

# Fair Isle Bird Observatory

## BULLETIN



*Edited by*  
**PETER E. DAVIS**

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Vol. 4 No. 5 (New Series)

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# Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust

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**FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY BULLETIN**

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DECEMBER, 1960

*C O N T E N T S*

	<i>Page</i>
52. Booted Warbler at Fair Isle ... ..	127
53. Arctic Warblers at Fair Isle ... ..	127
54. Greenland Redpolls and Lapland Buntings in Autumn 1959 ... ..	128
55. Autumn Migrants at Fair Isle and Foula <sup>s</sup> , 1959 ...	134
56. Recent Recoveries of Birds Marked at Fair Isle ...	146
57. Recaptures of Local Birds at Fair Isle in 1959 ...	149
58. Bird Notes from Haroldswick, Unst, Autumn 1959	150
59. Shetland Bird Notes, June 1960 ... ..	152
60. Various Records from Shetland ... ..	154
61. Migration on North Ronaldshay, Orkney, in August 1959 ... ..	155
62. A Grey Seal Recovery ... ..	156

## 52. Booted Warbler at Fair Isle

As already reported in *Brit. Birds* 53: 123-125, a specimen of the Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* was taken in the gully trap on the morning of August 29th 1959. It was released at North Haven and was seen again in nearby cliffs on the 31st. The species breeds from the Moscow area eastwards across central Eurasia, and normally winters in India. The occurrence was the second for Fair Isle and Britain—the first was collected by George Stout of Field on September 3rd 1936—and the third for western Europe; there was one taken at Heligoland on September 28th 1851.

This small warbler was remarkably lacking in distinctive features. It had sandy-grey upper parts, with a poor buffish-white supercilium and orbital ring, buff-white webs to the outer rectices, and mainly silvery-white under parts. The chief distinctions from the similar Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* lay in the smaller size, narrower bill, and slight differences of wing-formula. Our bird was in rather worn plumage. Its wing measured 62.5 mm., and its weight was 8.4 grammes.

P. D.

## 53. Arctic Warblers at Fair Isle

Before the Bird Observatory was established in 1948 there had been six specimens of the Arctic or Eversmann's Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* collected at Fair Isle, and one or two others reported seen. The dates ranged from a very early bird on July 30th in 1928 to a very late one on October 18th in 1913, but the rest were all in the second half of September. Since 1948 there had been only three substantiated records; sight-records on August 27th 1951 and September 21st 1954, and a single capture on September 2nd 1954. It was therefore most unexpected that we should catch three individuals in September 1959, on the 1st, 8th, and 17th.

This is a most attractive little leaf-warbler, with bright green fringes to the flight-feathers, greyer-green upper parts, a narrow well-defined primrose superciliary stripe reaching from the gape almost to the nape, and a clear whitish wing-bar at the tips of the greater coverts. Most of the under parts are cleanly washed with pale yellow, and the legs are pale yellowish-brown. It stands in rather the same relationship to the Greenish Warbler *Ph. trochiloides* as does the Willow Warbler to the Chiffchaff; being slightly larger, more colourful, with pale, not dark legs, and with no emargination on the 6th primary.

All three of our captures were in good plumage, with only

slight wear on the rectrices and remiges. The bird of September 8th was thought to be rather less bright green on the wings than the others, and had a paler, less yellow supercilium; the capture of the 17th was the only one to show a second wing-bar, on the tips of the median coverts. This was quite obvious in the field but surprisingly indistinct in the hand. The wing-measurements of the three were 62, 66, and 64 mm. respectively, and the weights 9.5, 9.0, and 10.4 grammes.

The second bird was taken in the gully trap and was not watched in the field. The others were both feeding in potato "shows" and were watched for some time before being taken in mist-nets. They were both sulking yet restless in habit, flitting about continuously among the stems of the plants but seldom emerging into the open. The impressively long supercilium was undoubtedly the best field-character; it extended straight back from the eye, or even seemed slightly upcurved, and tapered away to a point at the back. The leg colour was quite plain on a clear view, and the wing-bar(s) clear on the closed wing.

P. D.

#### 54. Greenland Redpolls and Lapland Buntings in Autumn 1959

PETER DAVIS

At Fair Isle, August and September of 1959 were dominated by westerly weather, and it was a good autumn for the regular passage migrants from Iceland and Greenland. Turnstones and Purple Sandpipers, Wheatears, Meadow Pipits, and White Wagtails were all more abundant than usual. Two other forms, the large, dark, and heavy-billed Greenland race of the Redpoll, *Carduelis flammea rostrata*, and the dark-plumaged, long-billed Greenland race of the Lapland Bunting, *Calcarius lapponicus subcalcaratus*, though annual at Fair Isle, seldom arrive in quantity; but by a rare coincidence both came in good numbers in 1959. Greenland Redpolls have been recorded in comparable numbers only during the irruptions of 1905, 1925, and 1955, and the Lapland Bunting totals were surpassed only in 1949 and 1953. The 1955 Redpoll arrivals were described by Williamson (1956), and the great 1953 Lapland Bunting invasion by Williamson and Davis (1956).

In 1959 there were four "waves" of Redpoll passage, and two Lapland Bunting movements which virtually coincided with the first and last of these.

*The First Arrival.* The first fall began with two Redpolls

on August 26th; there were three by the 28th, and at least four on the 30th, five 31st to September 2nd, and two until the 5th. At Foula (forty-five miles N.W. of Fair Isle) one was seen on August 27th, five by the 28th, and one or two until September 3rd; and at Haroldswick in Unst (ninety-five miles N.N.E. of Fair Isle) six Redpolls were seen on September 1st and 2nd. The earliest Lapland Bunting appeared at Fair Isle on August 27th; there were five on the 30th, ten on the 31st and nineteen by September 2nd, though it was not until the 4th that the various parties of previous days were found simultaneously, and a total of twenty-six birds recorded. After the 5th, only a few remained. In Foula the first seen were three or four on August 27th; there were eight by the 31st, about thirty-five on September 1st, and by the 6th, when observations ceased, some fifty were thought to be present.

The weather-maps for August 25th-26th show ideal conditions for a North Atlantic crossing, with calm, fine weather in southern Greenland, and a light to moderate N.W. to W. airflow between there and N. Scotland, to the west and south of a depression centred well north of Scotland; several of the 1955 arrivals took place in essentially similar situations. Some emigration from Iceland was taking place at this time, as shown by a small arrival of the intermediate "schioleri" Wheatears, *theresae* Meadow Pipits, and White Wagtails, with three Merlins, at Fair Isle on the 26th; and a further increase of the passerine species, with thirty Wigeon and two Pintails, on the following day. From the 27th the weather deteriorated markedly in southern Greenland, with extensive frontal rain there and to the east, and any further long-distance movement is likely to have been an onward passage from South Iceland, where the weather was much better. Most of the species seen on the 26th-27th increased again on the 30th, with the addition of Turnstones and Purple Sandpipers, and more Wheatears and pipits came in during the morning of the 31st, but after this time there was little evidence of immigration from the north-west until September 7th, when another fall of Wheatears, pipits, and wagtails from Iceland was not accompanied by Redpolls or Lapland Buntings. It therefore seems most probable that the first entry of these birds into Britain was completed by the end of August, and that the apparent increase of the buntings on September 1st and 2nd was due to a more complete search of their preferred habitat in the islands—the grassy parts of the hill ground.

The normal range of weights for Greenland Redpolls that have had time to recuperate from a long flight seems to be about 17 to 20 grammes. Two trapped on Fair Isle on August 26th weighed only 14.2 and 14.3, whereas another on the 31st, presumably rested, weighed 20.7. For Lapland Buntings the

normal range for rested birds appears to be about 25 to 30 grammes; three trapped on August 30th, obviously newly arrived, weighed 22.1, 27.7, and 24.1, and two caught September 4th weighed 24.0 and 29.0 grammes.

*The Second Arrival.* The next arrival of Redpolls began, after three blank days, with four on September 9th, and five or six on the next three days. There were sixteen on the 13th, increasing to twenty or more on the 16th, but barely half-a-dozen by the 19th. This arrival may have been reflected in records of six or more at Haroldswick on the 10th-11th. At Tory Island, Co. Donegal, single Redpolls of this form were observed on the 11th, 14th, and 15th. Up to six Lapland Buntings were at Fair Isle until the 17th, but these were probably the remnants of the first arrival, though one trapped on the 17th was at the low weight of 22.4 grammes and may have been a newcomer.

From the weather situation it is conceivable that the Redpolls of September 9th were freshly-arrived from Greenland and after a cyclonic crossing to the south of a low centred over Iceland: but the overcast and rainy conditions in south Greenland do not encourage this view. The weather was worse, and with southerly winds, in south Iceland, and no other north-western immigrants reached Fair Isle at this time. However, there were certainly more Wheatears on the 10th, and two Redpolls trapped on this day were at only 14.0 and 15.3 grammes (the former had increased to 17.3 when it was re-trapped on the 15th) which strongly suggests a recent crossing. The weather in south Greenland was better on the 10th, and this improvement extended to Iceland as the low moved away east on the 11th, and an anticyclone was established to the south of that island. Another fall of Wheatears, pipits, and wagtails reached Fair Isle by the morning of the 12th. Conditions continued to favour immigration, round the north and east sides of the anticyclone, on the 13th, and a corridor of clear calm weather remained open until the 16th. This day brought our first significant fall of Snow Buntings, twenty-five, as well as the increased score of Redpolls. The catch of Redpolls during the period 11th to 16th showed a wide range of weights. One bird early on the 11th was at 13.7 grammes (it reached 17.1 four days later), whilst three at noon on the same day were all over 15 grammes (one of them, 15.4, reached 17.1 on the 14th). A single capture on the afternoon of the 12th weighed 17.6, and two on the evening of the 13th were at 14.4 and 15.2. On the 14th, one weighed 16.4 at 0900 GMT, another 13.2 at 1100, and a third 15.6 at 1500. Six birds were trapped around midday on the 15th; three of them weighed only 13.2 to 14.3, and the others weighed 15.6 to 17.9. These figures seem to confirm the impression given by the Daily

Census totals, of a gradual build-up with frequent new arrivals during this week.

*The Third Arrival.* The third "wave" of Redpolls started with eight on September 22nd; ten were seen next day, and by the 25th there were fifteen, including one bird with very greyish fringes to the feathers of the mantle, and a whiter rump than the others—perhaps a pale example from the hybrid populations ("*islandica*") of Iceland, where the indigenous Redpolls are normally sedentary. After the 25th numbers declined to seven birds at the end of the month. There was a slight resumption of Lapland Bunting movement at this period, with four on the 23rd and up to three during the next few days.

This arrival was preceded by a large fall of Icelandic Meadow Pipits on the 20th, and a great movement of Greenland Wheatears (over one thousand) on the 21st. The Meadow Pipits travelled in the light south-west winds in the warm sector of a low centred in Denmark Strait; the Wheatears evidently crossed from Greenland in the fresh to strong westerly airstream behind the cold front of this low—the front had cleared Fair Isle on the afternoon of the 20th. This low was moving slowly east, but the weather-pattern remained essentially similar until the 22nd, when another trough crossed south Greenland. The weather deteriorated in Iceland, with adverse winds, and there is no evidence of renewed passage from the north-west after this day. The apparent increase of Redpolls on the 25th may have been due to birds from Shetland. Too few Redpolls were trapped at this time to throw much light on the arrivals. Three on the 23rd were at 18.0, 14.6, and 16.0 grammes; the latter reached 19.1 by October 3rd, but the 18-gramme specimen attained only 18.4 by October 6th, so could hardly have been a recent emigrant when first caught. Another bird at 17.0 on September 24th was probably rested, as were individuals at 15.9 on the 26th and 17.5 on the 29th (the last was little heavier on October 2nd). A Lapland caught on 23rd weighed 24.1.

*The Fourth Arrival.* Several ringed birds from the third arrival remained on the island until late October, but they were joined by new immigrants on October 1st (seventeen seen) and there were over twenty again on October 2nd-3rd. Up to twelve stayed till the 19th, and about five to November 2nd (after which all the Redpolls clearly identified were *Mealies C. f. flammea*). Several Redpolls were reported from the Haroldswick district in the first week of October. The second Lapland Bunting fall coincided with this arrival of October 1st-2nd. There were at least twelve present on the 1st, at least seventeen on the 2nd, and smaller numbers remained until the last week of October. The interesting feature of this arrival is that although the birds were certainly of



Greenland origin, they came at a time when trans-Atlantic movement was improbable, with very disturbed southerly weather in Iceland and Greenland; and when light south-easterlies in fine weather were bringing a strengthening immigration from Scandinavia to Fair Isle. Either the new birds were from Shetland, or they had made a return crossing after an earlier drift to Norway. One Redpoll at 16.4 grammes on the morning of the 1st had increased to 18.1 by the 3rd, which suggests it had recently suffered a flight-loss, though not of the same order as in birds freshly-arrived from Greenland. Three other captures on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th all weighed between 15 and 16 grammes. A Lapland Bunting trapped on the 2nd weighed 24.5.

*Causes of the "Irruption."* The Greenland populations of both of the species under discussion normally migrate into North America for the winter. The Greenland Redpoll penetrates considerably further south in some years than in others, and its numbers fluctuate widely in the southern part of the winter range. In this it behaves very like its close relative the Mealy Redpoll in Europe and America, and the periodic irruptions are presumably related to high population and food-scarcity. The Lapland Bunting also fluctuates in numbers very considerably in its winter range, but is not apparently so prone to irruption beyond the normal winter area. It does not winter in Iceland, which the Greenland Redpoll is said to do, at any rate in some years; though this conclusion seems to be based on taxonomic evidence which may be dubious in view of the extreme variability of the resident Icelandic Redpoll population. If Greenland Redpolls do winter in Iceland, it may be that this is only in the years when numbers cross the North Atlantic and reach the British Isles.

Unfortunately we have at present no evidence of a correlation between peak populations in Greenland and unusually large autumn arrivals in Scotland; but it seems probable that there will be one. A puzzling feature, however, is that the irruptions of these two races into Britain seldom coincide. Peak populations are often reached after an abnormally fine summer, and one would expect two forms with a similar breeding-rate and not very dissimilar habitat and food-preferences both to achieve high numbers in a favourable year. The big Redpoll arrivals at Fair Isle in 1905 and 1955 saw very few Lapland Buntings; in 1925, though Redpolls were in exceptional numbers, the bunting totals were only a little better than average. There were very few Redpolls with the big Lapland Bunting invasion of 1949, and virtually none with the outstanding "invasion" of 1953. Not until 1959 did both forms arrive simultaneously in comparable strength.

The final solution of this problem, if there ever is one, may depend on particular meteorological conditions at the time of

the birds' autumn movements; and the haphazard influence of off-shore winds in eastern Greenland could account for the anomalies.

*The Wintering Areas of the Immigrants.* The 1953 Lapland Bunting invasion was followed by a great increase of winter records from the east and south coasts of Britain, between Edinburgh and Portsmouth (see Williamson and Davis, *loc. cit.*). Even so, the total number of wintering birds reported did not nearly account for the numbers known to have entered the north and west of the country in the previous September; and it was suggested that some must have moved on into Europe. The same may be said of 1959; in fact winter numbers in the main British wintering-grounds in North Norfolk were reported to be lower in 1959-60 than in the previous year.

The winter area of the immigrant Greenland Redpolls is even more obscure. There are no records of this race in England, and so far as I am aware only one very old autumn record from the continent—on Heligoland in 1879. There are remarkably few Scottish records except in the northern isles, and even fewer Irish ones; and almost all of these are for the period September to December. Venables and Venables (1955), writing before the 1955 irruption, could give only five records of this race in Shetland, three in October-November and two in April-May, whereas the Mealy Redpoll is given as a regular autumn migrant, that sometimes remains to winter in the islands. Since *rostrata* is often more common and certainly more regular at Fair Isle than *flammea*, it seems certain that there has been misidentification in the past, and some of the old Shetland records of Mealies probably refer to Greenlanders. Cage-bird fanciers are apparently well aware of the occurrence of Greenland Redpolls in the isles, as witness the illegal advertisement for "Greenland Mealy Redpolls, Wrung or Unwrung," inserted by a Caithness dealer in one of the Shetland newspapers in October 1959. Had there been a sizeable arrival of Greenland Redpolls in Shetland during the Venables' eight years of residence there, they might well have found some wintering birds.

There have been one or two spring records of this Redpoll at Fair Isle in most recent years, and in 1960 there was a fairly pronounced passage in late April, with one on the 17th-18th, four 19th, two 20th, three 23rd to 26th. This was reflected at Haroldswick, where one bird appeared on the 19th and two on the 26th. This passage indicates that some birds winter to the south of the islands—probably in North and West Scotland or West Ireland, and any stray bird-watcher who sees winter Redpolls in these areas might do well to examine them carefully.

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- Williamson, K. (1956). The autumn immigration of the Greenland Redpoll into Scotland. *Dansk. Orn. Foren. Tidss.* 50: 125-133.
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## 55. Autumn Migrants at Fair Isle and Foula, 1959

In the following list the Fair Isle records are given first, and observations at Foula follow in parenthesis. The Foula records, made by the Brathay Exploration Group parties under J. V. Boys and A. E. Land, with some notes from C. K. Mylne, cover the period July 30th to September 7th only. Work at Fair Isle continued until December 31st.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Colymbus immer*. Two August 27th. One or two present October 9th to 21st, one 26th-27th, and one November 4th.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus stellatus*. One August 12th, October 8th, two November 24th.

SOOTY SHEARWATER *Procellaria grisea*. Up to three on most crossings between September 1st and October 2nd. (Foula: one on the crossing August 11th).

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*. No more than three recorded before August 27th, then frequently passing south; peaks of twenty August 28th and 30th, forty September 14th-17th, twenty-eight 24th. Up to eight in October, up to five in November and a few in late December. (Foula: only four records of one or two birds between late July and late August).

HERON *Ardea cinerea*. First appeared July 12th (six) and smaller numbers usually present for the rest of the year. The only obvious fall was of eight September 14th and eleven next day. (Foula: nine records of one or two birds between July 31st and August 30th).

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*. Up to six usually present between July 6th and the end of the year. The main movements were: eighteen August 26th, twelve September 14th, twenty-eight October 27th, thirteen November 6th, seventeen December 9th and twenty 18th. (Foula: up to four birds seen occasionally).

TEAL *Anas crecca*. Small numbers from August 13th to mid-December; maxima eight August 20th and 28th, six November 18th. (Foula: seen almost daily, but had bred).

WIGEON *Anas penelope*. Three records in July, and often present from August 14th to end October, with maxima thirty August 27th and nine October 5th. One or two occasionally in November and December. (Foula: three on September 1st and five 3rd).

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*. Two July 22nd, two August 27th, one 30th.

SCAUP *Aythya marila*. One October 17th-20th and another November 9th-13th.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*. One October 15th-16th.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*. Up to three October 8th to 27th, three November 18th, four 21st, one December 9th and three 10th.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*. One September 15th, and up to six often present from October 16th through November, single birds in December.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca*. One adult male September 28th, two immatures October 15th to 24th, one 25th-26th.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra*. No Fair Isle records. (Foula: one female August 31st).

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*. Two July 12th. One or two frequently between September 20th and end October, and odd records November-December.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*. Single adult males November 22nd and December 10th.

GREY GEESE. The species most frequently identified was the GREY LAG *Anser anser*: fourteen October 17th, thirty 22nd, two 28th, six 29th, twenty-seven 30th, twelve 31st, five November 1st, seven 2nd, four 3rd and 4th, two 9th, one 25th, two 26th, six 29th, which probably remained until December 3rd. WHITE-FRONTED *Anser albifrons* was first seen September 28th, an exhausted juvenile of the Greenland form *A. a. flavirostris*, fed, and released October 2nd. Three more of the Greenland form were well seen November 26th, and one juvenile of the typical race shot 27th. PINK-FOOTED *Anser brachyrhynchus*: six October 18th, two 25th, six 27th, five November 10th and one 27th; the last wore a metal ring. Other grey geese were: twenty-two passing south off-shore on September 27th (probably White-fronts), nineteen October 18th (probably Grey Lags), five 25th, seven 28th, four November 19th, six 27th and 28th (probably the Grey Lags of 29th), and one December 12th. (Foula: twelve grey geese on September 3rd were thought to be probably Pink-footed).

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis*. One October 26th.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*. Three September 26th, seven October 18th, ten 19th, two 20th, over thirty 25th, thirteen 26th, four 27th and eight 29th; two November 4th, eleven

7th, one 10th, three 12th, and two December 17th. Nearly all were passing north.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*. One at North Haven, November 7th.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo lagopus*. One October 13th and 14th, one November 10th.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*. One September 26th, and occasionally through October (two 10th). One November 9th-10th and 24th, December 3rd.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*. "Ring-tails," probably this species, September 28th, October 21st and 24th.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*. First appeared August 26th (three), and one or two usually present to the end of the year; three August 31st to September 2nd, four 19th. These totals are much lower than usual. A bird of the Icelandic form *F. c. subaeson* trapped August 30th. (Foula: one large female August 21st, another with a male 29th, still present September 6th).

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*. First seen August 13th, and one or two present until September 16th, and again from 25th to October 13th. Stragglers October 24th-26th, November 7th and 22nd. (Foula: one August 14th, September 6th and 7th).

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*. One August 17th-18th, September 8th, and one or two often seen from 18th onwards (one wintered). Five recorded November 9th and 10th.

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex*. Local birds last seen September 13th.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*. One found dead September 9th, one seen 12th. One October 9th and 13th to 24th, and one November 25th.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*. Most of the local birds had gone by the end of August, and a flock of thirty-nine September 12th would be passage migrants. Two birds present until at least the end of November. (Foula: probably a small increase in first week of September).

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*. Local birds had gone by late August. Immigrants numbered up to thirteen in late September, up to twenty-three (6th-7th) in early October; nineteen October 18th then few until nineteen November 16th, increasing to thirty-four 21st and thirty-six December 4th, some remaining to the end of the year.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*. A few moving in late July but the first sizeable arrival was twenty August 15th. Later peaks were: forty-three August 19th, fifty 24th, thirty-four September 4th. Less than ten until September 22nd, twenty. One or two through October and up to November 20th. (Foula: an arrival of up to twenty birds August 19th to 21st).

GREY PLOVER *Charadrius squatarola*. Four September 13th.

- GOLDEN PLOVER** *Charadrius apricarius*. Odd birds in July and early August, ten August 17th, seventeen 27th. Main passage: forty September 12th-13th, fifty October 1st, forty-nine 15th. Stragglers to December 10th. (Foula: first seen August 15th, odd birds until eight 26th, increasing to twenty 28th).
- TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres*. First seen on July 20th and 29th. Twenty by August 5th, and seldom fewer to the end of the year. About fifty by August 14th, over seventy 24th, but no more than fifty in September. Up to seventy again October 16th, eighty 19th, and over a hundred November 2nd, one hundred and twenty 20th. (Foula: thirty by August 3rd and twenty-one 9th, increasing to about fifty by 26th; fewer in early September).
- SNIPE** *Capella gallinago*. Light passage from mid-August but no more than fifteen seen daily until November 20th, forty. Fewer later.
- JACK SNIPE** *Lymnocyptes minimus*. One August 29th and September 9th, and then up to four (September 26th) until late October; odd birds occasionally in November-December. (Foula: one September 1st).
- WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola*. One July 6th and August 15th. Frequently from October 2nd, but very small numbers except 31st. More common in November, with over fifty 2nd and 6th, 150 7th, a hundred 13th and eighty 18th. Odd birds through December.
- CURLEW** *Numenius arquata*. Usually present from July to December, but very few except in July (twenty-five 9th and 21st) and late August (fifty 21st, thirty 27th). (Foula: numbers built up from about six in early August to about twenty a month later).
- WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus*. Often seen between early July and early September, but highest totals only five July 17th, six August 12th, and thirteen 13th. The last were four September 13th. (Foula: one or two usually present, with seven August 3rd, four 5th, and five 9th).
- BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica*. One August 14th.
- GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus*. One July 1st to 5th, 24th, 28th to 30th, and August 13th. (Foula: one July 30th, two August 3rd, one 12th).
- WOOD SANDPIPER** *Tringa glareola*. One July 8th.
- COMMON SANDPIPER** *Tringa hypoleucos*. Two August 14th-15th, one to 18th; two 24th and one 26th.
- REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*. Up to forty resident July to December. Larger numbers recorded only in mid and late August (sixty 14th, sixty-five 20th, eighty 24th), in September (fifty 4th and 21st) and in late November (fifty 26th). (Foula:

- generally fewer than six present, but eleven August 22nd, and up to thirty 31st).
- SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*. One August 9th and September 8th. (Foula: one September 1st).
- GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*. Odd birds on eight days between August 4th and 29th. (Foula: one August 11th and 22nd).
- KNOT *Calidris canutus*. Four July 18th. Usually present August 10th to September 10th, with peak numbers thirty-five 20th and forty 24th. Single birds September 20th and 25th. (Foula: four on August 14th, building up to thirty-three 18th and one more on the 20th. Fewer than ten after the 24th).
- PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*. First arrived August 10th, and over twenty by 15th. Fewer than this until early November, but over thirty November 2nd, and up to thirty-five later in the month; about fifty by December 3rd. (Foula: single birds August 2nd, 3rd, and 10th, three 24th, and one present later).
- DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*. First appeared July 6th, and up to seven (21st) later in the month. A few in early August but the main passage began about 19th (fifteen), over twenty by the 25th. Fewer until September 11th (twenty-four), and then only stragglers to November 6th. (Foula: frequently recorded after August 4th, but never more than four.)
- SANDERLING *Crocethia alba*. First seen July 12th, and usually present until the last record, September 18th. Peak numbers: eleven July 20th, eight August 18th, and ten 24th. (Foula: single birds seen frequently August 16th to 25th and from September 4th).
- RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*. One July 13th-14th, one 17th. One August 19th-20th, another 27th to September 3rd, two 4th to 8th. (Foula: one August 15th).
- COMMON GULL *Larus canus*. Usually present from July to December, but the main passage in August: 210-250 9th-10th; 550-700 14th-15th. A few moderate arrivals later: 160 September 25th, 120 October 12th, 100 November 19th. (Foula: up to six usually present, and up to thirty (August 15th) occasionally).
- GLAUCCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*. One October 27th-28th, November 2nd-3rd, and up to ten (17th) later in November; one until December 2nd.
- ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides*. Singly October 24th, 27th-28th, November 28th, and December 5th.
- BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*. Seen most days in July-October with maxima thirty July 12th, thirteen August 8th. Odd birds in mid-November and one December 17th. (Foula:

eight records of single birds up to August 26th, and ten or twelve September 5th).

LITTLE AUK *Plautus alle*. First recorded November 1st, and many offshore in late November and early December.

STOCK DOVE *Columba aenas*. One between November 4th and 12th.

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*. Parties totalling ten birds were still seen coming in from the east at Bunes on the morning of November 12th, and passage was suspected on the 22nd (12) and 27th (15). Twenty-five on December 4th included ten flying along the coast at North Haven, almost certainly immigrants.

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*. One July 5th and 8th, October 6th and 7th. One or two present October 13th to 21st, and two 27th. November saw the heaviest passage recorded for many years. The first one appeared on 11th and there were five by the 16th, about thirty 18th. Most of these died or were shot in the next ten days, but at least one survived until February 1960. T. Henderson informs us that there were unusual numbers in the south part of Shetland in late November.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*. Two September 1st to 3rd, one 4th; one 11th and two 12th. (Foula: one August 20th, another September 1st to 5th).

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*. One on several occasions between October 7th and 20th, with another 15th. One November 7th and between 19th and 24th.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*. Records of single birds between July 20th and 24th. August 14th, September 2nd-3rd, October 13th to 19th; two November 13th, one 20th and 26th.

SWIFT *Apus apus*. Two main periods of movement, between July 17th and 29th (twenty-two 20th, twenty-five 22nd) and between August 16th and 23rd (seventeen 16th, twenty-one 19th). Only one or two birds occasionally outside these periods; the last were two September 11th. (Foula: two, perhaps four, August 15th-16th, four 19th).

SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella cinerea*. One trapped November 21st, another seen at very close range on the 23rd. Both showed the characteristics of the eastern form *C. c. longipennis*.

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*. (Foula: one closely observed on August 6th).

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*. A small arrival September 23rd and more on 24th. Most of the local birds had gone by mid-November, but an immigration began on 16th (thirty) and there was a gradual increase to over ninety by the 24th. More wintered than in recent years.



- SHORELARK *Eremophila alpestris*. One October 8th to 12th, another November 12th.
- SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*. Four records of one or two birds in late July; one August 6th and 9th, two 17th, five 18th; two September 3rd, three 4th, one 5th and 13th; one October 2nd and 10th to 12th. (Foula: one August 21st and 22nd).
- HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*. Five records of one or two birds in July, up to the 25th, but none later in the year.
- SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*. One between July 18th and 22nd. (Foula: one September 2nd).
- RAVEN *Corvus corax*. A flock of seventeen September 13th must have included some immigrants.
- CARRION and HOODED CROW *Corvus corone*. A Carrion Crow (or perhaps a black-plumaged hybrid) joined the local Hoodies September 3rd and was seen again 6th; a "normal" dark-shafted hybrid was present September 7th to at least October 17th.
- ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*. One October 13th to 17th, three 22nd and up to four daily in late October; up to five (2nd) in early November, and one or two frequently for the rest of the year, with four December 4th and 15th.
- JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*. One October 13th to 22nd, one December 4th.
- GREAT TIT *Parus major*. One at the North Light October 13th and 14th, and one (probably same) caught at the Haa 15th. This bird, which showed the characteristics of the typical form, stayed until the end of March 1960.
- TREE CREEPER *Certhia familiaris*. One trapped October 17th and seen next day; a well-marked bird of the typical form. The only previous records were in December 1906 and April 1913.
- MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*. Two October 14th-15th, one 24th-25th.
- FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*. A very early record, August 13th-15th, and another 30th. Seen on seven days in September (three 6th) and daily from October 1st. The first sizeable arrival was fifty October 12th, followed by 300 14th, 300 20th, 500 27th, 100 November 7th, 150 18th increasing to 300 21st. Fewer than fifty in December until an arrival of seventy 27th. (Foula: one early bird on August 21st).
- SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelus*. Apart from one July 7th the first bird arrived September 3rd. Another was seen 11th, and then present daily from the 24th, with ten by 26th. Unusually large numbers in October, peaking at seventy 5th and fifty 14th and 18th, about twenty until 30th. Seen most days in November but never more than five (20th), and odd records early December. (Foula: one August 8th).

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*. None recorded until a sudden arrival of 150 on September 24th. Numerous throughout October, with arrivals seventy 1st, a thousand 5th, a thousand 11th, over three thousand 14th, twelve hundred again by 21st, four hundred 27th and two hundred 30th. In November the peak figures were 250 2nd, 150 10th, 200 18th increasing to 300 21st. Numbers then fell away and there were no more than forty during December. All the large arrivals concerned birds of the typical form, but there were some Icelandic birds *T. i. coburni* in the last two falls of October, and the arrival of November 10th was entirely of Icelandic origin.

**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus*. Two September 26th, three October 5th, one of most days to the 16th, with four 14th; one 25th.

**BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula*. No definite arrival until October 1st (seven). There were peaks of one hundred 5th, 150 13th rising to 300 14th, and 250 30th. November falls were smaller than in recent years, with 100 2nd, and fifty 16th rising to 150 18th. A further peak of 100 occurred December 3rd, and numbers dropped away to about thirty at the end of the year.

**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Small arrivals, apparently of Shetland birds, occurred on August 8th, 12th, 14th, and 22nd. A further increase on 24th included the first larger Wheatears of the Icelandic type, and these occurred in further small falls on August 26th, 27th, and 30th. The first true Greenland Wheatears *Oe. oe. leucorrhoea* arrived in a moderate fall on September 7th. After this, numbers were exceptionally low until an arrival of about fifty on the 19th, doubling next day, and increasing spectacularly to over 1000 (62 trapped, nearly all *leucorrhoea*) on the 21st. Most of these were gone by the 22nd, and totals slowly decreased through October until continuous records ceased on November 3rd. One was seen November 13th, one 17th, and a different bird 18th and 19th, the latest record ever made here. (Foula: no significant falls recorded until September 5th and 6th, when there were "large numbers of birds obviously of the Greenland race"; it is interesting to note that this fall preceded the one at Fair Isle by one or two days).

**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra*. One July 22nd; one August 11th, four 14th and over twelve 15th, then fewer until twelve 21st. Up to four on most days in late August and early September, until the 12th; one September 17th-21st, two 25th, three 26th; then one or two most days until October 27th, with three 5th. (Foula: single birds on most dates between August 14th and 29th, with two 19th, four 20th, and three 26th).

**REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. Single birds September

- 6th, 8th, and 21st; four 25th, five 26th, up to three until the 30th. Six October 1st, fewer to the 5th (ten). These left on the 7th and only one or two seen until 14th. Two or three October 17th to 19th, two 26th, and one November 3rd.
- BLUETHROAT *Cyanosylvia svecica*. Very scarce. A female September 16th to 23rd, with another 18th; a male 25th-26th. Single birds October 5th, 9th, and 15th.
- ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*. Single birds August 10th, 21st, September 8th. Up to three birds present September 25th to October 3rd, twenty-five 4th, fifty 5th to 11th. The biggest fall in the observatory's history began with a slight increase 12th, then over 200 13th, and over 400 14th. Numbers then gradually fell away until only two were seen 29th, but there were further small arrivals of ten to twenty on October 30th, November 22nd. At least four birds remained through the winter.
- GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*. One October 15th.
- REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. One August 22nd.
- SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. One September 10th.
- ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*. Three individuals arrived between August 12th and 14th, and two more between 21st and 23rd. The last of these was seen 29th.
- BOOTED WARBLER *Hippolais caligata*. One trapped August 29th and seen again 31st. The second record for Fair Isle and Britain.
- BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*. Four or five different birds between September 5th and 12th, one 25th, two 28th, and three 30th. Seen daily October 1st to 20th, with maxima five 2nd and 3rd, ten 13th; odd birds later in the month, with four 31st. Up to three on ten days of November to the 27th.
- BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria*. Unusually numerous. Recorded on most days from August 19th to September 29th, with maxima of six August 21st, five 30th, and frequently up to three later. Perhaps thirty individuals in all. (Foula: about six individuals seen between August 20th and September 5th; four present on the 3rd).
- GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*. One July 9th. One August 12th, three 15th, and then seen most days to October 8th, with peaks of six August 26th and 29th, eight September 1st, five 4th and 26th. (Foula: several records of single birds from three 6th).
- WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*. Single birds August 11th, LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*. One August 20th, two September 14th. (Foula: one September 6th).
- WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*. One July 31st to August 2nd. Small numbers on most days August 9th to

- October 4th, maxima eight August 23rd and 30th (rising to ten 31st), ten September 15th to 17th. (Foula: two August 11th and one most days to 25th, with six 22nd; one September 3rd onwards).
- CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*. A very worn bird trapped July 21st was recaptured in heavy moult on September 8th. The first autumn migrant appeared September 11th, two next day, and there were one or two on most days later in the month. In October, three 2nd increasing to eight 5th, smaller numbers to fifteen 13th-14th, a gradual decrease to 24th. One 29th to 31st, November 2nd. Several of the October birds were of the "Northern" races, *Ph. c. abietinus/tristis*.
- WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. Single birds July 30th-31st, August 3rd, 13th, and 30th.
- ARCTIC WARBLER *Phylloscopus borealis*. Single birds trapped on September 1st, 8th, and 17th.
- YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*. Singly September 26th, October 2nd to 5th, 12th, and 14th.
- GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*. One August 30th one or two September 1st to 3rd and 8th-9th. Seen most days September 25th to November 22nd, with arrivals of ten September 26th, twenty-five October 4th increasing to at least 300 next day. The great majority of these died on the island though there was probably some emigration about October 12th-14th; less than ten remained at the end of the month. Five November 5th and three 22nd were probably newcomers. The October arrival was by far the biggest recorded since the war.
- SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*. Very scarce. One September 11th, one October 4th to 7th, two 8th, one 9th and 14th. (Foula: one August 11th and September 2nd).
- PIED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa hypoleuca*. Usually present August 10th to October 6th, but maxima only four August 21st, eight 30th, four September 13th. (Foula: two August 20th and one 22nd, September 7th).
- RED-BREADED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa parva*. One September 12th and 13th, 17th and 25th; four 26th, one to 30th. One October 2nd, two 3rd, one 6th, 19th, and 20th.
- HEDGE SPARROW *Prunella modularis*. First seen October 2nd, one on several days to 12th; twelve 13th, five 14th, and one or two most days to 25th. One November 12th and 16th-17th. (Foula: one August 6th).
- MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*. No big falls, but moderate arrivals August 25th-27th and 30th-31st, September 7th, 12th, and 19th-20th, small increases October 25th and November 20th. A few present until December 19th (perhaps later). (Foula: some increase noted in the last few days of August).

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*. Very scarce. One September 8th to 13th, 26th, two 28th, one 29th. In October, up to three (13th) on twelve days to the 24th.

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaezeelandiae*. Three together October 8th.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*. One July 14th. Seen on most days August 8th to October 11th, with main arrivals of twenty August 14th, twenty-five 23rd increasing to seventy 26th, thirty-five September 7th increasing to forty-five next day. Less than ten after September 13th, single birds in October. Late straggler(s) October 23rd and 26th-28th. (Foula: first seen August 7th, up to thirty later in the period of observation).

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*. One October 2nd and 4th-6th. (Foula: Three August 9th, two 10th, one 11th).

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*. Single Blue-headed Wagtails *M. f. flava* September 24th, and (perhaps same bird) 27th to October 9th. Others not racially determined on September 14th and 16th, October 15th. (Foula: birds of unknown race on August 5th and September 5th).

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*. Two or three October 31st, one to November 2nd; two 4th, one to 6th; one 10th-11th, 13th, and 18th.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*. One October 13th, joined by another 18th, one to 20th.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius cristatus*. A juvenile September 11th.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*. A slight increase October 13th, great numbers at the lighthouses during the following night, and many more on the island 14th. Another noticeable fall 29th, but no observed increases later.

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*. More than for many years. One October 12th, eleven 13th, five 15th, four 17th, one 18th, twelve 19th; one 21st and 23rd, two 27th and 29th, six 31st. One or two most days November 2nd to 10th, one 22nd to 25th, and one December 9th.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*. One June 26th and two 27th to 29th. Two arrived October 1st; there were seven by 5th and thirty 6th. Figures fluctuated in the next two weeks but it is not clear if there were any further significant arrivals; thirty were still present 19th, but in the rest of the month no more than three. Seen most days in November with 15-20 6th and 7th, and a further wave peaking at ten 26th. Three records in December; one bird 15th, two 20th, and three 24th.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*. Five July 3rd and one 23rd. (Foula: one August 6th, three 9th, one 10th and 11th).

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*. Probably a small increase in the

last three days of August. The local birds began to decrease in early October, declining from about 250 to 100 on the 5th, and down to fifty by the end of the month. The last birds were seen November 23rd.

**REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea*. An invasion of Greenland Redpolls *C. f. rostrata* began with two August 26th and there were at least five by 31st, decreasing to two September 5th. A second arrival began with four 9th and increased to sixteen 13th, over twenty 16th; and after a decline there were again ten by 23rd and fifteen 25th, with fewer to the end of the month. Seventeen more appeared October 1st, over twenty 2nd and 3rd, and up to twelve were present until the 19th, up to five until November 2nd. A small irruption of Mealy Redpolls *C. f. flammea* began with two November 7th, and up to eight (21st) were seen during the next two weeks, but none later. (Foula: apart from a dubious record of three August 10th, the first was a single bird August 27th; there were five 28th, and one or two until September 3rd).

**BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*. A female October 22nd to 30th, two November 6th and one 7th. A male December 10th. All were of the Northern (typical) form.

**SCARLET GROSBEAK** *Carpodacus erythrinus*. Two August 29th and 30th, four 31st, two remaining September 1st and 2nd. Another September 7th to 10th, and one 15th to 25th. (Foula: one September 2nd to 5th, another 5th and 6th).

**CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra*. One July 12th and 13th, three next day, and seven by 16th. Two July 19th, ten 20th, fifty 21st, and up to 30 daily till end of month. Forty-one August 1st, then none until 9th, but up to seven on most days later in the month. Up to four on six days of September and one October 2nd to 8th. (Foula: fifteen August 3rd-4th and two 5th; one 11th, and at least one or two frequently until the 29th. Two September 2nd-4th, four 5th and 6th).

**TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL** *Loxia leucoptera*. (Foula: one immature August 21st).

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs*. Small numbers from September 25th. Thirty-five by October 2nd, and fifty 5th, then gradually decreasing to only odd birds by last week of October, with a further arrival of fifteen 29th. One or two on nine days in November, one December 12th.

**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla*. Six September 25th and a few later in the month. Nine October 1st increasing to fifteen 2nd and fifty 5th; numbers then fell away until a fall of eighty-five 15th, a hundred 16th-17th, 250 18th, followed by a gradual decrease to odd birds at the end of October. In November, up to five (12th) on most days to the 22nd. One December 11th and 14th.

**CORN BUNTING** *Emberiza calandra*. Thirteen October 22nd-

23rd, seven 24th, two November 4th, one 7th, 10th, 14th, two 20th and 21st.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*. First seen October 10th, five by 15th, nine by 18th and fifteen 20th, a few daily until November 4th. Odd birds in following ten days, then four 18th increasing to six 21st-22nd, one or two till December 5th.

RUSTIC BUNTING *Emberiza rustica*. One seen by James A. Stout October 15th.

LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla*. One trapped October 17th, another seen 19th to 27th.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*. Seen daily from September 25th to October 27th. One or two at first, increasing to six October 2nd, seventeen 5th to 7th, and after a decrease to twelve or more 18th; still ten 25th. Single (different) birds November 19th, 21st, and 28th.

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*. One August 27th, five 30th, ten 31st, increasing to 26 by September 4th; a few daily to 17th. Four reappeared September 23rd, and up to three most days to 30th; twelve October 1st, seventeen 2nd, and smaller numbers present until 27th. In November, two 1st, one 2nd and 6th; two 16th, three 18th and 20th, one 30th and December 3rd (same bird). The late November birds were all of a very pale sandy colour, and perhaps of eastern origin. (Foula: three or four August 27th, two 28th, one 29th; eight 31st, about thirty-five September 1st, probably about fifty on the island by 6th).

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*. First seen September 12th, and usually present for rest of year. Peak numbers were twenty-five September 16th, forty-five 20th and October 5th, 150 October 8th, 170 29th and 200 31st; 600 November 3rd, 800 7th, and after a decrease 300 16th increasing to 21st. About 100 present through December.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*. One October 19th, and 29th to November 4th.

## 56. Recent Recoveries of Birds Marked at Fair Isle

The following reports were received during 1959:

FULMAR. AT 59433, an adult ringed on July 27th 1958, was caught on a fishing-vessel 12 miles E. of Scarborough, Yorks, on February 22nd 1959; and AT 61745, a chick of August 8th 1958, was killed at Fuenterrabia (Guipzcoa), Spain about October 10th 1958.

SHAG. Two 1958 and two 1959 chicks were recorded from Shetland (Trondra, Burra Isle, and two in Yell). Two other 1959

young were in Scotland during the autumn, 1008175 at Kyle lighthouse (Inverness) on October 14th, and 1008495 at Helmsdale (Sutherland) on November 19th. A chick ringed on June 30th 1958, 520756, was found in a fishing-net near Maasholm, Kappeln, off the Baltic shore of Schleswig-Holstein in North Germany, on March 24th 1959. This is apparently an area from which Shags are seldom recorded. Finally, a chick of June 15th 1959, 1008140, was found at Rekefjord (Rogaland) in south-west Norway on October 10th.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL.** 412662, a young bird ringed on the Sheep Craig on July 9th 1959, was caught on a fishing-boat about 25 miles N.W. of Loch Inchard (Sutherland) about December 14th 1959.

**RAZORBILL.** Four of the 45 Razorbills marked in 1959 had already been recovered abroad by the end of the year. AT 64119, a chick marked on July 1st, was shot near Faerder lighthouse in Oslofjord, Norway, on September 25th; AT 64113 and AT 64314; young ringed on July 1st and 8th, were both shot near Haugesund (Rogaland) during the first week of October; and AT 64408, a chick of July 11th, was caught at Santurce, near Baracaldo, (Vizcaya) Spain, on November 23rd.

**GUILLEMOT.** Three 1959 chicks, all ringed at Wester Lothar on July 8th 1959, were killed in Norway during the autumn. AT 64269 was at Søgne, near Kristiansund on October 3rd; AT 64286 was off Risør (Aust-Agder) on October 9th (these two places are in the Skagerrak); and AT 64261 was in Inner Boknfjord (Rogaland) on the North Sea coast on November 21st.

**PUFFIN.** Two chicks ringed on successive days in 1958 were reported from widely separated areas in their first winter. AT 55103, ringed July 10th, was caught at Plaistow (Essex) about January 14th 1959. AT 55204, marked on July 11th, was shot at Sardoq, Julianehab district, in S.W. Greenland, on November 24th 1958. The latter seems to be the first British auk to be recovered in the enormous winter sea-bird concentration in these waters.

**SONG THRUSH.** One ringed, V76126, during the great arrival of March 31st 1958, was shot at Marcay, near Poitiers (Vienne), France, on January 1st 1959.

**REDWING.** Two recoveries both concerned birds of the Iceland form. S87051 was ringed as first-winter on October 29th 1956 and found injured at Castlebar (Co. Mayo) Eire on December 29th 1959. S87721 was marked as adult on November 8th 1957 and killed at Queyrac (Gironde) France on November 1st 1959.

**BLACKBIRD.** Twenty-three recoveries. Seven of these were in or near the presumed breeding-area: W 14848, ringed as



adult May 2nd 1956, found dead at Idland, Gjesdal (Rogaland) Norway on April 11th 1959; R 49488, a first-summer bird of March 17th 1959, found at Kristiansund (More og Romsdal) Norway on May 5th 1959; S 87901, first-summer capture on March 29th 1958, found dead at Skernine, (Fyn) Denmark, on June 30th 1959; V 76008, ringed as first-winter on March 31st 1958 and shot near Karlskrona (Blekinge) Sweden about September 11th 1959; V 76410, first-summer bird of April 19th 1958, shot at Kimstad (Ostergotland) Sweden about July 15th 1959; R 49379, another first-year bird ringed November 23rd 1958 and killed by a cat at Bergstena, nr. Alingsas (Alvsborg) Sweden on April 15th 1959; and S 87798, first-winter of November 14th 1957, killed by striking a window at Pihlajalahti, Saaminki (Mikkeli) Finland on April 14th 1959. The latter was the most easterly recovery of any Blackbird marked in Britain.

Eleven more birds were reported from the presumed winter areas: three caught in late November 1958, R 49366, R 49359, and R 49391, were recovered early in 1959 in Banffshire, Orkney, and Aberdeenshire; two others, R 78490 and R 78860, caught during the autumn of 1959, were in the Isle of Lewis and Morayshire in November. The remaining six had been ringed a year or more before they were recovered: three of these were in the normal winter area in western Ireland (S 87659, V 76347, and R 20243) but V 76389 was at Thurleigh, Bedfordshire in January 1959 (another bird from the abnormal arrivals of March-April 1958); S 87284, ringed November 18th 1957, was near Oldenburg (Holstein) Germany on January 16th 1959, and R 49389, ringed November 23rd 1958, was caught at Haneberg, near Sokndal, Egersund, in south-west Norway on December 11th 1959.

Of the remaining Blackbird recoveries, four were in western Norway at mid-autumn dates; they could have been already on passage. Three of them, R 49395, R 49450, and R 49513, had been ringed in autumn 1958 or spring 1959 and were reported in the following autumn; the other was a long-delayed return of a first-winter bird, SP 756, trapped at Fair Isle on October 22nd 1950 and caught at Indre Aure (Nordmore) Norway in "autumn 1956."

The last Blackbird return was the most curious. R 78333 was a first-winter bird ringed on October 14th 1959 and recaptured at Kvingo, near Masfjorden (Hordaland) Norway only two days later. There had been a large fall of Scandinavian birds at Fair Isle in the early hours of the 14th, and presumably this bird stayed no more than a day on the west side of the North Sea before returning home!

WHEATEAR. F 21500, ringed as a first-winter bird on August 29th 1958, was found dead at Bandol (Var) on the Mediterranean coast of France on April 12th 1959. This was our

first recovery of the species at any distance from the western seaboard of Europe. C 47616, another first-winter bird ringed August 27th 1956, was found dying at Weisdale, Shetland presumably in its nesting-ground, about July 22nd 1959.

BLUETHROAT. K 81795, a first-summer female ringed May 24th 1959 was found dying on the sea-front at Ostende, Belgium (600 miles S.S.E.) only four days later. This recovery was discussed in the *Bull.* Vol. 4, No 4.

MEADOW PIPIT. A bird caught on September 3rd 1958 and ringed F 21628 was shot at Seville, Spain, about November 13th.

STARLING. Five local-born birds were reported. V 76712 was at Shapinsay, Orkney, in its first January, and three others, S 87214, S 87294, and S 87893, were recovered in their second winters at Lybster (Caithness), Shapinsay, and Sandwick (Shetland); W 14959, ringed as a juvenile on June 20th 1956, was caught exhausted on a ship about twenty miles south of Iceland at the end of February 1958; perhaps it boarded the ship near Fair Isle.

## 57. Recaptures of Local Birds at Fair Isle in 1959

SHAG. Three breeding adults of 1958 were recaptured at the same nest-sites in 1959.

PURPLE SANDPIPER. A bird trapped on December 7th 1958 was still on the island on May 7th 1959.

PUFFIN. Five adults ringed at the nest in June and July 1957 were handled again in the summer of 1959. Two of them had also been caught in 1958.

TYSTIE. There were three recaptures of birds ringed at the South Haven colony. An adult of July 1955 was found dead in June 1959, another marked in June 1956 was breeding in the same place in 1958 and 1959, and a chick of 1954 was nesting at its birthplace in its fifth year.

WREN. Juveniles of 1955 and 1957 were retrapped in June 1959.

WHEATEAR. Six birds from earlier years were recaptured: a chick and a juvenile of 1954 (the latter had also been handled in 1955), an adult and a juvenile of 1956, an adult of 1957, and a chick of 1958.

MEADOW PIPIT. Three juveniles of July and August 1956, and two chicks and five juveniles of 1958, were caught again during the 1959 breeding-season.

ROCK PIPIT. The oldest recaptures were three juveniles of 1954, one of which had been handled in 1955, 1956, and 1958. A single juvenile of 1956, three from 1957, and two from 1958 were also taken.

STARLING. Forty-six recaptures from earlier years. The oldest were an adult of September 1951 and a "full-grown" of the following November. An adult of September 1953 had been taken in every year up to 1959. The other retraps were three juveniles of 1954, two of 1955, three adults and eight juveniles of 1956, four of each from 1957, and six adults, thirteen juveniles from 1958.

TWITE. The five retraps included one six-year old, a juvenile of July 1953. The others were an adult and a first-winter bird of 1956, a juvenile and an autumn "full-grown" from 1958.

HOUSE SPARROW. The senior bird among twenty-five retraps had been ringed as an adult in May 1952, and was therefore at least eight years old. Another had been marked "full-grown" in October 1953. Two juveniles of 1956, three of 1957, four adults and ten juveniles of 1958 were also caught.

## 58. Bird Notes from Haroldswick, Unst, Autumn 1959

MAGNUS SINCLAIR

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Colymbus immer*. One inshore, December 12th and 16th.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus stellatus*. The last seen were two in flight, September 13th.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*. The first autumn arrivals were five September 26th.

WHOOPEE SWAN *Cygnus cygnus*. Heard on the night of October 24th, and five seen next day.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*. One on September 14th.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*. One September 14th and 15th.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*. Two July 17th. Single birds August 12th, 22nd to 25th, and 31st. Two September 1st, three next day, and one 16th, 22nd, 30th. One October 7th and two November 11th.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*. One October 10th.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*. Most had left by mid-August; but three seen 24th, and two at Skaw September 13th. Four appeared on October 11th, and a single bird December 10th and 11th.

SANDERLING *Crocethia alba*. Six at Norwick on September 3rd.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*. One August 12th and 14th.

BONXIE *Catharacta skua*. Three still at Saxa Vord breeding-grounds on October 10th. The last seen was one flying west on 25th.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*. An immature noted November 30th, and what was probably the same bird remained throughout December.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna macrura*. Last of breeding birds seen August 24th. In September two passed on 9th and 18th, one 21st, and two 26th. Single birds seen October 1st and 25th, and one November 1st was my first November record.

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbarius*. Occurred singly on October 10th to 12th and November 23rd.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*. One July 17th, September 1st and 12th.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*. One reported from Norwick in the third week of August.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*. One July 4th, four 7th to 9th and 23rd-24th. Single birds August 2nd, 13th, and 24th; a straggler September 30th.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*. One October 20th and 22nd, my first autumn record.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*. One arrived October 20th, and three on 24th. These birds stayed in different areas and all four seen November 3rd. One to three seen daily through November, but all except one disappeared with the severe S.E. gales on December 6th-8th. The remaining bird wintered at Haroldswick.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*. A flock of seven October 8th, and small numbers in the fourth week of October, also between November 6th and 9th.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*. One September 16th, and a small flock 26th. Quite common from October 4th to end of month, the largest numbers being on the 6th, 8th to 12th, and 20th. Most numerous in the first half November. A single bird noted on December 15th and 19th.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Increases on August 12th and September 22nd. In October, two 3rd and odd birds from 19th to end of month. The last were two November 1st.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*. One at Skaw on September 13th.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. Several between October 21st and 25th.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*. One October 24th to 26th.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*. Noted on October 22nd and 31st, November 1st and 11th.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*. Two females at Skaw on September 13th, and a late bird at Haroldswick November 22nd.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*. One September 13th.

WILLOW WARBLER/CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus trochilus/colly-*

- bita*. A Willow identified September 21st; two leaf-warblers October 10th, and a late-bird, almost certainly Chiffchaff, November 23rd-24th.
- GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*. One September 26th. Very numerous October 12th to 17th, feeding amongst potato haulms, and seen up to 22nd. (Two were on-top of Saxa Vord hill on 16th). A single bird November 20th.
- PIED/WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*. Very numerous this autumn, after breeding. The last Pied *M. a. yarrelli* was a male August 24th and 25th. Many birds were present till mid-September, and three at Baltasound October 2nd.
- YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*. One of undetermined race seen on the Ward of Norwick on September 6th.
- SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*. One November 3rd and 25th.
- TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*. An albino seen from November 10th to 20th in a flock of 200-300 birds.
- REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*. Many more than usual this autumn. Up to six with a flock of Twites on September 1st and 2nd and again 10th and 11th. More present in the first week of October. Occurred again from November 3rd to 7th, and about a score seen from 10th to 12th, a few in the fourth week also. Three noted December 15th. (Judging from the arrivals at Fair Isle, the September and October birds would be mainly Greenlanders *C. f. rostrata*, and the later ones mainly Mealies *C. f. flammea*.—Ed.).
- CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*. A juvenile August 11th. Two September 3rd and 4th and three 7th.
- CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*. Seen in the first week of October, and again on the 20th.
- BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*. One October 1st.
- SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*. Appeared in the last week of September. Small flocks early October, but increasing between the 20th and the end of the month. Present throughout November and December, with peak numbers November 5th-6th and 19th, December 3rd and 17th.
- TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*. A flock of at least six juveniles and adults at Skaw on September 13th.

## 59. Shetland Bird Notes, June 1960

L. S. V. & U. M. VENABLES

- TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*. A female with six chicks on the Loch of Hillwell, Dunrossness, in 1952 was the first breeding record for Shetland. In July 1957 R. F. Dickens found a female with two chicks on Loch Kirkigarth, Walls. In May 1958 we saw a pair and two drakes on the Loch of Collaster,

Sandness, where in July of the following year M. Sanderson saw six males, six females and three broods of young. On this loch in June 1960 we saw six males and two females, and J. Peterson found pairs near Loch Kirkigarth.

This is one of the species we suggested (*Birds and Mammals of Shetland* 1955) might soon colonise Shetland.

**MUTE SWAN** *Cygnus olor*. Four arrived on Loch Spiggie in early June 1960. These kept in two pairs, one of which left in a few days but the other pair was still present on 3rd July and would take bread from the hand. Orkney in the nearest Mute Swan locality.

**COMMON PARTRIDGE** *Perdix perdix*. On 9th June Major R. D. Winton of Kergord told us that he had 50 eggs under hens. Previous attempts to establish this species have all failed.

**PHEASANT** *Phasianus colchicus*. In 1959 Major R. D. Winton introduced two males, four females and 30 eggs, of which 15 hatched successfully under hens. On 9th June 1960 he told us that he knew of two females on eggs in the Kergord Plantations, and two further nests that had been robbed by vermin. Previous introductions have never established themselves permanently.

**COOT** *Fulica atra*. None seen on Loch Hillwell in June 1960. This was the last breeding place so the species now seems to be extinct in Shetland. Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* seem rapidly to be approaching the same fate.

**LAPWING** *Vanellus vanellus* and **CURLEW** *Numenius arquata*. Both have conspicuously increased in Dunrossness since we left in 1953.

**REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus*. Previously a very rare and occasional breeder in Dunrossness; in fact we have no definite record since June 1939. However two to three pairs nested there in 1957, 1959 and 1960.

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Larus ridibundus*. The colony between Lochs Spiggie and Brow was the largest and perhaps oldest in Shetland and had increased to about 260 pairs by 1958. In 1959 there were only about 45 pairs, and in 1960 about 25-30 pairs. The local inhabitants report greatly increased predation by Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* and the larger gulls over recent years but as this is largely nest- and juvenile-predation it could hardly, by itself, account for the reduction of over 200 pairs in one year.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo*. First recorded breeding in 1901. The percentage of Common to Arctic Terns *Sterna macrura* is still increasing; quite markedly so over recent years in Dunrossness and the Westside.

**WOOD PIGEON** *Columba palumbus*. Small numbers still nest in Kergord Plantations where breeding began about 1939-40.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*. Two flying among the sheds near the kippering kiln at Scalloway on 20th June. This species nests occasionally in Shetland. In fact there was a nest at Tingwall near Scalloway in 1954.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*. The rookery begun at Kergord Plantations in 1952 (the only one in Shetland) was still occupied in 1960 in spite of occasional control measures.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus ericetorum*. The last definite nest was at Kergord in 1958. None was seen at Kergord or Lerwick in 1959 or 1960, and in the latter year George Waterston saw none on a June visit to the North Isles. This small Shetland breeding population, established some 50-60 years ago, seems to be extinct.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. Singing males (one in each case) at suitable nesting localities: Tresta 7th June (not subsequently), Mill Burn of Scousburgh 15th and 21st June (query intervening dates) and Loch of Hillwell 16th June. This species breeds in Orkney but so far no nest has been found in Shetland.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*. We visited Tresta four times between 7th and 14th June and each time a Garden Warbler was singing there. It was in this bush- and tree-filled garden that we found an old warbler's nest in the autumn of 1950 which G. Charteris identified as that of either Garden Warbler or Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*: *Birds and Mammals of Shetland* 6. 154. There is no reliable breeding record for Shetland and previously we had heard the song only once (1946) in nine years though there have been three song records since 1955.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrelli*. A male at Kergord Mill Burn on 7th and 9th June. Very rarely recorded for Shetland, in fact this is the first we have seen there in spite of nine years' residence and many shorter visits.

## 60. Various Records from Shetland

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus*. Two at the Bay of Scousbrough on October 11th 1959, and probably for a few days previously (T. Henderson).

SNOWY OWL *Nyctea scandiaca*. One on the Quendale Links, Dunrossness, in December 1959 (W. Horne). The last record for the parish was in January 1952.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*. There was a quite exceptional arrival of this species in Shetland in October 1959. Apart from the bird that arrived in Fair Isle on October 13th, and remained there until the end of March 1960, we have heard of the following records: at least eight at Halligarth and Balta-

sound, Unst, in late October, two of which were still at Baltasound in early March (S. T. Saxby); one at Haroldswick, Unst, October 20th, and three 24th, several of which remained throughout November, and one of which survived until at least the end of March 1960 (M. Sinclair); two on Fetlar October 16th and others, at least six, until the end of the month (L. Brown in *Scottish Birds*); two at Voe on December 3rd (Mrs D. Adie in *S.B.*); at least three in Lerwick in late October, which stayed through the winter (J. Peterson and T. Henderson). T. Henderson also heard of three birds wintering at Hillswick. The last winter in which more than odd birds are known to have remained in Shetland seems to have been in 1932-33.

## 61. Migration on North Ronaldshay, Orkney, in August 1959

P. J. B. SLATER

The writer was present on North Ronaldshay, the most northerly island in the Orkneys, from 21st to 26th August 1959. The island is 4 miles long and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  broad and is separated from Sanday, its nearest neighbour, by a 2 mile channel. Fair Isle lies 20 miles to the North East.

The visit was an attempt to see whether any drift migrants of note occur there and to compare the birds seen with those which appeared on Fair Isle during the same period. Difficulties were experienced because the island is very highly cultivated and is too large to be covered in one day. In the centre of the island there is, however, a large sheltered clump of bushes and it was in this that most of the migrants were seen. The wind was South-East at the beginning of the period with mist on 21st and 22nd and rain on 24th and 25th.

On 21st there were 3 Willow and 3 Garden Warblers, 1 Barred Warbler and 1 Pied Flycatcher present and a single Swift was also recorded. All these birds left the following day when the mist lifted and the neighbouring islands became visible. There was another Pied Flycatcher on 22nd and single Whinchats on 22nd and 23rd when Wheatears reached a maximum also. There was another Swift on 23rd.

Wader numbers were very large compared with Fair Isle which is undoubtedly due to the more suitable coastline. Over a hundred Ringed Plover, Dunlin and Sanderling were seen and about half that number of Turnstone and Knot. Golden Plover was the most common wader with six or eight hundred on the island. A Purple Sandpiper and a Little Stint were recorded on 22nd.

There are about seven freshwater lochs on the island and



10 Mallard, 16 Shoveler, 3 Teal and 2 Pintail, which were seen on these, may well have been resident. There were also 3 Wigeon on 23rd. A Short Eared Owl on 21st, 2 Merlins on 22nd and 2 Ravens on 23rd and 24th were the only predators of note. No Phalaropes were seen and the islanders say that they have not bred for about three years.

## 62. A Grey Seal Recovery

The first tagged Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus* to be found at Fair Isle was discovered freshly-dead by Jerome Stout of Leogh, on the beach at Hestigeo, on December 31st 1959. It bore a plastic tag inscribed London Zoo 5385, and had been marked on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, in September 1959.

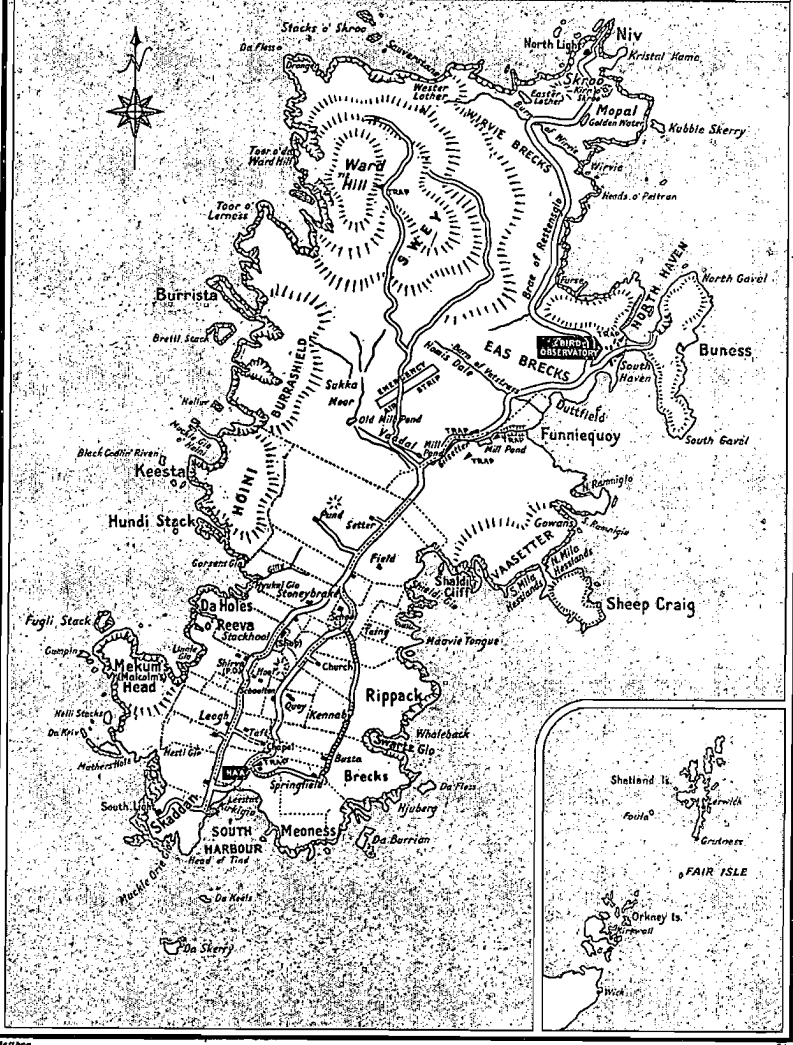
### CORRECTION

In the article on the birds of Handa by H. Dickinson and M. P. Harris, (*antea*, pp. 119-123) the accounts of the Cormorant and the Shag were inadvertently merged. The Cormorant paragraph should have ended with "a few seen daily," and the sentence beginning "A survey round the island..." refers to the Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*.

# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

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

Roads == Bird Trap TRAP Boundaries .....



Mathew

Eda