Isle on 7th April 2007 being caught there on 13th November 2009.

Sedge Warbler

AHH9648 was ringed on 20th May and retrapped on 4th June (15 days)

Starling

LJ79764	1	27 May 2017	Fair Isle	
	X	10 Feb 2019	near Boddam, Shetland	1y 8m 14d, 50 km, NNE (22°)
LJ79754	1	27 May 2017	Fair Isle	
	VV	17 Feb 2019	Toab, Shetland	17 8m 21d
LC43009	1	3 Jun 2010	Fair Isle	
	VV	20 Mar 2019	Foula, Shetland	8y 9m 17d

There were several records of birds that had been ringed in earlier years, with individuals recorded from 2018 (two), 2017 (four), 2016 (three), 2015 (two), 2014 (four), 2013 and 2009.

Typical local movements of Fair Isle bred birds, which often wander to Shetland in winter (and sometimes remain there). CL41490, was ringed on 30th April 2009 and found dead on 25th April, although its remains in Da Water suggested it may have been there quite some time; irrespective, the Fair Isle longevity record remains over 12 years old.

Blackbird

7461089	4M	26 Oct 2019	NORWAY: Snigsmoen, Lindesnes, Vest-Agder	
	VV	9 Nov 2019	Fair Isle	14d, 593 km, WNW (288°)
LK34782	3F	22 Oct 2017	Fair Isle	
	X	21 Jun 2019	NORWAY: Torderod, Moss, Østfold	1y 8m, 693 km, E (91°)

LK35510 was ringed on 18th November 2018 and was still present on 15th March (3m, 25d), having also been retrapped in January, proving it was overwintering on the Isle. A couple of other lingering birds involved LK35166 from 3rd January to 5th March (2m, 2d), which was presumably also overwintering, and LK35230 which was present from 20th April to 12th May (22d).

There have now been 384 Fair Isle-ringed Blackbirds recovered away from the Isle, of which over a third have been located in Norway. In this respect, LK34782 is a typical movement, although it is always interesting to see where a Fair Isle-ringed bird was presumably breeding (in this case, the south-east of Norway). Of the 90 birds found on Fair Isle that had been ringed elsewhere, 7461089 is the 18th from Norway, meaning only Orkney (with 21) has provided more. This was a slightly unusual record in that the metal ring was read in the field as the bird fed in the Schoolhouse garden during some generally unpleasant weather.

Fieldfare

LK35241 was ringed in the Plantation on 14th July and recaptured there on 9th August (26d).

The fact that this bird was ringed helped to confirm that just one bird was responsible for all the mid-summer sightings, as it was capable of hiding itself around the Isle for almost a fortnight at a time.

Redwing

RZ10643	4	19 Oct 2018	Fair Isle	
	X	21 Oct 2019	FRANCE: Arbonne, Pyrénées-Atlantiques	1y 2d, 1804 km, S (174°)

The 16th Fair Isle-ringed Redwing to be found in France. Although a wing length of 120 mm puts it firmly in the overlap zone between the two subspecies of Redwing to pass through Fair Isle, it was caught the day after a record daily haul of 181 birds were ringed that were all considered to be T.i. coburnii and it is likely that it was also of the Icelandic subspecies.

Song Thrush

RZ10165	5	28 Mar 2018	Fair Isle	
	R	29 Dec 2019	PORTUGAL: Monsanto, Santarém	2287 km, 1y 9, 1d, SSW (193°)

Of the 33 recoveries of Fair Isle-ringed Song Thrushes, 12 have been from the Iberian Peninsula, with this being the third to be found in Portugal.

Robin

AHH9504	5	6 Apr 2019	Fair Isle	
	R	9 Apr 2019	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	3d, 451 km, WSW (247°)

A large spring passage saw many birds lingering for several days, with two of the longest stayers being AHH9635 from 18th May to 19th June (1m, 1d) and AHH9702 30th April to 23rd May (23d). Also, a special mention to ABB1776, which lingered from 13th March until 4th April (22d), but was notable for being the first bird to be ringed on Fair Isle in the aftermath of the fire.

A movement between Fair Isle and North Ronaldsay is not in itself unusual, but it seems slightly counterintuitive that it was going south at this time.

House Sparrow

TS52382	3JM	15 Aug 2016	Fair Isle	
	X	10 Jan 2019	Sumburgh, Shetland	2y 4m 26d, 42 km, NNE (28°)
VZ47687	3M	30 Aug 2018	Fair Isle	
	W	29 Apr 2019	Foula, Shetland	7m 30d, 72 km, NNW (340°)

In addition, a number of Fair Isle birds were recaptured from previous years, involving birds from 2017 (three), 2016 (three) and 2015, whilst TS52412 was found dead at Kenaby on 20th April, having been ringed on 8th November 2014 (4y, 5m, 12d).

Although generally considered sedentary, these are the fourth and fifth House Sparrows to move from Fair Isle to Shetland (including the second to Foula), whilst another two have gone to Orkney, and two Orkney-ringed birds have been found on the Isle.

Dunnock

TW45601	4	12 May 2019	Fair Isle	
	R	30 May 2019	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	18d, 49 km, WSW (248°)

An unusual, but by no means unprecedented, southerly movement of a spring migrant presumably trying to reorientate itself.

Grey Wagtail

EN72529	3	23 Sep 2019	NORWAY: Revtangen Ornithologiske Stasjon, Klepp, Rogaland	
	R	11 Oct 2019	Fair Isle	18d, 416 km, WNW (283°)

This is comfortably the longest ringing movement involving Grey Wagtail for Fair Isle, with a Shetland-ringed bird being our only previous recovery and Fair Isle birds moving to Shetland, Orkney and North-east Scotland.

Pied Wagtail

Z830649	3J	2 Sep 2015	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	
	W(6F)	28 Feb 2019	Fair Isle	3y 5m 26d, 51 km, ENE (67°)

APB0568	3	18 Aug 2019	Rerwick, Shetland	
	R	20 Sep 2019	Fair Isle	1m 2d, 50 km, SSW (200°)
APB0565	3	18 Aug 2019	Rerwick, Shetland	
	R	27 Aug 2019	Fair Isle	9d, 50 km, SSW (200°)

AHH9782 and AHH9790 were both ringed as recently-fledged juvenile Pied Wagtails on 18th July and were still present on 23rd August (1m, 5d) and 18th September (2m) respectively.

The two relatively long-staying juveniles were interesting, especially given the very few other retraps of alba wagtails despite the record numbers ringed in the autumn, which suggests they were Fair Isle raised chicks (especially considering the early autumn date of ringing). APB0565 (which, like all the trapped birds mentioned here, was caught in the roost at the Obs) was a 'White Wagtail' and, along with APB0568 were the first Shetland-ringed alba wagtails to be found on Fair Isle. Z830649 was also seen on Fair Isle in 2018, when it was part of a breeding pair regularly observed around the Obs.

Meadow Pipit

Three birds that were ringed in 2018 (two in August and a juvenile in July) were retrapped in August 2019. S016236 was ringed in the Vaadal on 26th August 2016 and recaptured there on 29th August 2019 (3y, 3d) having also been recaptured in the same trap three times in August–September 2018.

Rock Pipit

2721787 was ringed on 28th March 2017 and seen on 6th March 2019 (1y 11m 6d)

This bird was ringed in the Obs garden, where the 2019 sighting was from, and it was also noted there on 26th November 2018. A typical record of a wintering bird from the Obs area, although it is unknown whether these breed on Fair Isle or elsewhere.

Chaffinch

AYD5473	3F	14 Oct 2018	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	
	VV	17 Apr 2019	Fair Isle	6m 3d, 49 km, ENE (68°)

A bird that had its ring read in the field as it fed in the Schoolhouse garden, it was thought to have overwintered on North Ronaldsay before it made a short hop north on its journey back to its breeding grounds.

Brambling

The only bird recaptured more than a few days after ringing was AHH9814, ringed on 28th April and still present on 10th May (12d).

Twite

S465478	3M	2 Oct 2017	Fair Isle	
	R	20 Jan 2019	Sumburgh Head, Shetland	1y 3m 18d, 41 km, NNE (30°)
AHH9789	3J	18 Jul 2019	Fair Isle	
	R (3F)	30 Oct 2019	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	3m 12d, 49 km, WSW (248°)

S016168 was ringed as fledged juvenile on 19th August 2016 and was resighted at the Wirvie Burn on 23rd April (2y, 8m, 4d) having also been recaptured on the Isle in April and May 2017 and April 2018. AHH9762 was ringed on 26th May and recaptured on 23rd August (2m, 28d).

AHH9789 is a typical southerly movement of a presumably Fair Isle raised bird for the winter, but S465478 is only the second to be recorded on Shetland.

Linnet

ACF0420	4M	30 Apr 2019	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	
	R	22 Jun 2019	Fair Isle	1m 24d, 49 km, ENE (68°)
ALJ3510	3J	31 Jul 2019	Scousburgh, Shetland	
	R	18 Sep 2019	Fair Isle	1m 18d, 48 km, SSW (202°)
D975158	5F	4 May 2015	Fair Isle	
	R	28 Apr 2019	Scousburgh, Shetland	3y 11m 24d

The Linnet connection between Fair Isle and former FIBO Assistant Warden Nick Dymond's garden in Scousburgh remains strong and this year again included D975158, which has been trapped at Scousburgh in September 2015, May 2016, June 2017 and May 2018. A typical set of records of birds using Fair Isle as a stopover on their way to and from breeding grounds in Shetland.

Reference

Robinson, R.A., Leech, D.I. & Clark, J.A. 2019. *The Online Demography Report: bird ringing and nest recording in Britain & Ireland in 2018*. BTO, Thetford (www.bto.org/ringing-report, created on 16-November-2019).



Plate 129. Ringing pliers retrieved from the ashes, Obs, 16th June 2019. © Sarah Harris

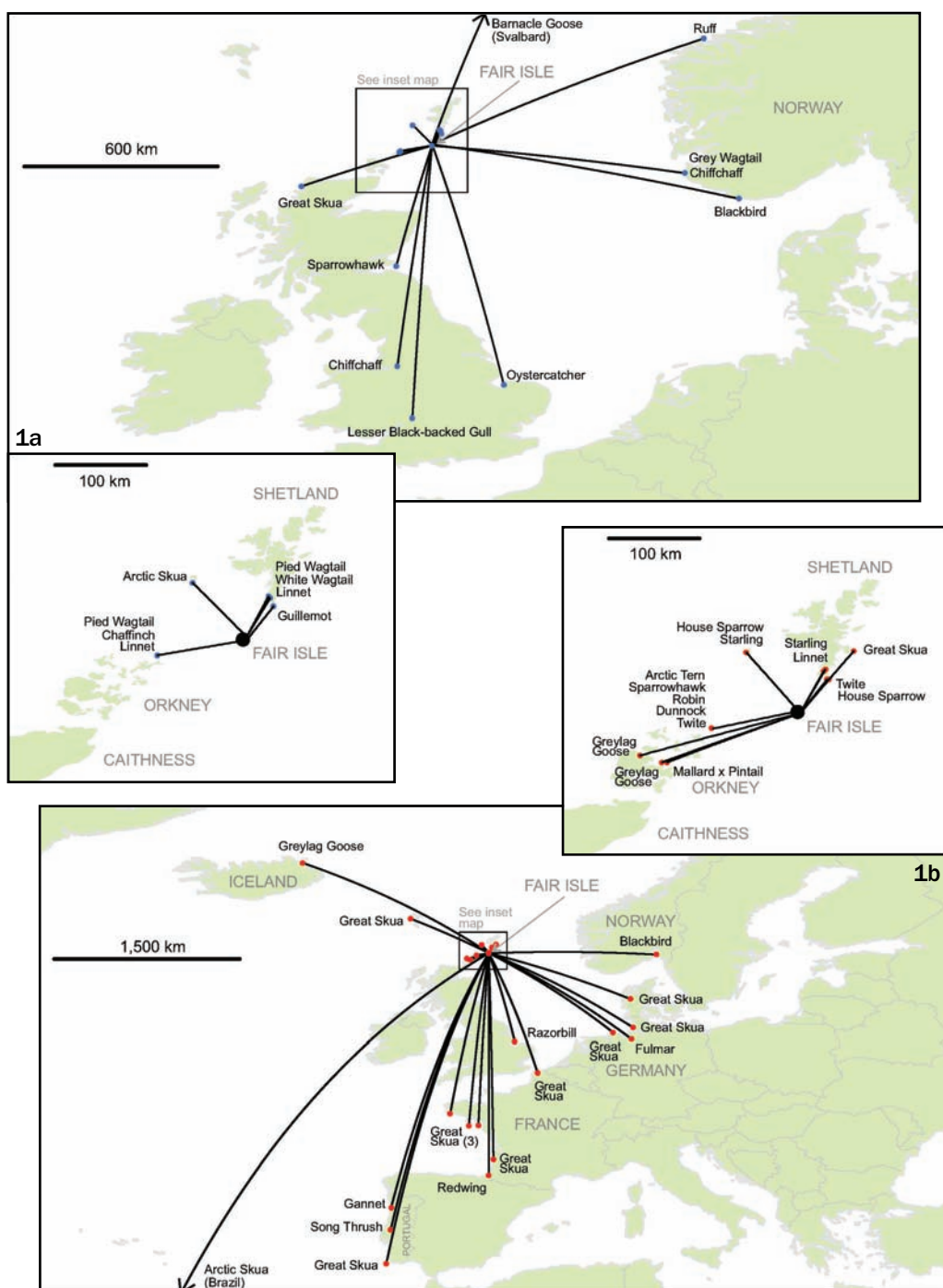


Figure 1a–b. Ringing recoveries and controls relating to Fair Isle, 2019. Storm Petrel data are not included. Blue dot = site where a bird was ringed which was later recovered/controlled on Fair Isle in 2019; red dot = site where a bird ringed on Fair Isle was recovered/controlled in 2019.

Correction: in the 2018 report (page 128), the red and blue colours were transposed.

FAIR ISLE'S SEABIRDS IN 2019

David Parnaby

Overview

As is typical of recent years, it was a mixed season. There were some promising signs in some of the population plots (Fulmars, Shags, Kittiwakes and Arctic Terns all showing increases), although other species moved in the opposite direction. Most changes were relatively small compared to 2018, and, with seabirds being long-lived species, it is usually best not to read too much into a single year's change in population. For most species, the catastrophic declines seemed to have at least slowed, although recovery to their heydays is a long way off.

Productivity is perhaps a better indication of how the Isle's seabirds are getting on and it was very pleasing to see so many fledged Arctic Terns and Arctic Skuas compared to recent years. Razorbills and Puffins again did well (albeit slightly down on the excellent season in 2018), although Common Guillemots struggled. There were also particularly poor years for the breeding success for Fulmar, Gannet and Great Skua, but hopefully these don't turn out to be signs of a more significant problem. We shall certainly await the outcome of the 2020 seabird season with interest.

Species accounts

Kittiwake: Plot counts in 2019 produced 36 AON, an increase of 5.9% in comparison to 2018. For the second consecutive year, only the Green Holm and Dog Geo plot had any nesting attempts. Kittiwake has seen one of the most dramatic population crashes of any of Fair Isle's seabirds, with a steep decline noted since 1987.

Productivity increased by 42.6% in 2019 to 0.67 chicks fledged per AON in comparison to the 0.47 chicks fledged per AON in 2018. The recent trend has been for poor productivity for this species, although 2019 was the sixth consecutive year to see chicks fledged from the productivity plots after none at all from 2011 to 2013.

Arctic Tern: The whole-island count showed an increase of 50.5% in 2019 (286 AON) in comparison with 2018 (190 AON). Breeding numbers have fluctuated greatly since 1987, although a general upward trend until 2001 has now clearly been reversed and a long-term decline now seems to be occurring.

Productivity increased in 2019 by 115.4% to 0.28 chicks fledged per AON (compared to the 0.13 chicks per AON recorded in 2018), the highest productivity figure since 2006.

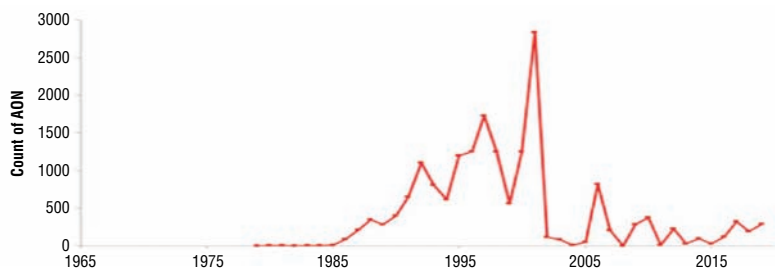


Figure 1. Whole island counts of Arctic Terns on Fair Isle, 1965-2019.



Plate 130. Arctic Tern, juvenile on sheep, Bunes, 18th July 2019. © Richard Cope

Great Skua: The count of 490 AOT in 2019 represented a 5.8% decrease from the 2018 count of 520 AOT. The overall trend for Great Skua has been a long-term increase, which was slow and steady, until 2004 when numbers increased rapidly until 2008, before apparently stabilising until 2013, after which numbers have fluctuated markedly, although still with an overall upward trend, with 2018 and 2019 representing the first time that consecutive years have recorded counts of over 400.

Breeding success was 60% lower in 2019 (0.14 chicks fledged per AOT) than in 2018 (0.35 chicks fledged per AOT). Prior to 2000, productivity was generally high (usually 0.7 chicks or higher fledged per AOT), but since then it has been more mixed. A large amount of intraspecific predation was noted in the colonies, with many chicks being predated.

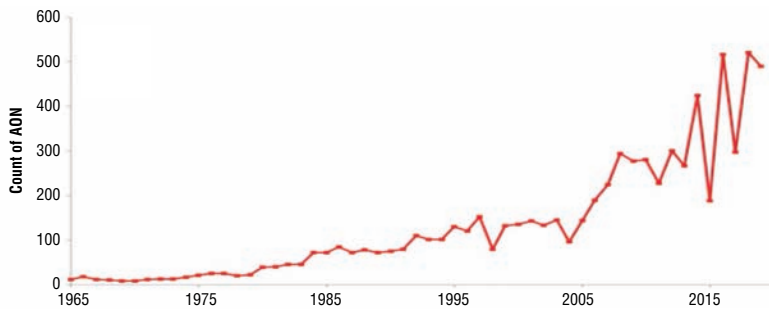


Figure 2. Whole island counts of Great Skuas on Fair Isle, 1965-2019.

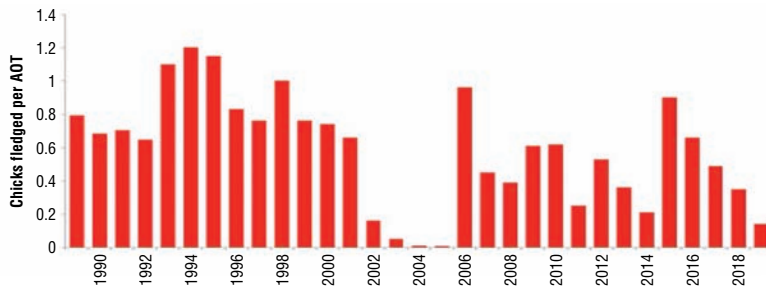


Figure 3. Breeding success of Great Skuas on Fair Isle (whole island), 1989-2019.

Arctic Skua: The island population of Arctic Skuas remained the same in 2019 (28 AOT) as it was in 2018, bringing an end to two consecutive years of decline. The long-term trend in the population has been a gradual decline with occasional fluctuations. Since reaching a low of just 19 AOT in 2013, a very slight increase in fortunes had been noted, but the 2018 and 2019 totals were the third-lowest ever recorded.

Productivity in 2019 increased to 0.6 chicks fledged per AOT in comparison to the 0.04 chicks fledged per AOT in 2018. Productivity from 2011 to 2013 was very poor (with just one chick fledged in total during the three years), improved from 2014 to 2016 before just single chicks fledged in each year in 2017 and 2018. The 2019 productivity figure was the best since 2006.

Common Guillemot: Plot counts remained the same in 2019 as they were in 2018 at 1,224 individuals. Since 1999, the overall pattern has been of a decline in numbers, although this appears to have stabilised somewhat since 2008.

Productivity decreased by 52.5% in 2019 to 0.28 chicks fledged per AIA in comparison to 2018 (0.59 chicks fledged per AIA). From 1988 to 2002, productivity remained relatively high, fluctuating between 0.67 and 0.85; however, from 2002 to 2013 the general trend was for productivity to be lower (typically less than 0.5 chicks fledged per AIA), with zero productivity recorded in 2004, 2008, 2011 and 2013. From 2014, there have been signs of productivity improving slightly, with 0.45 chicks fledged per AIA or higher recorded in four of the six years.

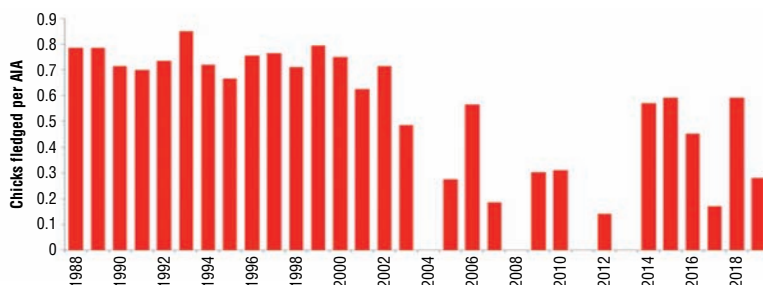


Figure 4. Breeding success of Common Guillemots on Fair Isle (means of two plots), 1988-2019.



Plate 131. Guillemots, Geo o' Pietron, 26th June 2019. © Max Hellicar

Razorbill: Numbers at the Lericum monitoring plot decreased by 16.1% in 2019 compared with 2018, to 35 individuals. The population on Fair Isle has been steadily declining since the late 1980s, with a particularly sharp crash in numbers noted after 2006. Counts then appeared to stabilise somewhat, with a slight hesitating increase noted since 2013.

Productivity in 2019 was 0.78 chicks fledged per egg laid, a 1.3% decrease from the 0.79 chicks fledged per egg laid recorded in 2018. From 1990 to 2002, productivity fluctuated but remained relatively high at between 0.47 and 0.8, but from 2003 to 2013 productivity was consistently low (<0.5) or, in four years, zero. From 2014 productivity has again been generally higher (between 0.5 and 0.79).

Black Guillemot: The number of Black Guillemots in breeding plumage counted along the east coast of Fair Isle (North Lighthouse to South Lighthouse) in 2019 was 174 individuals, representing a 12.6% decrease compared to 2018 (199 individuals). After a steep crash in numbers in 1998, a steady, fluctuating increase has occurred since, although the last two years have seen another decrease. Counts of this species are dependent on suitable weather conditions (of which there were few in 2019), so a couple of years of decreasing numbers is hopefully not significant.

Puffin: After an initial check of burrows at the Green Holm monitoring plot on 30th May, there were repeat visits on 29th June, 13th and 24th July and 3rd August. Productivity was found to be 0.85 chicks fledged per egg laid, which was a decrease of 5.6% compared to 2018 (which was a record high of 0.9 chicks fledged per egg laid). Productivity was above 0.5 chicks fledged per egg laid every year from 1987 to 2000 and, although it has fluctuated more since then, it has remained relatively high (especially compared to the other auks), with no years of zero productivity.



Plate 132. Puffin, Bunness, 10th July 2019. © David Parnaby

Fulmar: An increase of 17.9% was recorded at the population monitoring plots in 2019 (428 AOS) in comparison with 2018 (363 AOS). This species has shown a general trend for a gradual, fluctuating increase in the monitoring plots since the early 2000s, which reversed a previous gradual decline, and 2019's count is the highest since 1996.

Mean breeding success on the monitoring plots decreased by 14.8% to 0.46 chicks fledged per AOS in 2019, the lowest productivity since 2008.

Gannet: A decrease of 1.9% was noted in the island population in 2019 (4,211 AON) in comparison to 2018 (4,291 AON). Gannets colonised Fair Isle in 1975 after which a gradual increase followed, with rapid expansion in the population noted from 2008 to 2010, followed by a levelling off or slight decline from 2011 to 2015, after which the population has started rising again.

Productivity in 2019 was 0.64 chicks fledged per AON (from a sample of 253 nests), representing a decrease of 17.9% from 2018 (0.78 chicks fledged per AON). The 2019 figure is the lowest since 2002, but maintains the high productivity values seen over the last 19 years; above 0.6 in all years with data from 2001 to 2019.

Shag: An increase of 24.1% was recorded at the population monitoring plots in 2019 (36 AON) in comparison to 2018. A long-term decline in numbers has occurred on Fair Isle since 1969, although since 2011 counts have stabilised and the 2019 total represents the highest count since 2010.



Plate 133. Shags, Meoness/Busta Geo area, 28th August 2019. © David Parnaby

Productivity was 9.9% lower in 2019 (0.82 chicks fledged per AON) than in 2018 when there were 0.91 chicks fledged per AON. The long-term trend since 1986 has been a gradual decline in productivity, with particular poor breeding success recorded recently in 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2017, although productivity of over 1.0 chicks fledged per AON was recorded in 2014 and 2015. The breeding population on Fair Isle has declined severely and the total number of occupied nests in the productivity monitoring plots is now very low: 11 in 2019 compared with 68 in 1986.

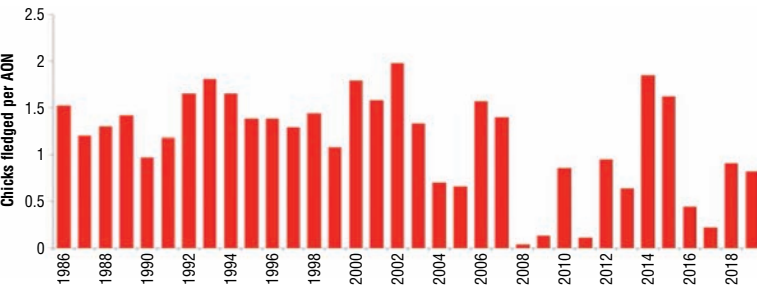


Figure 5. Breeding success of Shags on Fair Isle, 1986-2019 (sample size of monitored nests has ranged between 12 and 95).

CHASING SKUAS

Sarah Harris

Sitting in the BTO office one day, I discovered I was being loaned, like a football player, from the Surveys Team to BTO Scotland for some fieldwork of a lifetime: tracking Arctic Skuas (it gets better...) on Fair Isle! A species on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern, a species that has declined at a greater rate than any other UK breeding seabird (81% between 1986 and 2014), a species I'd only ever seen during seawatches - so, as a speck in the distance. Albeit a cool speck, chasing down other seabirds and stealing their meals - a fast-flying, agile pirate, that keeps you watching as it passes the headland you're perched on with a shaky 'scope battered by the wind.

Across the world, there is limited information regarding population change in Arctic Skuas but where they are monitored, the general theme is declines of varying degrees. The most recent count in the UK, during the *Seabird 2000* survey, estimated 2,136 Apparently Occupied Territories.

As breeding populations are restricted largely to the Northern Isles, with some smaller populations scattered across north and west Scotland, research was planned for Fair Isle and Rousay, Orkney. On Fair Isle, the numbers of breeding Arctic Skuas have declined from a peak of 180 pairs in the late 1960s, to a low of 19 pairs in 2013 and around the 30-pair mark during our three years of research, a shadow of its former strength. Rousay supports a smaller number of Arctic Skuas, with 15 apparently occupied nests being recorded in 2018 within the study area. That was the highest recorded in the five-year period since annual monitoring was started.



Plate 134. Arctic Skua chick, Lerness 13th July 2017. © Sarah Harris

Whilst many seabird species in the UK had been tracked using GPS or satellite telemetry during the breeding season, the Arctic Skua had, at this point, not been part of such studies. Expert opinion suggested Arctic Skuas were likely to stay close to their colonies during the breeding season and were likely to forage relatively close to their summer residence. From the BTO Migration Atlas we were also aware of ringing recoveries from the UK, the majority dotted along the west coast of Europe and Africa. A handful occurred along the east coast of America and Greenland too. These recoveries are largely based on washed-up birds and therefore provide limited information on where birds spent the non-breeding season. In summary, little was known about their foraging behaviour or winter movements and these were our primary research aims, so it was an exciting venture!

Thinking about causes of this 81% decline in the UK, thoughts were drawn to some other declines seen across the seabirds as a whole in this region. The crash in the sandeel population around Shetland (a seabird's favourite prey item) in the late 1980s was thought to be associated with a targeted fishery and more recently with climate change, which has hampered its recovery. Another potential issue for Arctic Skuas at the southern edge of their global range here in the UK, are warmer summers which could be putting additional strain on the species with regards to 'overheating' during incubation. Anecdotally, during fieldwork on Fair Isle, incubating birds were often seen fidgeting and leaving the nest unattended to go and cool off in a nearby pool or stream.

Great Skua numbers have generally increased, and breeding numbers on Fair Isle notably fluctuate year-on-year. Based on anecdotal observations, they predate Arctic Skua eggs as well as fledged young and out-compete Arctic Skuas for breeding space and potentially other resources and their success has been suggested as a mechanism contributing to the decline in Arctic Skuas on Fair Isle and in general. At their peak, Arctic Skuas bred in clusters – colonies – with safety in numbers, but today the Fair Isle distribution is rather more scattered.

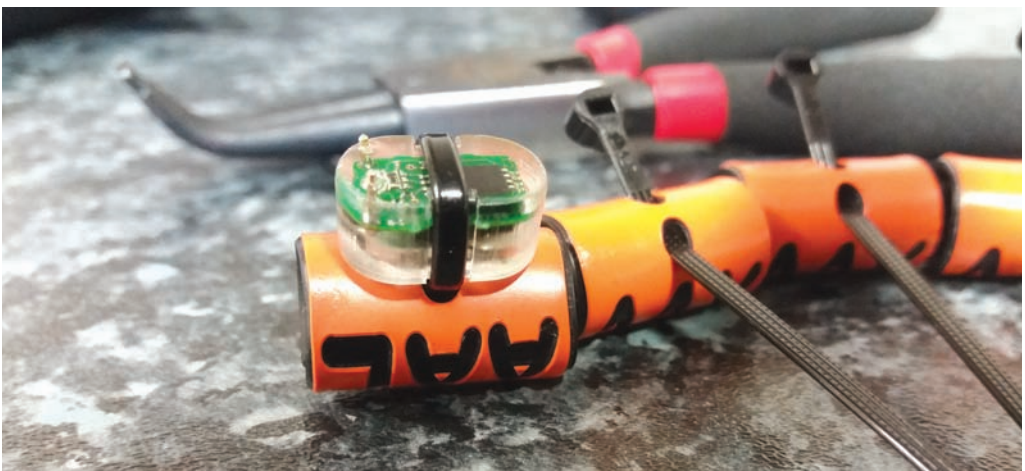


Plate 135. Preparing geolocator tags, 9th June 2017. © Sarah Harris

Thanks to the local knowledge of Observatory staff and islanders, sharing information on current territories and historic breeding data, BTO's research on Fair Isle's 'Skootie Alans' got a great head start in 2017. We soon got to work and deployed Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking devices, made by Pathtrack and glue-mounted to the Arctic Skuas' mantle, enabling us to look at the foraging movements during the breeding season and to relate these to the breeding performance of individual tagged birds.



Plate 136. GPS-tagged Arctic Skua, Gilsetter, 9th June 2017. © Richard Cope

We also fitted geolocators (on colour-rings) supplied by Migrate Technology to obtain information on movements associated with migration routes and wintering grounds. These devices record day length and time to infer a bird's location. While the GPS tags download data to a base station close to the nest, geolocators store the information for up to a couple of years, and then need to be physically retrieved and plugged into the computer in order to gain the stored information.

By mid-June 2017, nine GPS tags had been deployed. Nine geolocators had also been attached and, most importantly, no negative impacts from the tags were detected on the 12 study birds tagged (some with both tags). In 2018, the research programme expanded to Rousay, all thanks to Arctic Skua enthusiasts, Helen and David Aiton, who have been studying the Arctic Skua and other predatory seabirds there since 2014.

In 2018, nest cameras were used on Fair Isle to provide insights into behaviour at the nest. On both islands, nest temperature recorders known as thermocrons were placed in the bottom of the nest cups to record when temperatures stopped being consistent - indicating when incubation ended due to either failure or hatching. This additional information was critical in helping interpret the breeding movement data from the GPS tags and what time and date to watch-back the hours of camera footage for clues!

During tagging, feather samples were collected in order to sex the study birds and match this to the biometrics taken. It was the aim to take any regurgitated food for analysis as well, but the birds on Fair Isle did not

regurgitate food during the ringing process, as is the case in some other studies elsewhere in the world. There is no known reason for this although it did cause us to wonder if they simply did not have enough food to regurgitate. One of the only times regurgitation did happen on Fair Isle, the prey item regurgitated was a barely swallowed Snipe chick!

In 2019, it was a case of trying once more to catch birds to recover geolocators at both colonies. Any geolocators retrieved on Fair Isle in this year carried a heftier prize than in 2018; they had the potential to have stored two years' worth of winter and migration data!

In the 1980s, individual birds on Fair Isle were typically away from their nests for a few hours at most. While the technology to track their movements was not available then, it can be safely assumed that they were finding sufficient food for themselves and their young close to home. Almost certainly, they would have been pirating the plentiful food being brought back by other seabirds breeding on the island. Now these birds have to spend many hours, even days, away from their nests to forage even just for themselves.

So what have we discovered so far? (Aside from Fair Isle being an amazing place to carry out research!). Well, the maximum foraging trip during incubation was 212 km - down to Fraserburgh (North-east Scotland). One failed nester went to Dogger Bank and back, which is a distance of 585 km! There was only one successful breeding attempt in 2017 and that was from a tagged bird which showed that after hatching, the foraging trip reduced in distance to just 14 km, off the coast at South Light. However, this is a sample size of ...one.



Plate 137. Arctic Skua with geolocator tag 'AAA', Airstrip, 9th June 2018. © Sarah Harris

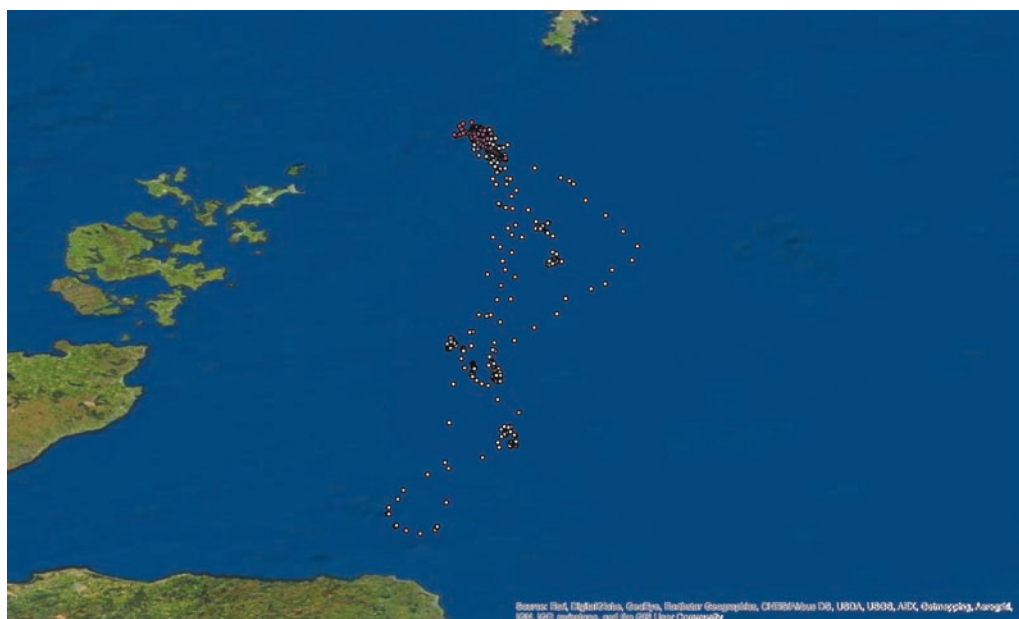


Figure 1. Foraging track for 'AAA', the half of the only Arctic Skua pair to fledge a chick in 2017. Note the foraging trips during incubation (white) and those once the chick had hatched (pink).

On Rousay, Arctic Skuas bred more successfully than on Fair Isle in 2018, and there was a marked difference in the foraging areas used by birds which successfully reared chicks and those which did not. While these differences are likely to be associated with food availability influenced by oceanography and bathymetry (factors still being investigated), it is curious why some chose not to forage in those apparently successful areas. After all, all the birds on Rousay could see the 'successful' area from where they were nesting and no doubt the successful birds returning from there. Similarly, it is curious why the birds from Fair Isle did not similarly travel to that same area which was closer than many of the places they did travel to!

Interestingly, when you overlay the Fair Isle and Rousay foraging grounds, there was very little overlap in the early part of the study before birds started to fail. A formal comparison of foraging behaviour and nesting success between the two sites will add insights into problems facing these birds.

The combination of camera traps on Fair Isle and thermocrons on both islands in 2018 was helpful for retrieving additional information on clutch survival rates for individual birds and proximate causes of failure. Further work will look at relationships between foraging behaviour and clutch survival rates at the individual level as well as the paired colony comparison.

Fellow fieldworker John Calladine, and I, never saw a Great Skua predate an Arctic Skua nest on Fair Isle - but an Arctic Skua egg was found in a Great Skua nest. One of the camera traps did, however, record a Herring Gull take an egg from an Arctic Skua nest. But the most astounding and worrying sight was that of Arctic Skuas eating *their own* and each other's eggs! The timing

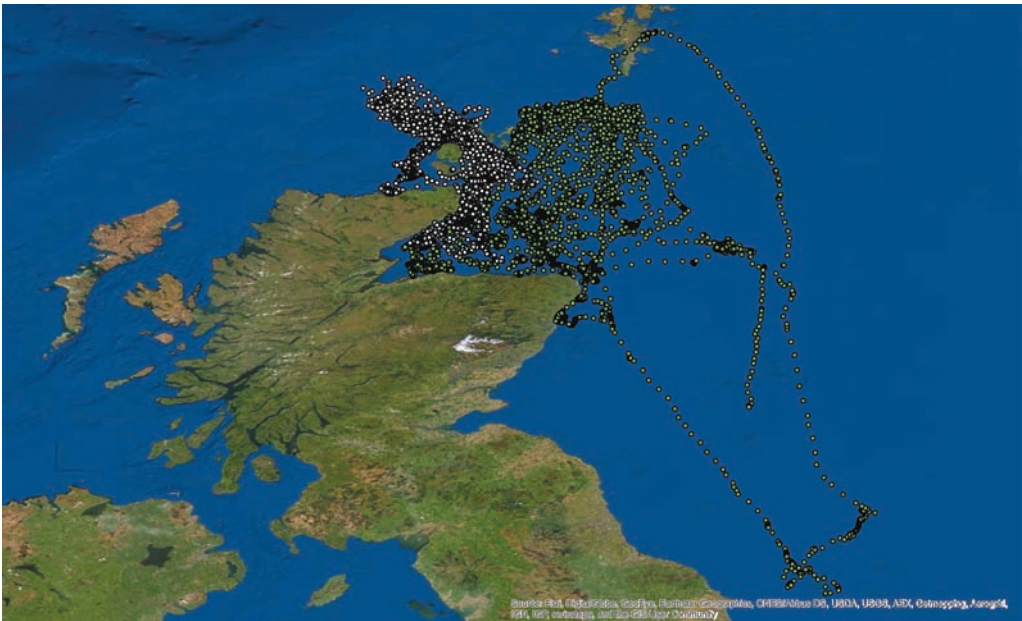


Figure 2. Arctic Skua foraging results from GPS tags, 2018. Key: white = tagged on Rousay, green = tagged on Fair Isle.

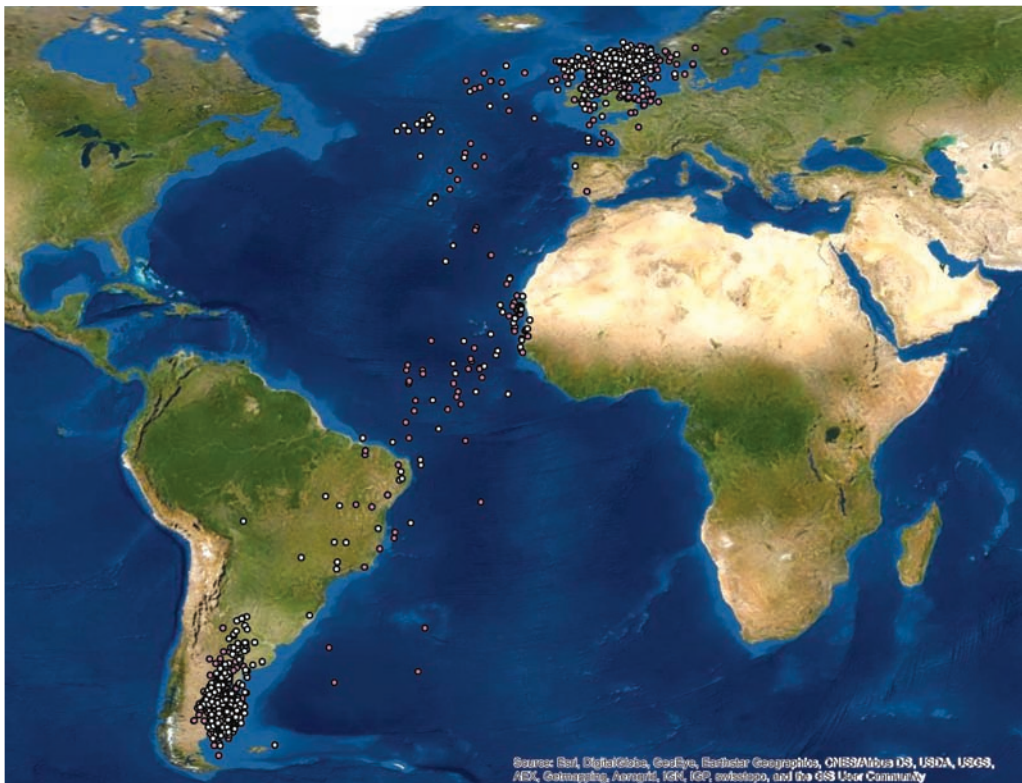


Figure 3. 'AAH', a Fair Isle Arctic Skua caught by the wardening team of 2019, provided two years of winter and migration data. Here, we see the preliminary results for 2017–18 in pink and 2018–19 in white. Further refining and processing of the data is needed and will likely show a more exclusively marine and coastal range!

of events and GPS tracks for the bird which went to Dogger Bank showed it had a long foraging trip before returning to eat its own eggs. Did it decide nesting wasn't worth the effort? There were also a number of clutches that were simply abandoned and not predated (both by study birds and 'control' birds). It appears that birds now have to spend so long on foraging trips that the remaining member of a pair is left attending the nest for too long and they simply give up. While the proximate cause of nesting failure might include predation of eggs, including by Arctic Skuas themselves, the ultimate cause is likely related to the availability of food, or rather the lack of it, close to the nesting colonies.

Processing of the data retrieved from geolocators is currently underway but provisional results have revealed some interesting journeys outside of the breeding season and remarkable differences between individual birds. On Fair Isle, we have one-year tracks for four birds and two years-worth of data thanks to the sterling efforts of FIBO staff and volunteers, along with Grace and Freya, who caught a late-nesting bird after we had to leave the island!

On Rousay, the picture is similar, with apparently varying migration strategies between birds, with three geolocators retrieved with one year of migration and overwintering data. Although, even with eight geolocators retrieved, of which one proved difficult to extract data from, these preliminary tracks come with the caveat that this is a small sample size to be drawing any robust conclusions from.

The importance of this year-round tracking, albeit less precise than the GPS foraging data, is how choices throughout the annual cycle might influence breeding success and could provide further clues behind the reasons for population decline.

To summarise, as with most research, it has afforded us an insight into the possible issues faced by Arctic Skuas, but at the same time resulted in more questions! Are Great Skuas getting a bad press or exacerbating a hard life already felt by Arctic Skuas? Does the choice in wintering routes and migration routes influence their success? What are they feeding on at different times of the year and which host species are they targeting? Why are Arctic Skuas going so far out to sea rather than waiting for their host species to return to the colony with their food loads?

Research and data analysis will continue, but in the meantime, we would like to express our thanks to all those who have assisted with this project to date, either physically in the field, by sharing their own knowledge, to those who managed and supported the project from BTO Scotland and BTO HQ, to *British Birds* magazine for a grant to assist the research on Rousay, and to those who generously donated to the BTO Arctic Skua Appeal. We are very grateful to you all. Thank you.

The BTO Arctic Skua project is managed by Dr Liz Humphreys based at BTO Scotland. Please visit www.bto.org/tracking-arctic-skuas to find out more!

FIRST AND LAST MIGRANT DATES

David Parnaby and Ian Andrews

Species	Earliest ever	Earliest 2019	Latest 2019	Latest ever
Quail	30th Apr 1961	28th May	8th July (found dead) & 2008 (alive)	13th Oct 1989
Swift	16th Apr 2013	14th May	4th Sep	26th Oct 1975 #
Cuckoo	17th Apr 1987	14th May	11th Aug	8th Oct 1977
Turtle Dove	23rd Apr 1971	3rd Jun	3rd Jun	1st Nov 1982 & 1990
Corncrake	10th Apr 1966	25th Aug	25th Aug	3rd Nov 1977
Dotterel	25th Apr 1973	24th May	30th May	3rd Dec 1986
Whimbrel	9th Apr 2013	18th Apr	20th Sep	12th Dec 1907
Red-necked Phalarope	9th May 2005	13th May	25th Jul	16th Sep 1979
Common Sandpiper	5th Apr 1983	15th Apr	30th Sep	2nd Nov 1908 ^ ^
Green Sandpiper	1st Apr 2017	18th Apr	11th Sep	12th Nov 1970
Wood Sandpiper	25th Apr 1968	9th May	4th Jun	2nd Oct 1998
Greenshank	8th Apr 1979 & 1998	18th Apr	3rd Aug	6th Dec 2015
Lesser Black-b Gull	2nd Feb 2011	21st Mar	8th Oct	12th Dec 1957
Sandwich Tern	26th Mar 2006	n/a	n/a	1st Oct 1993
Common Tern	25th Apr 1983	11th Sep	11th Sep	18th Oct 1975
Arctic Tern	13th Apr 1995	8th May	26th Sep	30th Oct 1972
Great Skua	7th Mar 1985	1st Apr	6th Nov	25th Nov 2014 ^
Arctic Skua	4th Apr 1965 & 1988	21st Apr	20th Sep	25th Oct 1961
Storm Petrel	8th May 1962 (GS)	25th May	31st Aug	10th Nov 1962 (GS)
Manx Shearwater	26th Mar 1966 (GS)	25th May	15th Sep	27th Oct 2006
Osprey	25th Apr 1966	n/a	n/a	4th Nov 1935
Honey-buzzard	21st May 1966 & 2009	15th May*	25th Aug	19th Oct 1984
Marsh Harrier	24th Mar 1995	7th May	16th Sep	26th Oct 1976
Wryneck	18th Apr 1981	28th Apr	28th Sep	17th Oct 1974
Hobby	1st May 1964	2nd Jun	15th Jun	3rd Oct 1973
Red-backed Shrike	4th May 1984	19th May	25th Sep	8th Nov 1993
Sand Martin	31st Mar 2006	12th Apr	10th Sep	19th Oct 1978
Swallow	31st Mar 2002	12th Apr	12th Oct	30th Nov 1991
House Martin	24th Mar 1995	18th Apr	1st Oct	2nd Nov 2011
Wood Warbler	14th Apr 1981	18th May	15th Sep	7th Oct 2017
Willow Warbler	25th Mar 2010	13th Apr	6th Oct	23rd Nov 1927
Chiffchaff	12th Mar 1973 & 2008	29th Mar	26th Nov	31st Dec 1975
Sedge Warbler	19th Apr 1987	22nd Apr	4th Sep	11th Nov 1975
Reed Warbler	28th Apr 2001	26th Apr*	18th Oct	31st Oct 1980
Marsh Warbler	18th May 2013	29th Jul	1st Sep	10th Oct 2004
Icterine Warbler	8th May 2013	20th May	9th Sep	20th Oct 2016
Grasshopper Warbler	7th Apr 2002	22nd Apr	30th Sep	25th Oct 2014
Blackcap	27th Mar 2012	4th Apr	19th Nov	21st Dec 2017

FIRST AND LAST MIGRANT DATES

Species	Earliest ever	Earliest 2019	Latest 2019	Latest ever
Garden Warbler	21st Apr 1968	29th Apr	3rd Oct	20th Nov 1976
Barred Warbler	28th May 1992	1st Aug	17th Oct	5th Nov 2018
Lesser Whitethroat	13th Apr 2018	23rd Apr	31st Oct	9th Nov 1997
Whitethroat	10th Apr 2016	24th Apr	2nd Oct	1st Nov 1995
Subalpine Warbler	20th Apr 2000	13th May	19th Jun	29th Oct 2007
Goldcrest	28th Jan 2000	24th Mar	30th Oct	19th Dec 2003
Ring Ouzel	16th Mar 1988	4th Apr	3rd Nov	19th Dec 1968
Spotted Flycatcher	20th Apr 1949	14th May	29th Sep	26th Oct 1985
Bluethroat	22nd Mar 1908	13th Apr	15th Oct	13th Nov 1983
Pied Flycatcher	21st Apr 1983	24th Apr	14th Oct	29th Oct 1961
Black Redstart	5th Jan 1995	8th Apr	4th Nov	31st Dec 1986 x
Redstart	10th Apr 2016	16th Apr	18th Oct	11th Nov 1981
Whinchat	14th Apr 1981	23rd Apr	11th Oct	26th Nov 1990
Stonechat	14th Feb 2008	14th Feb	15th Oct	28th Dec 2000
Wheatear	13th Mar pre-1959	1st Apr	23rd Oct	19th Nov 1959
Yellow Wagtail (all subspecies)	27th Mar 1973	22nd Apr	29th Sep	20th Nov 1957
Grey Wagtail	14th Mar 1999	5th Apr	16th Nov	30th Nov 2017
Pied Wagtail (both subspecies)	25th Jan 2016	22nd Feb	12th Nov	30th Nov 2017
Tree Pipit	10th Apr 2016	17th Apr	17th Oct	9th Nov 1908
Red-throated Pipit	8th May 1936 & 1954	13th Oct	14th Oct	1st Nov 1908
Common Rosefinch	4th May 1995	15th May	19th Oct	30th Nov 1991
Crossbill	7th Jan 2013	4th Jun	2nd Sep	13th Nov 2012
Siskin	3rd Feb 1994	5th Apr	19th Nov	29th Dec 2006
Ortolan Bunting	26th Apr 1964	15th May	15th May	7th Nov 2015
Little Bunting	4th Apr 1958	23rd Apr	2nd Oct	19th Nov 1975
Rustic Bunting	25th Apr 1980	21st May	23rd May	8th Nov 1975

This table was initially compiled by Hywel Maggs in 2002 and has been updated annually by Deryk Shaw and David Pamaby. The list has now been revisited and expanded by Ian Andrews.

*new record

x this bird went on to over-winter

^ an injured, flightless bird survived on the island until 19th December 2016

^ ^ an unidentified *Actitis* sandpiper was seen on 16th November 2018

an unidentified swift sp. was seen on 7th November 2011

GS = from the *Good Shepherd*

Maggs, H. 2002. Earliest and latest migrant dates. *FIBO Report for 2001*: 36.

BLACK-WINGED STILT, 9TH OCTOBER 2019; THE FIRST FOR FAIR ISLE

Stewart Thomson, Quoy

It is a privilege to be asked to write about the sighting of the Black-winged Stilt on Fair Isle. I have always been interested in birds, as my grandfather, Jerome Wilson, was one of the islanders taught by Dr William Eagle Clarke to record and identify any unusual sightings when he was not on the island. I had been very much brought up in a family with a keen interest in ornithology, and it was a daily habit of mine to tour the Isle to see what was around.

I arrived at the North Haven after lunch, and had a quick look on the sand. Imagine my surprise and excitement when I saw what I immediately recognised as a stilt, accompanying an Oystercatcher! It was quite wary, but I quickly backed off behind the old fish store where I was able to have a really good look, confirming my initial identification of Black-winged Stilt. I had seen stilts before, but certainly not on Fair Isle. When in New Zealand, I had seen Pied Stilt at their breeding grounds in the geothermal area near Rotorua, and more recently in Spain, I had seen a Black-winged Stilt, so I was quite certain what I was looking at.



Plate 138. Black-winged Stilt, North Haven, 9th October 2019.
© Steve Arlow

I quickly drove down to the Schoolhouse, where I told David and Susannah of my finding, whereupon we all headed north at a rate of knots. Fortunately, the bird was still there and all the keen birdwatchers on the island got a really good look. This was only my third Fair Isle first in a lifetime of birdwatching. The other two were both seen on my way north to charge the batteries for the subsea cable which came ashore at the Haven - both were in 1970. My first one was the Great Bustard (just past the double-dyke trap, looking up Homisdale whilst looking for a 'goose' seen the day before) and the second was an Upland Sandpiper (on a small roadside pool as I drove past the Kirk).

David Parnaby

It was a quiet morning for migrants and the very strong southerly winds with spells of heavy rain didn't make for a particularly exciting morning's census. We had Mike and Jenny Ford (Susannah's parents) staying with us at Schoolhouse, where we were just finishing lunch when Stewart came to the door and asked, in a somewhat calm manner 'You'll have seen the stilt?'. After telling us there was a Black-winged Stilt at North Haven, we headed north (as Stewart mentions, we were not entirely calm, but did manage to put news out on the way) and were soon admiring another good bird found by the ornithologically knowledgeable residents of Fair Isle.



Plate 139. Black-winged Stilt, North Haven, 9th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

A small crowd consisting of Observatory staff and volunteers, a few interested islanders and all the visiting birders gathered and were joined by Paul Harvey, for whom the timings worked out perfectly. He was able to get to Tingwall just before the scheduled afternoon flight and, in the 12 minutes the plane was on the runway unloading and reloading, got a lift down to the Haven from Richard Cope (who was parked facing out the car park and had the engine running before Paul got in the car!), ticked the stilt and got back in time to fly out again. Surely no twitch to Fair Isle has ever been so brief! Grace and Freyja were also able to add the bird to their Fair Isle lists, having been let out of school a peerie bit early due to the importance of the situation!

There was obviously no doubting the identification, whilst the brown-tinted mantle and white trailing edge to the wing confirmed it as a first-calendar-year bird. Interestingly, Mike and Jenny had been down to the Haven at around 12:20 hrs and returned with a fairly comprehensive list of the waders on the beach, but no stilt. That, combined with Richard have censused the Haven and Bunness earlier that morning, heavily implied that the stilt had arrived shortly before Stewart discovered it at around 14:00 hrs.



Plate 140. Watching the Black-winged Stilt at North Haven, 9th October 2019 (left to right: Jenny and Mike Ford, Nick Riddiford, Freyja and Susannah Parnaby, Steve Arlow, Grace and David Parnaby, Glen Tyler, Richard Cope, Kenny Stout). © Brendan Doe



Plate 141. Black-winged Stilt, North Haven, 9th October 2019. © Steve Arlow

It spent most of the rest of the afternoon sat on the short, sandy beach of North Haven (although it flew off for a short while on one occasion), occasionally stretching or looking around. By the evening, the high tide was making life a bit difficult for it as it tried to feed at the edge of the rocks, occasionally struggling slightly with its balance.

Most of the observers agreed it was a surprising sight, especially in October when it is Sibes or American passerines that dominate the wish lists, depending upon the wind direction. It was, however, listed in an article in the *FIBO 2015 Annual Report* as one of the four commonest BBRC species not on the Fair Isle List, with the statement “perhaps [it] will follow Glossy Ibis and Great White Egret and make the journey north from a southern wetland.” We’re still waiting for the seemingly more likely Blue-winged Teal and probably less likely Nutcracker and Penduline Tit from that list though. Surely anyone bold enough to predict this first for Fair Isle (and Shetland) would have guessed a spring overshoot on Da Water or one of the other pools on the island, rather than an autumn juvenile on North Haven? Scottish records do show an interesting pattern though, with four of the 12 records occurring in autumn (four others were in spring, two in summer and two undated), compared to around 80% of overall UK records that occur from April to June.

There were also sightings of 1cy Black-winged Stilts from Filey (North Yorkshire) on 28th August, Borders on 29th August, Northumberland on 31st August, Nottinghamshire on 1st–7th September and Berkshire from 11th September to 8th October, with the latter’s disappearance the day before the Fair Isle sighting surely being more than a coincidence. Images do not show any conclusive features to link all the sightings (although the pattern of pale tips to the coverts appears similar on the Fair Isle and Nottinghamshire bird at least), but nor are there any obvious differences. Given the rarity of autumn arrivals in the UK (the last new bird to be found in October was in 2012), the circumstantial evidence at least points strongly towards all of these sightings relating to the same individual.

FRANKLIN'S GULL, 6TH JUNE 2019; THE FIRST FOR FAIR ISLE

Laurens Steijn

In June 2019, I was guiding a group of birdwatchers for the Dutch company BirdingBreaks on the maiden voyage of *MV Hondius*, the new vessel of OceanWide Expeditions. We sailed from Vlissingen (The Netherlands) to Longyearbyen in Svalbard (Norway) with stops along the way in Aberdeen, Fair Isle, and Jan Mayen (also Norway).

It was on 6th June when we approached Fair Isle from the south. The island was partly visible due to low clouds. I was on the bow from early morning with fellow birders enjoying Great Skuas and the first Black Guillemots of the trip. Then suddenly, at around 07:30 hrs, a gull with a dark hood flew past. It was not difficult to identify; it was a crisp summer-plumaged Franklin's Gull! I shouted "Franklin's Gull" but then realised that not everyone in my group was on deck (or indeed awake). I followed the bird to the stern of the ship and tried to take as many photos as possible. I then lost the bird as it was flying in the direction of Fair Isle, which was still a few kilometres away. I tweeted the record immediately and soon began receiving messages from friends telling me it was the first Franklin's Gull for Fair Isle! And that birders were already on the lookout for it in the south of the island.

We then got ready for a briefing and the landing on Fair Isle. It was still a bit cloudy and rainy but we were all very excited to have a stroll on the island and visit the Puffin colony on Buness. After the landing, I first visited the Puffins (fantastic) and then walked south in the drizzle past the former Bird Observatory. There were some migrants in the bushes next to the Observatory, a pale Willow Warbler and a Blackcap, but not much else. I then received a message from Mick Peerdeman, one of the participants who had walked a little further south, that someone had relocated the Franklin's Gull in a group of other gulls in a field opposite Barkland! Great news, especially for all the Fair Isle birders! But it did not stay very long. I saw it with Herring, Lesser and Great Black-backed Gulls when at 11:35 hrs it flew off north-east and disappeared, not to be seen again.

This was the first record of Franklin's Gull for Fair Isle and the 392nd species for the Isle in total.



Plate 142. Franklin's Gull (with Lesser Black-backed Gulls behind), Chalet, 6th June 2019. © Laurens Steijn



Plate 143. Franklin's Gull, south of Fair Isle, 6th June 2019. © Laurens Steijn

EASTERN OLIVACEOUS WARBLER, 16TH JUNE 2019; THE FOURTH FOR FAIR ISLE

David Parnaby

Father's Day began with some foggy patches and low cloud, so Common Guillemot counts were postponed whilst we waited for visibility to improve. I decided that, with just a light south-east wind, it would be worth running the traps and, in the meantime opening the nets, as there could well be a few late migrants on the move. Although the trap round only produced a few juvenile Starlings, when I got to the Obs some movement in the *Rosa* turned out to be a River Warbler. Although it was sat in the open, it was in view for only a short length of time, during which showed its pale-tipped undertail coverts and dark brown upperparts. I decided to carry on with my plan to open the nets, as there might have been other birds about, but it would also be useful to have confirmed the identification of the River Warbler, having only seen it for a very brief while. Whilst opening the nets, a Quail flushed from one of the rides, which was a nice bonus! The wardening team were soon on site, but despite a valiant effort of crawling under the bushes, there was no further sign of the warbler. Early June is a very busy time for seabird monitoring and, as the cloud had lifted, we headed out to carry out the Guillemot count as any good weather needs to be taken advantage of. Shortly after completing the counts, some quite heavy rain set in and so it was lunchtime before we were able to head back to the Obs.



Plate 144. Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Obs, 16th June 2019. © David Parnaby

I was the first there and was somewhat surprised when, in a repeat of the morning's events of turning up and being confronted by a rare warbler, a movement in the garden turned out to be a greyish '*Hippolais*' that was pumping its tail as it moved actively around the garden. It looked like we had a classic 'Sunday lunch spoiler'! A tail-pumping '*hippo*' should be an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, but there was something slightly troubling about the movement of the tail that appeared subtly different from the Eastern Olivaceous Warbler I found at Nether Taft in September 2011. It was hard to describe, but it sometime seemed to show a slight sideways movement, although there was certainly no fanning or waving motion. The bird also appeared a touch large, so although Eastern Olivaceous was the most likely identification, other species including Upcher's Warbler needed to be ruled out. Plumage didn't really offer any help, there were some slightly paler edges to the greater coverts, but otherwise it seemed rather unremarkable.

Having grabbed a few record shots, I realised I'd left my phone back at the house, so had no way of letting people know about the bird. I headed back towards Schoolhouse, passing Sarah Harris and John Calladine on the way and seeing Richard Cope and Max Hellicar working on the Plantation trap. I slowed the car down, to bellow "large, grey hippo at the Obs" at them and carried on. Everyone quickly gathered at the Obs and the nets were opened as it was agreed that trapping it would be the best way to help to confirm the identification.

The bird flew into a mist net very shortly afterwards and was processed at the picnic table that had survived the Obs fire. The measurements all backed up our initial thoughts of Eastern Olivaceous Warbler:

- Wing length 70 mm (which ruled out Upcher's and Olive-tree Warblers)
- obvious emarginations on the third and fourth primaries, with a fainter one on P5
- length of P2 (between the sixth and seventh primary, although closer to the former)
- P1 (which protruded 4 mm beyond the primary coverts)
- wing point comprising the third and fourth primaries
- The relatively long primary projection (14 mm) ruled out Sykes's Warbler (although it never really felt like that species anyway), and was probably at the top end of the range for Eastern Olivaceous Warbler.

Table 1. Biometric data for Upcher's, Sykes's, Western Olivaceous and Eastern Olivaceous Warblers (from Svensson 1992) and the bird trapped on 16th June 2020 (ring number AHH9775). All lengths are in mm. P = primary and PC = primary coverts. Other measurements: age = 2cy+; primary projection = 14 mm; fat score (out of 8) = 3; pectoral muscle score (out of 3) = 2; weight = 14 g.

	Upcher's	Sykes's	Western Olivaceous (WOW)	Eastern Olivaceous (EOW)	AHH9775	Comments
Wing length	72–81.5	58–65	67–74	62–71	70	Either EOW or WOW (rules out Upcher's and Sykes's)
Tail length			50–61	48–59	53	Not conclusive
P2	P5 or P5/6	P6/8	P7 or P7/8	P6/7	P6/7 (closer 6)	EOW (or Sykes's)
Wing point	3 (4)			3 & 4	3 & 4	probably not Upcher's
Emarginations to...	3. 4. (5)	3. 4. 5. 6		3. 4. 5. (6)	3. 4. (5)	Favours Upcher's, but within range of EOW (rules out Sykes's)
Bill length (to skull)	16.0–21.8	12.6–15.9	16.6–18.5	15.0–17.4	16.2/16.5	Upcher's (although at bottom of range) or EOW (rules out Sykes's and [just] WOW)
Bill width (Svensson)			3.9–5.0	3.1–3.9	4.9	WOW
Bill width (rear nostril)					4.6	
P1>PC	-2.0–4.0		4.0–9.0	2.5–7.0	4	Not conclusive, although at very top end of Upcher's or very bottom end of WOW

The plumage was quite worn, although was overall a greyish tone (rather than the browner tones shown by Western Olivaceous Warbler). The bill was orangey, particularly on the lower mandible, with a darker upper mandible (although this was also paler towards the tip).

Whilst the bird was being processed, Max and Richard went to close the nets and returned with a juvenile Starling and the River Warbler! As ringing demonstrations go, it was a pretty impressive mix of species (although two visitors from America assumed it was normal, as their last visit to Fair Isle seven years ago coincided with a River Warbler being trapped at the Obs!).

The *Iduna* warbler was still causing some discussion even after its release though, with some features being less convincing for Eastern Olivaceous Warbler. Given that this is a family that includes some very difficult identifications (and with the limited reference material we checked later suggesting even more overlap between the measurements than stated in Svensson 1992) it took quite some time that evening before we were happy that the bird was indeed an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler and we felt we had a convincing reason for most of the possible anomalies. Some potential issues were:



Plate 145. Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Obs, 16th June 2019. © Sarah Harris

- The tertial spacing favoured Svensson's illustration of Upcher's Warbler over that of Eastern Olivaceous Warbler. It was agreed that, although there was clearly a larger gap between the first and second tertials compared to the second and third (this spacing should be even in Eastern Olivaceous Warbler), the wear on the first tertial probably made this unreliable. A missing tertial on the left wing meant that the feature could only be checked on one side.
- Bill width (as measured at the extent of feathering on the underside of the bill as illustrated in Svensson) was 1 mm too wide for Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, but fitted into the measurement for Western Olivaceous Warbler. The bill was not really concave when viewed from underneath either, although the various literature we consulted seemed mixed on how reliable this was as an identification feature. However, bill length was only just into the lower range of Western, but comfortably within the range of Eastern Olivaceous Warbler. The bird certainly looked quite 'beaky', with the apparent stoutness of the bill being perhaps the one feature that didn't tally entirely with Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, although Nick Riddiford, who has experience of Western Olivaceous Warbler from Mallorca, considered it wasn't as large-billed as he would expect for the species.
- A lack of white in the outer tail; although the tips of the outer two tail feathers and the inner web of T6 were white with the outer web being paler than the rest of the feather, whilst the inner web of T5 was also thinly edged pale. Eastern Olivaceous Warbler should show a white outer tail, but it was felt that the wear on the tail probably accounted for its absence.
- The lores were perhaps a little pale for a typical Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (which could potentially favour Western Olivaceous or Upcher's), although this feature appears variable and may also have been influenced by bleaching.

Overall, we considered that the biometrics, plumage features and behaviour (with tail-pumping supposedly unknown in Western Olivaceous Warbler for example) all being a better match for Eastern Olivaceous Warbler than any other species.

A couple of feathers had become dislodged during the ringing process and Professor Martin Collinson and Thom Shannon were able to provide a DNA analysis of them. They confirmed the identification of the bird as Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, potentially of the subspecies *elaeica*. Professor Collinson said in an email "The bird was an Eastern Olivaceous, albeit quite a beaky one. There's 1051 bp of cytb and it is 0–3 bp different from six database *I. pallida*, i.e. 99.7–100% identical. Everything else is at least 9% different (Upcher's 10% difference). Not a lot we can say on subspecies except there's no reason to suspect it's anything but *elaeica*. Four of the database birds are *elaeica*, and the other two are from Saudi and Kenya of unnamed subspecies. So, although the other subspecies are not covered in Genbank and we don't know if or how much they are genetically divergent, it is within the range of genetic variation in *elaeica*."

Reference

Svensson, L. 1992. *Identification Guide to European Passerines*. 4th edition. British Trust for Ornithology.

BLACK KITE, 19TH APRIL 2019; THE THIRD FOR FAIR ISLE

Richard Cope

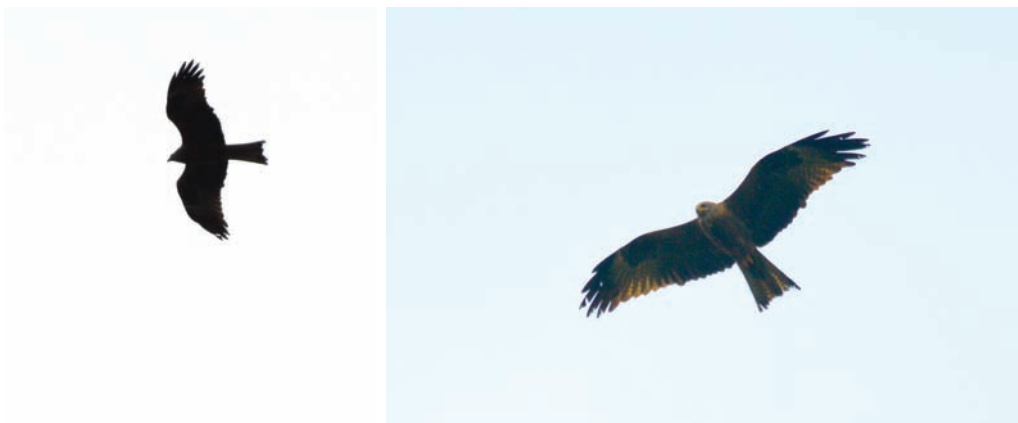


Plate 146a–b. Black Kite, 28th April 2019. (left) School. © David Parnaby. (right) Setter. © Max Hellicar

April had seen an almost continuous easterly element to the winds, producing some very good birding and birding conditions. The 19th April was no different with clear skies, a force 4–5 south-easterly and hazy conditions. A pleasant wander along the west cliffs revealed a scattering of Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Goldcrests and a couple of Blackcaps. I had checked the Lower Station buildings and was wandering across towards the Mast trying to relocate a Black Redstart when I saw a medium-sized raptor being mobbed by Bonxies. Upon raising my bins, I realised it was a kite, although at this point it was into the sun so difficult to judge colours. However, based on the overall shape, wing length and the shallow fork in the tail I suspected the bird to be a Black Kite. Fortunately, it drifted to the north-west to check out Ward Hill and after a brief circuit of the top it headed back south-east and hung in the updrafts for a while. It had dark-brownish upperparts, a slightly paler greyish-brown head and paler brownish wing coverts as well as diffuse 'windows' on the underwing. This gave me a brief opportunity to grab a couple of photos with my bridge camera and phone David to get the news out. It drifted to the south-east, rapidly losing height towards the airstrip, before turning north-east towards the Obs then following the coast before heading north-east from the North Lighthouse. I had hoped that the haze offshore and Shetland being hidden from view would mean the bird might linger but that wasn't to be the case. It was lost to view out to sea at 10:58 hrs, having been in view for 16 minutes in its tour of the north. Despite the news getting out promptly only David Parnaby was able to locate the bird at distance from the Schoolhouse.

It was considered likely that this was the bird subsequently seen on Shetland on 22nd and 24th April and that returned south via Fair Isle on 28th April, where it stayed until 1st May.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS, 18TH–19TH MAY 2019; THE FOURTH FOR FAIR ISLE

Richard Cope

The morning of 18th May appeared to have all the vital ingredients - complete cloud cover, patchy fog, a light north-easterly, combined with a run of easterly winds and a scattering of scarcities in recent days - and it looked promising. At least seven Bluethroats had been present the previous day and Hannah Bell had joined me on census to assist in covering extra ditches. It soon became apparent that yet more Bluethroats had arrived and they were present in just about every spot I'd previously seen them. Even by Fair Isle standards it was an almost surreal experience. The phone was going regularly with more birds dotted across the rest of the Isle. As we approached Da Water, I stopped to scan the wet area, but before I'd had a chance to raise my binoculars, I spotted a wader coming towards us from the west. Getting my bins onto the bird as it dropped low against the vegetation in front of us, I noted that the plumage was superficially like a Wood Sandpiper. However, I was stuck by the 'odd' size and shape of the bird. It appeared long winged and long bodied and slightly larger than a Wood Sandpiper. By the time it landed, I was already thinking it might be a Lesser Yellowlegs and my initial views of the bird on the ground confirmed that suspicion. I asked Hannah to watch the bird whilst I took a few photos. Unfortunately, during this time, the bird took off again and flew off high north, over the Schoolhouse and off into the murk. I put the news out and continued with SE census. Fortunately, it was relocated a short while later on Utra Scrape. It remained around this area throughout the following day. It was relocated a few days later on the 23rd at Gards Loch, Scatness on Shetland (where it stayed until 29th May and again 19th–20th June).

In flight, the bird appeared longer and thinner winged than Wood Sandpiper, as well as longer bodied with protruding yellow feet. The rear of the bird was long, as a result of the longer wings and tail giving it a more attenuated appearance. The fine bill was all dark blackish and showed only the slightest hint of being upturned. It was almost equal in length to the head. The head and neck were greyish with fine darker streaking, slightly heavier on the top of the head and on the nape. The mantle showed a mix of both summer and winter plumage with the black-centred feathers being particularly noticeable. The bird was heard to call on several occasions, each time giving a single 'tew' call.

In addition, the evening's log produced a conservative total of 16 Bluethroats - a classic Fair Isle day that I'll remember for years to come.



Plate 147. Lesser Yellowlegs, Utra scrape, 18th May 2019. © David Parnaby

BROWN SHRIKE, 13TH OCTOBER 2019; THE SECOND FOR FAIR ISLE

Glen Tyler

I was delighted to be part of 'Team Phoenix', maintaining the census work at the end of the 2019 season and spending a week on the Isle from 8th October. Early in the week, there were plenty of birds but no major rarities, although the weather was both pleasant and promising. But this is Fair Isle after all, so the expectation was that something interesting would turn up sometime.

On Sunday morning, I was allocated SW census and headed up to Setter to start working my way back south past the Raevas and up on to Malcolm's Head before intending to head down towards South Light and up through the centre of the island to finish. Just as I was coming down Malcolm's Head, my phone rang. It was Susannah asking if I would head over towards Houll as Nick Riddiford had mentioned, after attending chapel, that he had seen an orange-rumped stonechat in the Houll thistles that morning.



Plate 148. Brown Shrike, Midway, 13th October 2019. © Brendan Doe

I started walking across the parks towards Houll, scanning thistles, dykes and fence posts as I went, but there was no sign of any stonechat. As I was standing in the park in front of Houll, I took a sweep of the *Rosa* growing in the Schoolton garden. I immediately noticed a bird's head poking out of the *Rosa* clump at the back of the house. It wasn't a stonechat but was surely a shrike. In the bright sunlight, which was slightly against me, what I could see looked very interesting, but I needed to see a bit more of the bird. I started to head over to the garden and the shrike flew down the side of the garden, revealing a long tail, and no obvious white in its wing, only to plunge immediately into the thick *Rosa* at the southern edge of the garden behind a wall of pallets. From what I had seen the bird looked mainly a rich brown above, paler below. My first thought was that it could be a Brown Shrike, but I had only seen the whole bird at some distance and for a second or two. Just at that moment, I saw the bird flip over

the *Rosa* and land on one of the pallets in full view. Then I could see its big-headed, long-tailed appearance with certainly no white in the wings. A dark brown mask ran from the eye backwards but was paler and weaker in front of the eye. Above the eye was a distinct pale supercilium. The crown was a dull chestnut brown, possibly a touch paler towards the nape and pretty much the same colour as the back. I thought initially that the tail was perhaps a little brighter, richer coloured. At that distance, the underparts were off white, and I could see some barring of the flanks at least. It certainly looked good for what I expected a Brown Shrike to appear like, but slightly concerned that the tail was possibly warmer coloured than the rest of the upperparts. I called Susannah, who had now arrived at Houll with other members of the family and told her that I couldn't find the stonechat, but thought I had a Brown Shrike. David's father had brought David's camera and although the bird was distant, we tried to get a couple of shots of the bird while Susannah spread the word to those on the Isle. Our lack of familiarity with the camera defeated us though, but soon Deryk Shaw and most of the visiting birders, including some who did know their cameras, started to appear as the bird flew onto fence lines below Quoy. Nick, leaning out of his upstairs window, was keeping track of its movements. Now out in the open, it was much easier to see well the main features and Deryk's confirmation that it was definitely a Brown Shrike meant that news was soon out on the Fair Isle WhatsApp and thus spread far and wide.

Description

A small to medium sized shrike, with short wings, a large head and a thin, long-looking tail. The crown, nape, mantle and upper tail coverts were rich brown with some weak dark barring. The wing coverts were of a similar colour with dark brown primaries and secondaries. The tertials were dark with distinct paler edges. The rump and tail base were a slightly warmer brown with a bit more obvious barring than the mantle, but the rest of the tail was plain dark brown. A pale supercilium, strongest behind the eye, separated the crown from the dark mask. The rest of the underparts were buff-white, with fine dark barring throughout, except perhaps the belly and undertail. The flanks were most obviously barred. The eye was large and dark. The bill was of a typical shrike - strong and hooked. The legs were strong and dark grey. The bird was silent.

At first the shrike was very mobile and quickly worked its way along the fence lines and dykes up to Kenaby. Just as we were following the shrike from Schoolton to Quoy, the 'Eastern Stonechat' flew back over us. Those present tried to look in two directions at once, but as we followed up on the stonechat, the Brown Shrike appeared back in the thistles below Houll. It then seemed to settle down in this area and fed between Midway and Schoolton for the rest of the day.

Despite being searched for early the next morning there was no further sign of the shrike. Then news came through of a Brown Shrike at Grutness on Shetland Mainland. Early thoughts were that the Fair Isle bird had relocated a bit to the north, but the Grutness bird was seen to be obviously different (it was reported as an adult female, whereas the Fair Isle bird was a first-winter). A first-winter Brown Shrike was also found dead on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 15th October.

COMMITTEE DECISIONS ON RARITIES FROM 2018

The following 2018 records were accepted:

Species	Date, Location, Observers	Committee
Canada Goose (North American group)	16–23 Dec, Meadow Burn, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Mediterranean Gull	17 Oct, Hjukni, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Honey-buzzard	21 Jul, Obs, V. Hastie, D. Roberts, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Pallid Harrier	8–12 Sep, Da Water and roaming, D. Roche <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Black Kite	7–12 Jun, Plantation then roaming, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Buzzard	16 May, Buness, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Hobby	31 May–5 Jun, Houll and Hjukni, I. Andrews <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Hobby	17 Jun, Obs, D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Hobby	7 Sep, Gunnawark, D. Parnaby	SBCRC
Shore Lark	17 Oct, Hoini, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Crag Martin	14–16 May, North Haven then Furse, K. Pellow <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Red-rumped Swallow	3–4 May, Ditfield then Furse, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Greenish Warbler	31 Aug–3 Sep, Guidicum then Raevas and Kirk, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Arctic Warbler	16 Aug, Gully, D. Roche <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Arctic Warbler	5 Sep, Stackhoull, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Arctic Warbler	6–7 Sep, School then Leogh, T. Gale <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Arctic Warbler	6–7 Sep, Muckle Jarm's Geo, D. Roche <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Arctic Warbler	7–18 Sep, Shirva, T. Gale <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	27 May, Chalet, P. Wolf <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	8–10 Sep, Springfield, D. Roche <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	9–10 Sep, Schoolton, T. Gale, N. Riddiford <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Blyth's Reed Warbler	18–19 Sep, Gully and Obs, D. Roche <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Lanceolated Warbler	5 Sep, Gully, D. Roche <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Lanceolated Warbler	11 Sep, Vaadal, T. Gale <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'	1 Jun–31 Jul, Lower Stoneybrek, J. Bloor, D. Roche <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Subalpine Warbler (sp?)	22 May, Lower Leogh, M. Golley <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Rose-coloured Starling	31 May–4 Jun, South Naaversgill, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Rose-coloured Starling	2–4 Jun, South Naaversgill, D. Roche <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Rose-coloured Starling	3–4 Jun, Plantation, D. Roche <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Rose-coloured Starling	9–12 Aug, Wirvie and North Light, D. Parnaby & D. Roberts	SBCRC
White's Thrush	13 Oct, Wester Lother, D. Roche <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Thrush Nightingale	30 May–1 Jun, Plantation then Obs, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Thrush Nightingale	30–31 May, Plantation then Obs, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	BBRC



Plate 149. White's Thrush (composite image), Mast, 13th October 2018. © Ian Andrews

Siberian Rubythroat	28 Oct, Meadow Burn and Mires, S. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	7–19 Apr, North Haven then Gully, F. & S. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	13–15 Apr, Wirvie Burn then Vaadal, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
Olive-backed Pipit	13 Oct, Stackhoull, M. Maher <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Olive-backed Pipit	17 Oct, Johnny's Peats, D. Roche	SBCRC
Serin	16 Jun, North Light, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
Corn Bunting	19–28 May, Field then Leogh, R. Hughes, N. O'Hanlon <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Ortolan Bunting	6 Sep, Da Water, T. Gale	SBCRC
Ortolan Bunting	23–28 Sep, Plantation, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
Rustic Bunting	2 Jul, Wirvie, D. Roche	BBRC
Song Sparrow	15–18 May, Plantation then Obs, R. Cope <i>et al.</i>	BBRC

Recently accepted records from previous years:

Montagu's Harrier*	3 Jun 2013, Da Water and roaming, G. Gordon <i>et al.</i>	SBRC
'Central Asian		
Lesser Whitethroat'	16–17 Oct 2009, Burkle, D. Shaw <i>et al.</i>	BBRC
'Northern Treecreeper'	1 Oct 1998, Easter Lothar, S. J. Turner	BBRC
Nightingale**	16 May 2017, Utra, D. Parnaby <i>et al.</i>	SBCRC
'Black-bellied Dipper'	22–23 Mar 1996, Gilly Burn, M. Newell, R. Riddington, M. Stout	BBRC

The following records were found not proven:

Cackling Goose	Utra Brecks, 24-26 May 2001	BBRC
'Eastern Black Kite'	Plantation then roaming, 7-12 Jun 2018	BBRC
<i>M. m. migrans x lineatus</i>		
'Northern Treecreeper'	8 Oct 2010, South Raeva	BBRC
Thrush Nightingale**	16 May 2017, Utra	BBRC
'Coues's Arctic Redpoll'	30 Oct 2018, Airstrip	BBRC

In addition, the following record that did not feature in the Annual Report were found not proven:

Ring-billed Gull	8 Apr, Schoolton	SBCRC
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Key to abbreviations:

BBRC	British Birds Rarities Committee
SBRC	Scottish Birds Records Committee
SBCRC	Shetland Bird Club Records Committee

* previously found 'not proven' by the BBRC as a Pallid Harrier

** previously accepted by the BBRC, this bird was found 'not proven' as a Thrush Nightingale and was subsequently accepted as a Nightingale by SBCRC



CETACEANS AND OTHER MARINE WILDLIFE

David Parnaby

Cetaceans

Minke Whale

Balaenoptera acutorostrata

Annual visitor in small numbers, most records from May to September, usually seen singly

Although it was a very quiet year for land-based sightings of this species, there was one from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 14th May, five from a cruise ship as it approached Fair Isle on 17th May and another from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 21st May. The next sighting was seen from the AirTask flight around three miles north-west of Fair Isle on 7th June and the last of the year was the only one actually seen from the Isle; off Dronger on 1st August.

Risso's Dolphin

Grampus griseus

Annual visitor, most records in August and September, usually in groups of up to a dozen

The most frequently encountered dolphin in Fair Isle again enjoyed a good season, beginning with eight seen from a plane north of the Isle on 27th July. There were sightings of between six and 21 on five dates in August from 12th–26th, including at least four calves on the latter date. September saw ten three miles north of the Isle on 8th then up to six on three dates from 21st–27th, whilst the last of the year were four off South Light on the late date of 6th November.

Killer Whale

Orcinus orca

Annual visitor, often with several sightings of individuals or small groups during the year. Can occur in any month, but most regular between March and September

A relatively quiet year saw just one sighting in the spring and summer, when three (including one bull) passed North Light on 19th June. A popular group of four toured the Isle on 19th September after being found off Lerness, with twitchers including the entire school roll, who connected with them as they passed Bunes. A familiar sight was the group of seven found on 3rd November; they included two bulls and a calf that could be identified as the '27s' pod, regular visitors to Fair Isle and Shetland. At least two were seen off South Light on 7th November, which may have been part of the same group.

Harbour Porpoise

Phocoena phocoena

Recorded in small numbers from May to October

It was another quiet year for sightings of our smallest cetacean, with the first not seen until 23rd July when there were three. There were sightings on only three dates in August, with a maximum of seven on 30th and the only later sighting was of one from the *Good Shepherd IV* on 3rd September, although a dead individual was also washed up on Hjukni Geo on 11th September.

Other marine wildlife

Grey Seal

Halichoerus grypus

The first pup was found dead in Mid Geo on 21st September, with another dead pup found in Gunnawark on 10th October before the first live one was seen in the same location two days later. The total number of pups born was 48, three higher than 2018. A total of 17 beaches (not including Mid Geo) was used for pupping, with the majority along the north and west coasts from Wirvie to South Raeva, with the only other location being North Mila Hessland. The beach with the most pups was Gunnawark, for the second consecutive year, with 19.



Plate 150. Grey Seals, Easter Lothar, 28th March 2019. © David Parnaby

Common Seal

Phoca vitulina

One in South Harbour on 11th September was the first Fair Isle record since February 2017.

Flapper Skate

Dipturus intermedia

An adult presumed to be of this species (rather than the closely related Blue Skate *D. flossada*, which formed a single species 'Common Skate' with *D. intermedia* until they were split in 2009) was found dead in South Harbour on 30th December. It measured an impressive 230 cm from the snout to the tip of the tail. An egg case from this species was found in South Harbour on the same date, with another in South Haven on 27th February.

European Eel

Anguilla anguilla

The only sighting was of one on 3rd September in Muckle Uri Geo.

David Parnaby

Butterflies

Large White

Pieris brassicae

There was a single at Schoolton on 6th May, unidentified white butterflies on 4th and 7th June that were probably this species, then one on 14th and two on 24th and 25th June followed by a single on 11th July. The last confirmed Large White on Fair Isle was in 2013, with single unidentified white butterflies, seen in 2014 and 2015, so this was a particularly good year on the Isle for this former 'pest' species.

Red Admiral

Vanessa atalanta

One on Dronger on 27th April was the earliest-ever Fair Isle record and was followed by three on 29th. In May there were daily records from 14th–17th, peaking at 11 on the first date and in June there were records on 14 dates from 4th, peaking at seven on 25th. There were sporadic records through the summer, with sightings of up to four on 12 dates throughout July and August, then sightings on six dates in September until 24th, with a maximum of seven on 20th.

Painted Lady

Vanessa cardui



Plate 151. Painted Ladies, North Haven, 2nd August 2019.
© Max Hellicar

Two on 7th and three on 11th June were the forerunners of an amazing arrival, with the next sighting involving 113 on 14th, increasing to 204 on 19th and then smaller numbers present until the end of the month. There were sporadic records in early July that included an arrival of at least 50 on 8th, with smaller numbers then present throughout the rest of the month before a further arrival from 26th saw an increase to 176 on 31st. Numbers continued to increase to an impressive 961 on 3rd August, although they dropped away rapidly after this, with just single figures recorded by the third week of the month. An arrival at the

end of August peaked at 186 on 28th and there were regular sightings during September until 28th, although no more than 36. A phenomenal year for this species, reflecting the huge influx recorded across the British Isles during the year; it is also worth remembering that census counts are likely to underrepresent the actual numbers present across the Isle.

Peacock

Aglais io

A record-breaking year for this species began with one on 14th May followed by sightings on 18 dates from 26th July to 4th September, during which the peak count was 11 on 25th August; the highest ever recorded on the Isle.



Plate 152. Peacock, Burkle, 27th July 2019. © Max Hellicar

Small Tortoiseshell

Aglais urticae

There was just one record; a single noted on 8th August.

Moths

No moth-trapping took place at the Obs this year, although actinic traps run at Schoolton, Lower Stoneybrek and Burkle all had a productive year. Some of the more interesting moth and other insect records from census and casual observations during the year are listed below.

Diamond-back Moth

Plutella xylostella

Spring passage was recorded from 17th May to 10th June, with counts during this time generally of less than 30, other than a large arrival on 24th May that involved over 200 and a smaller arrival of at least 75 on 1st June. The only other sightings were singles on 12th and 30th July and 1st and 3rd August.

Convolvulus Hawk-moth

Agrius convolvuli

One in the Wirvie Burn on 29th August was the only record of this less than annual migrant.

Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum*

There was only one record this year, with an individual on 29th April at Utra arriving four weeks earlier than the previous earliest date of 27th May.

Bedstraw Hawk-moth

Hyles galli

Two were seen on 29th July: one at Aesterhoull and another in Homisdale. In addition, there were records of singles trapped on 27th July at Lower Stoneybrek and 3rd August at Burkle. With only ten previous records, and none since 2007, this was an exceptional year for this species.



Plate 153a–b. Bedstraw Hawk-moth, Burkle, 2nd August 2019. © Max Hellicar

Silver Y

Autographa gamma

It was a quiet year for this species, with scattered records between 24th June and 27th September and a peak of just ten on 25th June.

Other insects

Eyed Ladybird

One found in the North Haven on 28th July was the first record for the Isle of this migratory species. Indeed, it may well be the first ladybird found on the Isle to make it to Fair Isle under its own steam, with previous species recorded all suspected of having been accidentally imported to the Isle (Riddiford, N. 2015. Ladybirds on Fair Isle. *FIBO Annual Report for 2014*: 172–173).



'Shetland Bee'

Bombus muscorum agricolae

Sightings ranged from 11th April until 17th September.

'White-tailed Bumblebee' *Bombus lucorum (sensu lato)*

There were regular sightings from 27th April to 22nd May and again from 20th August to 10th September at widespread locations across the Isle. Close examination of several individuals suggests that they are most likely Northern White-tailed Bumblebee *B. magnus*, but until this is confirmed by DNA, it is best to record them under the 'White-tailed Bumblebee' group.

Buff-tailed Bumblebee

Bombus terrestris

After sightings in 2012 and 2017, there were a further series of records from 20th April to 9th May from crofts and gardens ranging from Field in the north to Haa in the south; another interesting chapter in the developing story of bumblebees on Fair Isle.



Plate 155. Tiger Hoverfly, Dronger, 29th April. © Max Hellicar

Green Lacewing

Chrysoperla carnea agg.

There were sightings on 20th May, 31st July (two), 3rd August (two) and 16th August.

Tiger Hoverfly

Helophilus pendulus

One on Dronger on 29th April was the earliest ever Fair Isle record, considerably earlier than the previous recorded first date of 26th June.

Other sightings of note

Nathusius's Pipistrelle

Pipistrellus nathusii

A small bat found on the outside door of the workshop at Kenaby on 24th August flew off strongly before the identification could be confirmed, although it appeared to be this species.

Coconut

Cocos nucifera

One washed up in its husk in Busta Geo on 27th September was an interesting find, although there have been at least two others found on the Isle since 2011.

SOME NON-AVIAN HIGHLIGHTS

Nick Riddiford

Flora

It was a glorious year for flowering plants, providing considerable added value to Fair Isle's landscape quality for visitors during the summer months. Unusually warm weather from late March prompted a remarkable run of earliest-ever flowering dates. The dry weather was accompanied by chilling easterlies but this did not deter the plants. Information from Dave Wheeler (Fair Isle Meteorological Station) showed that continuous sunshine had warmed the top few layers of soil and, where it was thin, the rock underneath too - which retains the heat. He considered this to be the major factor in bringing the plants on so early. In late April, he measured 22°C just above the soil surface in a sheltered spot. That is the equivalent of the highest air temperature recorded on the Isle.

It was an earliest-ever year for nearly 50 species. A prime example was Red Campion *Silene dioica*, in flower from 8th April. The earliest previous recorded date was 26th April (2011) but even that was early. Its main flowering period starts in mid-May. Red Campion was still in flower in November, one of several species extending their season farther into the autumn than before. The spring and early summer was clearly favourable for many plants, particularly Northern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* whose population has grown from single figures in 1973 to many thousands in 2019, and with a considerable extension in range. The Kirk enclosure held record numbers of Field Gentian *Gentianella campestris* – 306 flowering spikes in late July – and was a picture with its diverse and colourful plants. Amongst these was Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, previously only known from waste ground near the School. The future of the Kirk and its enclosure is currently unclear. It is worth flagging up the conservation importance of the enclosure to ensure



Plate 156. Field Gentian, Field, 3rd August 2013. © Nick Riddiford

its botanical values are maintained. It is one of the richest sites on the Isle for flora, including high diversity and rare threatened species.

Another important find was Changing Forgetmenot *Myosotis discolor*. A group of 25 was the first since the 1990s of a species previously considered lost to the Isle. Another 'lost' species, Sea Sandwort *Honckenya peploides*, which had re-colonised in 2018 after a 37-year absence, doubled its population from one to two on Muckle Uri Geo. In addition, the original plant was far more robust than in its first year bringing hopes that the population will grow yet stronger. It shares a fenced-off area on Muckle Uri Geo with Oysterplant *Mertensia maritima*, whose population continues to thrive. The older plants are now coalescing into a series of continuous mats and thus impossible to count individually. Some mats are better described as 'carpets', reaching up to five metres across and comprising as many as a dozen coalesced plants.

Away from the coast, the Prostrate Juniper experienced moderate berry production for the second consecutive year. A pattern may be emerging of more consistent berry production than in recent history when, typically, berries were hard to find.

In 2018, Common Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* and Rosebay Willow-herb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, both potentially invasive species, were found. Both were within the Observatory grounds. Remarkably, both survived the fire.

Insects

The pattern of 'earliest-ever' carried over to the insects, in particular Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* (27th April, previous earliest 6th May), Large White *Pieris brassicae* (6th May, earliest by eight days) and Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum* (29th April, previously 27th May).

The other notable feature of 2019 was a series of 'invasions' by migrant species. It began with further arrivals of bumblebees not previously native to the Isle: Buff-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris* from 20th April; White-tailed Bumblebees *Bombus lucorum sensu lato* from 29th April. The big arrival, however, involved Painted Lady butterflies *Vanessa cardui*. An influx of hundreds in mid-late June was unprecedented in terms of numbers, yet this was eclipsed by an even larger influx from late July to early August. Both influxes were part of a widespread invasion along the British east coast. Some moths were also part of the second influx, notably four Bedstraw Hawk-moths *Hyles gallii*, three Nutmegs *Anarta trifolii* (the only previous record was in 2006) and Fair Isle's first record of the Dun-bar *Cosmia trapezina*. Other insect arrivals during this period, all firsts for Fair Isle, were an Eyed Ladybird *Anatis ocellata* found above North Haven and two bugs trapped at Schoolton. These were the Field Damsel Bug *Nabis ferus*, which has a tendency to roam, and the bug *Lygus wagneri*, less so. Both were well north of their known range while the ladybird has only recently been reported from the Northern Isles. One later migrant, a Convolvulus Hawk-moth *Agrius convolvuli* on 29th August, was a good find in Wirvie Burn.





Plate 158. Painted Lady caterpillar on Spear Thistle, Barkland, 18th August 2019. © Nick Riddiford

There are no resident butterflies on Fair Isle but, not surprisingly considering the numbers arriving, there were several reports of Painted Lady caterpillars on Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare* and Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, whilst Red Admiral caterpillars were recorded on Nettles *Urtica dioica*. Red Admirals were also part of the butterfly influx, but in much smaller numbers.

Whereas these insects arrived under their own power, there were two curious cases of assisted passage. In April, moderate numbers of Seaweed Flies *Coelopa frigida* emerged from boxes newly arrived at the shop. Fair Isle has a large Seaweed Fly population, breeding on seaweed cast on to beaches. But the box escapees probably originated in Shetland where the species is equally common. The second stowaway was a southern European moth, the Small Mottled Willow *Spodoptera exigua*, which occurs occasionally as an immigrant along English Channel coasts. The first to make Fair Isle was found half emerged from a pupa inside a red pepper purchased from the island shop!



Plate 159. Dun-bar, Schoolton, 29th July 2019. © Max Hellicar

Marine biota

There have been large changes in the composition of jellyfish species in recent years but a moderate influx of Lion's Mane *Cyanea capillata* in summer was a return to previous times, Lion's Mane being the dominant jellyfish, often in very large numbers, for much of the 20th century. The post 20th century newcomers continued to appear however, in the form of the Many-ribbed Jellyfish *Aequorea forskaelli*. This is the third year running for this warm temperate/sub-tropical species, appearing on the late date of 6th November.

ENCOURAGING THE NEXT GENERATION AT FIBO

John Harrison Memorial Fund (JHMF) and Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund (SABF)

Fair Isle Bird Observatory runs two schemes to enable keen birdwatchers aged between 15 and 24 to stay at the Obs at minimal cost. The JHMF and SABF funds provide brilliant opportunities for enthusiastic young birdwatchers to stay at and contribute to the work of a world-famous bird observatory.

The John Harrison Memorial Fund provides financial assistance in the form of grants to young birdwatchers to enable them to visit Fair Isle and take part in the daily work schedule of the Obs. It was established in 1968 by Richard Richardson in memory of John Harrison who visited Fair Isle three times before he died at the early age of 19. The Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund honours the memory of Simon Aspinall who visited FIBO several times from 1987 onwards before his early death in 2011.

Full details of how and when to apply for these funds will be made available via our website www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk/jhmf_sabf.html and on social media as soon as the opportunity to stay at the new Obs becomes available.



Plate 160. Sarah Harris (left), Max Hellicar and Tom Gale, 28th September 2019. © Sarah Harris

FIBOT FINANCIAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2019

Mike Wood

It is difficult to know what to say about 2019 that isn't just repeating what has been written elsewhere in this Annual Report. The fire that destroyed the Observatory building on 10th March 2019 was absolutely devastating in its immediate impact, not least upon David, Susannah and family who were rendered homeless without clothes and other basic necessities. However, within a few days, everyone associated with FIBO was looking positively towards the future, planning for how we can cope in the short term and how in the longer term we can make Obs 5 even better than Obs 4.

One decision we took almost immediately was to continue the research work of FIBO during 2019 and subsequent years, including the daily census of migrant birds and the monitoring of seabird populations and their breeding success. Whilst this has stretched our finances, because we are incurring significant staff costs but no longer receiving income from accommodating guests, we decided it was important that this work should not be disrupted as it might adversely affect future research studies.

Almost immediately after 10th March, people began contacting me and other FIBO directors to offer donations and other assistance; we are immensely grateful for all of this help. We will be making an official appeal for donations when we have a clear idea of how much money will need to complete the project. However, the support we received in March and April 2019 was hugely valuable in helping to ensure the ongoing work of the Obs.

We have also been helped financially by our insurers who have been prepared to advance money to us whilst we agree with them the details of our insurance settlement. At the time of writing (May 2020) they have provided FIBOT with £450,000 in advance payments. This has enabled FIBOT to spend £103,000 on clearing and preparing the site, £240,000 on designing the Obs 5 building and securing planning approval, whilst still having £94,000 in our bank account.

At this point in time, it appears likely that we will have to raise approximately £2.5 million in grants, loans and donations to complete the Obs 5 project in the way it has been planned. This is an ambitious target, although it is less than we needed to find back in 2009/10 for the Obs 4 design and construction project.

Whilst our finances continue to be satisfactory despite the problems outlined above, any readers wishing to make a specific or non-specific donation to support the Observatory can be assured it would be gratefully received and effectively used. A summary of FIBOT's draft accounts for the year ended 31st October 2019 appears on the following pages. The full statutory accounts can be obtained by contacting the Administrator.

Mike Wood
Finance Director

Income and Expenditure Report for the year ended 31st October 2019

Sales Income	2019 (£)	2018 (£)	Balance Sheet as at 31st October 2019		
Accommodation & Meals	2,574	185,690	Fixed Assets	31/10/19 (£)	31/10/18 (£)
Shop Sales	304	12,277	Buildings	242,000	253,000
Bar Sales	1,295	22,921	Other Fixed Assets	43,121	53,901
	<u>4,173</u>	<u>220,888</u>		<u>285,121</u>	<u>306,901</u>
Cost of Sales			Current Assets		
Purchases	34,011	82,747	Stocks	27,846	27,846
Wages & Salaries	56,823	82,700	Debtors	14,663	19,438
	<u>90,834</u>	<u>165,447</u>	Cash at bank and in hand	70,166	73,283
Trading Profit	(86,661)	55,441		<u>112,675</u>	<u>120,567</u>
Other Income			Creditors: amounts falling due		
Interest Received	4,914	6,008	within one year	(14,226)	(56,347)
FOFI Subscriptions	6,313	7,744	Net Current Assets/(Liabilities)	98,449	64,220
Donations	23,834	3,956	Total Assets less		
Grants Received	18,681	19,069	Current Liabilities	383,570	371,121
Other Income (see Note 1 below)	155,894	0	Creditors: amounts falling due		
	<u>209,636</u>	<u>36,777</u>	after more than one year	(0)	(0)
Gross Profit	122,975	92,218		<u>383,570</u>	<u>371,121</u>
Other Expenses			Representing:		
Administration	10,670	9,730	Accumulated Surplus	383,570	371,121
Energy	8,540	17,742	Appeal Reserve	0	0
Establishment	28,476	36,597		<u>383,570</u>	<u>371,121</u>
Insurance	4,862	21,299			
Sales & Marketing	1,159	1,397			
Financial & Legal	9,711	6,544			
Depreciation	13,000	13,000			
Obs5 Project Costs (to 31/10/19)	59,415	0			
	<u>135,833</u>	<u>106,309</u>			
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	(12,858)	(14,091)			

Note 1. Other Income includes £150,000 advance payment from the Insurers.

WATER FEATURES

BM Boini Mire
DW Da Water
ELW Easter Lother Water
FD Field Ditch
G Gilsetter
GB Gilly Burn
GW Golden Water
H Homisdale
HB Hegri Burn
KM Kirki Mire
MB Meadow Burn
MV Mire o' Vatnagard
OS Obs Scrape
SM Suka Mire
US Utra Scrape
V Vaadal
WB Wirvie Burn
W Walli Burn

MAIN OBS TRAPS

DD Double Dyke
G Gully
HD Hjon Dyke
SD Single Dyke
RS Roadside
P Plantation
V Vaadal
NG North Grind

TOILETS

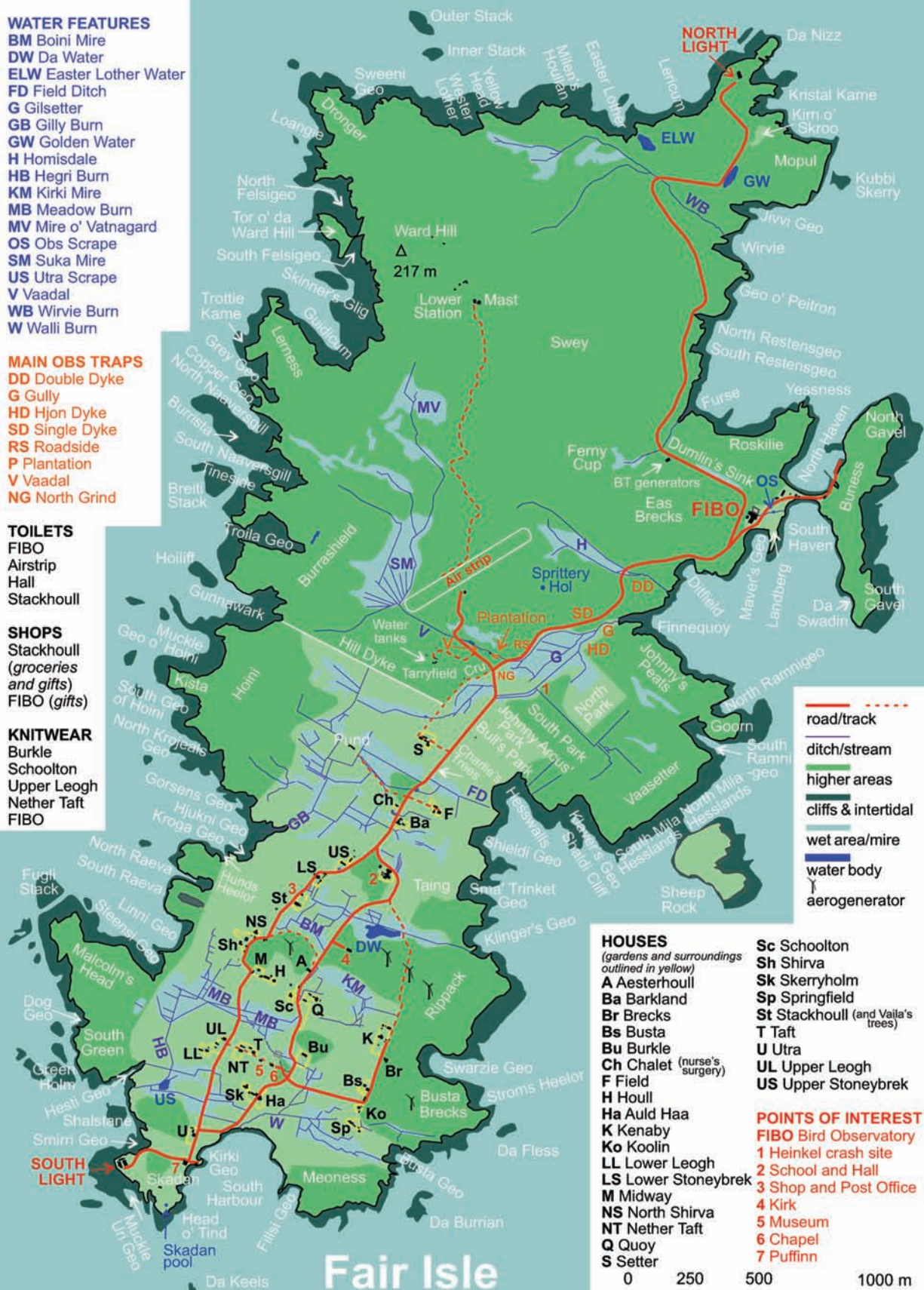
FIBO
Airstrip
Hall
Stackhoull

SHOPS

Stackhoull
(groceries
and gifts)
FIBO (gifts)

KNITWEAR

Burkle
Schoolton
Upper Leogh
Nether Taft
FIBO



Fair Isle

SYSTEMATIC CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF FAIR ISLE

David Parnaby

The table below is a checklist of the birds of Fair Isle at the end of 2019. All decisions follow those of the BBRC and BOURC (although note that the totals include all 2019 records, which may remain subject to ratification by the relevant committee), with the main list comprising all species on Categories A–C, with those species on Category D (uncertain origin) and E (presumed escapes), along with one extinct species included at the end of the list for completeness.

With the addition of Franklin's Gull and Black-winged Stilt, the Fair Isle list stands at 394 at the end of 2019 (not including Daurian/Turkestan Shrike, none of the records of which are currently accepted to species level). Note that recent changes by the International Ornithological Congress (IOC, the body the BOURC follow for taxonomic issues) have seen the Fair Isle list lose one species, with 'Steppe Grey Shrike' demoted to a subspecies of Great Grey Shrike. In addition, two species have been gained, with Hudsonian Whimbrel once again a full species and Black-eared Wheatear split into Eastern and Western species (Gill & Donsker 2020).

Status Categories:

Vagrant	V (no. of records)	ten records or less in the past 20 years
Rare	R (no. of records)	11–40 records in the past 20 years
Scarce	S	averaging 10 records or less per annum
Regular Migrant	RM	averaging 11–40 records per annum
Frequent Migrant	FM	averaging 41–500 records per annum
Common Migrant	CM	averaging more than 500 records per annum

Breeding Categories:

Small Numbers	BS	on average less than 100 pairs per annum
Moderate Numbers	BM	on average 101–1,000 pairs per annum
Large Numbers	BL	on average more than 1,000 pairs per annum
Occasional Breeder	OB	

Reference

Gill, F.B. & Donsker, D.B. (eds) 2020. *IOC World Bird List 10.1*. doi 10.14344/IOC.ML.10.1. www.worldbirdnames.org

Species	Status	Breeding status	Records (individuals)				
Quail	S	OB		American Wigeon	V		1
Brent Goose	R		54 (103) a	Mallard	RM	BS	
Canada Goose	R		37 (90)	Black Duck	V		1
Barnacle Goose	FM			Pintail	S	OB c	
Greylag Goose	CM			Teal	FM		
Taiga Bean Goose	V		9 (15) b	Green-winged Teal	V		3
Pink-footed Goose	CM			Pochard	R		58 (74)
Tundra Bean Goose	R		12 (146) b	Ring-necked Duck	V		2
White-fronted Goose	S			Tufted Duck	RM		
Mute Swan	V		12 (17)	Scaup	S		107 (142)
Bewick's Swan	V		6 (17)	Lesser Scaup	V		1
Whooper Swan	FM			Steller's Eider	V		1
Shelduck	S			King Eider	V		14
Mandarin Duck	V		4	Eider	FM	BS	
Garganey	V		13 (23)	Harlequin Duck	V		2 (3)
Shoveler	S			Surf Scoter	V		2
Gadwall	R		58 (89)	Velvet Scoter	R		129 (181)
Wigeon	FM			Common Scoter	RM		
				Long-tailed Duck	RM		
				Goldeneye	RM		

Smew	V		7	Great Snipe	R		46
Goosander	R		109 (154)	Snipe	CM	BS	
Red-b Merganser	RM	OB		Terek Sandpiper	V		1
Nightjar	V		31	Red-necked Phalarope	V	OB	45 e
Alpine Swift	V		5	Grey Phalarope	R		48
Swift	FM			Common Sandpiper	FM		
Pallid Swift	V		1	Spotted Sandpiper	V		1
Little Swift	V		1	Green Sandpiper	RM		
Great Bustard	V		1	Solitary Sandpiper	V		1
Little Bustard	V		1	Lesser Yellowlegs	V		4
Cuckoo	S	OB		Redshank	CM	OB	
Pallas's Sandgrouse	V		1 (40)	Wood Sandpiper	S		
Rock Dove	FM	BS		Spotted Redshank	R		106 (120)
Stock Dove	S			Greenshank	RM		
Woodpigeon	FM			Collared Pratincole	V		2
Turtle Dove	S			Black-winged Pratincole	V		1
Oriental Turtle Dove	V		1	Kittiwake	CM	BM	
Collared Dove	FM			Ivory Gull	V		2
Water Rail	RM			Sabine's Gull	V		5
Corncrake	S	OB		Black-headed Gull	FM		
Little Crake	V		1	Little Gull	R		34
Baillon's Crake	V		2	Laughing Gull	V		2
Spotted Crake	R		51	Franklin's Gull	V		1
Moorhen	S	OB		Mediterranean Gull	V		3
Coot	R		94	Common Gull	CM	BS	
Sandhill Crane	V		1	Ring-billed Gull	V		4
Crane	R		29 (39)	Great Black-backed Gull	CM	BS	
Little Grebe	R		42	Glaucous-winged Gull	V		1
Red-necked Grebe	V		23 (25)	Glaucous Gull	RM		
Great Crested Grebe	V		14 (15)	Iceland Gull	S		
Slavonian Grebe	S			Herring Gull	CM	BS	
Stone-curlew	V		8	Lesser Black-backed Gull	FM	BS	
Oystercatcher	FM	BS		Gull-billed Tern	V		1
Black-winged Stilt	V		1	Caspian Tern	V		2
Avocet	V		1	Sandwich Tern	S		
Lapwing	FM	BS		Bridled Tern	V		1
Golden Plover	FM	OB		Roseate Tern	V		4 (5)
Pacific Golden Plover	V		2	Common Tern	RM	BS	
American Golden Plover	V		11	Arctic Tern	FM	BS	
Grey Plover	R			White-winged Black Tern	V		4
Ringed Plover	FM	BS		Black Tern	V		2
Little Ringed Plover	V		8	Great Skua	FM	BM	
Kentish Plover	V		1	Pomarine Skua	R		105 (135)
Caspian Plover	V		1	Arctic Skua	FM	BS	
Dotterel	S		109 (203)	Long-tailed Skua	R		54 (110)
Upland Sandpiper	V		2	Little Auk	RM		
Whimbrel	FM	OB		Brünnich's Guillemot	V		1
Hudsonian Whimbrel d	V		2	Common Guillemot	CM	BL	
Curlew	FM	BS		Razorbill	CM	BL	
Bar-tailed Godwit	S			Black Guillemot	FM	BM	
Black-tailed Godwit	S			Puffin	CM	BL	
Turnstone	CM			Red-throated Diver	RM		
Knot	RM			Black-throated Diver	V		5
Ruff	RM			Great Northern Diver	S		
Curlew Sandpiper	R		63 (146)	White-billed Diver	V		4
Temminck's Stint	V		19	Black-browed Albatross	V		1 f
Red-necked Stint	V		1	Storm Petrel	CM	BS?	
Sanderling	FM			Swinhoe's Petrel	V		2
Dunlin	FM	OB		Leach's Petrel	S		
Purple Sandpiper	FM			Fulmar	CM	BL	
Baird's Sandpiper	V		4	Cory's Shearwater	V		3 (90)
Little Stint	S			Sooty Shearwater	RM		
White-rumped Sandpiper	V		5	Great Shearwater	V		16 (140)
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	V		18 (19)	Manx Shearwater	S		
Pectoral Sandpiper	R		36	White Stork	V		4
Semipalmated Sandpiper	V		3	Gannet	CM	BL	
Long-billed Dowitcher	V		2	Shag	CM	BM	
Woodcock	FM			Cormorant	RM		
Jack Snipe	FM			Glossy Ibis	V		2 (6)

Little Bittern	V		1	Western Bonelli's Warbler	V		4 i
Night-heron	V		2	Hume's Warbler	V		3
Grey Heron	FM			Yellow-browed Warbler	RM		
Purple Heron	V		3	Pallas's Warbler	V		43
Great White Egret	V		1	Radde's Warbler	V		9
Little Egret	V		2	Dusky Warbler	V		20
Osprey	S		133	Willow Warbler	CM		
Honey-buzzard	R		63	Chiffchaff	FM		
Golden Eagle	V		1	Green Warbler	V		1
Sparrowhawk	RM			Greenish Warbler	R		56
Goshawk	V		6	Arctic Warbler	R		98
Marsh Harrier	R		60	Great Reed Warbler	V		14
Hen Harrier	S			Aquatic Warbler	V		38
Pallid Harrier	V		6	Sedge Warbler	FM	OB	
Montagu's Harrier	V		3	Paddyfield Warbler	R		25
Red Kite	V		8	Blyth's Reed Warbler	R		53
Black Kite	V		3	Reed Warbler	RM		
White-tailed Eagle	V	OB	12 g	Marsh Warbler	S		
Rough-legged Buzzard	V		46 (49)	Thick-billed Warbler	V		2
Buzzard	R			Booted Warbler	V		15
Barn Owl	V		6	Sykes's Warbler	V		3
Scops Owl	V		2	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	V		4
Snowy Owl	V		23 (24)	Melodious Warbler	V		20
Long-eared Owl	RM			Icterine Warbler	RM		
Short-eared Owl	RM			Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	R		25
Hoopoe	R		42	Lanceolated Warbler	S		98
Roller	V		1	Grasshopper Warbler	RM		
Kingfisher	V		1	River Warbler	V		18
Bee-eater	V		8 (10)	Savi's Warbler	V		7
Wryneck	RM			Blackcap	CM		
Great Spotted Woodpecker	S			Garden Warbler	FM		
Lesser Kestrel	V		1	Barred Warbler	RM		
Kestrel	RM			Lesser Whitethroat	FM		
American Kestrel	V		1	Whitethroat	FM		
Red-footed Falcon	V		5	Dartford Warbler	V		1
Merlin	RM			Subalpine Warbler	R		101 j
Hobby	R		67	Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler	V		2
Gyr Falcon	V		13 h	Sardinian Warbler	V		2
Peregrine	RM	OB		Firecrest	V		10
Brown Shrike	V		2	Goldcrest	FM		
Red-backed Shrike	RM			Wren	RM	BS	
Lesser Grey Shrike	V		20 (21)	Treecreeper	V		11
Great Grey Shrike	S			Rose-coloured Starling	R		50
Woodchat Shrike	V		32	Starling	CM	BM	
Red-eyed Vireo	V		1	Siberian Thrush	V		2
Golden Oriole	R		48	White's Thrush	V		16
Magpie	V		1	Grey-cheeked Thrush	V		5
Jackdaw	S			Swainson's Thrush	V		2
Rook	RM			Hermit Thrush	V		3
Carion Crow	FM	OB		Ring Ouzel	FM		
Hooded Crow	RM	BS		Blackbird	CM	OB	
Raven	RM	BS		Eye-browed Thrush	V		2
Waxwing	S			Black-throated Thrush	V		14
Coal Tit	V		7	Dusky Thrush	V		1
Blue Tit	V		14 (26)	Fieldfare	CM		
Great Tit	R		41 (55)	Redwing	CM	OB	
Woodlark	V		57	Song Thrush	CM	OB	
Skylark	CM	BS		Mistle Thrush	RM		
Crested Lark	V		1	Spotted Flycatcher	FM		
Shore Lark	R			Asian Brown Flycatcher	V		2
Short-toed Lark	S		164 (179)	Robin	CM	OB	
Bimaculated Lark	V		1	Rufous-tailed Robin	V		1
Calandra Lark	V		6	Bluethroat	RM		
Sand Martin	RM			Thrush Nightingale	R		66
Swallow	FM	OB		Nightingale	R		58
Crag Martin	V		1	Siberian Rubythroat	V		8
House Martin	FM	OB		Red-flanked Bluetail	V		22
Red-rumped Swallow	V		13	Pied Flycatcher	FM		
Wood Warbler	RM			Collared Flycatcher	V		7

Red-breasted Flycatcher	S			White-crowned Sparrow	V	1
Black Redstart	RM			White-throated Sparrow	V	5
Redstart	FM			Savannah Sparrow	V	2
Rock Thrush	V		3	Bobolink	V	1
Whinchat	FM			Baltimore Oriole	V	1
Stonechat	S			Brown-headed Cowbird	V	1
Siberian Stonechat	V		2 k	Tennessee Warbler	V	2
Wheatear	CM	BS		Magnolia Warbler	V	1
Isabelline Wheatear	V		1	Blackburnian Warbler	V	1
Desert Wheatear	V		5	Blackpoll Warbler	V	2
West. Black-eared Wheatear	V		2 l	Yellow-rumped Warbler	V	2
East. Black-eared Wheatear	V		2 l			
Pied Wheatear	V		1	Not identified to species:		
Dipper	R		40	Daurian/Turkestan Shrike	V	4
House Sparrow		BS				
Tree Sparrow	S	OB		Category D:		
Alpine Accentor	V		2	Daurian Starling		1
Siberian Accentor	V		2	Red-headed Bunting		1
Dunnock	FM	OB				
Yellow Wagtail	RM	OB		Category E:		
Eastern Yellow Wagtail	V		1	Red-breasted Goose		1
Citrine Wagtail	S		80	Bar-headed Goose		4 (9)
Grey Wagtail	S	OB		Black Swan		1
Pied Wagtail	FM	BS		Wood Duck		1
Richard's Pipit	S			Lanner Falcon		1
Blyth's Pipit	V		4	Saker Falcon		1 m
Tawny Pipit	V		19	Gyr Falcon		1
Meadow Pipit	CM	BS		Waxwing		1
Tree Pipit	RM			Blackcap		1
Olive-backed Pipit	S		114	White-shouldered Starling		1
Pechora Pipit	R		45	Chinese Grosbeak		1
Red-throated Pipit	R		92	Long-tailed Rosefinch		1
Buff-bellied Pipit	V		4	Pallas's Rosefinch		1
Rock Pipit	FM	BS		Chestnut Bunting		2
Chaffinch	FM			Black-headed Bunting		5
Brambling	FM			Red-headed Bunting		c.48
Hawfinch	S		165	Yellow-headed Blackbird		1
Bullfinch	S			Black-headed Grosbeak		1
Common Rosefinch	RM			Indigo Bunting		2
Greenfinch	RM			Lazuli Bunting		2
Twite	FM	BS		Varied Bunting		1
Linnet	RM	OB		Painted Bunting		1
Common Redpoll	FM					
Lesser Redpoll	S			Other records:		
Arctic Redpoll	R		95	Turtle Dove x Barbary Dove		1
Parrot Crossbill	V		6 (68)	House Finch n		2
Crossbill	RM					
Two-barred Crossbill	R		31 (81)	Extinct:		
Goldfinch	S			Great Auk		1
Citril Finch	V		1			
Serin	V		4			
Siskin	FM			Notes		
Lapland Bunting	FM			a. Since 1948 only		
Snow Bunting	FM			b. Plus another 21 records of 63 unidentified bean geese		
Corn Bunting	R	OB		c. Hybridised with Mallard in 2018		
Yellowhammer	RM			d. Split from Whimbrel by IOC in January 2020 (Gill & Donsker 2020)		
Pine Bunting	V		13	e. Including six fledged juveniles		
Ortolan Bunting	S			f. Plus an unidentified albatross in 1949		
Cretzschmar's Bunting	V		3	g. 11 since 1900, excluding four known reintroduced birds		
Chestnut-eared Bunting	V		1	h. Escaped bird in 2018		
Little Bunting	S			i. Also a bonelli's warbler sp. in 1992		
Yellow-browed Bunting	V		1	j. Includes Subalpine/Moltoni's group		
Rustic Bunting	R		138	k. Plus another 45 records of 'Eastern Stonechat' (Siberian/Stejneger's)		
Yellow-breasted Bunting	R		103	l. Plus another Western/Eastern Black-eared Wheatear. Split by IOC in January 2020 (Gill & Donsker 2020)		
Black-headed Bunting	V		26	m. Three other records are thought to be this species or hybrid falcons		
Black-faced Bunting	V		1	n. Both records refer to probable <i>Carpodacus</i> finches, but neither accepted as this species		
Pallas's Reed Bunting	V		2			
Reed Bunting	FM					
Song Sparrow	V		4			



Plate 161. From Ward Hill looking south towards Guidicum, Hoini and Malcolm's Head, 25th August 2019. © Max Hellicar

INDEX TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

Auk, Little	69	Dipper	104	Godwit, Bar-tailed	59
Blackbird	95	Diver, Great Northern	71	Godwit, Black-tailed	59
Blackcap	91	Diver, Red-throated	71	Goldcrest	94
Bluetail, Red-flanked	100	Dotterel	58	Goldeneye	49
Bluethroat	98	Dove, Collared	52	Goldfinch	117
Brambling	111	Dove, Rock	51	Goosander	50
Bunting, Lapland	118	Dove, Stock	51	Goose, Barnacle	43
Bunting, Little	120	Dove, Turtle	52	Goose, Canada	43
Bunting, Ortolan	120	Duck, Long-tailed	49	Goose, Greylag	44
Bunting, Reed	121	Duck, Mandarin	46	Goose, Pink-footed	44
Bunting, Rustic	120	Duck, Tufted	48	Goose, Tundra Bean	45
Bunting, Snow	118	Dunlin	61	Goose, White-fronted	45
Buzzard	76	Dunnock	105	Grebe, Red-necked	54
		Eagle, White-tailed	75	Grebe, Slavonian	54
Chaffinch	111	Eider	48	Greenfinch	112
Chiffchaff	85			Greenshank	64
Coot	54	Fieldfare	96	Guillemot, Black	70
Cormorant	73	Firecrest	93	Guillemot, Common	70
Corncrake	53	Flycatcher, Pied	101	Gull, Black-headed	65
Crossbill	114	Flycatcher, Red-breasted	102	Gull, Common	66
Crossbill, Two-barred	115	Flycatcher, Spotted	97	Gull, Franklin's	65
Crow, Carrion	80	Fulmar	72	Gull, Glaucous	67
Crow, Hooded	80			Gull, Great Black-backed	66
Cuckoo	51	Gadwall	47	Gull, Herring	67
Curlew	59	Gannet	73	Gull, Iceland	67
				Gull, Lesser Black-backed	67

Harrier, Hen	75	Quail	43	Teal	48
Harrier, Marsh	74			Tern, Arctic	68
Hawfinch	111	Rail, Water	53	Tern, Common	68
Heron, Grey	74	Raven	81	Thrush, Mistle	97
Hobby	78	Razorbill	70	Thrush, Song	97
Honey-buzzard	74	Redpoll, Arctic	114	Treecreeper	94
Hoopoe	77	Redpoll, Common	113	Turnstone	60
		Redpoll, Lesser	114	Twite	112
Jackdaw	79	Redshank	64		
		Redstart	102	Wagtail, Citrine	106
Kestrel	78	Redstart, Black	102	Wagtail, Grey	106
Kite, Black	75	Redwing	96	Wagtail, Pied	106
Kittiwake	65	Robin	98	Wagtail, Yellow	105
Knot	60	Rook	80	Warbler, Arctic	86
		Rosefinch, Common	112	Warbler, Barred	92
Lapwing	56	Ruff	60	Warbler, Blyth's Reed	88
Lark, Shore	82			Warbler, Dusky	85
Linnet	112	Sanderling	61	Warbler, Eastern Olivaceous	89
		Sandpiper, Common	63	Warbler, Garden	92
Mallard	47	Sandpiper, Curlew	60	Warbler, Grasshopper	90
Martin, House	83	Sandpiper, Green	63	Warbler, Greenish	86
Martin, Sand	82	Sandpiper, Pectoral	61	Warbler, Icterine	90
Merganser, Red-breasted	50	Sandpiper, Purple	61	Warbler, Lanceolated	90
Merlin	78	Sandpiper, Wood	64	Warbler, Marsh	89
Moorhen	53	Scaup	48	Warbler, Melodious	90
Nightingale, Thrush	100	Scoter, Common	49	Warbler, Pallas's	84
Nightjar	50	Shag	73	Warbler, Radde's	84
		Shearwater, Manx	72	Warbler, Reed	88
Ouzel, Ring	95	Shearwater, Sooty	72	Warbler, River	90
Owl, Long-eared	76	Shelduck	46	Warbler, Sedge	88
Owl, Short-eared	76	Shoveler	46	Warbler, Subalpine	93
Oystercatcher	54	Shrike, Brown	79	Warbler, Willow	85
		Shrike, Great Grey	79	Warbler, Wood	83
Peregrine	78	Shrike, Red-backed	79	Warbler, Yellow-browed	83
Petrel, Leach's	72	Siskin	117	Waxwing	81
Petrel, Storm	71	Skua, Arctic	69	Wheatear	104
Phalarope, Red-necked	63	Skua, Great	68	Whimbrel	58
Pintail	48	Skua, Pomarine	69	Whinchat	103
Pipit, Meadow	107	Skylark	81	Whitethroat	93
Pipit, Olive-backed	108	Snipe	62	Whitethroat, Lesser	92
Pipit, Pechora	110	Snipe, Jack	62	Wigeon	47
Pipit, Red-throated	110	Sparrow, House	104	Woodcock	62
Pipit, Richard's	107	Sparrow, Tree	105	Woodlark	81
Pipit, Rock	110	Sparrowhawk	74	Woodpigeon	52
Pipit, Tawny	107	Starling	94	Wren	94
Pipit, Tree	108	Stilt, Black-winged	56	Wryneck	77
Plover, Golden	57	Stonechat	103		
Plover, Grey	57	Stonechat, 'Eastern'	103	Yellowhammer	118
Plover, Little Ringed	58	Swallow	82	Yellowlegs, Lesser	64
Plover, Ringed	57	Swallow, Red-rumped	83		
Puffin	71	Swan, Whooper	45		
		Swift	50		

Plate 162. Freyja Parnaby releasing a ringed Wryneck with Richard Cope, 15th May 2019. © David Parnaby



Plate 163. Richard Cope (left) with Susannah and Freyja Parnaby, Skadan crop strip, 7th October 2019. © Chris Dodd



