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Scottish Birds is the quarterly journal for SOC members, and is published in March, June, September and December annually.

Containing original papers relating to ornithology in Scotland, topical articles, bird observations, reports of rare and scarce bird sightings, alongside branch and Club-related news, our members tell us that *Scottish Birds* is one of the key benefits of belonging to the SOC. Its different sections have been developed to meet the wide needs of the birdwatching community, and the publication is renowned for its first-class photography.

An archive of the journal is available on the SOC website, where links can be found to other Club publications, including the *Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme Report* and the *Scottish Bird Report* online.

More about the SOC...

On the one hand, a birdwatching club; Established in 1936, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) is Scotland's bird club with 14 branches around the country and a growing membership of over 3000. Through a programme of talks, outings, conferences and other events, it brings together like-minded individuals with a passion for birds, nature and conservation.

On the other, a network of volunteers across Scotland, gathering vital, impartial information about our wild birds; The data we collect is made available to conservationists, planners and developers, and is used by organisations such as the RSPB, as one of the first points of reference in informed conservation planning.

Club Headquarters can be found at Waterston House, Aberlady, overlooking the scenic local nature reserve. Housed within, is the George Waterston Library, the largest ornithological library in Scotland, and the Donald Watson Gallery - one of the jewels in the Waterston House crown, exhibiting wildlife art all year-round.

Join us...

As well as receiving *Scottish Birds* every quarter, SOC members have access to a programme of talks and outings across Scotland and affiliation to a local branch of the Club. New members will receive a welcome pack on joining, plus a thank you gift if paying their subscription by direct debit.

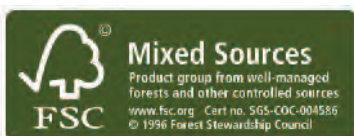
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President's Foreword

At the end of last year, I was delighted to be invited to the launch of *The Birds of Clackmannanshire*. This county atlas was published by the Central Branch of the SOC and supported by *The Birds of Scotland* Fund. Edited by Neil Bielby, Keith Broomfield and John Grainger, this wonderful book is a real advert for citizen science, and exemplifies the contribution that the SOC and its members make towards observing, recording and conserving birds in . Congratulations to all those involved. I hope SOC members who have an interest in the 'wee county' will consider buying a copy at the bargain price of £15.

Another major achievement at the end of last year was the publication of the *Bird Atlas 2007-11*. The official launch, organized by the BTO, took place at the Royal

Plate 1. Chris McInerny, Ladakh, January 2014.
© Ken Shaw

Society in . I was invited to attend to represent the SOC and spent an enjoyable evening in the company of two former Club Presidents, Mark Holling and Chris Waltho. The SOC was a major partner in this important book and all members, and there are many, should be proud of their contribution and achievement to this historical document.

As I write this foreword, we are looking forward to the 2014 Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference, scheduled to take place on 22 March. This year's programme brings together an excellent line-up of speakers to discuss the theme 'Birds and people - a natural relationship?' Huge thanks go to the BTO Scotland team, the North-East Scotland SOC branch and Dr. Jane Reid at the for all their hard work in organizing the event. I hope to see many of you there. If you haven't already booked your place, there may still be time - please contact the BTO directly to check for availability.

Another exciting new venture for the SOC is a joint project with the Isle of May Bird Observatory, where a Young Birders' Training Course is being created sponsoring six young enthusiasts to stay at the observatory for a week to learn ringing and ornithology skills. Please see the announcement in this issue of *Scottish Birds* (page 51) for more details.

From the new to the old. I'd like welcome to the new Moray Branch of the SOC, which was launched last year under the stewardship of Martin Cook. With 60 members already, this Club branch is thriving. Congratulations also to the Dumfries & Galloway branch of SOC, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. A wonderful milestone.

Finally, deep thanks to all SOC volunteers, and an invitation to members to contribute to the Club journal - the Editors will be pleased to receive articles.

Best wishes to all in 2014 and good birding.

Chris McInerny, SOC President



Plate 2. Adult Mediterranean Gull, East Pier, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, January 2010. © Brian D. Henderson

The Mediterranean Gull in Dumfries and Galloway

B.D. Henderson

The Mediterranean Gull is a scarce vagrant in Dumfries and Galloway, mostly seen at coastal locations with fewest records from April to June. Following the first record in 1978, numbers increased during the 1990s and 2000s with a notable upsurge since 2009. The majority of sightings were from the westernmost part of the region especially at Loch Ryan where it is now a regular visitor. Over 60% of all records were of adult birds. Sightings of non-breeding colour-ringed individuals, including first-winter birds, show that the birds originate from European countries bordering the North Sea. Some individuals return to the region on successive years, some staying for extended periods. It is not known to have bred locally.

Introduction

The Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* is an uncommon, though regular, visitor to Scotland where most are observed at large estuaries, more occasionally inland, often with flocks of Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Its rapid range expansion has coincided with cyclic population fluctuation witnessed in the Black Sea population (M. Toms in Wernham *et al.* 2002). This has resulted in a discontinuous breeding distribution now spread across the Caspian, northeast Atlantic, North and Black Sea coasts (Meininger & Bekhus 1990). After breeding, many move to the coasts of the North Sea, and some visit Scotland where there has been an increase in the number of observations, tied in with the breeding range expansion into Western Europe during the second half of the twentieth century (Olsen & Larsson 2003). Since first recorded in Scotland in 1972 it has occurred in most regions, especially on the east coast and in Ayrshire. The Mediterranean Gull is a fairly recent addition to the avifauna list of Dumfries and Galloway, where it is a scarce but increasing vagrant.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse its occurrence in Dumfries and Galloway and compare its status there to the rest of the United Kingdom.

Methods

An extensive literature and Internet search was made of all Mediterranean Gull sightings in Dumfries and Galloway to April 2013. All *Dumfries and Galloway Region Bird Reports* (1985 to present) together with some earlier county reports were searched, as were editions of *Scottish Birds* and *The Birds of Scotland* (Thom 1986, Forrester *et al.* 2007). Internet searches included Birdguides, Rare Bird Alert and the SOC's website. Additional records were obtained from Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Resource Centre (DGERC) and from Birdline Scotland. Local ornithologists, including those who do not or no longer contribute records to the county recorder, and visiting ornithologists and naturalists were contacted for unpublished records. A.D. Watson's handwritten and typescript notes were also searched. Co-ordinators and project leaders for Mediterranean Gull colour-ringing schemes were contacted for details birds seen in Dumfries and Galloway.

Results

Early sightings

The first Mediterranean Gull recorded in Dumfries and Galloway was a first-winter bird at Carlingwark Loch, Castle Douglas on 25 October 1978. The second did not occur until 1986, an adult at Wigtown Bay on 11 February 1986. Another seven years elapsed until the next, again an adult, at Carsethorn on 17 November 1993. The first second-winter bird was at Carsethorn on 10 February 1995, with the first juvenile at Bishop Burn, Loch Ryan on 10 August 2004.

Distribution

Mediterranean Gulls have been seen at 52 locations in Dumfries and Galloway since 1978 (Figure 1). Most sightings (90%) were on the coast. Wigtownshire recorded 84% of all sightings with the Loch Ryan area alone accounting for 75%.

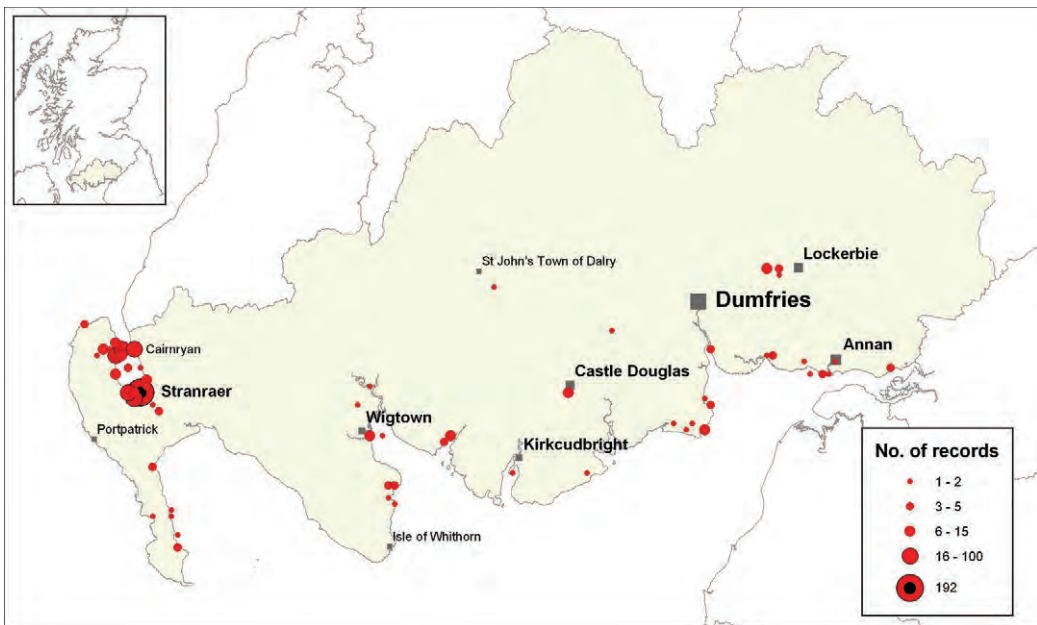


Figure 1. Distribution by occurrence and abundance of Mediterranean Gull in Dumfries and Galloway 1978 to April 2013.

Annual sightings

Five hundred and twenty-nine sightings involving 608 Mediterranean Gulls were sourced in Dumfries and Galloway for the period 1978 to April 2013. They have occurred annually since 1993 (Figure 2).

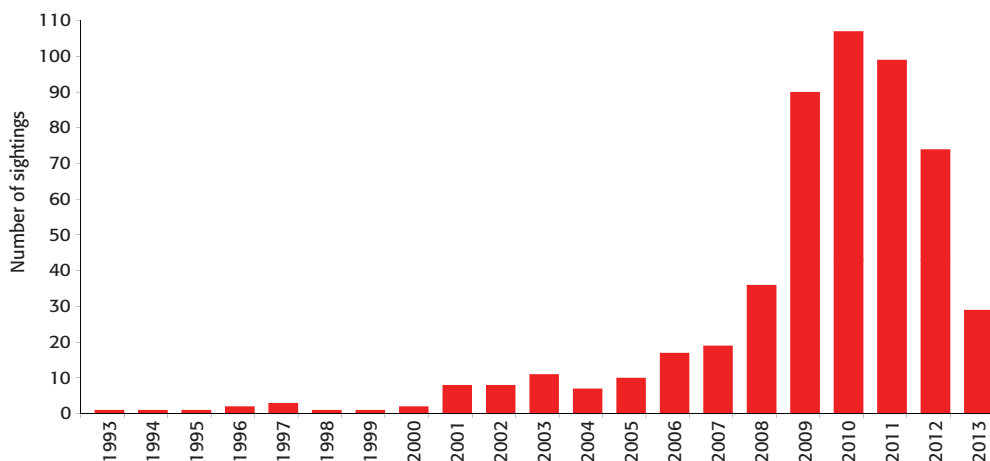


Figure 2. Annual sightings of Mediterranean Gull in Dumfries and Galloway 1993 to April 2013.

In 2003, annual sightings reached double figures for the first time. Following 2004, there was a gradual increase to 2009 when sightings rose 90. During 2010, which accounted for 20% of all Mediterranean Gull records, sightings rose to 107. Thereafter, they fell to 74 in 2012.

Seasonal occurrence

Observations show two distinct periods (Figure 3), one peaking in late August (48% adults and 23% juveniles) continuing into September (53% adults and 44% juveniles/first-winters) and to mid October (69% adults and 31% first- & second-winter). Spring peaks occur from mid February to the first ten days in March (11 February to 10 March) and comprise mostly adult (68%) and second winter (20%) individuals.

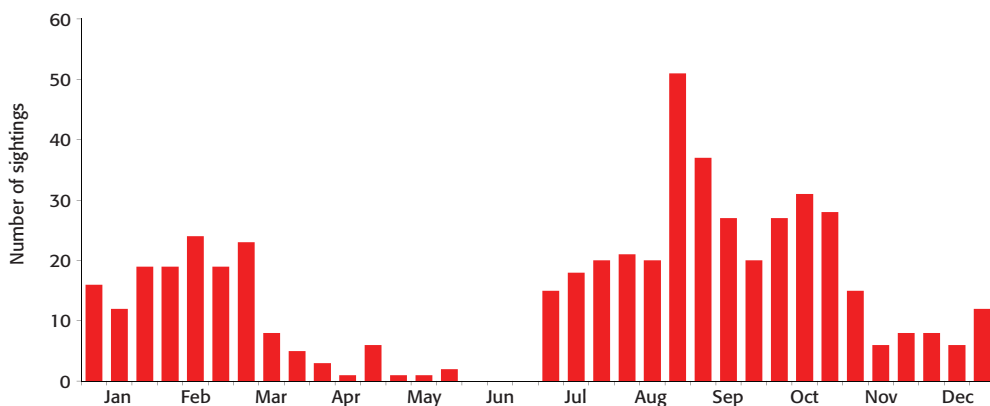


Figure 3. Seasonal occurrence of Mediterranean Gull in Dumfries and Galloway 1978 to April 2013.



Plate 3. Adult Mediterranean Gull, Innermessan, Loch Ryan, Dumfries & Galloway, September 2009. © Brian D. Henderson

Coastal sightings

Mediterranean Gulls have been recorded at 35 coastal locations with eight of these having had ten or more sightings (Table 1). The principal area for coastal sightings is around the large natural anchorage of Loch Ryan with most sightings from the southern and south-eastern shores at Stranraer and from the north-western shores at Kirkholm.

Table 1. Coastal locations with ten or more sightings of Mediterranean Gull in Dumfries and Galloway 1978 to April 2013.

Location	Grid reference	Number of sightings
Bishop Burn	NX0761	195
The Wig/Wig Bay	NX0367	63
Stranraer	NX0660	49
Loch Ryan	NX0468	31
Kirkholm Point/The Scar	NX0468	22
Innermessan	NX0863	14
Kirkholm	NX0369	11
Skyreburn/Cardoness	NX5754	10

Inland sightings

Seventeen inland localities (at least 1 km from the coast) accounted for 10% of all Mediterranean Gull sightings in Dumfries and Galloway, with five localities having had five or more sightings (Table 2).

Table 2. Inland locations with five or more sightings of Mediterranean Gull in Dumfries and Galloway 1978 to April 2013.

Location	Grid reference	Number of sightings
Carlingwark Loch	NX7661	11
Castle Loch, Lochmaben	NY0881	11
Loch Connell	NX0168	7
Soulseat Loch	NX1058	7
Greenhill, Lockerbie	NY1081	5

Age-class profiles and trends

For the period 1978–2008, adult Mediterranean Gulls accounted for 46% of all sightings, for the period 2009–13 they accounted for 67% of all sightings. Fifty-eight percent of all first-winter bird sightings occurred during 2009–11 and 50% of all juvenile birds were seen during 2010.

Table 3. Mean 5-year age-class trends of Mediterranean Gulls in Dumfries and Galloway 1993–97 to 2008–12.

Age-class	5-year mean 1993–97	5-year mean 1998–2002	5-year mean 2003–07	5-year mean 2008–12
Juvenile	0	0	1.2	3.2
First-winter	0.2	1	3.2	10.2
First-summer	0	0	0.6	1.2
Second-winter	0.2	0.2	1.8	7
Second-summer	0	0	0.8	3.6
Adult	0.8	2.4	4.6	52.4

**Plate 4.** Second-winter Mediterranean Gull (colour-ringed 32A4), Bishop Burn, Loch Ryan, Dumfries & Galloway, February 2012. © Gavin B. Chambers

Multiple sightings

Sightings of two or more individual Mediterranean Gulls at the same location on the same day have been recorded on 112 occasions. Sixty-nine sightings involved two birds, 32 involved three birds, six involved four birds, three involved five birds and two involved six different individuals. The majority of multiple bird sightings (82%) came from Loch Ryan.

Colour-ringed individuals

The first colour-ringed Mediterranean Gull (White E107) seen in Dumfries and Galloway was at Wig Bay, Loch Ryan on 5 December 2009. There have been a further 24 sightings of colour-ringed individuals in Dumfries and Galloway. Twenty-three (92%) of the colour-ringed sightings were observed from Loch Ryan. White E107, ringed as a pullus on 24 May 2009 at Antwerpen, Belgium, has been observed on 16 occasions in Dumfries and Galloway. First observed in its first winter during 2009, it has been seen each year since. White 35P6, ringed as a pullus on 6 June 2008 at Arnhem, Netherlands, has only been recorded once in Dumfries and Galloway. White 32A4, ringed as a pullus on 24 June 2010 at De Kreupel Island, IJsselmeer, Netherlands, has been sighted on five occasions in Dumfries and Galloway. Red 4P5, ringed as a pullus on 6 June 2007 at Paczkowski Reservoir, Paczków, Poland, has been observed on three occasions in Dumfries and Galloway.

The first-winter individual present at Carlingwark Loch, Castle Douglas from 18 January to 16 February 2003 was seen to have a metal ring on its right tibia (Forrester *et al.* 2007, p.741). It was believed that this bird was ringed in Eastern Europe, possibly Slovakia, though this was never confirmed (Norman 2006).



Plate 5. Adult Mediterranean Gull (E107, observed annually in Dumfries & Galloway since 2009), Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, October 2013. © Gavin B. Chambers

Discussion

Mediterranean Gulls in Dumfries and Galloway, as elsewhere in Scotland, are most often observed on the coast. Mediterranean Gulls are now an uncommon, though regular visitor to Wigtownshire. There is a regular turnover at established wintering sites in Wigtownshire. Sightings may be skewed by observer coverage, particularly so for Loch Ryan. The number of records for Dumfries and Galloway may be an overestimate of the actual number of individuals. One individual may be seen at different or several localities or several individuals may be at any one locality and birds at the same place in several years may or may not be the same individual(s) reappearing.

The age of most birds (95%) seen in Dumfries and Galloway was noted by observers. As adults are easier to detect and identify, immatures and sub-adults are more likely to be missed. Identification skills have probably improved, but there does seem to a genuine increase in the numbers of immatures/sub-adults occurring in the region.

There is evidence of a distinct arrival increasing throughout July and August and reaching a peak at the end of August, continuing into September and October. The smaller spring peaks during February and March may consist of new records of birds moving southwards from further north on the east and west coasts of Scotland. This pattern was detected by Bourne (1970) who suggested 'that Mediterranean Gulls must often, but not always, undertake three migrations annually'. Sharrock (1974) also found a protracted autumn arrival during July to October and another peak during March. Hume (1976) found that adults begin return movements to their breeding grounds as early as late January or more commonly in February. In Dumfries and Galloway for the period 21 January to 28 February 78% of all records comprised adult birds. Inland records from Castle Loch, Lochmaben, for the same period showed that all records comprised entirely adult birds. Sightings of returning winter adult colour-ringed birds suggest that they leave the area around this period (5 February to 25 February). Resightings of the same individuals usually occur following breeding dispersal and return migration. Sightings of birds during the spring passage period (late April to mid-May) in Dumfries and Galloway are scarce. Compared to Britain and the rest of Scotland, numbers during this period do not match numbers recorded elsewhere nor is there an influx of first-summer or second-summer birds as there is in Scotland from late-April to mid-June (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

Sightings of colour-ringed individuals show that they originated from breeding colonies in countries that border the North Sea (Belgium 1, Netherlands 2 & Poland 1). Some birds in Dumfries and Galloway arrive following natal dispersal. Juvenile birds have been seen as early as the first ten days in August with sightings on 6 August 2012 (G. Chambers pers. comm.) and on 10 August 2004 (Norman 2006) both at Bishop Burn, Loch Ryan suggesting that rapid natal dispersal occurs (Ellis & Shaw 1998). Re-sightings of colour-ringed individuals give an indication of return movements to the same breeding grounds. Movements made by individual Mediterranean Gulls can be difficult to interpret, partly due to increased range expansion but also because individuals may breed at widely separated sites in successive years (Wernham *et al.* 2002).

The sightings of colour-ringed individuals also show that some Mediterranean Gulls are less loyal to wintering sites than was thought. Some within Loch Ryan periodically wander and are not seen again for many months, whereas others use some sites as staging posts during passage migration. Some individuals return to the region, even to the same site, over successive years, some staying for extended periods. One colour-ringed gull (White E107) seen in its first winter, returned for its fourth successive winter during 2012 to the same site. It stayed for periods of at least 49, 30, 92 and 97 days.

In Dumfries and Galloway, two adult Mediterranean Gulls were observed within a Black-headed Gull colony at Loch Ken on 26 May 2009 (Irving 2010), but there were no return visits to confirm breeding or attempted breeding.

Acknowledgements

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Revised ms accepted October 2013

Intra-specific attack on an incubating Greenshank

B. Etheridge, N. Christian, R.W. Summers & S. Pálsson

Within Britain and Ireland, there is a relatively small population of breeding Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia*, found primarily in the peat flows of northern Scotland. The most recent estimate is 1,440 pairs (Hancock *et al.* 1997). The breeding behaviour and biology have been well studied during long-term studies (Nethersole-Thompson & Nethersole-Thompson 1979, Christian & Hancock 2009). Nevertheless, some aspects remain unknown. This study, initiated by John and Nick Christian in 1975, was expanded by using recent technology to answer specific questions about the north Sutherland population. One of the aims was to look at incubation patterns of the sexes and to identify nest predators. It is usually difficult to determine the cause of nest failure, and even more difficult to determine its context. Therefore, motion-triggered camera-traps were used at several nests in 2013.

One camera-trap was placed near a nest on 31 May 2013 and set to take 10-second video clips of events, with 1-minute pauses before taking another. Both birds of the pair had been colour-ringed with unique permutations earlier, and the sexes determined from a DNA sample from a feather (Fridolfsson & Ellegren 1999). Unfortunately, the camera did not trigger at all events at the nest, but change-overs were filmed on 3 June at 08:10¹ and 4 June at 07:30 when the female took over from the male. It is usual for the male to incubate by night and the female by day (Nethersole-Thompson & Nethersole-Thompson 1979).

The next triggered event was on 6 June at 05:27 when an un-ringed Greenshank was standing by the nest. The male was incubating as the intruder proceeded to attack by pulling but mainly pecking vigorously at the head of the male. The male stood up to try to avoid the intruder. However, the



Plates 6–7. An intruding Greenshank attacking an incubating bird at its nest, north Sutherland, June 2013. Note a dislodged feather in the bill of the intruder.

intruder fluttered above the incubating bird, landing on its back and continued the attack (Plates 6 and 7). In the 10-second clip, there were 16–18 pecks, dislodging some feathers. The male made no attempt to defend himself, either by fleeing the nest or turning on the intruder. Apart from rising off the nest he seemed powerless to dislodge the intruder from his back. His beak opened on several occasions, indicating he was calling. With only 10 seconds of filming, the outcome was unknown.

There were two filmed events later the same morning. At 06:17, a bird whose legs could not be seen walked into the nest. It stood alert and pecked at the nest but did not sit down. At 07:06 the female (the rings were visible) walked close past the nest pecking three times at the ground and false preened its back. This was around the time of the previous change-overs, and given that the female did not settle on the eggs, we presume that the nest was now empty, as we found when we visited the nest on the following day (7 June) at 20:50. Measurements of egg density on 31 May indicated that the eggs were still about a week from hatching at the time of the attack, so the clutch had been predated. However, there were neither remains of shell fragments in the nest, nor close to the nest, to confirm predation. Unfortunately, there was no film of the eggs being removed so we do not know how this was accomplished. It seems unlikely that the Greenshanks were responsible, yet it seems odd the camera was not triggered by any of the typical nest predators, such as Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*, Raven *Corvus corax* or Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*, all of which occur in the vicinity. However, it does seem possible that the attack on the incubating bird had caused the male to desert, and may have made the now exposed eggs vulnerable to predation.

Nethersole-Thompson & Nethersole-Thompson (1979, page 105) refer to territorial defence of nest territories, with males responding with song and by chasing off intruding Greenshanks in flight. Once incubation is under way, the off-duty bird may be a long distance from the nest, leaving the incubating bird vulnerable. Therefore, a sitting bird would have to quit the eggs to deal with an intruder. However, in our case, it was the male that was attacked at the nest.

¹ All times are GMT

Acknowledgements

The Greenshank study is supported by a grant from the SOC Endowment Fund and the camera traps were bought from Highland Ringing Group funds. We are most grateful to both organisations. Filming and the removal of a feather for molecular sexing were carried out under licence.

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Plate 8. Rockall from the south-west with nesting Gannet on the right of the beacon stump, 15 July 2007. © Ewan Wakefield

Gannet and Guillemot breeding on Rockall, North Atlantic, in 2013

S. Murray, I. Smith & A. Smith

Rockall is an isolated 20-metre-high rock which lies in the Atlantic Ocean 300 km west of St Kilda. The first detailed list of birds found on and around Rockall was given by James Fisher in his book *Rockall* (1956). Subsequently, Bourne (1993) summarized what was known of the birds of the rock from the few visits and landings made between 1956 and 1992; the year when Belaoussoff (1993) confirmed breeding of both Gannet *Morus bassanus* and Guillemot *Uria aalge* for the first time.

Since then there have been several well publicized visits to the rock, notably by Greenpeace activists who stayed ashore for 42 days in 1997. Despite this, there appear to be no published records made of birds on or near the rock since 1992 and no reports of possible breeding by either Gannet or Guillemot until 2007.

Gannet

Fisher (1956) concluded that “Gannets sit on Rockall in most (but perhaps not all summers), without making serious attempts to nest on it”. Gannets were seen on the rock, from offshore, in June 1977, but visitors who succeeded in landing in July the same year found no evidence that any birds were actually breeding. Not until 19 June 1992 was a nest with an egg confirmed (Belaoussoff 1993), and it was 15 July 2007 before breeding was again suspected, when a single Gannet was seen on a nest, adjacent to the remains of the beacon that occupies the summit of the islet (Plate 8) (Ewan Wakefield pers. comm.). No landing was possible, so no conclusive proof of breeding was made that year.

On 14 May 2008, on the same ledge, Innes Smith found two well-built nests without eggs (Plate 9) and below on Hall's Ledge, four trace nests (Plate 10). The undisturbed birds appear from the photographs taken before the landing to be mainly in adult plumage (Plate 11). Given the early date of the visit, it is possible that one or both nests could have held eggs later in the season.

On a return visit on 1 June 2012, he did not land, and only one person, Nick Hancock was put ashore. He wore a helmet mounted camera and the footage of his landing appears on his personal website (www.rockallsolo.com). This shows some 30 Gannets on Hall's Ledge; as they fly off it is clear that most of them are in adult plumage, with only a few four-year old birds. On the ledge there are no nests substantial enough to hold an egg, but there are at least eight trace nests. On the beacon ledge four nests can be seen, two are more than trace nests but not mound shaped and have no eggs; one very substantial nest is probably empty and one holds an egg.



Plate 9. Empty Gannet nests next to the stump of the light beacon (erected June 1972) on Rockall summit, 14 May 2008. © Innes Smith



Plate 10. Hall's Ledge, Rockall, with four Gannet trace nests visible, 14 May 2008. © Innes Smith

The same team made a return visit to the rock on 31 May 2013, with the intention of landing N. Hancock for a 60-day stay, but sea conditions were such that the attempt was abandoned. Gannets were seen on the rock but their breeding status is unknown (Angus Smith pers. comm.).

Guillemot

Fisher (1956) concluded that "the evidence that the Guillemot breeds on Rockall is as positive as indirect evidence can be". This evidence is from aerial photographs, which show birds in incubation posture, facing into the rock face on Hall's Ledge. Not until 19 June 1992 was a single bird found with an egg, despite some 500 birds being present on the rock (Belaoussoff 1993). The breeding site in this instance was not on any of the broader ledges, but in a niche on the north-east face.

The most recent confirmed breeding was made by Innes Smith on 14 May 2008, when he found birds on eggs inside the metal stump of the destroyed beacon (Plate 12). More recently, the brief headcam footage taken by N. Hancock on 1 June 2012 also



Plate 11. Rockall south face from the sea, showing undisturbed Gannets and Guillemots on the summit and Hall's Ledge, 14 May 2008. © Angus Smith

shows Guillemots crowded inside the stump; although no eggs are visible it is probable that breeding was taking place.

Conclusion

Both Gannets and Guillemots may regularly attempt to nest on Rockall, but whether they get beyond the incubation stage and successfully hatch and rear a chick is unknown. There is no evidence at present to suggest that either species has done so.



Plate 12. Guillemot eggs inside the beacon stump on Rockall summit, 14 May 2008. © Innes Smith

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An extension to the autumn 2008 influx of Grey Phalaropes

McMillan *et al.* (2010) described the unprecedented influx of Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicarius* into sea areas off northern Scotland in October and November 2008, noting that it occurred later than any previous one, with only a trickle of birds before 18 October.

During 3–17 October 2008, we were on migrant watch on Inishbofin, off Connemara, north-west Ireland. With the onset of westerly winds on 7th, we began to scrutinise the Atlantic. Two Grey Phalaropes in 80 minutes of WNW force 3–4 late on 7th, pleased, but did not prepare us for the aftermaths of ‘horrendous rain on a SSW force 7–8 on 9th’ and ‘no clearance all day of low clouds on a SW force 3–4’ on 10th. There were 23 Grey Phalaropes in 75 minutes of WSW force 4 on 11th and 51 in 100 minutes of W force 4 on 13th. On the last date, Grey Phalarope was the third commonest southbound species in a total passage of over 800 seabirds, an incidence that neither of us had witnessed before in nine combined decades of seawatching.

Our observations indicate that Grey Phalaropes were off north-west Ireland in numbers at least nine days before most birds were seen off Scottish shores and that the strong westerlies and periods of poor visibility pushed them onto at least 550 sea miles of Irish and Scottish coasts along a NW by N axis.

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Possible use of mimicry by a Jay to deter predators

On 10 November 2004, I watched a female Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* chase a Jay *Garrulus glandarius* along a forest track near Crosshill in South Ayrshire. As both birds approached the spot at which I was standing, the Jay swerved sharply into an Ivy-covered shrub, followed almost immediately by the Sparrowhawk. About five seconds of total silence followed before a *ke-wick* call, identical to that of female Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* came from the shrub. Almost immediately, the female Sparrowhawk left the shrub and sped off downhill. The Jay left shortly afterwards and, suspecting that the call had come from it rather than a Tawny Owl, I searched the shrub, but could find no trace of any owl. The thought crossed my mind that the Jay could have used the call to deter the Sparrowhawk but, at the time, I dismissed the notion as perhaps nothing more than a coincidence.

However, on 3 June 2013, I was lucky enough to witness a young female Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* stalking two Jays in Galloway Forest Park. Both Jays could be heard giving their normal, grating alarm calls. The raptor was just about to close the gap between itself and the Jays when two things happened. Firstly, it was mobbed by a female Sparrowhawk which was nesting nearby and, secondly, a Tawny Owl-like *ke-wick* call was heard coming from the spot where the Jays were. The Goshawk appeared slightly unsettled by this, and it left the scene. The Jay seemed, once again, to have resorted to using this call at a point during a raptor attack when it was at serious risk.

It is well known that Jays frequently use mimicry in a variety of situations. Within Galloway Forest Park I have heard Jays imitating Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Goshawk,

Sparrowhawk and Tawny Owl, and D. Goodwin mentions Jay mimicry of all those raptor species. The circumstances in which mimicry has occurred has usually involved a threat from one of those predators, with the Jay's threat response often including mimicry of the attacking species. However, Raeburn (1949) mentions mimicry of Tawny Owl and Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* by Jays when threatened, with the suggestion that these calls may be intended to frighten off the attacker. Although open to question, the potential for an intelligent species like the Jay to use a predator call, different from the one which poses the immediate threat, as a means of deterrence, may be a possible explanation for the behaviour I observed.

I would like to thank Ian Andrews for the provision of additional source material and comments on the first draft.

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Sandwich Tern mimicry in a singing Whitethroat

Whilst out surveying for Lesser Whitethroat breeding territories on 3 June 2013 at Boydeston Braes, near Seamill, North Ayrshire at around 13:35 hrs, I came across a male Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* perched and singing on a low-level power line near some Hawthorn and Blackthorn scrub. Walking away, I heard the distinctive flight call of a Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* overhead and looked around, trying to locate it. I then quickly realised that there was no Sandwich Tern around at all. The Whitethroat sang again, but right at the very end of the phrase, the male gave four separate Sandwich Tern 'kier-rik' flight calls. The mimicry was so good, that it had me completely fooled. The Whitethroat then proceeded to sing another three full song phrases, each with four renditions of Sandwich Tern flight calls, again right at the end of each sequence, lasting around 5–6 seconds in duration. The Whitethroat then flew upwards from the power line and sang normally during the short flight downwards into the scrub - this time without the tern mimicry. The location of the singing Whitethroat was

only 200 m away from the high tide line, so hearing passing Sandwich Terns was probably a common event to this territorial male.

I have heard Whitethroats briefly mimic the trilling song phrase of Lesser Whitethroats in Ayrshire and Whitethroats can also mimic other *Sylvia* species such as Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* and Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* (Cramp 1992). However, there is no mention of Sandwich Tern mimicry in the UK literature (Cramp 1992, BTO pers. comm.), so this appears to be the first UK observation of such mimicry in this species. However, on contacting German ornithologists, I was informed that although uncommon, this behaviour has been observed before and Sandwich Tern mimicry is mentioned in Bergmann *et al.* (2008).

My thanks go to Dr Hans-Gunther Bauer who provided valuable information on Sandwich Tern mimicry, Peter Suedbeck for translating German text and Dr Peter Lack for advice and encouragement.

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A Lesser Whitethroat brood of six young

The Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* has been studied extensively in Ayrshire as part of a long-term study in central Scotland since 1983 (Byars 2010). During that time productivity from all breeding territories has been documented. I located and mapped a territory at Bracken Bay, South Ayrshire (NS278178) on 17 May 2013. I returned to check this territory for breeding success on 13 June 2013 at 10:18 BST and soon heard the distinctive contact *tuc* call given by adults when approaching their young with food. Crawling into dense 2 m high Gorse *Ulex europaeus*. I located six recently

fledged young, all perched motionless on a branch, close together in a row. As both adults approached the fledglings, one gave a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* like scolding *chirrrritt* call and became visibly agitated on seeing me. The fledglings responded with plaintive *neigh* food begging calls and one adult then gave a shrill *schreeee* note, which seemed to encourage the fledglings into frantic activity. They started to scramble off the branch and fluttered quickly after the adults, deeper into the dense vegetation and were soon lost to view.

According to the BTO Nest Records Scheme, there have been 583 Lesser Whitethroat nest records from 1950 to 1999 and broods of five accounts for 40% of those records. There have been only ten reports of broods of six during that same period, and those all came from the south of England. The average brood size in Ayrshire is 2.95 (n=40). This brood of six in Ayrshire was the first in this long-term study and appears to be the first recorded account in Scotland.

My thanks go to Dr Dave Leach for providing the BTO Nest Records Scheme data on Lesser Whitethroats.

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Plate 13. Recently fledged Lesser Whitethroat at Ardeer, Ayrshire, June 2010. © Tom Byars

Are the feeding habits and distribution of Jays changing in south-east Scotland?

Records from the 19th century (e.g. Lumsden 1876, Butler 1899) and into the 20th (e.g. Baxter & Rintoul 1953, Sharrock 1976) suggest a declining population of Jays *Garrulus glandarius* in southern Scotland. This has been ascribed to persecution - although depletion of mature woodland undoubtedly played a significant part - until a low, and apparently more stable, level was reached between c.1930 to 1970. Thereafter, there have been some local increases. Thom (1986) noted a very substantial expansion in Scotland from the early 1970s, associated with the colonisation of maturing conifer plantations, especially in the south-west. The 1988-91 distribution map in the *New Atlas* (Gibbons *et al.* 1993) still reflects the species' relative scarcity in south-east Scotland, though the text talks of a northward expansion into the Great Glen and Grampian presumably since the early 1980s, and - unsurprisingly - "In Scotland, the spread has been aided considerably by afforestation..."

Lumsden (1876) and Baxter & Rintoul (1953) both suggest that the Jay probably disappeared as a breeding species from Lothian and possibly also from the Borders. This seems improbable as, despite the severely reduced area of old woodlands, there were large areas of forest at least in parts of the Borders. My own and others' post-1945 sightings in both Lothian and Borders at all seasons confirm that they were there, but were "very local" - the phrase used by Baxter & Rintoul. By 1988-94, Murray *et al.* (1998) considered that breeding was confined to good-quality, mixed woodland, especially on policy woodlands of large estates - where persecution would have been most likely - and ancient semi-natural woodland along river valleys. The use of conifer woodland was also noted, but usually in association with strips of mature deciduous woods.

I have 40 years' experience of field work in the Borders, with a particular interest in woodland and plantations. My observations and those of many forest managers, forest rangers and game keepers all point to a sharp increase in

sightings of Jays at all times of the year after about 2000. They are now frequent in the lower altitudes of the larger conifer - largely spruce - plantations such as Craik, upper Teviot, Ewes & Hermitage Waters, Wauchope, Leithope and Crichness, as well as in smaller conifer plantations down into the Merse. They are also present, but much less frequent, in the forests of the Tweed Valley from Yair upstream to Stobo and Tweedsmuir. This difference may be down to a relative lack of abundance of invertebrate prey in which the upper Tweed Valley forests do seem to be markedly poorer.

Confirmed breeding records remain low, reflecting the bird's elusive behaviour when breeding, but summer, autumn and winter numbers of birds suggest a considerable increase. The start of the increase pre-dates, by some margin, the major change of government grant-support for native and broadleaved tree species that increased markedly from the



Plate 14. Jay, North-east Scotland, March 2012. © Harry Scott

1990s. Jays seen or heard in any Border woodland are now no longer remarkable.

Usually associated by British observers with oak and beech woods, their presence in conifer stands is not really surprising, given their wide diet. I have personally observed Jays getting seeds out of Norway Spruce *Picea abies* and Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* cones (on trees and on the ground), as well as feeding in Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* berries, as well as in foraging in orchards, oak and beech woods.

Of all the hundreds of direct observations from the Borders known to the author, only one suggests their feeding on cereals, which has been noted frequently by others. That said there are numerous records of Jays visiting garden-bird feeders, spilt grain, and game-bird feeders. Sadly, the increase has meant an attendant, if usually covert, increase in persecution from some game interests.

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Ray Murray comments:

Breeding records in the 1988–94 atlas of the birds of south-east Scotland, when Jays were reported in just 87 tetrads, showed c.24 tetrads in conifer plantations, typically adjacent to richer, mixed oak riparian woodlands of the middle Tweed and Ettrick with c.36 tetrads in the more open cereal-dominated habitats of the Merse, where Jays were recorded in coverts and small oak woodlands, mostly retained for shooting. How times have changed! In the current atlas, Jays, so far, have been recorded in 330 tetrads in south-east Scotland during the summers between 2008 and 2012 and 585 tetrads in the winters between 2007/08 and 2012/13. I think that the winter distribution better reflects the true population. About two-thirds of the Borders records now come from the low-lying arable areas, with small woodlands and about a third from the margins of the large plantations on the upland edges.

Obituaries

John K.R. Melrose (1926–2013)

My first encounter with John was when I began work at Culzean Country Park in the early 1970s. Many of the bird records in the park's card index system had the initials JKRM against them. We became close friends and through him I became involved with the SOC locally and went to my first SOC Conference with him.

John graduated BSc Agriculture at Aberdeen University and spent all of his working life with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, culminating in the post of Principal Agricultural Officer for south west Scotland. His career offered him the opportunity to visit many parts of Scotland and gave him an excellent working knowledge of the Scottish countryside. From his bases in Oban, Dumfries and, eventually, Ayr he was able to combine his visits to factor hill farms with his lifelong interest in birds. Visits to the islands off the west coast always gave him excellent opportunities to indulge his hobby.

He was passionate about birdlife. His wife Doreen was his constant companion and they made a formidable partnership in the field. John was well travelled enjoying visits to Peru, Costa Rica, the Gambia, Trinidad & Tobago, Spain, Zimbabwe, Turkey, India and Venezuela where his all time high was seeing a Cock-of-the-rock, a picture of which takes pride of place in the sitting room at Bankfoot where they finally settled in retirement.

John was a great supporter of the SOC, RSPB and SWT and served locally and nationally on their various committees bringing to meetings a wealth of experience. Along with Doreen he was an early member of the Dumfries Branch of the SOC and they made many long standing friends in the area. He had two spells as Chairman of the Ayrshire Branch of the Club and was made an Honorary President. Over a long period, he contributed a great deal to local

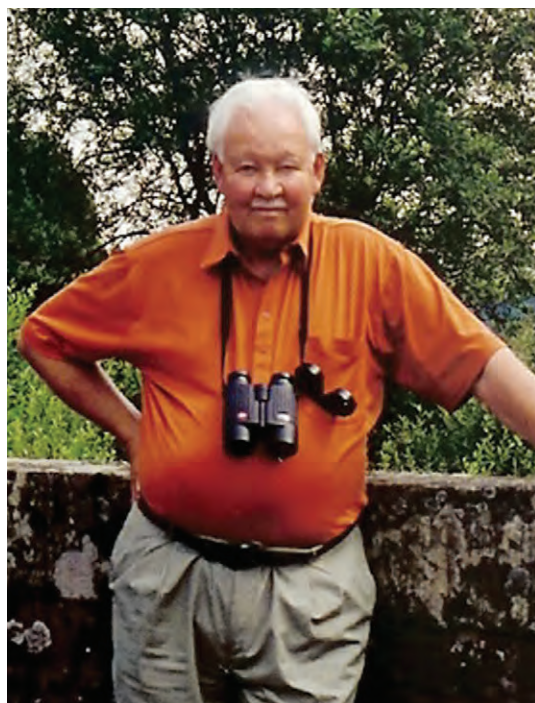


Plate 15. John Melrose, Loch of Linrathen, Angus & Dundee, 1999. © D. Melrose

and national monitoring schemes especially on his local Ayrshire patch. There are many memories of John, a fixture at the SOC conferences, winter trips to Caerlaverlock, his commitment to the SOC and enjoying walks in Culzean with Doreen and their dogs.

In the last few years of his life, dementia took its toll, but there was always a welcoming smile and talk of the early days. Happily, John and Doreen were able to enjoy their Diamond Wedding Anniversary celebrations. John's last wish was for his ashes to be scattered at Loch of Kinnordy, a place where he and Doreen spent many happy times. He will be missed as a true ornithological gentleman.

Gordon Riddle

Gerry Owens (1957–2013)



Plate 16. Gerry Owens, Kinneil, Upper Forth, 2011.
© Billy Mackie

“One of life’s good guys”, a common sentiment that I’ve heard about Gerry since his passing. You can go through life making many friends and Gerry was friendly to most of the people he met, but to a few of us he was the best friend we are likely to ever have had.

He loved the outdoors, but his introduction to serious birding was gradual. Billy Mackie, his best friend from childhood remembers, “As youngsters our primary focus wasn’t birding, it was just about being outdoors. Of course we saw birds, you couldn’t not, they were everywhere when we were kids, mostly House Sparrows, which we’d try to trap using old bread, an upturned box and a stick with string attached. I don’t recall us ever catching any though. Mostly though, we’d be roaming in a great fluctuating gang about the environs of Grangemouth, which believe it or not was really quite rural, even in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Often we’d be catching Sticklebacks and Stone Loach in the ‘burn’, sometimes we’d paddle upstream all the way to Polmont, trying and usually failing to guddle trout.

Other times we’d go downstream and encounter dabs rather than trout where the tidal influence prevailed. I’m sure there would be birds, but I can only honestly remember the terns, presumably Common.”

Once Gerry passed his driving test, Billy and him, now armed with proper fishing rods spent most of their time trout fishing all over Scotland though particularly Glen Garry. Gradually they became more aware of the birds around them and more familiar with the common species Kestrels wind-hanging by the road side, Buzzards soaring over glens, Goosander on a quiet loch, eventually birds becoming more than just part of the scenery, but something to be actively sought out and identified for their own sakes.

From mid-1980 birds had become the main focus and he would be off every weekend with Billy and the keeping of a year list became important to Gerry. It was in January 1983 that Gerry caught the twitching bug when he saw the Killdeer that was found in Bo’ness. Gerry found it quite astonishing that people would travel from Manchester, Birmingham and further to come to see this bird and it fired his imagination. From then on any bird anywhere in Britain was fair game.

It was around this time that I became good friends with Gerry and Billy often meeting them at Skinflats, Kinneil and on various twitches. It was a natural progression living in neighbouring towns for us to form a twitching team that was variously supplemented by other birders especially Ally White, Alec Barr, Jack Moss, Stuart Rivers and Dougie Dickson. Some fell by the wayside and Billy moved to live in Suffolk leaving mainly Gerry and myself to be eagerly waiting for Friday’s work to finish. We’d be off never knowing where our route would finally take us, though often via Suffolk to reunite with Billy and always returning the hire car on a Monday morning with a much-increased mileage.

Gerry loved driving fast and was a skilful driver with a rally driving style, ideal for twitching, ensuring that we were rarely too late to see a bird. Many of those who travelled with him have their own tales and experiences, some leaving their finger grips embedded in his car seats. We could write a book about his driving and twitching exploits. He became well known and respected on the British twitching scene with his birding and driving skills being fondly remembered by many English birders particularly at Landguard Bird Observatory.

Trips to the Scillies and eventually Fair Isle became part of his itinerary and he often drove alone to places as far as Cornwall after I became more interested in foreign birding. Gerry never went abroad, much to my disappointment. He did not like the heat but even an offer by relatives to put us up in their home in Alaska could not tempt him. His mother, who has also sadly just passed away, recently told me she thought it was because he worried about his diabetes. He had the condition all his life but it did not hold him back when twitching - I was often told to hold the car steady while he injected himself with insulin to avoid losing time stopping to do it.

Gerry was more than a twitcher though and spent many hours birding at his local patches at Kinneil and particularly Skinflats, where there is now a memorial plaque dedicated to him courtesy of Ally and Ann Dennis. He also spent many hours at Fife Ness. As well as counting commoner species at these sites, he also contributed by finding quite a few rarities, including Caspian Tern, Spotted Sandpiper and Yellow-breasted Bunting. He also took photographs and had an impressive array of equipment, but he preferred to see/find birds rather than sit waiting for the perfect shot. The Upper Forth and Fife Bird Reports will be diminished by his passing.

After seeing the birding facilities while twitching south of the border in the early 1980s and frustrated at the reluctance of the Scottish birding establishment to provide similar, Gerry, Billy and myself joined with nine other Fife and Tayside birders to become founder members of the Fife Bird Club in 1985. Gerry enjoyed

showing birds to others and encouraged many of his workmates to take an interest in birds or to become birders themselves.

His brother Tony recently looked through Gerry's notebooks to find that his Scottish list numbered 416 species and his British list had reached 492. In the latter years, as new ticks became infrequent, Gerry decided that he would attempt to see as many of the butterflies on the British list. It took only two years for him to see all of the regulars and a few of the scarce migrants, again driving all over the country to achieve this feat. He also took an interest in dragonflies, but they didn't hold the same fascination.

Gerry had many practical skills including car maintenance, gardening and DIY which was particularly helpful in the building of the FBC hides.

He had hidden his health problems from his family and even his closest friends, only informing us of his heart bypass in late 2009, after the event. He continued to twitch birds even appearing at the Musselburgh Wilson's Phalarope only days after his operation, much to the concern of birders who knew him. Although he had further heart problems, his health appeared to have improved in the weeks before his passing although he tired quicker. I was with him to see the Avocet at Skinflats in April this year and it came as a massive shock to hear he had passed away from a heart attack only three days later.

Many birders attended his funeral, a fitting tribute to Gerry as a friend and birder. He had a bigger influence than we knew on many of our lives and those of us closest to him still feel the loss.

Rab Shand

Scotland's upland birds and the 'What's Up?' project

J. BRAY



Plate 17. Creag Meagaidh NNR, Highland, May 2013. © James Bray

The Scottish uplands are world famous for their evocative and often breath-taking scenery and wildlife and in the UK are the best place to see such iconic species as Ptarmigan, Capercaillie and Golden Eagle. And can there be a better way to experience the beautiful Dotterel and Snow Bunting than to watch them on their high montane breeding grounds? Furthermore, the uplands increasingly appear to be a refuge for many formerly-widespread species like Black Grouse, Whinchat, Curlew and Meadow Pipit which have been pushed to the margins by agricultural intensification.

Things are changing, however. Both our climate and the way in which upland habitats are managed have changed significantly in recent decades and these changes look set to continue in the future. It is therefore increasingly important to monitor our bird populations to see what effects these changes are having.

Whilst it is widely recognised that the Scottish uplands are important for a whole host of species, it has proved difficult to monitor them all. There are already a fantastic number of people involved in bird recording in Scotland, as demonstrated by the success of the recently

published Bird Atlas 2007–11¹ and all the recent regional Atlases, as well as the ongoing monitoring schemes such as the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)². However, most of Scotland's population live in the Central Belt so finding sufficient surveyors in more remote areas is difficult, and the terrain (and weather) can make surveying challenging.

With the aim of increasing participation in upland wildlife surveying, and with funding from Scottish Natural Heritage and the SOC, the BTO launched the 'What's Up?' project at the beginning of 2013. A key theme of the project has been the drive to involve new audiences in bird recording as we know that there are large numbers of people working and playing in the uplands, many of whom have more than enough bird knowledge to start recording; they just need to find out how worthwhile and fun bird recording can be.

The BTO shares with the SOC the driving aim of encouraging more people to become involved with bird recording and provides several ways that people who are interested in birds can become involved in bird recording and monitoring, with surveys available to suit all levels

of ability and time availability. Anne Cotton discussed BirdTrack³ in the previous edition of *Scottish Birds*, so I will provide details of the long-term Breeding Bird Survey and the two-year Mountain Transect Survey, which is one of the key elements of the 'What's Up?' project, together with, of course, requests for your help.

But first, what are uplands? It is a fairly loose term encompassing a diverse range of habitats, but it is generally defined as land above the level of agricultural enclosure, which is typically 300–400 m above sea level, but often lower, especially in the north and west. The montane habitat, essentially the *Racomitrium* heath, is higher and generally lies above 750 m.

Breeding Bird Survey

The BBS is the principle means through which the UK's common breeding bird populations are monitored. Every year several hundred volunteers in Scotland wake up early on two mornings in the spring to count birds on their BBS square. For me, this is the highlight of my



Plate 18. Ptarmigan, Cairngorms, May 2013.
© James Bray



Plate 19. Snow Bunting, Cairngorms, May 2013.
© James Bray

birding year as I walk my transects in the Trossachs serenaded by the bubbling of Black Grouse, the reeling of Grasshopper Warblers and the incessant calls of Cuckoos. Some squares are inevitably less interesting as randomly picked squares will reflect the good and the bad, but in my opinion, the people who survey the squares with few birds on are the real stars; their data are as important as data from a bird-filled square, and probably more so as it is often difficult to find volunteers for less productive squares.

The end product, aside from fitter and happier birders, are the data that BTO scientists analyse to produce trend graphs for our common terrestrial birds and the data show worrying declines for a number of upland species. For example both Curlew and Lapwing declined by 56% between 1995 and 2011 in Scotland.

There are mixed fortunes for some of our upland passerines with the most abundant upland bird, Meadow Pipit, down by 29% over the same period. It is not all bad news however, with two trans-Saharan migrants doing much better in Scotland than further south with Tree Pipit and Willow Warbler having increased in Scotland by 84% and 38% respectively (declines of 45% and 29% respectively in England) between 1995 and 2011.

However, not enough squares are currently being surveyed in Scotland to be able to monitor on an annual basis the formerly widespread, but now red-listed, Ring Ouzel and Dunlin, and the amber-listed Whinchat although all three are known to be declining. We therefore need to increase BBS coverage particularly in areas that currently have scant coverage so that we can monitor more species, move towards producing more regional trends and increase the reliability of the species trends that the survey produces.

The BBS is organised by a regional network of volunteers whose enthusiasm and hard work has made the survey the success in Scotland that it is. If you are tempted to take on a square please get in touch with your local organiser via the BTO website (www.bto.org/bbs). We are also looking for volunteer mentors to help new surveyors get started with their squares. If you would like to help the next generation of BBS volunteers then please get in touch with BTO Scotland.

Breeding Abundance Change 1988–91 to 2008–11

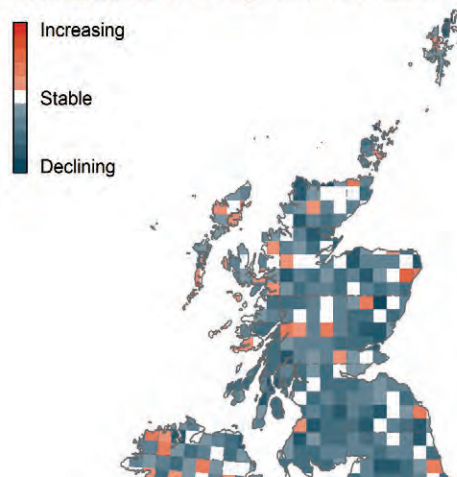


Figure 1. Distribution map of Upland Bird Assemblage from Bird Atlas 2007–11. © The map is reproduced with permission from the BTO

Bird Atlas 2007–11

The recently published Bird Atlas 2007–11 also provides stark evidence of the dramatic declines in range and abundance of upland birds with waders in particular suffering serious declines over the past 20 years as this Atlas map (for the upland bird assemblage) illustrates.

Mountain Transect Survey

Due to the fragmented topography of montane areas, in addition to their remoteness, BBS methods are impractical for these areas, so our knowledge of population trends for many species at higher altitude is fairly limited. Consequently, as part of the project, the BTO are running a dedicated Mountain Transect Survey through which, over time, we aim to monitor the birds in these important habitats. This survey aims to provide invaluable quantitative data for areas and habitats that are otherwise under-recorded. The survey methods are very simple with birds being recorded above the 750 m contour line in each of the kilometre squares of the Ordnance Survey grid that a surveyor walks through. This survey is very suitable for people who are making one-off visits to mountain areas as well as those who are just starting out in bird recording, as the open habitat and limited number of species and individual birds makes surveying relatively straightforward.

Over 180 transects were walked in 2013 and with a target of 500 transects over the two years of the project we do need more volunteers, so if the thought of a walk up into Scotland's most impressive scenery to see some of the country's most iconic species excites you, then we would love to hear from you. The confiding nature of many of the birds on the high tops, in contrast to some species lower down the hills, is another great aspect of being high up. Not only is it possible to enjoy the beautiful plumage of these birds but they also provide wonderful opportunities to watch natural behaviour at relatively close range.

BTO's professional fieldworkers spent some of their spring in 2013 walking calibration transects for this survey to enable analysis to be done on seasonal variations in species detectability. They can be tough walks but I found that leg- and lung-ache were soon forgotten when encountering some of the special birds of the high tops. My personal highlight was the two male Snow Buntings singing at each other at the top of a corrie with the Spey valley and Abernethy Forest laid out below them. To me it summed up the splendour of this part of the Highlands quite wonderfully.



Plate 20. Curlew, Lothian, February 2012. © *I.J. Andrews*

The Mountain Transect Survey demonstrates the partnership work that is at the heart of this project. Staff from the National Trust for Scotland also contributed calibration transects on NTS properties at Ben Lawers, Arran, Tarmacan, Glencoe, Kintail and Grey Mare's Tail, and the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Ecological Surveyor trainees walked the hills near Bridge of Orchy and we are very grateful to both organisations for their help. We are looking for further volunteers to help with the calibration transects again in 2014 so if you have some experience of transect surveys (BBS for example) and of hill walking and would like to survey birds amongst the most spectacular scenery in the UK then please get in touch with us.

Training courses

We have been running a number of upland bird identification and survey techniques training courses for the project and with over 180 people attending so far they have been proving very popular. The courses aim to improve people's skill levels and provide individual guidance on field methods, but we more often than not find that people are sufficiently skilled but just lacking confidence until we talk in person. We have welcomed many familiar faces to these courses, but also many people from hill walking clubs, and from countryside rangers and guiding organisations who are new to bird recording. It has been great to see the enthusiasm and engagement from people as they start their journey into bird recording.

Our sincere thanks must go to the volunteers who helped run the courses as well as to the venues (The Loch of the Lowes SWT reserve, the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, the communities of Elphin and Kinlochewe, the Clyde-Muirshiel Country Park, the Birdwatching and Wildlife Club in Grantown-on-Spey and Wilderness Scotland) for hosting courses and for encouraging their volunteers and staff to participate in wildlife recording. We will be running more courses in 2014 so please keep an eye on our website for further information.

As I hope I have conveyed, the Scottish Uplands are an increasingly important refuge for many wonderful species as well as a very enjoyable place to be out birding. As climate and land management practices change it is increasingly important to monitor our upland species; if we don't know how species numbers are changing then conservation measures cannot be successfully implemented.

I hope that this provides a little bit more motivation to go out and record birds, particularly in uplands areas. Anyone who is interested in finding out more can visit the BTO website (www.bto.org/whats-up). Thank you to all the landowners who have facilitated our survey work and the many other people who have helped with the project in very many ways. And finally, thank you to the SOC for providing funding to the project, for inviting my colleague Ben Darvill and I to talk to a number of the branches (and for the very warm welcomes that we were given), and for continuing to provide inspiration to Scotland's birders.

James Bray, BTO Scotland

Footnotes:

- 1 The 2007–11 Bird Atlas is a joint project between the BTO, Birdwatch Ireland and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club.
- 2 The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is run by the BTO and jointly funded by the BTO, the JNCC and the RSPB.
- 3 BirdTrack is organised by the BTO in a partnership with the RSPB, Birdwatch Ireland, the SOC and the Welsh Ornithological Society.

NEWS AND NOTICES

Membership milestone

In late January 2014, membership stood at just over 3,000 for the first time in the Club's history. This marks a significant milestone on a difficult journey which, over the past 20 years, has seen the Club tackle many important decisions. Not least was the sale of Regent Terrace in 2002 and the move to Waterston House in 2005. Also crucial was the investment in new staff, including a development officer, with Jane Cleaver employed since 2010, and the weekend opening manned by Dave Allan. The publication of *The Birds of Scotland* and the development of the Club's quarterly journal have also helped advertise the Club, and aided recruitment. Council would like to thank the many, many people, including both staff and volunteers, who have helped achieve this magnificent target, and dealt with the additional administration. Congratulations to everyone involved. Please keep spreading the word.

SOC Council

New SOC members

Ayrshire: Mr G. Bickerton, Mr M. Stewart, **Borders:** Ms A.S. Smith, **Central Scotland:** Mr C. Bachell, Ms C. Campbell & Mr K. Larcombe, Mrs C. Moore, Mr & Mrs R. Salvin, **Clyde:** Mr J. Brown, Ms D. Campbell, Ms R. Docherty, Mr W. Gray, Mr & Mrs W. Hartshorne, Ms A.J. Johnston, Ms L. McAllister, Mrs L. McBrien, Mr F. McCabe, Mr A.E. McKell, Mr N.B. Rankine, Miss R.J. Rennie, Mrs M. Sweeney, **Dumfries:** Mr & Mrs A. Grant, Ms A.B.S. MacDonald, Mr R. Robson, **England, Wales & NI:** Mr P. Clough, Mr S. Cox, Mr M. Doherty, Ms J. Latham, Mr G. Overington, Mr P. Rutt, Mr B. Shorrock, Mr P. Skinner, **Fife:** Mr W. Dickson, Mr W. Murphy, Ms C. Wright, **Highland:** Ms M.C. Bale, Ms Y. Benting & Mr I. Thompson, Ms G. Evans, Mrs I. Glover, Mr J. Henderson, **Lothian:** Mr A. Blyth & Ms S. Stevenson, Mr J. Brodie, Mr A. Butler, Miss F. Connolly, Mr G. Dalton, Mr J. Dickson & Ms L. Campbell, Mr C. Everitt & Ms P. Tomlin, Ms M. Freeman, Mr & Mrs J. Gilchrist, Mr & Mrs A. Graham, Mr G. Grant, Ms L. Green, Mr G.D. Hall, Mr & Mrs J. Hardy, Ms L. Hoad and family, Ms C. Holmes, Mr & Mrs J. Laphin, Mr K. Lorimer, Ms S. McGann, Ms A.

McWilliam, Mr M. Meaden & Ms V. Roper, Dr J. Nisbet, Mrs H. Reid, Ms S. Robertson, Mr & Mrs R. Skea, Mrs C. Small, Mr & Mrs L. Smith, Mrs G. Stewart, Ms V. Stuart, Mr G. Swinney, Ms J. Szpera, Mrs M. Tiso, Miss A. Turner, Mr & Mrs J. Wallace, Mrs C. Watson, Ms S. Wharton & Mr I. Wilson, Ms V. Wilson, **Moray:** Miss A. Abelsmith, Mr F. Antley, Ms C.A. Armour & Mr N. Sutherland, Mr S. Cox, Ms K. Cunningham, Ms S. Gill, Mrs E.A. Paterson, Ms C. Shaw, Mr B. Sheldon, **North-East Scotland:** Mr C. Gibbins, Mr R.W. Humphreys, Mr S. Jennings, Mrs C. Komlosi, Mr A. Main & Ms C. Kyle, Mr D. Thomson, Miss E.A. Walker, Mr S. Willis, **Scotland - no branch:** Miss R. Nason, **Tayside:** Mr B. Farquharson, Mr C. Nash, Ms L. Ryan, Ms J. Stewart, **West Galloway:** Mr E.P. Horsell.

200 Club

The latest prize winners are: **November: 1st** £150 Miss A. Creamer, **2nd** £75 Heather Millar, **3rd** £50 Mrs A.White, **4th** £30 Dr J Stewart, **5th** £20 A.D.J. Ramsay, **6th** £10 Roger Evans. **December: 1st** £30 I.T. Craig, **2nd** £20 Mrs Cartwright, **3rd** £10 Mrs G. Hartland. **January: 1st** £30 B. Etheridge, **2nd** £20 J. Fairbrass, **3rd** £10 Dr Frame.

The 200 Club was set up in 1989 by Mrs Daphne Peirse-Duncombe with the aim of raising money for the decoration and refurbishment of the Club's premises. The 200 Club is a private lottery and is open for members aged over 18 to join, with payment of £12/year payable each June. Members of the scheme are entered into the 200 Club draws throughout the year for 40 cash prizes. Subscription income is split 50/50 between the prize money and SOC funds. Since it was started, the scheme has raised £25k for the Club. Details on how to join can be obtained by writing to Daphne at Rosebank, Gattonside, Melrose, Roxburghshire TD6 9NH (joining form enclosed with this mailing).

Items funded by the 200 Club in the past 12 months include the installation of a water feature in the garden, floodlights for the car park, a new secure storage cupboard for artwork and some bookcases for the second hand bookshop (plate 21).



Plate 21. New bookcases (left) bought by the 200 Club, Waterston House foyer, Aberlady, January 2014. © Clive Davies

Branch updates

Caithness Branch. A new website, caithnessbirds.co.uk, has just been launched by the Caithness Branch with considerable input by Julian Smith. The site helps visitors find out what's going on in the county, with a birding sites map, up-to-date sightings, branch news and updates on progress on the local atlas.

Fife Branch. Alison Creamer, Fife Branch secretary, new Email address: alisonhcreamer@outlook.com

Stewartry Branch. Joan Howie, Stewartry Branch secretary, new address: The Wilderness, High Street, New Galloway, Castle Douglas, DG7 3RL. Tel: 01644 420280

New Outer Hebrides Bird Recorders: Yvonne Benting & Ian Thompson, Suthainn, Askernish, Isle of South Uist HS8 5SY, Email recorder@outerhebridesbirds.org.uk, telephone 01878 700849, 07501 332803 (YB), 07733 228246 (IT). A new website, www.outerhebridesbirds.org.uk, has details of sightings, how to submit records and much more.

New Shetland Bird Recorder: Rob Fray, Sunnydell, Virkie, Shetland ZE3 9JS, Email recorder@shetlandbirdclub.co.uk, website: www.shetlandbirdclub.co.uk.

Retiring recorders Brian Rabbits and Mark Chapman are thanked for their hard work.

Events

- **The 2014 Scottish Bird Fair**, 10 & 11 May 2014, Hopetoun House, West Lothian www.scottishbirdfair.org.uk
- **Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference**, Saturday 22 March 2014, Zoology Building, Aberdeen University. 'Birds and people... a natural relationship? For programme details and to book online, visit www.the-soc.org.uk or contact Anne Cotton, BTO Scotland, Tel. 01786 466560. Email: anne.cotton@bto.org
- **SOC Annual Conference, 31 October–2 November 2014, Station Hotel, Perth.** Programme and booking information will be circulated with the June issue of *Scottish Birds*.

Waterston House

Art Exhibitions

- Carol Barrett, 'Under an African Sky', showing until 2 April
- Szabolcs Kokay & Jonathan Latimer, 5 April to 28 May
- Robert Greenhalf, Andrew Haslen & Robert Gilmour, 31 May to 23 July

Optics Demo Day

Sunday 18 May, Waterston House, Aberlady, 10 am to 4 pm. A wide range of binoculars and telescopes to try before you buy. Or just come along for some friendly, expert advice!

The Birds of Clackmannanshire - new landmark book published

For the first time ever, the birdlife of Clackmannanshire has been systematically recorded to produce an ornithological atlas for the county. *The Birds of Clackmannanshire*, published by the Central Scotland branch, is the culmination of several years of dedicated fieldwork by numerous volunteers mapping the breeding and wintering distribution of the 'Wee County's' diverse birdlife.



Plate 22. Darren Rees (art editor) with John Grainger, Neil Bielby and Keith Broomfield (left to right) at the Clackmannanshire book launch, December 2013. © Dave Taylor (Wildpix Scotland)

The book retails at £15, with any profits from sales of the publication going to support the Central Scotland branch. Copies can be purchased by contacting Neil Bielby at n.bielby@sky.com

Dumfries & Galloway Bird Report 2012 (No. 23)

Edited by Duncan Irving. The price is the same as last year, £8 to non-members and £6 to SOC members + £1.50 p&p. From: Peter Swan, 3 Castle View, Castle Douglas DG7 1BG. Tel: 01556 502144. Email: pandmswan@btinternet.com. Please make cheques payable to "SOC Dumfries & Galloway Branches". Also available from Waterston House, WWT Caerlaverock and RSPB Mersehead.



Plate 23. Jim Cassels with Jo Winyard after receiving The Marsh Local Ornithology Award, London, October 2013. © BTO

Award for Arran Bird Atlas organiser

The Marsh Local Ornithology Award was presented to Dr Jim Cassels of Arran Natural History Society at a ceremony in London on 30 October 2013 by Professor Ian Newton, Chairman of the BTO, and Jo Winyard and Professor Bill Sutherland, on behalf of The Marsh Christian Trust. Jim Cassels, bird recorder of the Arran Natural History Society, has been the Atlas Regional Organiser for Bird Atlas 2007–11, coordinating fieldwork and undertaking validation of records for the Isle of Arran. The project is now at the writing and map production phase, again led by Jim. With financial support from the SOC and the Arran Trust, the intention is to publish the results in 2014 with the title *Arran Bird Atlas 2007–2012: mapping the breeding and wintering birds of Arran*. See www.arranbirding.co.uk for news and updates.

Waterston House - scene of the crime!

For two days in August, SOC Headquarters was transformed into a location for the second series of the BBC One murder-mystery drama *Shetland* starring Douglas Henshall. Made by ITV Studios, the series will focus on three novels by Ann Cleeves - *Raven Black*, *Blue Lightning* and *Dead Water* - and is due to be aired in the spring. The Club received a location fee of £3750 for the exclusive use of our premises for the full two days, which was felt to be worth the temporary disruption to HQ operations. *Blue Lightning* also features Fair Isle - although not as you remember it!



Plate 25. Identify that silhouette, Waterston House Christmas party, December 2013. © Jane Cleaver/Wendy Hicks

Corrections from the December issue

In the BirdTrack article (p. 337), the image is of the iPhone version, not the Android version and the piece was written by Anne Cotton, BTO Scotland. The credit for the Swift photo (p. 340) should read Ian Fulton. Our apologies for both.

Volunteers' Christmas Party

Just fewer than 50 volunteers attended this year's party at Waterston House, including Club officials Chris McInerny, Ian Thomson, Alan Fox and Mike Martin. A buffet was followed by a toast to the volunteers and some party games organised by staff.



Plate 26. A toast from the president, Waterston House Christmas party, December 2013. © Jane Cleaver/Wendy Hicks



Plate 24. Blindfold tasting, Waterston House Christmas party, December 2013. © Wendy Hicks



Plate 27. Wendy Hicks in the Archive Store, Waterston House, Aberlady, January 2014. © Clive Davies

The SOC Archive

I.H. ELFICK

Henry Ford famously suggested that “history is more or less bunk”. Alternatively, Winston Churchill claimed that “history will be kind to me, for I intend to write it”, while George Santayana wrote that “those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. But what is the relevance of this to SOC?

Like all clubs, we have a history, and it is important to be able to access this. Because of that, the Club has always had an archive of records, which can be consulted. The design of Waterston House included provision of an Archive Store off the Library Office to accommodate this need, and to allow the archive material, which had been spread throughout the original Regent Terrace headquarters of the Club in Edinburgh, to be accommodated in one place.

The archive material was placed in store when the Club was in temporary accommodation in Musselburgh, and was subsequently brought to Aberlady when the new headquarters building was completed. This provided an opportunity to develop a new organisation for the material. As new material is being added to the archive continually, it became apparent that the Archive Store would not hold it all. Council generously found the finances to provide a new stack in the Library, which materially increased the space available, and which will accommodate expansion for the foreseeable future.

Ultimately any classification system is arbitrary at the edges. An effective way of identifying and locating material within the archive is therefore important. A spreadsheet has been developed which describes the material and its location within the archive. Helpfully much of the Regent Terrace material had been identified by John Ballantyne, the archivist at Regent Terrace, also on a spreadsheet and it was possible to transfer these data to the new one. The new spreadsheet describing the material held in the Archive can be accessed and searched via the Club website. It is updated annually to reflect new material and any improvements or adjustments that have been achieved.

The structure of the Archive is straightforward. The Library Stack contains material directly relating to the history and activities of the Club. Material such as minutes from various committees, files on the organisation of conferences, annual reports and other formal papers are held along with material relating to the development of Waterston House, the creation of *The Birds of Scotland* and Branch activities. In addition, the wider activities of the Club are reflected with files such as those on the commercial activities of the Club, the events held at the Donald Watson Gallery or the Club’s responses to environmental and planning issues.

The rest of the material is held in the archive store. It is primarily focused on ornithology and includes material on the Club’s relationship with other bodies, material relating to studies of specific species of bird, material relating to faunal regions within Scotland, and in

particular, the personal archives of a number of ornithologists, including Baxter & Rintoul, Macmillan, Meiklejohn, Palmar, Sandeman and George Waterston. The archive was a significant source of information used in the development of BS3. Though the majority of the material is paper based, there is also a considerable amount of relevant audio and visual recorded material held in the store.

This material, both in the stack and the store, takes time and resources to store, maintain and organise, and is a reflection of the importance that the Club places on the Archive that it ensures these needs are met. The Archive provides two principal opportunities for both professional and amateur ornithologists. One is to explore and identify the history of and the issues addressed by the Club and be informed about the basis of the Club's current policies and decisions. The other is to access the data held in the archive about particular bird species or specific geographic areas to enable a comparison with current data. For example there are extensive records on geese in the Borders in the William Brotherston archive, which is complemented with similar material focused on Loch Leven in the Alan Allison archive.

It is hoped that the Archive will become more widely known and used. As well as through the Club website, the archive can be accessed through the National Register of Archives for Scotland, so that any relevant material can be identified and located. At present, a PhD student from Edinburgh University is using material from the archive as a part of his research data, and we would hope that this type of use of the Archive would be extended.

We also hope that the Archive will continue to develop. In part this will be by the refinement of the descriptions and organisation of the present material to enable more effective use. It will also be enhanced by the addition of new material, both in terms of keeping up to date on the activities of the Club and by the donation of new relevant material. We hope that the Archive will continue to reflect all aspects of the Club. For example, donations of material that reflects the activities of individual branches, both current and historical, would be most welcome. Equally the acquisition of relevant research data would both enhance the Archive and ensure that the data were accessible to future ornithologists.



Plate 28. A watercolour by E.V. Baxter of moths from her photograph album, SOC Archive, Waterston House, Aberlady, January 2014. © Clive Davies

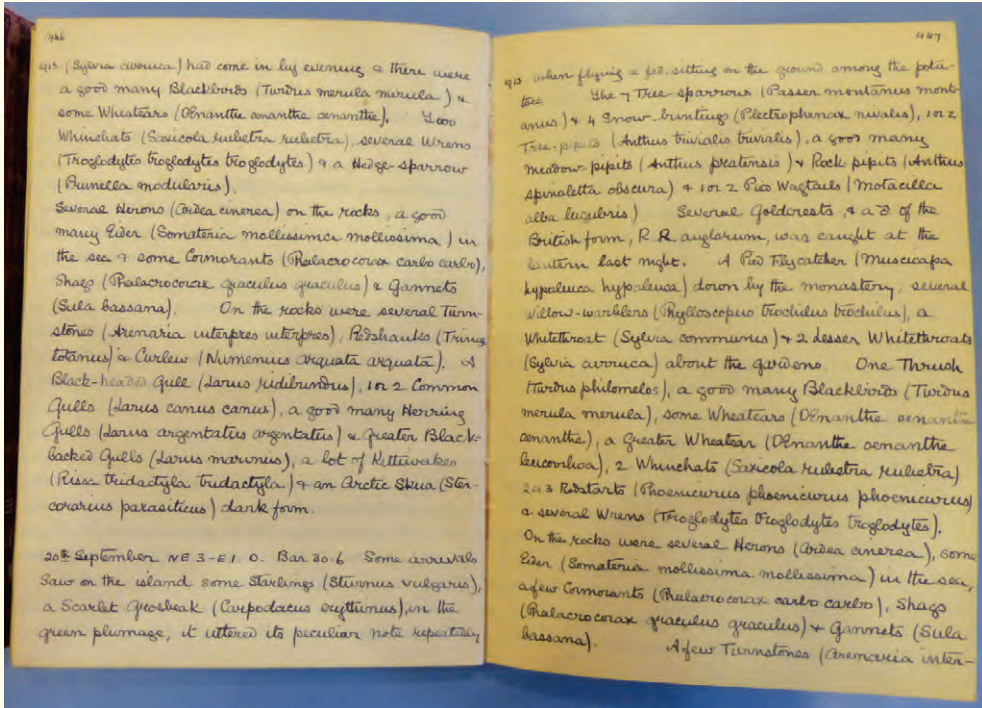


Plate 29. A spread from E.V. Baxter's Isle of May diaries, SOC Archive, Waterston House, Aberlady, January 2014. © Ian Elfick

The Archive is supervised by a sub-committee of the Library Committee. Chaired by John Savory, the other members of the sub-committee currently are David Clugston, Ian Elfick, Angela Hissett and Bob McGowan. The committee are conscious that major projects like *The Birds of Scotland* develop considerable bodies of knowledge of resources, but as they rarely occur more than once in a generation, much of this knowledge may be lost. We are therefore trying to develop a spreadsheet identifying the major ornithological resources available within Scotland. When developed, this would be available on the Club website. Comments and suggestions would be welcomed!

Ian Elfick
www.the-soc.org.uk/our-headquarters/the-library



Plate 30. The contents of a typical storage box, SOC Archives, Waterston House, Aberlady, January 2014. © Clive Davies

First record of a Scottish breeding Common Sandpiper on the non-breeding grounds

R.W. SUMMERS

The ringing of 22,000 Common Sandpipers in the UK, including many breeding birds and chicks, has led to only one ringing recovery on the non-breeding grounds south of the Sahara. This bird was ringed in southern England in autumn, so it is not known which breeding population it belonged to. It may have been a Scandinavian migrant. The furthest south a UK breeding bird has been recovered is Morocco. The Common Sandpiper is declining in numbers as a breeding species. The decline is not due to poorer breeding success but a decline in survival (Pearce-Higgins *et al.* 2009). Therefore, it is important to examine possible factors affecting survival at different stages of the annual cycle. This includes knowing where they spend the winter.

In 2011, the Highland Ringing Group deployed four geo-locators on Common Sandpipers breeding on the River Spey, near Granttown-on-Spey. Geo-locators are 1 gram data-loggers that record the time and light levels every few minutes. These allow one to calculate approximate locations twice per day (at midnight and noon) once the bird has been re-trapped and the data downloaded. The following year, one was re-trapped and the geo-locator removed to determine where the bird had been. It left Britain by 21 July and, after a short stay in Morocco, it moved down the coast to West Africa by the end of July. Thus, the migration of 4,400 km had taken 8.5 days. It spent most of the non-breeding period on the coast of either southern Senegal or The Gambia.

The time of the start of the return migration is not clear because of the inaccuracy of locations during the spring equinox, but the bird had moved inland by early April 2012, perhaps to

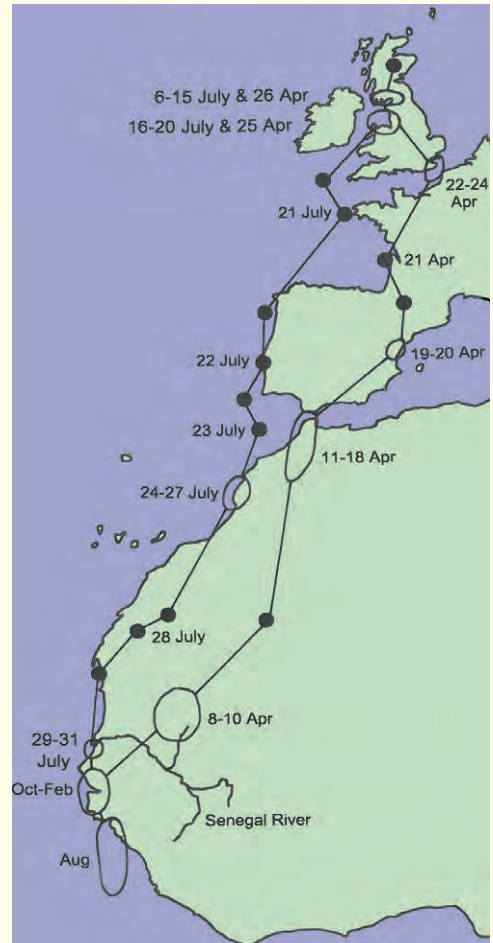


Figure 1. The migratory route and non-breeding areas of the Common Sandpiper tagged with a geo-locator. Dates are shown beside noon geo-locations (accurate to within c. 85 km) and ellipses encompassing the middle 50% of records at sites when the bird stopped for more than a day. The August records may be inaccurate due to the proximity to the autumn equinox when latitude records are inaccurate. The dates start in July 2011 and end with April 2012.

one of the large rivers south of the Sahara. It then crossed the Western Sahara to Morocco where it was held up by strong northerly winds. Afterwards, it moved up the east coast of Spain but crossed to the west coast of France and was in south-east England by 22–24 April. It was back on its breeding grounds by 27 April.

The coast of West Africa has two main habitats which are used by Common Sandpipers: mangroves and rice fields (Zwarts 1988). To feed the growing human population, many of the coastal wetlands are being turned into rice paddies. It is therefore possible that the decline in numbers of Common Sandpipers is due to changes in land use in West Africa. Our geolocator studies will continue to gather further data on the locations of the non-breeding grounds and the hazards that Common Sandpipers may face.

Full details of this preliminary study were published in: Bates, B., Etheridge, B., Elkins, N., Fox, J. & Summers, R.W. 2012. Pre-migratory change in mass and the migration track of a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* from Scotland. *Wader Study Group Bulletin* 119: 149–154.

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Email: ron.summers@rspb.org.uk*



Plate 31. Common Sandpiper, Highland, April 2007. © Al McNee

Manx Shearwaters breeding on the Isle of May

M. THORNE, D. THORNE & D. WHITE



Plate 32. The first sight of the first Manx Shearwater chick on the Isle of May, 8 August 2008. © Margaret Thorne

In the 80 years since its establishment the Isle of May Bird Observatory has kept long series of records, with the *Special Notes* series of logs the repository for unusual observations and counts of species, both avian and non-avian. The first record of Manx Shearwater in *Special Notes* is of at least one seen on the crossing from Pittenweem in April 1953, and after a handful of reports in the next three years a single bird was found in a passage at the Main Light (the

Tower), by one of the lighthouse keepers on 15 September 1957. It was handed to the occupants of the Observatory who ringed it. The written entry notes that "It was launched at Kirkhaven but although it seemed uninjured it was unable to take off; it was last seen swimming out to sea." Little importance was attached to this record, the presumption being that it was a bird lured to the island as a lighthouse attraction.



Plate 33. Manx Shearwater chick, Isle of May, 12 September 2008. Looks almost like fresh adult. © Margaret Thorne

More than two decades passed before a bird was heard at night calling over the island in 1978, and a further decade before this event was repeated in 1988 and a bird was seen to fly off from beneath a net set for Storm Petrels. In 1989, we were again present on the May, and a bird was ringed after it pocketed itself in our Stormie nets. For a few years after that there were sporadic occurrences of birds heard calling as they flew over the island during our late summer visits, but in 1996 there was prolonged aerial activity and vocalisation involving more than one bird. Observation was only carried out by listening (without using torches), but we were aware of male and female calls, that birds were landing, and from muffled calls that they



Plate 34. Manx Shearwater chick, Isle of May, 12 September 2008. The last vestige of down. © Margaret Thorne

were apparently going into burrows. In 1997, we could distinguish three different male voices and one female in the same area, but from 1998 there was much less audible activity. This continued until 2002. In that year, DW placed near the apparently occupied burrow entrance a microphone attached to a long lead so that it

was possible to monitor and record from c. 40 metres away and to hear both the male and female together underground. A bird was caught in August that year as it scabbled over the ground like a young Puffin making for the sea. Similarly, in 2003 there was burrow occupation and in late August a bird was seen outside a burrow at night.

In 2004, the first bird returned to the favoured spot on the island before midnight on 26 March, and on 22 May a male, which had been present in the burrow by day when we arrived, was replaced by a female during that night. She remained for the rest of the week until the 28th, during which night the male returned, they duetted and she left. This was strong evidence of incubation but with no contact detected in July & August it pointed to a failed breeding attempt. There was burrow occupation in 2005 by a male but no female was recorded, then 2006 saw only noisy aerial activity - evidence of there not being a settled pair, and in 2007 a pair was ousted by Puffins.



Plate 35. Manx Shearwater chick on the day it was ringed, Isle of May, 12 September 2008. © Margaret Thorne



Plate 36. Manx Shearwater chick, Isle of May, 3 August 2013. Looks more downy than the 2008 chick. © Margaret Thorne

Attendance by a pair between 13th and 20 May 2008 was marked by long spells of digging at a new burrow, with arrivals and departures quiet and furtive and this at a time when Puffins were already settled. When we returned on 1 August the microphone detected thumping sounds from within, and on the next night also. After midnight on the 4th a bird arrived at the burrow and departed later, while the following night (5th) a bird arrived silently at 23:29 and left at 01:13. The next two nights were unpleasant for the observers with incessant rain and, during the second night a NE F6–7 wind. During neither night was a bird seen to arrive. On the 7th a bird managed to approach and enter the burrow without alerting the watchers and was only picked up by DW through the microphone. From inside the burrow came adult croons and "high pitched chirping noises, as of a chick." The adult left at 02:25. "At approximately 18:00 we visited the burrow and DT reached down inside it. His hand was gripped and he brought out a Manx Shearwater chick."



Plate 37. Manx Shearwater chick, Isle of May, 8 August 2013. Comparable with the 2008 chick on a similar date (Plate 39). © Margaret Thorne



Plate 38. Manx Shearwater chick, Isle of May, 25 August 2013. The head quickly losing its down. © Margaret Thorne

This was the first record of Manx Shearwater breeding for the Isle of May, and for the east coast of Scotland south of Orkney. This first proven success was the culmination of 13 seasons of night observations and listening all done with no disturbance to the birds. We made our own rules, as there is almost no experience to call upon relating to such a small 'colony'. There was no intentional ringing of adults close to the centre of activity, though on many occasions we could have taken birds by hand easily, and no use of torches.

The following year we were, at the last minute, unable to make our May visit and in July the sea conditions delayed our arrival on the island by a day. Arriving mid-afternoon on 19 July, we settled in to the Low Light quickly and, anxious to determine the current state of activity went to check previously used burrows. As we approached the successful 2008 burrow there was the unwelcome sight of a freshly dead Manx Shearwater chick outside the entrance. Judging by the visible external injuries it would appear that it had been dragged from the burrow by its head. That it had not been taken away pointed to its not having been pulled out by a gull, which would presumably have fed it to its own young, and the most likely perpetrator seemed to be a Puffin. The chick was probably less than two weeks old. After hatching there is a period of about 8–10 days when a Manx Shearwater chick is attended by a parent by day during which the chick develops the ability to regulate its body temperature without the need for brooding, and after this point it is left alone allowing both parents to go to sea to gather food. This is the time when it is most vulnerable because it will not for some time be able to defend the burrow and itself against intruders. This chick



Plate 39. Manx Shearwater chick, Isle of May, 29 August 2013. The wings have developed rapidly. © Margaret Thorne



Plate 40. Manx Shearwater chick, Isle of May, 29 August 2013. The tail feathers and under-tail coverts are now well formed. © Margaret Thorne

looked to be at that stage. Measurements were taken and the body put in the freezer at Fluke Street from where it was later taken to the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh as a tangible record of the second breeding for the Isle of May, albeit ultimately unsuccessful.

The 2009 event seemed to cause disruption to the breeding pattern and there was no sign of any settled activity until August 2012 when there was a concentration on a burrow in a new area. A check of this burrow in May 2013 confirmed that a male was in residence throughout our week's stay but by the following Monday a changeover had taken place and the female was in residence. Regular changeovers were noted until the last week of June. We returned on 2 August and during that night recorded a visit by an adult to the burrow thus confirming its continued use. The following day we inspected the nesting site and extracted a very feisty and healthy chick capable of defending itself in the burrow. During the rest of the week we recorded the visits of the adults and the provisioning of the youngster which was ringed by DW. We returned for a week at the end of August during which the chick reached a weight nearly 50% greater than the adult male and 70% greater than the female. It was nearing the point when feeding would cease prior to fledging. A departure at this time in the season is much less fraught than for young Puffins five or six weeks earlier as the large numbers of gulls which they have to avoid have gone.

A reader of the recently published Bird Atlas 2007–11 (Balmer *et al.* 2013) looking at this species' account map will see that there is a red triangle on the Isle of May indicating a gain in the breeding distribution. To us this small symbol represents to date over 500 observer nights spent on watch by the three members of the team. We have realised our objective of recording the establishment of Manx Shearwater as a new breeding seabird on the Isle of May but it is just the very beginning. A 'colony' of one pair is fragile and expansion difficult, given burrow competition and fluctuating food resources. We look forward to the time when returning youngsters help to swell the numbers on the island in the years to come.

We acknowledge the cooperation of SNH in encouraging our continuing study on the National Nature Reserve and thank Mark Newell of CEH for monitoring in 2013 when we were not on the island.

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Wild Whooper Swans breeding in Clyde

Plates 41–43. Nesting Whooper Swans, Hamilton, Clyde, June 2013. © J. Knox

J. MAXWELL

Scotland has a small, but slowly increasing, population of breeding Whooper Swans; numbers have increased from one pair in 1978 to 3–7 pairs in 2004 (Forrester *et al.* 2007) and 13–16 pairs in 2011 (Holling *et al.* 2013). Their stronghold is in Shetland and the North-west Highlands, but an apparently wild pair nested in Ayrshire in 2002–08. In addition, naturalised birds bred in Clyde in 1979, and these birds were present well into the 2000s, with breeding confirmed in all but one year between 1979 and 1993, as well as in 2004 (Holling *et al.* 2010).

The breeding of naturalised birds has also been recorded in several English counties. There have been a number of instances of single birds building nests, and several cases of hybridisation with Mute Swans. An injured wild pair became the first definite nesting pair in England in 2011 (Holling *et al.* 2013).

In 2012, a Whooper Swan paired up with a Mute Swan, built a nest on the little island (Plate 41) on Island Pond, Hamilton, Lanarkshire and got to the stage of laying eggs, which then failed to hatch. The pond is part of Strathclyde Country Park, Motherwell and is viewable mainly from the motorway service station northbound on the M74. It hosts a wide variety of waterfowl and Mute Swans regularly breed there. Whooper Swans often visit in winter, being part of the main flock centring around Baron's Haugh RSPB Reserve below Motherwell. However, it appears that one female has remained on this pond throughout the summer for the last ten years

having been injured and unable to join the local flock returning to Iceland to breed.

In 2013, now with a Whooper mate, she has used the same nesting site and produced a brood of two cygnets. Unfortunately, this news was not widely broadcast and after being photographed by a local enthusiast, the female and brood appears to have disappeared from the scene leaving the male Whooper alone at the site.

Injuries to Whooper Swans are quite common in this area and last year two swans had wing damage and remained near Baron's Haugh with another uninjured bird right through this summer. We suspect that the pylon line across the Clyde valley is responsible where there is a long history of bird strikes.

In recent years, the number of Whoopers remaining in Scotland during the summer has gradually increased and we await next year's breeding season to see if perhaps other locally injured birds will attempt to raise a family.

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Jimmy Maxwell

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FIELD NOTE

Time out for a young predator

I have had some memorable experiences this year, both in a professional capacity as White-tailed Eagle Officer for the RSPB and also during my spare time as a member of the Lewis and Harris Raptor Study Group. Although I enjoy watching almost anything with feathers, it would be fair to say that I do have a particular interest in our birds of prey. Curiously though, the highlight for 2013 does not include one of our largest raptors. It was the hour or so I spent in my garden with an extremely, and unusually confiding, fledged juvenile Sparrowhawk. I found the bird perched on a wall, apparently with no other thought in mind other than to enjoy the warm sunshine. As I moved slowly closer, it seemed relaxed and unconcerned by my presence. Then I noticed the youngster's head seemed to be twitching unnaturally, jerking to one side, then up, down, and then to the side again. Initially I thought there was something wrong with my visitor, an illness perhaps, which might also explain why I was able to get so close, but the bright eyes, tight feathers and the stance on one leg are all typical of a healthy bird, not one that is sick. There had to be another explanation. This odd behaviour continued until I finally discovered what was actually happening. A number of hoverflies had gathered in the same sunny

sheltered spot as the hawk and as they darted, hovered and settled it was following their every move. It was amazing to watch a species known for its incredible eyesight in fast hunting situations actually being preoccupied by such minute creatures.

Not all human encounters with the bird are as pleasant as this though. Only recently, I read an article where the author was voicing his concern for the dwindling songbird numbers after a Sparrowhawk appeared in his garden. Predation by raptors is not, and never has been, a reason for the decline in songbird numbers. These creatures have been living together for centuries and are still with us. Introduced aliens and domestic cats can certainly create havoc in some circumstances, but native predators are a crucial part of a well-balanced ecosystem.

By introducing feeders we produce an artificial environment that suits our garden birds and they, in turn, attract predators. We are, in effect, providing food for the hawk. So let's even up the balance a bit by providing some escape zones. Thorny shrubs provide shelter and protection from all but the most determined hunters and are also a good source of food.

Frank Stark



Plate 44. Off-duty juvenile Sparrowhawk. © *Frank Stark*



Plate 45. First-summer male Nightjar, Angus, 3rd August 2011. © Chris McGuigan

(Re-) Colonisation of Angus by Nightjar 2011–13

C.C. McGUIGAN

We seem to be living in an age of rapid change in species distribution. This is particularly apparent for more mobile creatures such as moths, butterflies, dragonflies and birds. In this context, there are several species that seem to be consolidating or extending their ranges northwards: for example, Nuthatch, Cetti's Warbler, Nightjar, Wood Lark and Hobby. Since moving to east Scotland ten years ago, a summer-time focus of my birding has been to anticipate, and search for, some of these species in Angus.

From 2006 onwards, this effort has specifically included nocturnal 'playback' of Nightjar vocalisation and careful listening for response in likely areas of habitat. Until 2011 this had yielded nothing. At that stage, there were a total of six records of Nightjar for Angus, including one of a pair that was reported to have bred in Duns Estate in 1925 (Crighton 1975, local recorder's

database). However, historical records suggest that Nightjar may have been a more familiar species around the Tay (particularly in Fife) in earlier centuries (Harvie-Brown 1906).

Discovery

On 7 July 2011, I was bird ringing at around dusk when I was suddenly aware that, in addition to a distant male Quail, I could also hear the song of a male Nightjar! The nearest forest was around a mile upwind, in the direction the song was coming from. There were some narrow shelter belts in between, but it was difficult to be sure how far the sound was carrying in the breeze. The bird sang intermittently over the next 20 minutes or so while I packed up my equipment. While I simultaneously tried to localise it, the bird seemed to change location. It then went quiet and there was no more song for the next hour at least.

Follow-up observation

I returned the following evening with Mike Nicoll (MN) and spent some time listening along the 'line of sound'. Eventually MN located the bird: singing from an area of clear fell which I had searched for Nightjar over previous summers. I discussed our observations with Greg Conway, who studies Norfolk Nightjars. Based on his description of how the songs of paired and lone birds differ, it sounded like this bird was paired.

The next two months were spent listening to, locating and documenting activity at this territory and, to an extent searching nearby areas of habitat. While this was the only occupied territory we confirmed (MN thought he might have heard a second male singing nearby later that July) it became apparent that there were at least two birds present and that there was, indeed, a female. Prior to this a mist net was set on one evening and the male was caught and ringed. It was a young bird: having hatched in 2010.

Breeding success

Keen to remove the lingering uncertainty regarding the breeding status, we spent considerable time searching for a nest. This is where the dogged determination of MN (combined with his keenness to donate large portions of his retirement to bird study) paid off. On 16 August, he finally found the recently-vacated nest with two just-fledged Nightjars nearby.

Population increase 2011–13

The following year, a pair returned to the same site. Later in the season, Grahame Stewart (GS) reported hearing what he believed to be a Nightjar in Angus. I suspected that he had chanced upon the same site but was surprised to find that this site was different. Song was heard there regularly for two weeks. Nothing more was heard there that season. The original site was, however, occupied all summer, but survey effort was reduced. No further birds were trapped and although no hard evidence of breeding was obtained, both sexes were seen and there seems no reason to doubt breeding there in 2012.

In 2013, the situation changed markedly. Once again, the original site was occupied, probably by two pairs. Suitably primed, GS found Nightjar back at his 2012 site although only for a ten day period

in mid-June and later, independently found birds near the original site. At this stage, a few other people were alerted to the presence of Nightjars in Angus and went on to find some more. Gus Guthrie and Jon Cook found a single male at a completely new site. This bird held territory that season. Simon Busuttil and GS confirmed a further new site with one or two singing males near the original site. Again, breeding outcome is not known but, given the benign weather conditions in 2013, it seems likely that successful breeding occurred again in Angus.

So to sum up, we have evidence of absence in these (and other) areas of Angus prior to 2011 followed by confirmed breeding by a pair that year. This was followed by two occupied sites in 2012 (with probable breeding at one) and then five sites with six or more occupied territories (probably at least four pairs plus lone males) in 2013.

Habitat preference in Angus

Habitat selection by these birds is broadly similar to that described elsewhere in Britain and birds were initially found at one of these sites I had identified prospectively as 'likely good' for the species. While recent conifer clear-fell and early conifer or birch re-growth are often favoured, birds have occupied other habitats in Angus including wooded hillside with bracken and gorse scrub. Also, while they are reported elsewhere as having a preference for dry, sandy terrain, Angus birds have often occupied areas with extensive damp, marshy ground. So any open woodland or heath is probably worth checking.

All occupied sites found, so far, have been in lowland areas (up to 150 m above sea level). However, while some time has been spent checking apparently suitable habitat in upland glens, search effort has been concentrated in low-lying areas. There are historical reports of the species from the Angus glens, so searching appropriate upland habitats may still be worthwhile.

Timing

While they probably arrive in May, birds have generally not been heard until June. In 2013, GS was listening regularly and first heard one on 16 June. Given that spring 2013 was rather late,

searching from late May probably makes sense. The 2013 birds sang until mid-August and the last sighting was 8 September.

If you want to find your own Nightjars, position yourself near some likely habitat just before dusk from late May to July and listen for the characteristic churring song of the male or the 'kwek' flight call. Given the ample suitable-looking habitat around Scotland, I can see no reason why these birds should be limited to Angus and checking suitable habitat in neighbouring counties (and beyond) may well be worthwhile. For example, there are extensive areas of suitable looking forest in Grampian. In particular, the lowland forests along the Moray and Fife coasts look suitable.

If checking for Nightjars please bear in mind that the species is prone to disturbance. The Forestry Commission for example, has forest management policies in place elsewhere to protect these birds. Please therefore report any that you find to the local recorder so that the

land owner can, if appropriate, be informed and the fortunes of the Nightjar in Angus and Scotland can be further documented.

Acknowledgements

Several people have been looking out for these birds and have shared their observations including: Jon Cook, Gus Guthrie, Simon Busuttill, Grahame Stewart, Geoff Flogdell and Mike Nicol. Greg Conway, Research Ecologist at BTO, shared his considerable experience of the species at the early stages of these observations.

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Snowy Owl by D. Pullan

BOOK REVIEWS

The book reviews published in *Scottish Birds* reflect the views of the named reviewers and not those of the SOC.

On the Rocks. Bryan Nelson, 2013. Langford Press, Peterborough, ISBN 978-1-904078-56-2, paperback, 292 pages, £20.00.



I found this a very enjoyable book. Any library will place it under Biography, but it is mainly reminiscences of scientific and conservation

work done by the author on the Bass Rock, Galapagos, Christmas Island (the Indian Ocean one), Aldabra, and other places. There is also a short chapter on setting up the Seabird Centre in North Berwick. His early life is briefly described but only in the final chapter, and other personal details are generally omitted.

Most of the book concerns gannets and related seabirds on which the author is a world authority, but his considerable learning is very lightly worn. He writes in a lively style, informative and entertaining, showing the sort of questions scientists ask and the way they think, all clearly explained to the non-scientist. There are no tables or graphs. Any birdwatcher will find much of interest here, even if your interests don't normally extend to the tropics, and so I suspect will many ornithologists. He lays stress on the value of close and painstaking observation of bird behaviour, techniques partly learned from Niko Tinbergen and Konrad Lorenz, and he recalls kindnesses from several well-known Scottish ornithologists of an earlier generation. Like many of his age group, he retains some affection for the research

techniques of his early years, before the widespread use of computers, and is happy to reveal some gentle prejudices which will be shared by numbers of his readers from all branches of science.

The numerous illustrations include excellent photographs by the author and artwork by his long-standing friend John Busby. At £20 the price seems entirely reasonable. Read this book if you can.

John Law

Birds in Mid Deeside 1970–2012. Edited by David Jenkins, 2013. TLA Publications, Whitewalls, 1 Barclay Park, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire AB34 5 JF. Paperback, 80 pages, £7.50 + £1.20 p&p from above address.

This small book is written for general naturalists and would be very useful for visitors to this beautiful area.

The species list is fairly detailed and even experienced birders would be interested in species like Short-eared Owl, Long-eared Owl, Honey Buzzard, Hawfinch and Parrot Crossbill. For the less experienced visitor, it is crammed with gems from six decades. There are interesting, more detailed, chapters on breeding and passage waders and gulls and first song dates for resident and migrant passerines. There is also useful detail on local Black-headed Gull colonies where the national picture of decline is mirrored locally. I like local avifaunas and if I



was visiting Mid Deeside I would buy this one. There are superb images by Harry Scott and Ian Francis in particular.

Ken Shaw

Terns. David Cabot & Ian Nisbet, 2013. New Naturalist 123, Collins, London, ISBN 978-0-00-741247-1, hardback, £55.00, ISBN 978-0-00-741248-8, paperback, £35.00.

The New Naturalist series aims to provide authoritative texts on a range of subjects encompassing natural history, landscape and climate, with prime focus on Britain and Ireland. This title describes in great detail the life history of each of the terns which regularly breed here and has briefer information about all other species recorded on these islands.



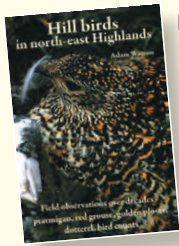
The 461 pages include an Authors' Foreword and Acknowledgements and 12 chapters covering: Terns of the World; Food and Foraging; Breeding Biology; Migration; History of Terns in Britain and Ireland; Little Tern; Sandwich Tern; Common Tern; Roseate Tern; Arctic Tern; Conservation; Vagrants, Passage Migrants and Occasional Breeders. Appendices give: Demography, Population Trends and Basis for Conservation; Research on Terns; The Seabird Monitoring Programme; Scientific Names of Plants and Animals Mentioned in the Text. Thirteen pages of endnotes are listed separately from the text, increasing the reading flow, 365 references are listed, the index seems thorough. There are 188 colour and

five black-and-white photographs, 17 distribution maps, and over 110 figures, tables and charts.

An excellent book, produced to the high standard expected of the series. Packed with information yet remaining very readable. Highly recommended, and a must-have for seabird enthusiasts.

Stuart L. Rivers

Hill Birds in North-east Highlands. Adam Watson, 2013. Paragon Publishing, Rothersthorpe, Northants, ISBN 978-1-78222-101-2, paperback, 107 pages, £9.99.



Dr Watson is the Sherlock Holmes of upland ecology. His name resounds in the annals of Scottish natural history. Half a page of references in *The Birds of Scotland* as lead author alone

testify to that. As a rule, his prose is as spare as his mountaineer's frame, clear as springwater, crisp as cranreuch, built on material as sound as Cairngorm granite, fortified with cask-strength statistics. Like Mr Attlee, he seldom uses one syllable where none will do. This slim volume, one of several by him from this publisher, gleans decades of data garnered during other studies - stray feathers from 70 years of note-keeping. Red Grouse and Ptarmigan hatch dates are compared with blaeberry leaf growth and climate change; Golden Plover and Dotterel breeding success with crane-fly abundance; Golden Plover breeding numbers with weather, density and habitat; their decline with habitat loss, avian predators and climate change.

Here is a deep drift of gemstones. Nevertheless, closer editing could

have polished these Cairngorm crystals. Indeed, we can vouch that few authors are more tractable to the editor than Dr Watson. Some passages are daunting to the merely above-average reader, or uncharacteristically clunky, as if torn from a weather-beaten notebook. Maps would have spared us such topography as "Braemar is in a valley 90 km south-west of Aberdeen". For site details we are often referred to sources as venerable as the *Journal of Animal Ecology* 1963. Even an avid student in a well stocked library might groan.

With upland breeding bird counts and Dotterel population estimates, Dr Watson spreads his wings to harry several authors. Warming to his polemic, he stoops at the hapless Thompson & Whitfield relentlessly - a flyte of Dotterels, forsooth! Curiously, he ignores the *Birds of Scotland* Dotterel assessment, with which he would doubtless also disagree. For all that, Adam Watson points to the worth of a hoard of dog-eared notebooks, and reminds us how precious are the hill birds of Scotland.

D.J. Bates

A Guide to Scots Bird Names. Robin Jackson, revised edition 2013. Ptarmigan Press, Banchory, ISBN 978-0-9540618-3-8, paperback, 44 pages, £11.99.

Braw paintings by Mike Langman and swatches of verse by makars ancient and modern adorn this attractive booklet which now collects almost 1,000 Scots bird names. Otherwise after brief introductory matter it remains simply two lists: Scots-English (i.e. standard English, more or less) and English-Scots. Regrettably we find little other guidance. Etymology

and Scots name-element definitions from "bletherin" to "bluiter" are shunned. Regional variants are outlined only for Chaffinch; even kenspeckle Shetland avifauna skulk among the rest.



Material in *The Oxford Book of Bird Names*, *The Concise Scots Dictionary* (CSD) and John Young's admirable *Robert Burns: A Man for All Seasons* (1996) is overlooked. That "Hoodie" can mean Carrion Crow is noted without further comment. In south Scotland this lingering folk usage may hint that the Hoodie-Carrion line once lay much further south. Why else call a black crow a "Hoodie"?

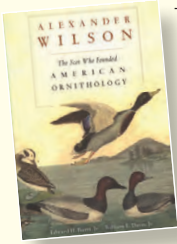
"Unthank Water...wi' the gowdnie's eggs" by Hugh "Macdiarmid" (actually MacDiarmid, *Water Music* 1932) is claimed under Goldeneye. A first nesting record? We investigated. MacDiarmid's editor (*Collected Poems* 1967) gives "gowdnie" as "gumard (a sea bird)". A posthumous editor (Douglas Dunn 1992 *Twentieth-century Scottish Poetry*) corroborates "gowdnie" as "the goldeneye duck". Neither *The Oxford Book* nor CSD disenfangle this guddle. The *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (DSL, www.dsl.ac.uk) offers various fishes for "gowdnie" with the duck as only a "may be". A case for the committee?

Those who do not mind their language will hardly mind anything else. Scots bird names have never been more in need of conservation. Use 'em or lose 'em! Nowadays constipated committees of bletherskite busybodies dump on us one clumsy clamjamfry of ugly academic names after another.

Vote yes to an independent *Scottish List!*

D.J. Bates

Alexander Wilson: The Scot Who Founded American Ornithology. Edward H. Burt, Jr. & William E. Davis, Jr., 2013. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., ISBN 978-0-674-07255-8, hardback, 444 pages, £25.00.



The publication of this book in the bicentenary year of Wilson's death, aged only 47, reminds us of the important contribution he made in the field of Poetry, Bird Art and American Ornithology. On this side of the Atlantic he is largely unknown despite having five species of bird named by or for him. Wilson is considerably more appreciated in North America where the bulk of the research material is to be found.

This scholarly work is split into five main chapters. The first two deal with Wilson's life, his writings, and with a brief biography, subjects which have been well covered by previous writers. The third provides the main focus of this thoroughly well-researched book. At its core is a detailed study of his pencil sketches, pen and ink drawings and draft paintings for the plates in his nine-volume *American Ornithology* (1808–14). Where they still exist the original artwork is reproduced in colour and compared to the finished plate. An accompanying commentary discusses the accuracy of his drawing techniques and makes comparisons with other contemporary illustrators. The final chapter is devoted to Wilson's legacy and his influence on subsequent generations of ornithologists, artists and writers. Two appendices provide informative accounts of his predecessors, contemporaries and correspondents.

It is a beautifully-produced book and to get a real insight into undoubtedly one of Scotland's unsung heroes, I can strongly recommend this latest addition to the Wilson literature.

David Clugton

Handbook of the Birds of the World, Special Volume: New Species and Global Index 2013. Edited by J. del Hoyo, A. Elliott, J. Sargatal & D. Christie, Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, ISBN 978-84-96553-88-0, hardback, 812 pages, €145.

2011 saw the publication of the sixteenth and apparently final volume of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, one of the most ambitious and successful publishing ventures ever undertaken in ornithology. We are now treated to one further 'Special Volume'. The original sixteen were built around concise accounts of every species of bird known to science, each individually illustrated. This new volume is rather different. Following a short introduction there are five main sections, a short first one describing the work of BirdLife International (59 pages; inspiring), a second dealing with avian classification and the impact of recent advances based on DNA (70 pages; a good overview but definitely not for the faint-hearted), the third with newly discovered species (164 pages; interesting but primarily of interest to the specialist), the fourth, some 200 photographs (175 pages; a joy to peruse) and finally a global index (309 pages; worthy but dull). Production standards are every bit as good as the previous

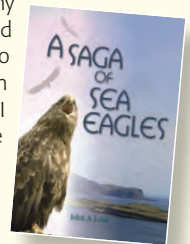


volumes, but, interesting though it is, this special volume only really makes sense in connection with what has gone before, and the target audience is presumably those who have subscribed to the previous sixteen volumes. For those who have not, my advice would be to look elsewhere for books to buy.

Robin Sellers

A Saga of Sea Eagles. John A. Love, 2013. Whittles Publishing, Dunbeath, Caithness, ISBN 978-1-84995-080-0, paperback, 256 pages, £19.99.

Like many others my copy of *The Return of the Sea Eagle* is an ex library book, purchased second hand long after it went out of print. John Love's thorough research provided a solid basis for many a Sea Eagle talk and was a reference I constantly returned to. However, John states in the introduction, that this book '*...will not be The Return of the Sea Eagle with a few new chapters added...*' and his approach is sound. Barely two pages pass without one of the author's colour photos mainly from Scotland and Norway. The use of these 'as it happened' photos gives a far better feel than using pin sharp library stock. It is also great to see the faces of so many people involved. Many maps, figures and tables are also included (some from the earlier book) and I was pleased to see John's expressive sketches at the end of each chapter.



John launches into an excited personal account of his first encounter with Sea Eagles on Fair Isle and the fate of these birds. The second chapter '*Sea Eagle facts*' places the British species in context and includes information

on biology other chapters such as 'Food and feeding', 'Sea Eagles in Britain', 'Sea Eagle persecution' are equally well researched and readable providing background information new to many. The inclusion of chapters 'sea eagle fiction', 'Rum' and 'Living with Sea Eagles' provide information, anecdotes and illustrations you will find nowhere else.

Finding the perfect time to write about a project is always difficult and as its predecessor was published prior to successful breeding on the west this book was completed a year before chicks fledged in East Scotland and Ireland. This inevitably makes the end feel abrupt, but is balanced by a reflective post-script.

This book is an insightful personal account of Sea Eagles in Scotland accompanied by authoritative research and told in a gentle, humorous style making it an enjoyable read.

Claire Smith

Drawn to the Edge. John Threlfall, 2013. Langford Press, Peterborough, ISBN 978-1-904078-38-8, hardback, 190 pages, £38.00.



This is the second book from Scottish based artist John Threlfall, and another in the ever-growing Wildlife Art Series from Langford Press. It has a similar elegant format and design as John's first title *Between The Tides*. The new collection *Drawn to the Edge* shares the similarly high production values, with full colour reproductions of John's beautiful artwork throughout. *Drawn to the Edge* is a lively portfolio of up-to-

date paintings from John's travels around the British coastline from Dorset's Jurassic Coast to the far northern beaches of Uist on the Outer Hebrides.

The book is broken into chapters reflecting the changing habitats on the journey with sections on Sea Lochs, Offshore Islands, Estuaries and Saltmarsh. These are illustrated with John's stylish artwork, his thoughtful prose and poetic captions. In a revealing introduction John spells out just how invigorating he finds his time visiting the shoreline.

The bird paintings and landscapes are wonderful and what we've come to expect from an artist of John's high standing. However, some of my favourite images are of mammals, and these often go beyond the normal portrayal of well known species: his Bull Grey Seal from Donna Nook, Lincolnshire and Wild Goat from Carsaig, Isle of Mull are particularly superb. In both masterful paintings John's confident and bold brushwork capture the form and character of the animals with consummate skill. The direct use of a loaded brush is something of trademark of Threlfall and his reputation is sure to grow with this fine book.

Darren Rees

The Birds of Africa. Volume VIII: the Malagasy Region. Roger Safford & Frank Hawkins (eds), 2013. Christopher Helm, London, ISBN 978-0-7136-6532-1, hardback, 1,024 pages, £125.00.

The eighth and last of the series originally published by Academic Press in the 1980s, this volume is different in that it covers an entire zoogeographical region rather than the conventional arrangement by families in previous volumes. It

covers all the birdlife that can be encountered in the islands of Madagascar, the Seychelles and Mascarenes (Mauritius, Reunion and Rodrigues), Comoros and numerous minor coralline

islands. The Malagasy region is a biodiversity hotspot, with unique avifauna, mammalia and plantlife, all with a high degree of endemism. Consequently, it has become a popular birdwatching holiday destination.

The introduction covers the geological history of the region, the geography, climate and vegetation of individual islands, followed by a section on the bird biogeography, evolution, colonisation and current status, endemism, introduced and extinct species. Forty-eight colour plates by John Gale and Brian Small illustrating the resident and migrant birds are grouped to the front of the book, followed by the species accounts in taxonomic order. A further 15 colour plates cover vagrant birds. Each individual species account describes the taxonomy, distribution, description, identification, voice, habits, food, breeding habitats, and status and conservation. There are extensive references, bibliography, scientific, English and French index lists, as befitting this major scientific work.

At more than a thousand pages and weighing more than 4.5 kg, this is a handbook to study before and after your visit, not to take with you. The lucky visitor will need the field guide by Sinclair and Langrand, which concerns only identification, but upon their return home, can then enjoy delving into this book at leisure.

John Wills



YOUNG BIRDERS' TRAINING COURSE

Applications are invited from individuals (aged 16–25) to participate in a week-long course run by SOC and Isle of May Bird Observatory on the Isle of May.



- Course will be held on 5–12th July 2014
- Limited to six participants
- Basic, hostel-style accommodation
- Course substantially sponsored by SOC

- Course content will include species recording and data handling, seabird research, bird ringing, Isle of May NNR & aspects of bird observatory life
- Deadline for applications – 25th April



*To apply, and for further information, follow links from SOC website:
www.the-soc.org.uk*

RINGERS' ROUNDUP

If you have any interesting ringing recoveries, articles, project updates or requests for information which you would like to be included in the next issue, please email to Raymond Duncan at Raymond@waxwing.fsnet.co.uk. Thank you very much to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and the many ringers, ringing groups and birders who provided the information for this latest round up. Thanks also to the many bird watchers who take the time and trouble to read rings in the field or find dead ringed birds and report them.

Norwegian darvic ringing projects

Engraved darvic rings (coloured plastic with engraved letters/numbers) are an excellent way of identifying individual birds in the field without any need to recapture them. With an ever-increasing number of birdwatchers using an ever-improving quality of photographic equipment every photograph of a darvic-ringed bird is helping various ringing projects to build up a bigger picture of timing and extent of movements of many species. Across the North Sea in west and south-west Norway, many darvic-ringed birds from projects run by the Sunnmøre and Lista Ringing Groups are being spotted by birders in Scotland.

Little Stint

Norman Milligan was lucky enough to capture a photograph of a darvic-ringed Little Stint which was present on the beach at White Sands Bay, East Lothian on 2 and 3 October 2013. Information was promptly supplied by Kjell Mork Soot from the Sunnmøre Ringing Group which revealed this bird had been ringed as a juvenile at Giske, Møre & Romsdal in western Norway on 9 September.



Plate 46. Darvic-ringed Little Stint JAP at White Sands Bay, Lothian, 3 October 2013. © Norman Milligan



Plate 47. Darvic-ringed Lapwing J34C on the Ythan Estuary, North-east Scotland, 29 August 2013. © Moray Souter

Lapwing

Our Lapwing numbers are massively swollen in autumn by counts far too large to originate solely from our rapidly declining breeding population. It is always interesting to get some information about the origins of these immigrants. Moray Souter photographed a darvic-ringed juvenile Lapwing on the Ythan Estuary, North-east Scotland on 29 August 2013. Information received back from the Lista Ringing Group revealed this bird to have been ringed as a chick at Hemnes, Sor, Karmoy, Rogaland, south-west Norway on 12 June 2013. Interestingly, the bird was still present three months later on 23 November, perhaps set to winter.

Lots of other projects from the Norwegian ringing groups involving engraved darvic rings include Great Black-backed, Herring, Common and Black-headed Gulls, Purple Sandpiper, Curlew, Redshank, Ringed Plover, Waxwing, Rock Pipit and White Wagtail.

Please send any sightings to kjellmorksoot@fugler.com or cr@ringmerking.net.

Pink-footed Goose collars, old style (for the poor) and new style (for the rich)

A catch of Pink-footed Geese at Blackburn near Aberdeen on 5 January 2014 resulted in 88 birds being fitted with old style neck-collars (darvic-engraved letters at about £4 each) and two new-style (3-D printed engraved with a solar panel GPS transmitter attachment at about £1,000 each; I think that's the right number of 0s!) (Plates 48 & 49).

Carl Mitchell of WWF, in a project part-funded by SNH, is using the satellite tracking collars to follow the daily movements and feeding sites of the birds in relation to their night-time roosts. A webpage can be accessed <http://telemetry.wikispaces.com> to view these movements as well as those of two birds originally collared in Iceland in the summer of 2013. There are also links to Bean Geese ringed at Slamannan, near Falkirk in winter 2012.

Meanwhile, the poor (Grampian Ringing Group) are also quite happy to tootle along with the old-style collars, promoting Community or Citizen Science (or whatever the buzz lingo is at the moment) to continue the involvement and participation of many birders who enjoy looking out for and reporting these collars and help monitor survival, site fidelity and return rates in their areas.

Please report any sightings of colour-ringed wildfowl to colourmarkedwildfowl@wwf.org.uk.



Plates 48–49. Old-style (below) and new-style (above) neck-collared Pink-footed Geese, Blackburn, North-east Scotland, 5 January 2014. © Rab Rae & Euan Ferguson



The march of the Med Gulls

Well, it's maybe not a march yet, but the increase and spread of Mediterranean Gulls down south in England, Wales and Ireland is gradually moving northwards into Scotland, with more birds being recorded and individuals lingering longer into spring. With the help of engraved darvic rings previously mentioned, more information is being obtained on numbers and individuals involved.

Three ringed birds recently seen around the north-east coast show the diverse origins of some of these birds with one returning to exactly the same wintering site as the previous year.

Green darvic AKLC was spotted by Mick Marquiss in Sandhaven Harbour on 8 January 2013 and subsequently by many other birders in the

following 2 months. This bird had been ringed as a breeding adult at Niedersachsen on the Elbe Estuary in Germany on 20 May 2012. The co-ordinator of this project, Andreas Zours, commented that "recoveries from Scotland are rare, besides two sightings in Norway this is our most northern sighting."

This bird returned to the same harbour again this winter, first seen and photographed on 1 and 13 September 2013 by Nick Picozzi and Alan Knox.

A second darviced bird, this time red PER6, also frequented Sandhaven Harbour during winter 2012/13 and was photographed by Joseph Nicols and Kenny Buchan. This bird had originally been metal ringed in the Czech Republic on 4 June 2000 and the darvic added on 20 May 2007 when it was retrapped in Poland!

The third darviced bird, seen at the Don Estuary in Aberdeen on 29 April 2012 had been ringed as a nestling at la F.A.O, Sevilla in southern Spain on 20 May 2009.

It is always fascinating and interesting to know where our next potential colonists may have originated from.

The Colonsay French Connection

A very small number of Sedge Warblers have been ringed on Colonsay in the Inner Hebrides; only 12 had been ringed when news came back that one ringed in June 2008 had been caught at Tours aux Mouton, Donges, Loire-Atlantique, France in May 2010. So, it came as a bit of a surprise when another ringed on Colonsay in June 2012 was re-trapped in the same location a couple of months later. However, on 21 May 2013, David Jardine caught a French-ringed Sedge Warbler at Milbuie, Colonsay and jokingly remarked it will probably be from Tours aux Moutons *...incroyable...* when the recovery details came through in September, it did turn out to be from the same location. So, out of 21 Sedge Warblers caught on Colonsay over the last seven years, three have travelled through the same site in Loire-Atlantique, France. Aren't some birds amazing? (And aren't some ringers jammy! There's life in good old metal ringing yet. Ed.)



Plate 50. Darvic-ringed Mediterranean Gull AKLC in Sandhaven Harbour, North-east Scotland, 13 September 2013. © Nick Picozzi



Plate 51. Cedar Waxwing, Isle of Tiree, Argyll, September 2013. © Jeremy Wilson

Cedar Waxwing, Isle of Tiree, Argyll, 23–28 September 2013

J.M. BOWLER

On 23 September I received a phone message describing an odd bird seen briefly by one of the island residents as it visited their garden at Vaul around noon. It had apparently allowed a very close approach as it sat in a Barberry bush (*Berberis sp.*), totally focussed on eating the berries, which it subsequently regurgitated. The fact it was eating berries and had a yellow tip to the tail made me think it was a Waxwing, though the date seemed extremely early, and the mention of the body colour being greyish did not really fit either. After two hours fruitlessly checking the Vaul area, and starting to lose daylight, it looked like the bird had gone. However, at 16:50 I found a very grey coloured waxwing in a Cotoneaster bush in a different garden.

A quick study of the bird revealed it was clearly not an early Bohemian Waxwing. The flight feathers were a rather uniform bluish-grey colour with paler edgings on the primaries and there was a rather bold white line down the inner edge of the tertials. The overall body colour was a cold greyish-brown, paler on the rump and belly, with slight yellowish tones apparent on the belly and

vent, when viewed in good light. The tail was a darker bluish grey with a narrow yellow tip, whilst there was a bold black mask, bordered white, giving the impression of white spectacles when viewed front on. The bird showed a rather weak crest, which was rarely raised, whilst the bill and legs were blackish-grey, although the bill base looked paler as a result of an accumulation of berry skins. Rather incredibly, these features indicated the bird to be a first-winter Cedar Waxwing, a species I had dipped on in Nottingham back in 1996 and which I had last seen in Texas in February 2011.

The bird was sometimes quite confiding although it often disappeared from view and upon taking flight occasionally uttered a weak high-pitched trilling call. I took some digi-binned record shots of the bird and made some notes in my note-book. The house owner had originally seen the bird a couple of days earlier or possibly the day before, Friday 20 September. It had stayed around the garden almost continuously since then, always feeding in the same berry-laden Cotoneaster bush.

The bush the bird favoured was not visible from the nearby public road and a tall hedge and bushes blocked the view into the garden from the adjacent field, consequently the bird was only viewable from inside the garden or from the house. When I spoke to the owner (a lady in her 90s), I mentioned the bird was extremely rare and she was very distressed at the possible disturbance of lots of birders coming to see it. As a result I refrained from putting out news of the bird that evening, which I would normally have done. The next morning I returned to re-assess the situation, accompanied by Jeremy Wilson, Head of Conservation Science at RSPB Scotland, who was visiting the island that week. The Cedar Waxwing was still present on the Cotoneaster bush, but we could still not find any means of viewing it from outside the house or garden. The lady stressed again that she did not want the news put out more widely, and so we agreed not to say anything all the time it remained in her garden, and hoped it would move somewhere more accessible where we could accommodate visitors.

I regularly checked for the bird over the next few days, with Jeremy and also Jim Dickson, the Argyll Bird Recorder, who had arrived for his usual autumn week birding on the island. However, the Cedar Waxwing consistently fed in its favoured Cotoneaster and was never observed outside the garden, despite baiting a nearby area with cut-up apples. When I initially saw the bird it had seemed lethargic, and appeared to fall asleep after periods of feeding, but over the succeeding days it became more alert and increasingly wary, while the amount of berries remaining was much depleted. The bird was last seen by the lady house-owner on Sunday 29 September, and there was no further sign of it in the area after that. It is assumed that it headed off the island on that Sunday night.

Plate 52. Cedar Waxwing, Isle of Tiree, Argyll, September 2013. © *Jim Dickson*





Plate 53. Cedar Waxwing, Isle of Tiree, Argyll, September 2013. © Jim Dickson

Description

Shape and size: The bird appeared subtly smaller, generally slimmer, relatively longer-bodied and clearly longer-tailed than Bohemian Waxwing. It could seem quite sleek at times, but more rounded at others, especially when sleeping. There was a short and rather ragged crest, which was mostly held slightly erect. The wings were rather long, with long primary extension, whilst the tail was relatively long and appeared to broaden towards the tip. The bill was slim and a little longer than on Bohemian Waxwing. It occasionally called a very soft, high-pitched trill, particularly when moving between bushes, otherwise it was silent.

Plumage: The plumage was generally rather dull compared to Bohemian Waxwing, lacking the warm pink-buff salmon tones of that species. Instead, the main plumage colour above was a cold grey-brown, which was rather concolorous on the crown, nape and mantle becoming a shade darker on the upperwing coverts and scapulars, and a shade paler on the rump and upper tail coverts. The closed flight feathers lacked the striking yellow, white, red and black of Bohemian Waxwing and instead were a rather uniform dark blue-grey with paler whitish outer fringes to the primaries. More striking was a bold white line down the inner edge of the tertials, which was particularly noticeable when viewed from behind. The tail was a similar shade of dark blue-grey to the

flight feathers and had a narrow yellow tip and a narrow black sub-terminal band. The cheeks, chin, throat and breast were a similar but perhaps very slightly warmer grey-brown to the upperparts, and on the breast this colour formed broad diffuse streaks with a whiter background coming through in between. The belly and vent were greyish white but a yellowish tint could be seen on both in good light. There was a black mask formed by a narrow black band above the bill widening onto the lores and reaching its maximum thickness in front of the eye and this was entirely bordered by a narrow whitish line, giving the impression of spectacles when viewed straight on, whilst the white also extended in a wedge below the base of the bill-gape. Unlike on Bohemian Waxwing, the black of the mask was restricted to in front of the eye and the lores, and did not extend onto the chin or up behind the eye. There was a narrow black eye-ring with white "eye-lids" around the rear half of the eye, which was most conspicuous on the lower lid. The bill had a dark blackish-grey tip with a slightly paler bluer-grey base but often appeared to have a pale reddish-brown base as a result of an accumulation of Cotoneaster berry skins there. A pinkish gape was apparent when the bill was open. The legs and feet were blackish, whilst the iris was very dark brown.

John Bowler, Balephuill, Isle of Tiree, Argyll.

Email: john.bowler@rspb.org.uk



Plate 54. Cedar Waxwing, Isle of Tiree, Argyll, September 2013. © Jim Dickson

Status of Cedar Waxwing in Scotland

This Nearctic species breeds from southern Alaska eastwards to Newfoundland and south to northern California, and across to northern Alabama and Georgia. It is resident from southern British Columbia to California and from SE Wyoming eastwards through the Great Lakes States to Maine and Nova Scotia and south. Much of the population is migratory, particularly in harsh autumns/winters, and winters from South Dakota through the southern USA to northern South America.

The first accepted British record of Cedar Waxwing was of an adult bird on the Isle of Noss, Shetland on 25–26 June 1985. The second was a first-winter found on 20 February 1996 in the Sherwood area of Nottingham. It associated with a part of a widely roaming flock of up to 1,200 Bohemian Waxwings until at least 18 March. Elsewhere in Europe there are two records from Ireland - a first-winter on Inishbofin, Co. Galway on 14 October 2009, and one at Blacksod, Co. Mayo on 10 November 2012; and two from Iceland at Reykjanes from 15 April to late July 1989 and at Vestmannaeyjar on 8 October 2003. Cedar Waxwing migration in eastern North America in spring shows distinct peaks from late February into March and in May to early June, suggesting the Noss bird in 1985 and the Icelandic bird in 1989 are as likely to be overshooting spring migrants as overwintering birds displaced by weather systems the previous autumn.



Plate 55. Cedar Waxwing, Isle of Tiree, Argyll, September 2013. © Jim Dickson

Brown Shrikes in Scotland in autumn 2013



Plate 56. Brown Shrike, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 2013. © Moray Souter

Although autumn 2013 in Scotland was particularly notable for the number of rarities which were found, one of the most remarkable and unprecedented events was the multiple arrival of Brown Shrikes which occurred in late September. Of five birds found in Britain four were in Scotland and these provided the first records for Orkney, Fife and North-east Scotland plus the fourth for Shetland.

North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 24–29 September 2013

M. WARREN

It was prime-time September, the wind had swung to the east and the Observatory was full with expectant birders. Things were already going well, with the second island record of River Warbler having been found in Irises at Westness the previous day. So with Yellow-browed Warblers as common as Starlings, 24 September was full of promise as we all headed out for another long day in the field. As expected, there were plenty of new migrants scattered about, and two Red-breasted Flycatchers and a Bluethroat were found, but expectations hadn't quite been fulfilled and by mid-afternoon most of those working the north end were making their way to Westness to have another look for the River Warbler.

Andrew McMillan (AM) and Moray Souter (MS) were the first there and as they approached the Irises, AM flushed a red-tailed shrike from a stone dyke, but it vanished towards some buildings. I arrived just as AM relocated the bird, lined it up in his telescope and unselfishly and excitedly ushered me to take a look. This was a very, very interesting looking shrike! Red-backed

never got a look in, and Isabelline wasn't on my radar for very long either. My first view revealed a bird with a bold, black mask, prominent whitish supercilium, uniform, unmarked, warm gingery-brown upperparts and crown, a long, narrow, slightly brighter reddish tail and a 'chubby' looking neck. It looked good for Brown Shrike; a bold call, and now we had to prove it!

Within half-an-hour all interested parties had made their way to Westness. It spent the next hour or so perched on the stone dykes and fences around a network of small fields, but often spent time on the ground. I had managed to crawl to a position about 30 m away was able to watch it for lengthy periods with my telescope, noting further features, taking a more detailed description and a quick sketch.

Structurally, it appeared bulky and large-headed, with a thick-set neck giving a hunch-backed appearance. It had a longer and narrower tail than Red-backed Shrike, which made the body look comparatively small, with the whole bird looking a little out of proportion and top-heavy. It was in first-winter plumage and beginning with facial features, it had a thick, solidly dark, black mask, an equally blackish-looking loreal patch, much more developed and blacker than in juvenile Red-backed Shrike. Above this was a

striking white supercilium, which began at the bill sides (but didn't meet above it), passed over the eye and widened slightly behind. The crown was a warm gingery-brown colour, and there were no scales or dark markings within it, was uniform and unmarked, appearing brighter and more richly coloured when seen head on. This contrasted heavily with the bright white supercilium and black mask and appeared very similar to the spring bird I had found in Cornwall in 2010, leading me to believe the face was made up of largely moulted, adult feathers. The bill was silvery-grey, but did not appear noticeably large or broad based to me as I was aware Brown Shrike often are.

I knew that Brown Shrikes were supposed to moult early and both the upper and underparts of the North Ronaldsay bird fitted with this idea. Its upperparts were the same uniform, warm-gingery brown colour as the head and there were no contrasting paler areas on the nape or any scaling present. The underparts were peachy-buff and densely vermiculated, with dark grey scales on the flanks and in the upper-breast area. The throat was creamy-white, unmarked and plain as were the undertail coverts. The wings were short looking with a primary projection about half the length of the tertials which themselves had solidly dark centres with a neat creamy white surrounding outer edge. It had no white primary patch as in Isabelline Shrike and the coverts were as the upperparts being a gingery-brown colour but with a distinct whitish wing-bar across the greater coverts formed by pale feather tips. A look at photographs later revealed some pale scales to be present on the scapulars, median and lesser coverts. The primaries and secondaries were blackish, but whitish edges to the latter formed a pale 'wing-panel' on the closed wing. The tail was long, narrow and a rusty reddish-brown colour, being brighter and warmer than in Red-backed Shrike, but not as bright or Redstart-like as in Isabelline Shrikes. It was much more contrasting in flight - the colour difference between the upperparts and tail was often difficult to see when perched, presumably due to the narrowness of the tail. The one thing I was constantly looking for, but could not see, was the short outer tail feather, which for me would have been the clincher!



Plate 57. Brown Shrike, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 2013. © *Moray Souter*

At this point no one had managed any photographs. Most had experience of the long-staying Staines (Surrey 2009–10) Brown Shrike and agreed that "it wasn't like any Isabelline Shrike they had ever seen in the past" and though I couldn't remember all the features to rule out Turkestan Shrike, I was fairly sure they should have had a longer primary projection. After vanishing for a period of time, the bird moved to a thistle-covered slope a short distance away and here it frequently hovered or balanced awkwardly on thistle heads in the wind, often displacing the outermost tail feather and there it was! In doing so, it often spread its tail and I could now see that T6 was indeed short, roughly two-thirds as long as the other tail feathers. I was now happy that the bird was without doubt a Brown Shrike! Everyone else agreed and with smiles all round we watched it in this general area until dark with MS securing a few record photographs.

The bird could not be found the next day and was only seen briefly on the 27th not far from Westness before it quickly vanished. In fact it proved to be a bit of a nightmare and goes to show how easily birds can disappear on North Ronaldsay. Re-finding it a couple of days later at Gravity, roughly a mile south of Westness it showed well to me and although I managed to track it for about 20 minutes it was incredibly mobile and again vanished much to the frustration of many Orkney birders who were across on that day. It wasn't seen again.

**Mark Warren, North Ronaldsay Bird
Observatory, Orkney.**
Email: markwarren1980@hotmail.co.uk



Plate 58. Brown Shrike, Wester Quarff, Shetland, September 2013. © Roger Riddington

Wester Quarff, Shetland, 27–30 September 2013

D. POINTON

Our annual Shetland pilgrimage began in style, with Baltimore Oriole, Hornemann's Redpoll, Blyth's Reed Warbler and an Arctic Warbler all seen within the first 24 hours on the islands. With a mouth-watering week of east and south-east winds forecast attentions were turned to seeking out something of our own. Despite the forecast, migrants were few and far between, and aside from a brief Ortolan and the increasingly ubiquitous Yellow-browed Warblers, we had little to show for the vast amount of energy expended traipsing through countless Iris beds. Everyone was beginning to flag considerably by the end of the week.

Much of the 27th was spent drifting between wind-swept locations, each receiving no more than an unsurprisingly unsuccessful cursory glance at the bird-less habitat viewable from the road. By late morning the strong wind was making viewing passerines nigh on impossible and we headed back to the ever-reliable south mainland, and chose Wester Quarff as a birding location due to the likely shelter from the strong

southerlies. Getting out of the car, it was not too surprising to hear a chorus of 'tsooeet' calls emanating from a large garden across the road. Uninspired by this, half of the team opted to stay in the car for forty winks whilst Ashley and I headed down to walk the burn, an activity which had twice previously this week yielded nothing. As we got just over two-thirds of the way down the burn and it seemed today was going to be no exception, we flushed a medium-sized brown bird, which whirred some distance away down the burn before landing on a fencepost. The bird was obviously a shrike species, and when relaying directions to Ashley I commented I expected it to be a Red-backed Shrike. However, during our initial views, several plumage features were striking as not typical for first-winter Red-backed Shrike. The lores and ear-coverts were strongly defined and almost black in colour, and the nape, rear-crown and mantle appeared a concolorous soil brown. Ashley could still not see the bird, so we continued down the burn hoping to obtain a change of angle and closer views. Unfortunately, our attempts at a stealthy advance failed, and the bird flew off down the burn before continuing for some distance up the opposite hillside and out of view behind buildings.

Spurred on by the idea that there was potential this bird was not just a Red-backed Shrike, we scurried up the hillside in pursuit. We rounded the corner of a garden to see the bird flashing away back down the slope, before landing c.400 m away on a fencepost in the burn. Heading down the hill, it was clear the bird was very wary and views would be distant, so I headed up to

the road to fetch the 'scope and stir the 'Sleeping Beauties' in the car. On the road I bumped into local birder Russ Haywood, who joined us as we hastily made our way back to the burn. Ashley was still watching the bird, but was less than convinced it was anything but a Red-backed Shrike. Given that Ash had seen a first-winter Brown Shrike less than a week before in Hampshire, this was somewhat disconcerting. Initial views through the scope only served to further my suspicions of the birds' identity. The primary projection was short, and the tail was long and thin with a notable rufous wash to the uppertail coverts. In contrast to the recent Hampshire bird, the flanks were relatively clean and pale, lacking particularly strong vermiculations. As we crept up the burn attempting to get closer to the bird, it managed to disappear unseen. Feverish scanning ensued, but to no avail, and we all split up to relocate it. At this time opinions were still divided; I felt the primary projection, nape pattern and tail structure made the bird extremely likely to be a Brown Shrike, however Ash had the opposite view, mainly based on the apparent plainness of the flanks.

With sunset less than an hour away, it was a huge relief when the bird was relocated at the very western end of the valley. At this point, the bird showed at much better range, allowing Ash to reel off a few shots and the rest of us to properly scrutinise the bird. Everything seemed to fit perfectly for Brown Shrike: the primaries barely reached past the top of a long, thin tail, the bill was dark and heavy with a strongly curved culmen, and the upperparts were uniform brown in colour and lacked the internal vermiculations of first-winter Red-backed Shrike. Better views of the flank pattern revealed a creamy buff wash with light vermiculations, and although not as strong as the Hampshire bird of the previous week, were well within range for Brown Shrike. After half-an-hour of continuous views and reviewing Ash's pictures, everyone was happy with the identification as a first-winter Brown Shrike. Thankfully, the bird hung around for a few days, allowing people from as far away as Fair Isle to travel to see it.

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Plates 59–60. Brown Shrike, Wester Quarff, Shetland, September 2013. © Jim Nicolson

Balcomie Farm, Fife Ness, Fife, 28 September 2013

T. DREW & J. DREW

As weather conditions looked promising for migrants, we decided to spend the day birding around the Fife coast, and headed for Crail and Fife Ness. Having been around Kilminning and seen four Yellow-browed Warblers, we moved on to check Balcomie farm area. As we approached the farm, we heard another Yellow-browed Warbler in the Sycamores.

We continued along the track and as we did so, we noticed a smaller wader flying with a small Golden Plover flock. As they flew over our heads we obtained better views and we strongly suspected it to be a Buff-breasted Sandpiper. However, frustratingly the flock continued out of view. TD kept his eyes to the sky. Meanwhile, JD noticed a *Sylvia* warbler fly into the farm cottage garden and notified TD. It turned out to be a Lesser Whitethroat. It was now 09:30 and we decided to wait around to see if the waders would return - without much luck. However, we heard another Yellow-browed, and our focus returned to the garden.

About five minutes later, as we were watching the Yellow-browed Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat, a larger bird suddenly dropped into the middle of a willow. The bird was obscured by the leaves, but its head was visible for a couple of seconds. We both exclaimed simultaneously, "shrike, shrike - Red-backed Shrike!" Then, we saw the strong eye mask and chocolate brown head, and immediately questioned our initial identification - "could it be a Brown Shrike?"

Within seconds the bird had flown over the high wall that bordered the back of the garden. We quickly found a door that would take us through the wall. There were slats in the door, and we peered through and saw it perched on a wire. Tentatively, we opened the door, but unfortunately flushed the bird in doing so. However, it flew to a nearby tree about 20 metres away, where we had a clear, uninterrupted view of a stocky-looking shrike with a bullish neck, plain brown head and back, darker wings, a distinct black mask, pale breast and belly, and vermiculation on the flanks. "Brown Shrike, yes it's a



Plate 61. Brown Shrike, Fife Ness, Fife, September 2013. © Keith Hoey

Brown Shrike!" we both exclaimed, incredulously. Moments later, it flew again and we noted how long and rufous its tail appeared.

We put out the news, then tried in vain to obtain a photograph of it, due to it being elusive and hard to track. The bird remained difficult to follow throughout the day, but was seen by at least 40 observers before we left the site. More arrived later, and at least one observer obtained photographs of the bird. It was not seen the following day.

For us this was quite an emotional throw-back moment, as in 2000 we had found a similarly elusive first-winter shrike on the island of Foula, Shetland, which exhibited all the same features as this bird. We had no pictures and virtually no literature available on first-winter Brown Shrike, but were familiar with and had more to hand, on both Red-backed and Isabelline Shrike, and knew it was not either of those. We submitted the bird, but sadly, our submission was rejected - which makes the Fife bird particularly special. While at Balcomie we mentioned the probable Buff-breasted Sandpiper to some birders present, hoping it might be re-located. Amazingly, Barry Ferguson, took some photos of a passing flock of Golden Plover, in amongst which was the Buff-breasted Sandpiper - confirming our initial sighting! This rounded off a perfect day, and one not to be forgotten.

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Plate 62. Brown Shrike, Collieston, North-east Scotland, September 2013. © Harry Scott

Collieston, North-east Scotland, 28–29 September 2013

P. CROCKETT, P. SHEPHERD & C.N. GIBBINS

The conditions looked great for some good birding on 28 September. In each of the previous two years a good run of south-east winds, with some rain and overcast skies, and a pressure system of tempting proportions, had led to a 'Sibe' being found in the Collieston area. The number of Yellow-browed Warblers being found had been building up to record highs and hence the anticipation was palpable in recent days.

It was no surprise therefore when Pete Shepherd and Phil Crockett met up by chance in the early morning at the site of last year's Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, a mile from Collieston village. There was yet another Yellow-browed Warbler and a Redstart in this area. We decided to go to the edge of Collieston, in the Kirkton area, and walk down the gully that leads to Cransdale Head. PC suggested that this might be the day when the gully might contain something good, for once. Previous rarities had tended to favour being near local bushes, but this year the gully had a rich crop of umbellifers, so looked more tempting than ever.

We had walked nearly all the way to the Cransdale end of the umbellifer, thistle, nettle and willow-herb strewn walk, when PS shouted that there was a shrike up at the top edge of the slope. It had flitted rapidly out of view, but came back up again shortly afterwards showing a glimpse to us of its rich brown upperpart plumage and apparently very long and thin looking tail. It was a medium-small shrike in terms of size. These initial glimpses especially when combined with a very dark contrasting mask, suggested Brown Shrike, but we were a long way from making the formal identification at this stage. The time at this point was just before 10:00.

The long chase that ensued, led onwards by the suggestive features we were glimpsing, will live long in the memory. The bird was able to disappear at will, and even when present close-by in the vegetation could seem invisible, until flushed at close range. When flushed it would tend to swoop low to the ground, making it hard to track against the background view of thick vegetation and many times it was lost to view before apparently alighting somewhere. On hearing news of the Brown Shrike at Fife Ness that morning, we were even more determined to stick to the task.

Even once Chris Gibbins was called in to lend a hand, it took at least another hour until we gained sufficiently good views to see the requisite features and then with certainty call the news out. It was now past 12:30 - a long, hard effort had been rewarded and we felt able to put news out that there was a Brown Shrike at Collieston.

Features that made the identification certain were:

- Five primaries were visible beyond the tertials; this represented an extension of approximately half (possibly a little less) the length of the tertials. This gave the folded wing a shorter, more rounded feel than seen with Red-backed Shrike.
- The outer tail feather on each side was approximately 25% shorter than the others. Though this feather was mostly hidden, we did get occasional views looking head-on at the bird (when underside of tail was visible) or on occasions when it fanned its tail or feathers were displaced and these allowed us to confirm the presence of shorter outer feathers.
- The tail certainly was long and slender in flight relative to Red-backed Shrike. In fact this was a distinctive feature. Overall it gave the bird its characteristic short-winged, long-tailed appearance that is described.
- There was a rich brown colouration. The upperpart colouration actually appeared relatively uniform throughout, unlike Red-Backed Shrike where there is much more variation between the head, mantle and tail in tones. The brown colouration was too dark (it completely lacked sandy tones) to be consistent with Isabelline Shrikes.
- There was only sparse barring on the upperparts.
- There was a broad, creamy supercilium, especially behind the eye, that emphasised a strong, blackish-brown face mask (clearly much darker than the crown) that extended from the lores to the ear coverts.
- The tertials had their dark brown centres set-off against broad golden-buff fringes; these fringes formed a striking panel on the secondaries of the closed wing. Importantly, there was no evidence of the darker subterminal fringe seen in Red-backed of this age - consequently these feathers were less variegated than those of Red-backed Shrike.

Plates 63–64. Brown Shrike, Collieston, North-east Scotland, September 2013. © Harry Scott



In the early afternoon, the bird showed very well in the long hedge area near the gully and similarly for a short period the next day near the church, but mostly it just amazed us with its ability to disappear at ease.

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Status of Brown Shrike in Scotland

This was fully covered in the account of the finding of the first Brown Shrike for Argyll on Tiree on 22 October 2011 (Scottish Birds 32(1): 78–81), and these records are the first in Scotland since then. The find dates for all four Scottish records in 2013 fit within the previously established autumn range of 19 September to 18 November, with a peak in late September. The short stays of the 2013 birds is also fairly typical, with four of the previous 12 British records only seen on the discovery, while two lingered for two days, and only two for more than seven days.



Plates 65–66. Brown Shrike, Collieston, North-east Scotland, September 2013. © Harry Scott





Plate 67. Thick-billed Warbler, Shetland, October 2013. © Michael McKee

Thick-billed Warbler, Shetland, 4–5 October 2013 – the fifth Shetland (including Fair Isle) and British record

H. HARROP & D. FAIRHUST

Friday 4 October 2013 on Shetland began somewhat dreich, but after three days of very strong south-easterly winds it had eventually calmed down and expectations were high given the number of rare and scarce birds already encountered.

David was leading our Shetland Wildlife tour and the group had spent the early part of the day birding in the south Mainland. New continental migrants were evident including Blackcaps, Goldcrests, Bramblings and Reed Buntings, plus Yellow-browed Warblers from further east. Despite heavy rain at midday DF took the group to Geosetter, a favoured birding hotspot. As they headed along the approach track a bulky passerine with a notably long tail and seemingly concolourous upperparts rose out of a crop ahead of them and flew straight into some thick willow cover. The impression suggested it was a shrike and so they staked out the area hoping for it to appear, but an hour passed with no sign of the bird. Still determined to refind the bird, DF and some of the group went to Bigton to get phone coverage and called HH, who was nearby birding his local patch at Maywick. DF related what he had seen and asked HH to help with the search – something of a case of *deja vu* as the last time

DF called HH about a shrike at Geosetter it turned out to be Britain's eighth Brown Shrike! Was history about to repeat itself?

Although still raining heavily we walked back up the burn to join Robert Cookson who had kindly remained to look for the bird in the group's absence and was walking along the south side of the willows. There was no sign from the south side of the willows, so we headed back to the vehicles which gave a good vantage point from which to scan plus we could stay a lot drier. However the rain continued and time was passing, and still very keen to try and relocate the bird we walked up the burn – sadly with no luck. Eventually the rain stopped, so we got the group to set up their telescopes and check the multitude of fence posts hoping the 'shrike' would 'do what shrikes do' and pop up onto one. The group had seen the Brown Shrike at Wester Quarff the previous weekend, and knew just how how mobile and wide-ranging shrikes could be!

Thirty minutes later HH heard what seemed like a bird alarm calling from the original crop. It sounded like a very loud *Sylvia* warbler, and the



call was repeated for periods of around 10–15 seconds. We shifted to the edge of the field and scanned from the road, but saw only a Blackcap and a Meadow Pipit perched on the wire fence surrounding the crop. We thought the calls might be coming from a bird that had just been taken by the 'shrike', and that it would shortly fly up on to a fence post. After all, we were still expecting to see a Shrike and that's what they do! The alarm calls stopped suddenly and seconds later a bird with uniform upperparts, warmer tones around the rear end, and a long tail, flew from the middle of the crop back to the willows. It was 'the' bird but if this was a 'shrike', which species was it?

We had noted where the bird had entered the willows and concentrated on the area. A couple of minutes later DF picked up the bird on the north side of the willows and it was clear that the bird we had all seen was no shrike - instead it was a large *Acrocephalus* warbler. He shouted to HH and the group that it was possibly a Great Reed Warbler. We got everyone on to the bird, but it was about 75 m away and obscured for most of the time. As it started to come into view we were both immediately struck by the lack of contrast in the area around the face. The bird had a bland combination of a brownish head, buff white throat and upper breast - sullied with buffer tones, a big beady eye, no obvious fore-supercilium and a large, deep-based pale bill. As it moved right out into the open it revealed very short wings lacking any obvious tips to the remiges visible at the range we were viewing from and a long, graduated, round-looking tail. All these features pointed to just one bird: Thick-billed Warbler. DF made absolutely sure that everyone knew what it was, its great rarity in Britain and just how blessed and excited we were!

The warbler stayed on view for another couple of minutes and made short sallies from one willow to another, or moved around on the ground or in the taller dead Docks feeding. Unfortunately, we had no telephoto lenses to hand, but the group responded to our begging pleas to digi-scope the bird while DF obtained some understandably shaky video (see <https://vimeo.com/76154046>). The bird then

Plates 68–71. Thick-billed Warbler, Shetland, October 2013. Top two © *Jim Lawrence*, bottom two © *Stuart Piner*

flew back into the crop and it was at that point that the enormity of what had just happened started to sink in. Unsurprisingly the atmosphere among us all was totally euphoric. Still wondering about the alarm call heard from the field, HH retrieved his iPod and speaker from his vehicle and played a recording by Hannu Jannes of Thick-billed Warbler - it was the same call we had heard coming from the crop!

Geosetter is a black-spot for our mobiles, but a couple of the group had different network coverage and kindly lent us their phones to put the news out. As we did the bird flew up from the field and sat on top of the crop in full view for about five seconds before it dived back in to cover. We also called Judd Hunt who was on Fair Isle with our other group and due to fly off that afternoon.

The first birders arrived quickly and soon a crowd of about 60 people had assembled. The bird had not been seen again but we assumed it was still in the crop field. A person was asked to walk along the track and the bird duly flew out and headed into the willows. We left at this point, but apparently the bird continued with this behaviour over the next hour and a half, and most birders saw it reasonably well.

The bird was still present the next day but had only been seen briefly a few times in flight. Many had turned up but not yet seen the bird, viewing was limited, and the amount of parked cars was becoming a potential problem. Consequently HH went to find John Sinclair, the owner of the field, and explained the situation and asked his permission to enter the crop field. Fortunately, it contained a non-commercial crop and he was kind enough to agree that HH and Judd Hunt could walk it on two 'organised flushes' - one at 13:00 and the other about 16:30. We believed that a couple of walk-throughs of the field in a nine-hour period of good daylight and decent weather would not prove too detrimental to the bird. As thought, the bird was still in the crop field and on the first walk-through it flushed a couple of times, allowing brief views, before heading into the willows and then flying back to the crop. The same happened the second time, with both Michael McKee and Stuart Piner managing to obtain some amazing in-flight images during its two forays into the crop field.

Early on Sunday morning a lot of new people, and some hoping for better views, were present. Knowing that a band of rain was predicted in the afternoon, HH thought it sensible to arrange one more 'organised flush' while it was still dry to at least establish whether or not the bird was still there, and if it was to allow the bird time to rest and feed in peace before any later 'organised flush' that might be carried out. However, it was soon apparent that the bird was not in the field, and subsequent checking of the willows and surrounding area was also unsuccessful: the bird had gone.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to our guests who joined us for the week and shared this magic moment. Thanks to John Sinclair, the owner of the crop field for his co-operation and for granting access; without his generous attitude many would not have seen the bird.

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Status of Thick-billed Warbler in Scotland

This species breeds in the Eastern Palearctic from the Ob River basin eastwards through southern Siberia, northern Mongolia and NE China to the Sea of Japan and south to the northern coast of the Gulf of Bohai. It is entirely migratory and winters in India and from the southern Himalayas south to Thailand, Vietnam and coastal southern China to Hong Kong.

There are four previous British records - two on Fair Isle and two in Shetland:

- 1955** Fair Isle, one, trapped, 6 October
- 1971** Shetland, one, Whalsay, trapped 23 September and released at Helendale, Lerwick, Mainland on 24th, but found dead there on 25 October (cat casualty!)
- 2001** Shetland, first-winter, Out Skerries, trapped, 14 September
- 2003** Fair Isle, one, trapped, 16–17 May

Elsewhere in Europe there are records from Finland (11 October 1994) and two from Utsira, Norway (6 October 2004 and 3 October 2005) plus one in Sinai, Egypt (20 November 1991).

Ovenbird, Papa Westray, 6 October 2013 - the first Orkney record

S. DAVIES



Plate 72. Ovenbird, Papa Westray, October 2013. © Tim Dodman

On the first morning of a week's birding holiday on Papa Westray my father Pete and I visited the walled garden at Holland. We have found this spot the best place for migrants on the island and, having obtained the necessary permission to enter the garden before our arrival, we were keen to try and emulate our find of a Red-flanked Bluetail of 2011.

After half-an-hour without seeing much, I had a brief glimpse with my naked eye of a bird at close range in a flower border. It looked interesting as its underparts seemed strikingly white. After a short while it reappeared under a bush at less than 3 m range. This time I got my binoculars focussed on it. The underparts were heavily marked with black streaking on the breast, there was a prominent white eye-ring and an orange-brown crown bordered with black. Ovenbird! I was too close however and the bird soon flushed. After briefly alighting in a greenhouse, after flying through a gap in a broken pane, it flew over a wall and was lost to view.

After searching unsuccessfully for another 30 minutes, I had to decide whether to broadcast our find after such fleeting views. Fortunately, I had managed to get a record shot of the bird in the greenhouse and, although in semi-darkness, the bird seemed just about identifiable from the image on the screen on the back of the camera. I then sent out the news. A long period of frustration followed as we searched all over the surrounding area to try and relocate it, frequently

interrupted by congratulatory calls, texts and tweets. During this time we were joined by local residents Tim Dodman, Neil Rendall and Patrick Taylor and, finally, after three hours, Pete refound the bird in a small garden at Holland Farm.

Throughout the afternoon we were able to watch and photograph the bird at a range of 10 m. Though usually visible, it stayed mostly in the shadows under a small stand of Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa*, only occasionally venturing out in the open on the adjacent lawn.

Description

Underparts: very white (Pied-Fly white) on most of the underparts with just some olive brown wash on the flanks. Heavily streaked and spotted with black on the lower throat, breast and upper and lower flanks. The upper throat was white/cream, and there was a prominent black malar stripe. **Upperparts:** mostly uniform olive-brown over the whole of the upperparts including the wings. The only noticeable exception was a bronze tone to the primaries. The tail was not well seen but appeared to be the same colouration as the upperparts. **Head:** It had a plain olive-brown face (as per the upperparts) apart from a bold white-eye ring surrounding the large-looking dark eye. The crown was orange-brown, though this was only really obvious head-on. Two prominent black crown stripes extended back on to the nape and narrowed to meet over the bill. **Bare parts:** the bill was dull pinkish, darkening near the tip, and the legs were distinctly pink. **Structure/gait:**

although it had the shape of a warbler, and was about Blackcap-size, it had a relatively short-tail and behaved more like a pipit. It kept exclusively to the ground and walked with a distinctive jerking gait, thrusting its head and body forward as it moved. No call was heard.

After rain set in during the late afternoon and evening, we were hopeful the bird would stay, but despite a day-long search by us and other Orkney birders, it was never relocated.

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Status of Ovenbird in Scotland

This species breeds in North America from SW Northwest Territories south through British Columbia to NW Colorado and eastwards through southern Canada to Newfoundland, and central USA to South Carolina. It is entirely migratory and winters primarily in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean and in central and southern Florida.

There have been five previous British records with two of those in Scotland:

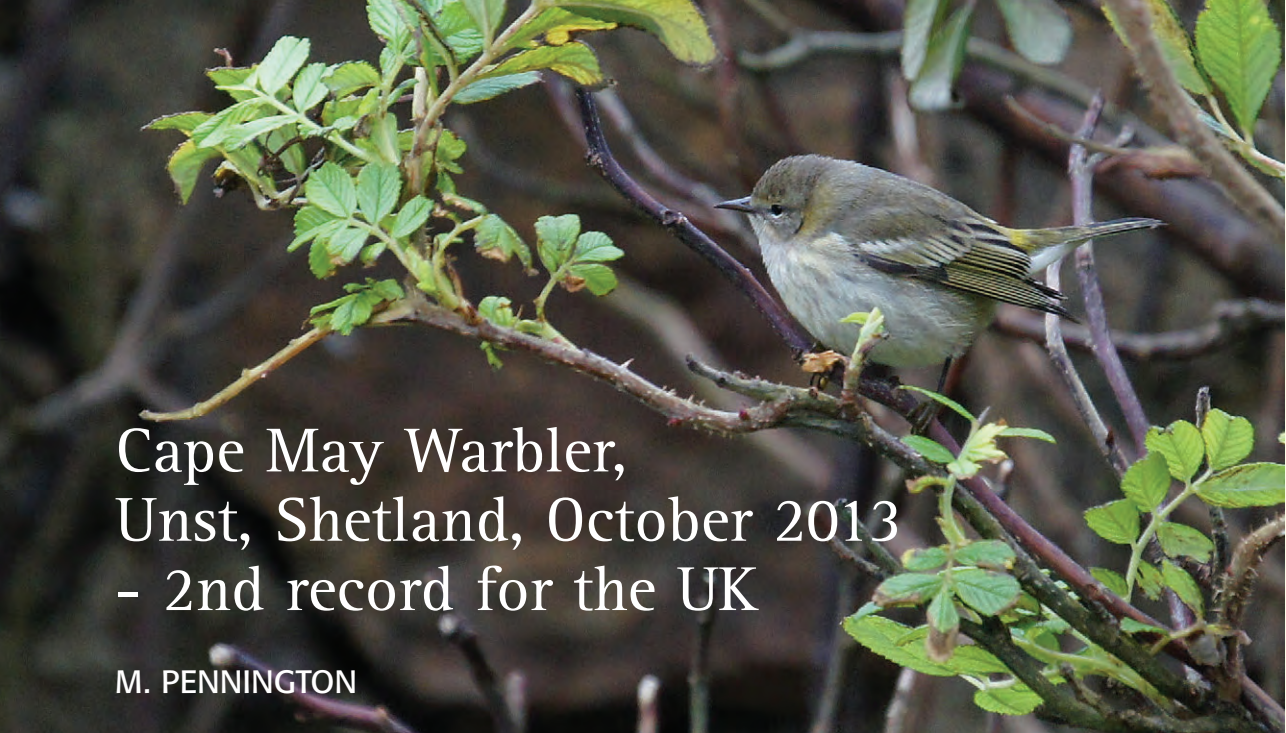
- 1973** Shetland, one, Out Skerries, 7–8 October
- 1985** Devon, probable first-winter, freshly dead, 22 October
- 2001** Herefordshire, one, Dymock, near Much Marle, 20 December to 16 February 2002
- 2004** Scilly, first-winter, St. Mary's, 25–28 October (taken into care and later died)
- 2011** Outer Hebrides, one, Castlebay, Barra, 23–24 October

All have been found in autumn between 7 October and 20 December, with a notable bias to western Britain. The Orkney record is therefore the earliest to be found in Britain. Short stays are typical, though the Herefordshire bird lingered at the same location for (at least) 59 days.

There have been two records in Ireland: one found dead at Lough Carra Forest, Co. Mayo on 8 December 1977, and a first-winter on Dursey Island, Co. Cork on 24–25 September 1990. Elsewhere in Europe, there is a record from Norway (25 October 2003).

Plates 73–76. Ovenbird, Papa Westray, October 2013.
© Sean Davies





Cape May Warbler, Unst, Shetland, October 2013 - 2nd record for the UK

M. PENNINGTON

Plate 77. Cape May Warbler, Unst, Shetland, October 2013. © Mike Pennington

As I had been away for a few days, I was full of enthusiasm as I headed out birding on Unst on 23 October 2013. The wind was in the SSE and there were clearly new birds in, with small flocks of Redwings and Fieldfares, and several Blackcaps around. Rather than head to the north end of Unst or check Halligarth as I normally would, I decided to walk round Baltasound, and made my way towards the school.

Disappointingly, there was nothing in the trees at Trola Water, but the lone tree in the Manse garden held a Mealy Redpoll and three Blackcaps, which was much more than I usually see there. I was about to head to check the trees beside the old kirk at Hillside when another local birder, Dick Foyster passed in his car, so I stopped for a chat. Just as well, as while we spoke I noticed another bird in the tree in the Manse garden. From long range the bird looked a bit *Phylloscopus*-like, but it was showing a large pale patch on the wing. We moved closer and the bird appeared again on the outside of the sycamore: "That's an American wood warbler!" I exclaimed. The bird was visible for well over 20 seconds, by which time we realised what we were looking at something particularly special and had noted the most obvious features. As it transpired this was the longest view of the bird over the next four hours!

We had only fleeting views in the next hour as the bird moved about in/near the lone sycamore. Dick had people coming to do work at the house and had to leave, there was no network signal for my phone, my attempts to photograph the bird had only succeeding in getting some out of focus vegetation shots; then the bird moved out of the sycamore and I couldn't find it again - at this point I still had no photos and only a cursory description.

What had I seen? A dull bird with no obvious bright colours (I never saw the rump until much later, an indication of the quality of the views I had obtained). Though parts of its plumage suggested Blackpoll Warbler the 'wing bars' were wrong - and seemed more like a pale wing patch. My recollection of Blackpoll Warbler was that it was a much brighter bird than the one here, which had a very dull greyish colouration, and an unstreaked mantle, which I also knew was not a feature of Blackpoll. The plain face and streaky underparts led to thoughts of Yellow-rumped Warbler, but that was surely a browner bird, and there was no sign of yellow in the plumage. I was reminded of Cape May Warbler, a bird I had seen in Cuba, but that seemed a long-shot - there had been only one British record and that was in spring. It appeared to be something particularly good, but I hadn't seen enough to be sure.

Before extending my search, I checked the lone sycamore again, and thankfully the bird had returned. This time I concentrated on getting photos. Eventually, I managed a few poor images, though the weather was becoming worse, with fog getting thicker all the time. Then the bird left the sycamore and flew off towards the old church at Hillside. On examination, the photos showed a feature I had not yet seen in the field: a bright green neck patch.

My wife, Margaret, arrived at that point with a copy of Sibley (2000) and a mobile phone on another network. Was it just a really dull Blackpoll Warbler with dark legs? It didn't fit, so I looked at other options and found a picture of a dull greyish bird showing a greenish neck patch - Cape May Warbler! This was a huge ID to make and I really needed another birder to see it. I was almost certain it could only be a Cape May Warbler, but it was an enormous leap of faith to actually believe it!

I contacted Brydon Thomason. He was on his way home to Unst but would take at least another hour. I phoned Paul Harvey telling him I had an American wood warbler. Since he was doing a Shetland year-list I was sure he'd come even if it transpired it was 'only' a Blackpoll, but I asked how to separate Blackpoll from Cape May Warbler in autumn plumages. We agreed to put out news on the local grapevine, without a definite species ID, to alert people to the bird's presence. I resolved to stay until others arrived and to relocate the bird in the meantime.

Margaret and I went to the old church at Hillside, where there is a small garden with three sycamores. We found the bird almost immediately, but it was as secretive as before. It was most evident when chasing off a Chiffchaff and a Blackcap that ventured into the trees. After a while, though, it started feeding along the walls around the trees, so when Brydon Thomason arrived he got good views and more



Plate 78. Cape May Warbler, Unst, Shetland, October 2013. © Rebecca Nason

photos almost as soon as he got there. The bird even started calling in flight - a sharp *tsip* - almost reminiscent of Song Thrush or a rare bunting (I'd actually heard the call earlier, when the bird was hiding in the lone sycamore, as I remember thinking that I could hear a rare bunting, but there was no way I was taking my eyes off that tree!). Brydon had a copy of Kaufman (2005) with him and independently went through the field guides. He too concluded it had to be a Cape May Warbler!

With the identification now settled, it was as if it knew, and it suddenly stopped hiding and began feeding along the wall behind the sycamores. No longer its former elusive self, it was in full view and for the first time in the field I finally saw the bright greenish-yellow rump and the bright yellowish edges to the wing feathers, plus the greenish neck-patch, though this was only visible at some angles (at least in the poor light). The broad fringes to the greater coverts which created the pale wing-panel were also obvious. One interesting feature, noted over its stay, was how the overall colouration seemed to vary in appearance, and not just according to the light. At times the bird looks almost completely grey, apart from the yellow or green in the rump, wing edges and neck patch, but at other times the plumage was distinctly olive-green.



Plate 79. Cape May Warbler, Unst, Shetland, October 2013. © Ian Broadbent

The pointed and worn tail feathers, brownish juvenile primary coverts, contrasting with the replaced greater coverts, and reduced white patches enable the bird to be aged as a first-winter, while it could be sexed as a female because males show more yellow on the head and face, larger dark centres to the back feathers, more white in the tail, and brighter and more extensive white in the median and greater coverts.

Plate 80. Cape May Warbler, Unst, Shetland, October 2013. © Dougie Preston





Plate 81. Cape May Warbler, Unst, Shetland, October 2013. © Rebecca Nason

About 20 or so people made it up from Mainland Shetland before dark. The next day more than 60 people saw the bird, with the highly novel sight of five aircraft parked on the apron at Baltasound airstrip, and by the end of its stay probably over 300 people had travelled up to see the bird.

During its stay the bird showed a clear preference for sycamores, spending most of its time within the trees. The bird's preferred feeding method was gleaning insects from leaves, which made it very difficult to see on the first day, but it got progressively easier as the leaves fell. It was also occasionally seen fly-catching. Occasionally, especially if it was windy, it would feed on the ground in leaf litter beneath its favoured sycamores, behaviour which appears to be atypical but not unprecedented. The bird was very aggressive to any other small passerines which ventured into its trees, and it was frequently seen assiduously chasing off Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs. This intraspecific territorial behaviour outside the breeding season is apparently quite common for this species. It may not have been newly arrived when it was found, as it seemed to already have a 'mental map' of its environment and flew directly between its favoured sites.

The only previous Western Palearctic record of Cape May Warbler involved a singing male in spring, found by Tom Byars and Iain McDonald in Paisley Glen, near Glasgow, on 17 June 1977 (Byars & Galbraith 1980, T. Byars in Forrester *et al.* 2007). There are not even any records from the Azores, despite the avalanche of recent records of North American passerines there, so this is the first time that species has been found in autumn anywhere on this side of the Atlantic. The breeding range is mostly across southern Canada from southern Northwest Territories south to British Columbia and eastwards through the northern Great Lakes area to southern Quebec, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. It is entirely migratory and winters primarily in the Bahamas, with some also in southern Florida, eastern Mexico and Central America. Its rarity in Europe may be because the main migration route is believed to be inland, between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi (Cramp & Perrins 1994). In the north-eastern United States, peak migration is in September, but it is drawn out, with birds frequently lingering into November or even later (Cramp & Perrins 1994), while on Bermuda, autumn migration is from late August to late November, peaking in October (Slack 2009).



Plate 82. Cape May Warbler, Unst, Shetland, October 2013. © Rebecca Nason

As a way of thanking Shetland residents, who are still becoming used to large twitches, Shetland Bird Club set up a *Just Giving* page to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support

(<http://www.justgiving.com/Shetland-Bird-Club>). The charity was chosen because the first day of the Cape May twitch coincided with a funeral on Unst where money was raised for this charity, and over £1,000 has been raised - my thanks to everyone who has contributed.



Plate 83. Cape May Warbler, Unst, Shetland, October 2013. © Rebecca Nason

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Plate 84. Mourning Dove, Isle of Rum, Highland, October 2013. © Steve Smith

Mourning Dove, Isle of Rum, Highland, 28 October–3 November 2013 - the third Scottish record

S. MORRIS

With 10,000 hectares of remote terrain to cover Rum is a challenging prospect for rarity hunters to find the bird of their dreams. So it was a big surprise, with all that ground to choose from, that one of the UK's 'best' finds of 2013 decided to show up and spend the best part of a week in my garden. It certainly trumped the Common Rosefinch that visited the garden for a single day back in May.

On Monday 28 October I popped home for lunch as usual at about 12:30. At 13:10 I happened to glance out of the kitchen window and immediately noticed a small dove on the ground among the Chaffinches under one of the bird feeders. I was amazed by the very small size and shouted through to my wife that I

thought we had an unusual dove in the garden. Looking through binoculars I was immediately struck by the large black markings on the tertials and wing coverts and the black spot below the ear coverts and I realised this was going to be something special, having no recollection of seeing it while browsing through my usual European field guides. Whatever species it was I'd certainly never seen it before!

I needed to get some record shots in case the bird disappeared but I'd unfortunately left my camera at work so I had to grab my wife's Nikon P520 which has a very handy 42x zoom. Suspecting I had a likely American species the first field guide I consulted was my *Sibley Guide to North American Birds* and I was able to



confirm the identification as Mourning Dove since there are no other confusion species. I quickly telephoned Mike Werndly, another resident birder on the island and left a message with his partner that there was a Mourning Dove in my garden, knowing he would come up as soon as he heard. By now it was approaching 13:30 and I was busy downloading the photographs of the bird to my computer when Mike arrived and was also able to confirm the identification. Unfortunately I had to get back to work and meet the ferry due in at 14:00. I put the news out on Twitter with a photo and then left a message with Birdline Scotland.

After initially feeding on the ground the dove flew up and perched in one of the large *Leylandii* type conifers above the feeding site. It eventually stayed for seven days and favoured the same feeding area under the feeders in the *Leylandii* conifers or sat perched within the conifers for extended periods. It appeared to be selecting black Sunflower seeds over other mixed grains that were available. Over the course of the week a pattern emerged of regular feeding at first light and then again in the late afternoon and dusk until almost dark. Sightings on the ground were rather sporadic outside these times. This pattern changed on the morning of the final day when the dove did not appear until approximately 09:20. The bird was last seen at dusk on the evening of 3 November when it seemed fit, alert and healthy. That night weather conditions were relatively calm and clear so it is likely the bird carried on its migration after fuelling-up on Rum.



Despite the location in a private garden a good number of visiting birders were able to come and see the Dove. On Tuesday 29 October around 30 people made the day trip on the Calmac ferry and all saw the bird even if only perched in the cover of the conifers. The next few days were quite stormy and only another couple of birders connected with the bird, being forced to spend two nights on Rum for the privilege of doing so. Unfortunately for many this meant the bird did not have the opportunity to

Plates 85–86. Mourning Dove, Isle of Rum, Highland, October 2013. © Sean Morris



Plate 87. Mourning Dove, Isle of Rum, Highland, October 2013. © Steve Smith

get used to crowds and it remained nervous of people. It was perhaps this and the attentions of the local Sparrowhawk that prevented the Dove from coming in to feed on Saturday 2 November until literally minutes after the last of the special charters left Rum with its load of disappointed birders. So, with a lesson learned, the next day I constructed a viewing screen using some camouflage netting and this allowed 14 birders on the last charter to obtain great views of the Dove feeding on the ground on its final evening.

Sean Morris, Isle of Rum, Highland.
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Status of Mourning Dove in Scotland

This species breeds in North America, typically from SE Alberta eastwards to the Great Lakes and SE Ontario and Quebec to Newfoundland and south through the entire USA to Panama and in the West Indies. The species is partially migratory, with northernmost populations moving south in winter to vacate the Canadian and Great Plains portions of its range.

There are only two previous British records of Mourning Dove: remarkably both of these are from North Uist, Outer Hebrides, and the same observer, Brian Rabbitts (until recently Outer Hebrides Bird Recorder), found/identified both birds. Both records were of birds in first-winter plumage - the first was at Carinish on 13–15 November 1999, and the other at Carnach (just 4 km from Carinish) on 29 October–7 November 2007. The dates for the stay of the Rum individual closely match these.

There is one earlier record from the Isle of Man of a first-winter trapped at the Calf of Man on 31 October 1989, but sadly found dead the next day (records from here are not included in the British List). There are also two records from Ireland: a first-winter on Inishbofin, Co. Galway on 2–15 November 2007 and one at Garinish, Co. Cork on 25 October 2009. There are other Western Palearctic records from Iceland (19 Oct 1995), Sweden (3–19 Jun 2001), Germany (4 May 2008), Denmark (19–21 May 2008) and four on the Azores (2005, 2008, 2012, 2013).

Short-billed Dowitcher, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 17–23 November 2013 - the second Scottish record

M. WARREN



Plate 88. Short-billed Dowitcher, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, November 2013. © Mark Warren

After a busy autumn season on North Ronaldsay, mid-November usually marks a quieter period and the chance to catch up with all those paperwork and odd jobs that lay idle and ignored during September and October. I've always tried to maintain some sort of birding coverage over past winters and with the seasonal staff having departed and everyone else south at the Scottish ringers conference a Green-winged Teal on the 15th seemed like a half-decent 'end of year' bird and suitable gripping fodder. That all paled into insignificance as little did I know what was in store during a trip to the north end of the Island just a few days later.

It was the first day of reasonable weather for a while and with that in mind I had planned a full day in the field - about 6 hours at this time of year! After about a quarter of my daylight had elapsed I was counting the wildfowl, waders and gulls when I noticed a white supercillium among a flock of Redshanks. "Spotted Redshank or dowitcher?" I speculatively mumbled to myself, expecting the bird to be neither. A few moments later it raised its head into full view and to my surprise I could now see it was amazingly a dowitcher! But which one? I had only ever seen

two in the past - both adults a long time ago, and they are notoriously difficult to separate. My first attempt to get a telescope view of the bird by commando crawling to the nearest bit of sheep dyke failed miserably as I disturbed the sheep which in turn flushed the flock all over the place. Fortunately, after an agonising wait, the dowitcher returned to the flooded fields and I got my first proper look and an opportunity to take in some features. With an obvious contrast between the greyer, moulted mantle and some browner-looking, juvenile areas of the wing I judged it be a first-winter. I concentrated on the tertials, the two shortest were dark centered with uneven, grey notches around them. The longer one lacked this having unmarked golden-brown edges. Now this is where I went wrong, interpreting these upper two patterned tertials to be moulted adult-type feathers as they matched the mantle colour, believing the longer golden edged feather to be juvenile. Its 'loral angle' also seemed to be fairly straight, a feature shown by the commoner Long-billed Dowitcher, and along with my interpretation of the tertials I cautiously identified it as such. Peter Donnelly, the only other resident birder, had arrived an hour after my call and agreed with my conclusions.

Fortunately the bird had showed fairly well until early afternoon and we were able to take plenty of photographs, proving crucial just hours later. However upon returning to the Observatory after dark the alarm bells started ringing - it just looked wrong for a Long-billed Dowitcher! I frantically began working my way through the relevant literature and trawling the internet for images of the two species. Features were checked against my images, and with each of these Short-billed Dowitcher went from a ridiculous possibility to highly likely. The features matching the rarer species were:

- A startlingly white supercillium extending well beyond the eye and framing a dark cap with a few browner streaks within. The cap was noticeable darker than the upper-parts. When viewed head-on the supercillium tapered inwards with a 'step' down the crown whereas in Long-billed this always runs in a straight line.
- The bill was short, roughly one and a half times the length of the head, drooping slightly towards the tip.
- A primary projection of one to two primaries beyond the tertials was evident whereas Long-billed usually shows none. The primaries themselves could also be seen to extend slightly beyond the tail tip.
- The bird was less well marked on the underparts than Long-billed Dowitcher with narrow, neat grey bars on the flanks and subtle spotting on the breast side. There was a hit of pale peachy-buff colouration in the breast area creating a subtle band and an extensive white throat area.
- Dark bars through the tail were narrow, roughly the same width as the white bars with the latter possibly a fraction broader. In Long-billed the darker bars are more prominent.
- A few retained juvenile coverts were present within the wing and bore a distinctive 'tiger striped' notched patterning. A few juvenile scapulars were retained too and the moulted grey first-winter ones and mantle feathers had prominent white fringes, which are usually less obvious in Long-billed Dowitcher.
- It was a surprisingly small bird overall, not much bigger than a Turnstone, comfortably smaller than the accompanying Redshank being closer in size to a Knot.
- In most photographs the 'loral angle' appeared fairly straight but in some it could be seen to be steeper. In those pictures the position of the eye was well above the bill which is another supportive character of Short-billed Dowitcher.



Plates 89–90. Short-billed Dowitcher, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, November 2013. © Mark Warren



Plates 91–94. Short-billed Dowitcher, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, November 2013. © Mark Warren

I had mounted a strong case but I was now panicking yet still confused by the whitish, rather than golden-brown patterning to the tertials. I needed a little help from my friends, someone to tell me I wasn't losing the plot before releasing news of a bird in an unfamiliar plumage in Western Europe, which should have migrated south from North America a couple of months ago and would be just the fourth record for Britain! Grateful thanks must go to Rael Butcher, Paul Higson (Orkbird founder) and Josh Jones (Birdguides) who were contacted for early correspondence which ultimately led to the correct identification as a Short-billed Dowitcher. I could now put the unusual tertial colouration down to wear and bleaching with our British experience of Short-billed Dowitcher being of September juveniles whereas this first-winter bird was more than two months older.

After going missing for a day it was back at Bewan early morning on the 19th and now could truly be appreciated. It had even begun to call regularly and hearing the treble note 'tu-du-leu'- a bit like a cross between a Lesser Yellowlegs and a Turnstone was most satisfying. The bird remained on North Ronaldsay until at least 23 November and would have been a huge draw had it not been for the two juveniles which had been present in the south of England last autumn. It was enjoyed by only eight birders all told, including just three who twitched it from mainland Orkney. It just goes to show that while September will always remain prime time, a visit to North Ronaldsay can be enjoyable and productive all year round, even in the off-season.

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Since this account was written, the Short-billed Dowitcher reappeared on North Ronaldsay on 13–14 December and was seen again on 28th and in January 2014 - another remarkable case of a vagrant wader overwintering in Scotland, following on from the Kentish Plover at South Ford, South Uist (Outer Hebrides) from 10 November 2007 to 20 April 2008, the Pectoral Sandpiper at Troon & Barassie (Ayrshire) from 16 December 2011 and 27 April 2012 (at least) and the Marsh Sandpiper at Kyles Paible, North Uist from 30 December 2013 to 19 January 2014.

Status of Short-billed Dowitcher in Scotland

This Nearctic wader has three subspecies each using distinct breeding areas in North America: nominate *L.g. griseus* from Hudson Bay east to Newfoundland; *L.g. hendersoni* from SW Hudson Bay west to southern NW Territories and northern Alberta; and *L.g. caurinus* along coastal Alaska west to the Aleutian Islands. Each population is entirely migratory, with *griseus* migrating down the Atlantic coast to winter mainly in the Caribbean, *hendersoni* through eastern USA to winter along Atlantic and Gulf coasts, and *caurinus* down the Pacific coast to winter along the coast from California southwards.

Three previous individuals have been identified in Britain, though none has been assigned to a particular subspecies, with the first of these in Scotland:

- 1999** North-east Scotland, juvenile, Rosehearty, 11–24 September; with the same at Greenabella Marsh/Greatham Creek, Cleveland, 29 September to 30 October.
- 2012** Dorset, juvenile, Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 3 September to 6 October
- 2012** Scilly, juvenile, Tresco, 9–21 September

There have been seven records (three birds) from Ireland: a juvenile at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford on 30 September to 2 October 1985; a first-summer at the Boyne Estuary, Co. Meath on 18–30 April 2000, with presumed same then at Swords Estuary, Co. Dublin on 24 July to 23 September 2000 and again at Swords Estuary (as adult) on 5–26 May 2001, and a first-summer at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford on 30 June to 15 August 2004 then at North Bull Island, Co. Dublin (as adult) on 31 October 2004 to 13 March 2005 and Booterstown Marsh, Co. Dublin on 25 March to 9 April 2005.

The North Ronaldsay bird is the latest to be found, and consequently was moulting out of juvenile plumage into first-winter. Short-billed Dowitcher closely resembles Long-billed Dowitcher, which tends to migrate later, and hence good close views, particularly of the tertials, are essential for identification to species level.



Plate 95. Short-billed Dowitcher, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, November 2013. © Mark Warren

Hudsonian Whimbrel at Mid Yell, Shetland, 30 September–2 October 2013 - the fifth Scottish record

D. PULLAN



Plate 96. Hudsonian Whimbrel, Mid Yell, Shetland, September 2013. © Dave Pullan

Lesser Yellowlegs, Arctic Warbler and Eastern Subalpine Warbler; not a bad start to a Shetland autumn morning. Our Heatherlea Birdwatching group were driving back to the main road from the Mid Yell Subalpine Warbler, wondering what delights the magical island of Unst might hold, when we were distracted by a group of three waders standing on short heath and sparse grass only about 50 m off to our right. Two were clearly Curlews, but the third was smaller with a stripy head. It looked like a Whimbrel, but a late Whimbrel. After I'd pulled over to the edge of the road the birds took flight, moving only a few metres further back, but giving enough time to see the first important feature; the underwing was brown on the 'whimbrel', clearly darker and browner than the white underwings of the accompanying Curlews!

This set a kind of controlled panic in motion. I hadn't seen the rump, but knew that the underwing must mean one thing - Hudsonian Whimbrel! Myself and John set up our cameras and started taking the first images of the bird on the ground. If it flew again everyone was primed to check the rump. After a couple of minutes the



Plate 97. Hudsonian Whimbrel, Mid Yell, Shetland, September 2013. © Dave Pullan

Curlews did fly again, followed soon after by the smaller, darker, bird, drifting down to the stoney shore at the mouth of the burn. Yes, the rump and tail were unequivocally brown! Wow, not a trace of white anywhere and that beautiful underwing was clearly seen again.

There were other Curlews scattered about on the shore and the Hudsonian Whimbrel was looking settled, bathing and feeding in shallow water, and occasionally chasing one of the Curlews. At this stage, I put the news out locally and nationally. Paul Harvey was already on the ferry (!) and after a short search got to see the Hudsonian Whimbrel along with a couple of others including Yell birder Dougie Preston. It became quite mobile, moving with the Curlews to different sections of shoreline and at one

stage feeding on a grassy hillside well above the shore. After a good hour, we left to catch our ferry to Unst, leaving the magical island of Yell behind. The bird was seen again on 1st and 2 October, but was often elusive and at times visited near-by Whalefirth.

This is the eighth record of Hudsonian Whimbrel for Britain. The four previous Scottish records were as follows:

1955 Fair Isle, 27–31 May

1974 Out Skerries, Shetland, 27 July–8 August

2007 Fair Isle, 29–31 August

2009 South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 12 September

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Plate 98. Hudsonian Whimbrel, Mid Yell, Shetland, September 2013. © Dave Pullan

Black-and-white Warbler on Fetlar, Shetland, September 2013 – the second Scottish record

J. NANGLE & L. THOMSON

On 6 September 2013, my wife and I visited Fetlar and the RSPB hide at Loch of Funzie. It was a very quiet birding day and I remember thinking that summer seemed over. We sat in the hide having our coffee and saw virtually nothing.

The approach to the hide is partially obscured by an earth bank about 30 m long upon which grow small willow bushes. I left the hide first, and as I was walking along the path by the willows, I came to a small gap, where about 6 m in front of me, perched on some withered willows, was a warbler. It was broadly striped black and white, the size and shape of a Willow Warbler. I could not discern any further plumage details in the few seconds of my first sighting.

After briefly watching the bird, I had slowly dropped everything and started to reach for my camera, but the bird disappeared. We continued to look for it for a while, but had no further sightings.

I had only seen it for about four seconds in total, but knew immediately that I'd seen the bird illustrated in my *Collins Guide* which was in the car parked on the road. Upon looking it up, I easily located it in the book as it was so distinctive.

At this point we went to Andy Cook's house to tell him of the sighting. He's a local birder and lived only a couple of hundred yards away. Andy came back with us to the hide area, where we all had a very fleeting glimpse of the warbler, though frustratingly for not long enough to get more detail on it. This time, it was flying directly away from us and it alighted on a fence about 30 m away. In the time it took to raise my binoculars, it had flown off. Again the striping was apparent from a rear view, but no more detail was observed due to its very

flighty and elusive nature. Lynn and I then had to leave Andy to try to locate it again on his own, we had to get the next ferry back to Yell.

Later that evening, after Lynn and I came home from helping to prepare for the Yell Show, I checked the phone for messages. I really wasn't confident that Andy would have seen the bird again, but he had left a message; he confirmed that he had seen it again and well enough to be certain of its identification! [it really would help to get some info from him]

Neither of us had the chance to take photographs unfortunately, so the next morning, I went back over to Fetlar with a friend and met with Andy at the hide with another mutual friend. We awaited the arrival of other birders before searching the area thoroughly, ensuring that the willows and surrounding undergrowth were not concealing the bird. After our extensive search of all likely (and unlikely) habitats on the island, no further sightings were made.

Our observation constitutes the first live sighting of a Black-and-white Warbler in Scotland, the first record being of one found dead at Vatster, near Tingwall on mainland Shetland, in 1936. We have been fortunate in seeing the Vatster bird in the National Museums Scotland storage facility, thanks to Bob McGowan (Senior Curator of Vertebrates at the museum).

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This record is subject to acceptance by the British Birds Records Committee

Scottish Bird Sightings

1 October to 31 December 2013

S.L. RIVERS

Records in Scottish Bird Sightings are published for interest only. All records are subject to acceptance by the relevant records committee.

The following abbreviations for recording areas are used: Angus & Dundee - A&D; Argyll - Arg; Ayrshire - Ayr; Borders - Bord; Caithness - Caith; Dumfries & Galloway D&G; Highland - High; Lothian - Loth; Moray & Nairn - M&N; North-East Scotland - NES; Outer Hebrides - OH; Perth & Kinross - P&K; Shetland - Shet; Upper Forth - UF.

A warm, southerly airflow continued into the first part of October, with only a few days of SW winds, then a spell of NE winds mid-month heralded a

period of eastern arrivals, and prolonged westerlies in the latter half brought a number of Nearctic visitors. A fine series of Glossy Ibis sightings came from western and northern areas, but the wet and generally mild weather in November and December meant relatively low numbers of scarcer winter visitors were seen, and may account for the unprecedented (in Britain) over-wintering of a Short-billed Dowitcher and a Marsh Sandpiper.

Taiga Bean Goose: the regular wintering flock on the Slamannan Plateau (Clyde/UF) was present from late September, with a peak of 237 birds in November. Elsewhere one was noted in Edinburgh (Loth) on 18 October, and two at Collenan and

Martnaham Loch (both Ayr) on 4 November. **Tundra Bean Goose:** reports included six at Fannyside Lochs (Clyde) on 13 October; two near Corbiehall (Clyde) on 16 October; two at Caerlaverock WWT Reserve on 1 November; one near Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 1–2 November, and one at Fail, near Tarbolton (Ayr) on 21–23 December. **Snow Goose:** one was at Loch Watten (Caith) on 9 October; a white-morph bird was at Tarland, near Aboyne (NES) on 10–12 October, with presumed same in the Strathbeg area from 13 October, with two there or at Loch of Skene through November and December; one was at Gorebridge on 12 October and then at Kingston/Aberlady (all Loth) on 20–27 October; one at Crail, Fife on 30 October to 1



Plate 99. Snow Goose, Tarland, North-east Scotland, October 2013. © Harry Scott

November; one near Beauly (High) on 2 November. An intermediate and a white-morph were at Tayinloan (Arg) from 16 October to the end of December; two blue-morph birds were at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) from 27 October to end November and at Loch of Skene on 4 December, with one at Kinnordy (A&D) on 30 November and presumed same at Mains of Ballindarg (A&D) on 1–4 December. **Small race**

Canada/Cackling Geese: two Richardson's (form *hutchinsii*) were at Loch Gruinart, Islay (Arg) from 9 October, with one also at Loch Indaal on 21st, one of the form *minima* was reported on Islay in October. Up to three *hutchinsii* were on Islay in November; one was near Scrabster (Caith) on 23 October, others included two at West Water Reservoir (Bord) on 9 October and two on Orkney in December.

American Wigeon: single drakes were on Sanday (Ork) on 1–13 October; Udale Bay (High) from 7 October to 15 December; at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve from 20 October to 26 December; at Loch Bee, South Uist (OH) on 9 November; and Loch Saintear, Westray (Ork) on 30–31 December. **Green-winged Teal:** single drakes were at Loch Leven (P&K) on 31 October; Caerlaverock WWT Reserve (D&G) from 31 October to the end of the year; at Loch Gruinart, Islay (Arg) on 3–13 November; at Loch Leven again on 11 November; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) from 15 November to 28 December; at Loch of Kinnordy (A&D) on 17th and 30 November and 5–27 December; at Loch of Lintrathen (A&D) on 24 November to 1 Dec; at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree on 27 November and 29–31 December; at Loch of Kinnordy (A&D) on 30 November and 5th, 10–18th and 26–27 December. One was at Guardbridge, Fife on 5 December;

one at Carsebreck (P&K) on 11th, and one at Loch of Flugarth, North Roe, Mainland (Shet) on 28–30 December. **Garganey:** a juvenile was still at Lochwinnoch RSPB Reserve, Clyde on 1–28 October, and one at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay (Arg) on 25 October. **Blue-winged Teal:** the drake was still at Frankfield, near Stepps, Clyde from September to 18 Oct, and a female/juvenile drake was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 5–15 December. **Ring-necked Duck:** the eclipse drake remained at Meikle Loch (NES) to 12 October, with one there again on 17 December; a juvenile was at Loch Leodasay, North Uist (OH) on 10–30 October; a drake was at Loch o' the Lowes (Ayr) from 24 October to 10 November. **Lesser Scaup:** a female was at Loch an Dail, South Uist (OH) from 24 November and nearby at Loch an t-Saile from 1st to 18 December; a drake was at Loch Watten, near Thurso (Caith) on 8th and 31 December; a female was at Alturlie Point, near Inverness (High) on 12–31 December.

King Eider: a drake was in Hascosay Sound, Yell (Shet) on 10 November; a female flew south past Ardvule, South Uist (OH) on 11 November; a drake was off Burghhead (M&N) on 12–15 November; a second-winter male was off Hamars Ness, Fetlar (Shet) from 20 November to end of December; a drake was off Nairn (M&N) on 8 December; a female was off Gullane/Eyebroughty (Loth) on 11–14 December, with two off there and Fidra on 15–17th and at least one still to 31 December, and a drake was in Bluemull Sound, off Fetlar (Shet) on 20–28 December. **Surf Scoter:** a drake and a female remained off Murcar/Blackdog (NES) throughout Oct; three were in Sound of Taransay, Harris (OH) to 6 October; single drakes were at Rerwick Head (Ork) on 5 October;

off Ruddons Point, Fife from 20 October to the end of the year; at Loch Gruinart, Islay (Arg) on 23 October; a female/immature flew past Ardvule Point, South Uist (OH) on 27 Oct; a juvenile was off Ardivachar, South Uist on 30 October, and again on 7–16 November; a drake was off Tankerness, Mainland (Ork) on 10 November; a drake was off The Wig, Loch Ryan, near Stranraer (D&G) on 17 November; in Lothian a drake was off Cockenzie (Loth) on 28 November, with presumed same off Musselburgh and Joppa (Loth) on 21–31 December, with it, or another, at Seton Sands on 22 December. **Stejneger's (White-winged) Scoter:** an adult drake was present off Musselburgh Lagoons on 26 December, but was only retrospectively identified from photographs. It constitutes the first record for Britain.

White-billed Diver: one was in Bluemull Sound (Shet) from 28 October, with two on 14–20 November and in December; an adult was in off Kirkabister, South Nesting Bay, Mainland (Shet) on 10–13 November, and two were seen off Sound Gruney (Shet) between Yell and Fetlar on 20 December. **Sooty Shearwater:** late birds included 17 past North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 5 November, one past Butt of Lewis, Lewis (OH) on 14 November, and one seen midway between Skye (High) and North Uist (OH) from the Uig–Lochmaddy ferry on 1 December. **Manx Shearwater:** a notably late bird was seen off Rubha Ardvule, South Uist (OH) on 13 December. **Bittern:** one was at Bishop Loch, Glasgow, Clyde on 18 October; one at Loch of Kinnordy RSPB Reserve (A&D) from 28 November to 22 December at least, and one at Castle Loch NR, near Lochmaben (D&G) on 6th and 26 December. **Little Egret:** on the Outer Hebrides at least one was seen at various sites on the Uists and Benbecula



Plate 100. Glossy Ibis, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, December 2013. © John Nadin

from 8 October to 7 December. One was at Capringstone Flash, near Irvine (Ayr) on 29 December. In Dumfries and Galloway there were up to 12 in October, with about six still in December. Elsewhere one was on Foula (Shet) on 22 November; one at Findhorn Bay (M&N) on 1–6 November; one at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 12–13 November and 14 December; two between Kingoodie and Port Allen (P&K) on 2–24 October; at least one on the Eden Estuary, Fife in October; one at Higgins Neuk (UF) on 4 November, at RSPB Powfoulis (UF) on 16th and 23 November, and Skinflats Lagoons RSPB (UF) on 21 December. Up to four were in Lothian in October, and at least two in November and December. One was at Paxton House (Bord) on 20 December. **Great White Egret:** one was at Cambuscurrie Bay, near Edderton (High) on 24 October.

Purple Heron: one was on Fair Isle on 16 October. **Glossy Ibis:** four were present at Caerlaverock WWT Reserve on 1–3 October, and nearby at Mersehead on 3rd; one flew past Isle of Whithorn on 7th and two were at Wigtown Bay on 9 October (all D&G); five were at Cnoc an Torrain, North Uist (OH) on 25–26th, and Paiblesgarry, North Uist on 26–28 October, with one seen flying over Carinish, North Uist on 3 December, one at Loch Barvas, Lewis on 12–13 December; one at Loch na Revil, North Uist on 15th; two at Daliburgh, South Uist on 16–19th and 21st, four at Callanish, Lewis from 16–21 December, one flew over Nunton House, Benbecula (OH) on 17th; three at Clachan Farm, North Uist on 19 December, one at Hougharry, North Uist on 28–31st, one at Kilaulay, South Uist on 29–31 December, and one at North Galson, Lewis on 30 December.

Other sightings involved one at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve on 1 November with it, or another, near Wick (Caith) on 8 November, and Swannay, Mainland (Ork) on 17–22 December and 26–29 December, and one at Skelwick, Westray (Ork) on 19th, and at Tankerness, Mainland (Ork) on 25–31 December. **Spoonbill:** one was at Piltanton Burn, near Stranraer (D&G) from 7 October to 6 November. **Pied-billed Grebe:** one was at Loch nam Feithean, Balranald, North Uist (OH) from 6–26 December and on the adjacent Loch Scaraidh from 28 December into 2014. **Rough-legged Buzzard:** one was near Ellon (NES) on 24 October. **Hobby:** singles were at Auchmithie on 6 October and Ethie Barns on 8 October (both A&D), and a juvenile at Blairbowie (Ayr) on 5 November. **Gyr Falcon:** a white-morph bird was at Evie, Mainland (Ork) on 2 November; a

white-morph was at Balemore, North Uist (OH) on 9th and 17 November. **Crane:** three flew NW over Grangemouth (UF) on 27 November; two were seen circling over Minard Castle, Loch Fyne then flew north on 30 November and two adults were present near Crieff (P&K) on 3–13 December.

Dotterel: one was still on Fair Isle to 17 October. **American Golden Plover:** an adult was at Eoropie, Lewis (OH) on 1–2 October; one at Grenitote, North Uist (OH) on 2nd; an adult again at Butt of Lewis, Lewis on 6–8 October; a juvenile was at Broadford, Isle of Skye (High) on 6th; the adult was seen again on Sanday (Ork) on 10th; a juvenile was at Swainbost, Lewis on 11th; one at Machir Bay, Islay (Arg) on 17th, and one on Fair Isle on 18 October. **Little Stint:** about a dozen were seen in October, with notably late individuals at Montrose Basin

(A&D) on 3 November and one at Balranald, North Uist (OH) on 12 December. **White-rumped Sandpiper:** a juvenile was at Scord then Virkie and Grutness, Mainland (Shet) on 11 October; one at Boddam Voe, Mainland (Shet) on 17–21 October; one at Ardivachar, South Uist (OH) on 29–30 October; one at Aird an Runair, North Uist on 3 November; two juveniles at Ardivachar, South Uist on 5 November, one at Balgarva, South Uist on 7th, both again in North Bay, South Uist from 9 November, and finally one at Ardivachar on 24 November. **Pectoral Sandpiper:** one was still at Clevigarth, Mainland (Shet) on 1–2 October; one at Cullaloe SWT Reserve, Fife on 3–4th; one was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 4th; one at Cleatt Bay then Allathasdal, Barra (OH) on 6th; one at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 6th; one at Northton, Harris (OH) on 11th, and a juvenile at Loch of

Norby, Mainland (Shet) on 11–12 October. **Curlew Sandpiper:** about 40 were recorded in October, with peak counts of nine at Browhouses (D&G) on 10th, and at least eight at North Bay, South Uist (OH) on 6th. Late birds included one still at Browhouses on 11 November and one at Pool of Virkie, Mainland (Shet) on 14–18 November. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** a juvenile was still at Tofts Ness, Sanday (Ork) on 1–2 Oct, with an adult and juvenile there on 4th; one was on Fair Isle on 9–10 October. **Short-billed Dowitcher:** a first-winter was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 17–23 November, and seen there again on 13–14th and 28 December. **Hudsonian Whimbrel:** the juvenile was still at Setter, Yell (Shet) on 1–2 October. **Lesser Yellowlegs:** a juvenile was still at Clevigarth, Mainland (Shet) on 1–3 October. **Marsh Sandpiper:** one was near Kyles Paible, North Uist



Plate 101. Marsh Sandpiper, North Uist, Outer Hebrides, January 2014. © John Kemp

(OH) from 30 December into 2014 - the latest ever found in Britain and the first to overwinter.

Wilson's Phalarope: a first-winter was at Sand Voe, Mainland (Shet) on 10–15 October. **Grey Phalarope:** in October singles were seen from the Castlebay, Barra (OH) to Oban (Arg) ferry on 6th; off Rubha Aird-mhicheil, South Uist (OH) and flying past Aird, Tiree (Arg) on 9th, and one flew past Stinky Bay, Benbecula on 31st. In November, singles were at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree (Arg) on 11th; off Arbroath Esplanade (A&D) on 12th; off Carnoustie (A&D) on 14–19th; at North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 15th; at River Esk mouth, Musselburgh (Loth) on 18th. In December, one was seen briefly at Troon (Ayr) on 12th; one at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 24th, with it, or another, at Haroldswick, Unst (Shet) on 27th, three were at Northwick, Papa Westray (Ork) on 26th, and one was at Skateraw (Loth) on 28–30 December.

Pomarine Skua: about 40 were reported in October, with later sightings of one flying S past Maidens (Ayr) and Kennedy's Pass (Ayr) on 3 November; two past Tarbat Ness (High) on 4th; an adult heading N off Collieston (NES) on 7th; one past Aird, Tiree (Arg) on 14th; two N past Eyemouth (Bord) on 21 November; one was in Lunan Bay (A&D) on 20 December, and one off Scoughall (Loth) on 31 December. **Long-tailed Skua:** a juvenile was seen off Musselburgh Lagoons (Loth) on 4 October. **Ivory Gull:** in December a remarkable run of sightings involved 1st-winter birds at Baleshare, North Uist (OH) on 4th; at Tarbat Ness (High) on 5th; at Boddam Harbour fish factory (NES) on 7th; Evie (Ork) on 12–14th (which fed on a long-dead Sperm Whale) and at Lionel/Eorpie, Lewis (OH) on 21–29th. **Sabine's Gull:** a juvenile was seen c3 miles from Barra

from the ferry to Oban on 9 October; a juvenile flew N past St Abb's Head (Bord) on 11th; a juvenile was at Skaw, Whalsay on 24th; an adult flew W at Lossiemouth (M&N) on 24th, and one was off Burghead (M&N) on 25 October. **Ross's Gull:** an adult was in Bay of Swartmill, Westray (Ork) on 4 November. **Laughing Gull:** the adult remained on Sanday (Ork) to 13 October. **Mediterranean Gull:** away from the regular Fife and Lothian sites there was a first-winter at Ruaig, Tiree (Arg) on 1 October; a first-winter at Ardivachar, South Uist (OH) on 3–4th, with it, or another, at Stinky Bay, Benbecula (OH) on 4th, and North Bay, South Uist on 6th. An adult was at Lossiemouth (M&N) on 7th; one at Irvine (Ayr) on 17th, at Portencross (Ayr) on 19th; a 2nd-winter at Doonfoot (Ayr) on 23rd, and an adult at Arbroath Esplanade (A&D) on 26 October. In November a 2nd-winter was at Piltanton Burn, near Stranraer (D&G) on 1st, an adult at Skinflats (UF) on 3rd; one at Largs (Ayr) on 5th; two on Fraserburgh Beach (NES) on 17th; one at Troon (Ayr) on 22nd; a 1st-winter at the Add Estuary, near Crinan (Arg) on 26th, and one at Arbroath (A&D) on 28 November. One was at Maidens (Ayr) on 5 December; two at Doonfoot (Ayr) on 9th; an adult at Tayport, Fife on 10th; an adult and 1st-winter at Lochgilphead (Arg) on 11th; a 1st-winter at Carbarns Pool, Clyde on 21st; two adults and a 2nd-winter at Barassie (Ayr) on 22nd, and two adults at Bishop Burn, near Stranraer (D&G) on 29 December. **Ring-billed Gull:** the adult remained at Dingwall (High) throughout October to the end of the year; a near-adult was at Mallaig (High) on 31 October and 8 November; a 1st-winter was at Baleshare, North Uist (OH) and an adult was at Doonfoot (Ayr) on 7 December. **Yellow-legged Gull:** an adult was at Strathclyde Loch,

Clyde on 4–5th and 7 December; an adult was at Shewalton, Irvine (Ayr) on 17–19th; an adult at Doonfoot (Ayr) on 25th and 28th, and one at Castle Loch NR, near Lochmaben (D&G) on 28 December. A bird showing characteristics of Azorean Yellow-legged Gull (form *atlantis*) was at Strathclyde Loch on 4th and 7 December. **Caspian Gull:** an adult was seen at Belhaven Bay, Dunbar (Loth) on 27 December. **Iceland Gull:** very few reported in October, with peak count of two on Fair Isle on 24th. Only a dozen reported in November - all singles, though possibly two at Scrabster (Caith) on 23rd. More evident and widespread in December, but still relatively few and peaks of an adult and three juveniles at Stornoway Harbour, Lewis (OH) on 19th; an adult and two juveniles at Cnoc a' Lin/Rubh' Arnal, North Uist on 25th, and two at three other sites. **Kumlien's Gull:** a 2nd-winter was at Collieston (NES) and a 2nd-winter was between Soulseat and Castle Kennedy (D&G) on 28 December. **Glaucous Gull:** more widespread and numerous than Iceland Gull but still a poor showing. Only 10 or so reported in October, with a peak of two on Foula (Shet) on 21st. Over 30 were seen in November, but peak counts were of just two at seven locations. Over 45 were reported in December, mostly on the Northern and Western Isles, but with individuals in NE Scotland and Dumfries & Galloway. The peak counts were of four 1st-winter birds at Cnoc a' Lin and one close by at Balranald beach, North Uist (OH) on 31 December, and three juveniles at Fair Isle on 18 December.

Brünnich's Guillemot: one was found dead at Esha Ness, Mainland (Shet) on 28 December. **Little Auk:** relatively few reported with peaks of 10 off North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 12



Plate 102. Shorelark, Girdle Ness, North-east Scotland, October 2013.
© Harry Scott

October, 11 past North Ronaldsay on 5 November, and 18 past Anstruther, Fife on 27 December. **Turtle Dove:** late migrants included one still at Morghan, Barra (OH) to 5 October; one at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 1 October; one at Broadford, Isle of Skye (High) on 1–2 October; one at Clachan a Luib/Bayhead, North Uist (OH) on 3–8th, with probably the same at Baleshare, North Uist (OH) on 10th; one still at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 4–9th; one at Palace, Mainland (Ork) on 5–12th; one at Burray (Ork) on 6th, with a juvenile there on 24th; one at Balephuill, Tiree (Arg) on 6th, with it, or another, at Kirkapol on 8th; singles were at Burrarfirth and Baltasound (both Unst) on 7th; one at Stromness (Ork) on 8th; one at Haroldswick, Unst on 9th and another at Toab, Mainland (Shet) on 9–18th; one on Fair

Isle on 14th; one at Hosta, North Uist on 15th; one at lochdar, South Uist on 20th; one at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 21–22 October, and one again at Clachan a Luib, North Uist on 5 November. **Mourning Dove:** one was at Kinloch, Rum (High) on 28 October to 3 November. **Snowy Owl:** one was seen again on Hirta, St. Kilda (OH) on 24 November. **Kingfisher:** one was seen again at Howmore, South Uist on 11–12 October, and then at Loch Druidibeg, South Uist on 16 November (noted on and off since 27 August) and only the eighth record for the Outer Hebrides. **Hoopoe:** one was at Cullivoe, Yell (Shet) on 4 October; one at Hastigrow, near Wick (Caith) on 20 October. **Wryneck:** an exceptional inland record was of one at Pitlochry (P&K) on 16 October.

Red-eyed Vireo: one was on Fair

Isle on 6 October - the first for the island. **Golden Oriole:** one was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 3 October. **Isabelline Shrike:** a first-winter was on Foula (Shet) on 10–12 October, and one on Whalsay (Shet) on 17–28 October. **Red-backed Shrike:** a 1st-winter was at Haroldswick, Unst (Shet) on 7th and 10 October; one at Baltasound, Unst and one on Yell (Shet) on 9 October; one was at Gruinart Farm, Islay (Arg) on 14–26 October; a juvenile was found freshly dead at Sumburgh Farm, Mainland (Shet) on 22nd; one was at West Sandwick, Yell (Shet) on 2 November. **Great Grey Shrike:** singles were at Burrarfirth, Unst (Shet) on 2 October; on the Isle of May on 2–4 October; on Foula (Shet) on 4th and 10th; on Bressay (Shet) on 5th; on Fair Isle on 5–11th; at Cunningsburgh (Shet) on 8–9th; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 22nd, and at Baltasound, Unst on 24 October. One was at Urafirth, Mainland (Shet) on 1 November, and one at Nisbet (Bord) on 9 November.

Firecrest: singles were at Nesting, Mainland (Shet) on 2 October; at Kilminning, Fife Ness, Fife on 3rd and 14–20 October; at Rattray Head (NES) on 3–6th; at Longhaven Quarry, Boddam (NES) on 4–5th, and at Mire Loch, St Abb' Head (Bord) on 5–7th and 26 October. **Short-toed Lark:** singles were at Sumburgh, Mainland (Shet) on 5–8 October; at Sandwick, Mainland (Shet) on 6 October; at Rubha Ardvule, South Uist (OH) on 6 October; on Foula (Shet) on 8–12 October, and on Fair Isle on 9–10 October. **Shorelark:** one was at Girdle Ness, Aberdeen (NES) on 4 October; one at Exnaboe, Mainland (Shet) on 26 October, and one on Fair Isle on 12 November. **Long-tailed Tit:** five birds of the white-headed form (*caudatus*) were at Halligarth, Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 3 November, with at least two still present on 4th.

Greenish Warbler: late records

involved one reported near Campbeltown (Arg) on 1 October and one at North Loch Eynort, South Uist on 5 October - 1st for OH if accepted. **Arctic Warbler:** in October one was at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 1–2nd; one still at Loch of Voe, Mainland (Shet) on 1–5th and 12 October; one at Seafield, Lerwick (Shet) on 6–7th, and one on Fair Isle on 14–15th. **Pallas's Warbler:** one was at Denburn Wood, Crail on 13 October and one at Kilminning, Fife Ness (both Fife) on 15 Oct; one at Mire Loch, St Abb's Head (Bord) on 16–22nd; one at Sands of Forvie NNR (NES) on 19–20th, and one at Glendale, Trondra (Shet) on 26 October. **Yellow-browed Warbler:** the record influx continued into October, and up to 250 could have been present in the first half of the month. Most were on the Northern Isles, but others were found down the east coast to Borders, and smaller numbers in the Outer Hebrides and Argyll. High counts included 10 on Fair Isle on 6th, with nine there on 1st and 12th, and seven on 2nd and 11th; nine on Bressay (Shet) on 5th; eight at Wester Quarff, Mainland (Shet) on 4th; seven on Out Skerries (Shet) on 1st, and six at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) and on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 1st. Top counts from the Scottish mainland was of five at White Sands Bay (Loth) on 3rd and at Tullos Hill, near Aberdeen (NES) on 5th. Particularly notable were one at Kiltarlity, near Beaully (High) on 7th; one at Loch Garten RSPB Reserve (High) on 9th; one in Richmond Park, Glasgow, Clyde on 5th, and singles in D&G at Auchie Glen on 4 October, Caerlaverock WWT Reserve on 8th and Castle Loch NR, near Lochmaben on 13 October. Up to 90 were reported in the second half of October. Peak counts were of four on Fair Isle on 15th; four at Mire Loch, St Abb's Head (Bord) on 19th, with three there on 16th

and 20th, and three at Kilminning, Fife Ness, Fife on 17th. One at Blackford Hill, Edinburgh (Loth) on 16–19th was unusual. A notably late bird was near Kikwall Airport, Mainland (Ork) on 10 November. **Radde's Warbler:** one was on the Isle of May on 3–4 October, and one at St. Abbs Head (Bord) on 19–20 October. **Dusky Warbler:** one was on Fair Isle on 13 October, with two present on 15th, and one still on 17th; one at Fife Ness Muir, Fife on 18–20 October; one at Helendale, Lerwick (Shet) on 26–28 October, and one at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 22 November. **Western Bonelli's Warbler:** one remained at Marrister, Whalsay (Shet) to 18 October, and one on Burray (Ork) to 17 October.

Barred Warbler: one was near Aith, Fetlar (Shet) on 1 Oct; one was on the Isle of May on 3–4 October; one at Tullos Hill, near Aberdeen (NES) on 5th; singles on Fair Isle on 7th and 23 October; one at Skateraw (Loth) on 13th; one at Sandwick,

Mainland (Shet) on 14th; one at Mains of Usan (A&D) on 26th, and one at Burravoe, Unst (Shet) on 28–31 October. A notably late bird was at White Sands Bay (Loth) on 23 November. **Eastern Subalpine Warbler:** the male was still at Mid Yell, Yell (Shet) on 1–8 October. **Sardinian Warbler:** the male remained at St. Abb's Head (Bord) throughout October to 2 November. **Lanceolated Warbler:** singles were on Fair Isle on 6th and 20 October. **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler:** one was at Hoswick, Mainland (Shet) on 5–11 October. **Paddyfield Warbler:** singles were at Skaw, Unst (Shet) on 12 October; at Kirkwall, Mainland (Ork) on 21st, and on Fair Isle on 22 October. **Blyth's Reed Warbler:** in October one was still at Funzie, Fetlar (Shet) on 1st; and singles near Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 1–10th; at Sumburgh, Mainland (Shet) on 11th; on Fair Isle on 11–16th, with two there on 12–13th; and on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 15–16th. **Marsh Warbler:** all records were in October on Shetland - one



Plate 103. Rose-coloured Starling, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, October 2013. © John Nadin



Plate 104. Grey-cheeked Thrush, Fair Isle, October 2013. © Ian Andrews



Plate 105. Black-throated Thrush, Lerwick, Shetland, November 2013. © Rebecca Nason



Plates 106–107. Siberian Rubythroat, Fair Isle, October 2013. © Kevin Kelly

was still at Everland, Fetlar to 8 October; one at Ollaberry, Mainland on 4th; one at Vidlin, Mainland on 8th; one at Norwick, Unst on 11th, and one at Gorie, Bressay on 12th. **Great Reed Warbler:** a probable was seen at Mull of Galloway (D&G) on 4 October. **Thick-billed Warbler:** one was at Geosetter, Mainland (Shet) on 4–5 October.

Bohemian Waxwing: very few in October, the highest count being nine on Foula (Shet) on 29th. More widespread and larger numbers seen in November with high counts of 59 at Echt (NES) on 12th; 70 at Elgin (M&N) on 21st; and 60 in Hilton, Aberdeen (NES) on 27th. Noted widely in December, mostly in small numbers, with peak counts of 230 at Kincorth, Aberdeen (NES) on 22nd, 210 there on 21st; 60 at Cults (NES) on 27th, and 50 at Elgin on 8th and at Airyhall, Aberdeen on 19th. **Treecreeper:** one at Scarinish, Tiree (Arg) was only the second record for the island. **Rose-coloured Starling:** immatures were found at Hoswick, Mainland (Shet) on 5 October, and Port Nis, Lewis (OH) from 9 October to 11 November. **Black-bellied Dipper:** one was at Woodwick, Unst (Shet) on 11–12 October; one at Grimness, South Ronaldsay (Ork) on 22 October, and one at Hermaness, Unst (Shet) on 2–4 November. **Grey-cheeked Thrush:** one was at Sgallairidh, Barra (OH) on 10 October, and one on Fair Isle on 11 October. **Black-throated Thrush:** a first-winter was at Sound, near Lerwick (Shet) on 9–11 November. **American Robin:** a first-winter male was at South Loch Eynort, South Uist (OH) from 17 November to 3 December. **Siberian Rubythroat:** a male was on Fair Isle on 21–23 October. **Bluethroat:** one was at Rattray Head (NES) on 2–6 Oct; one on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 9–11th and 17th; one on the Isle of May



Plate 108. Red-flanked Bluetail, Crail, Fife, October 2013. © Keith Hoey

on 13th and 15th, and one on Fair Isle on 18 October. **Red-flanked Bluetail:** in October single first-winters were at Denburn Wood, Crail, Fife on 13–14th; at Pierowall, Westray (Ork) on 18–21st; at Upper Voe, Mainland (Shet) on 20–21st; at Walls, Mainland (Shet) on 25–26th, and on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 31st. **Siberian Stonechat:** one was at Gorie, Bressay (Shet) on 12 October, and one at Swartmill Bay, Westray (Ork) on 11–16 November. **Wheatear:** notably late records were of singles on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 9 November and at Turnberry Point (Ayr) on 10 December. **Red-breasted Flycatcher:** up to 15 were on Shetland and up to five on Fair Isle

in October. Elsewhere there were singles at White Sands Bay (Loth) on 1–7 October; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 1–2nd; at Sands of Forvie NNR (NES) and Kilminning Castle, Fife Ness, Fife on 4th; at Port Nis, Lewis (OH) on 8–9th; at Ardveenish, Barra (OH) on 11–12th; at Noss Head, near Freswick (Caith) on 13–16th; at Mire Dene, St Abb's Head (Bord) on 13–15th; at Lop Ness, Sanday (Ork) on 13th; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 15th; at Perthumie Bay, near Stonehaven (NES) on 19th, and at Howmore, South Uist (OH) on 20 October. A female/1st-winter was at Finstown, Mainland (Ork) on 5th and 9 November.

Citrine Wagtail: a first-winter was

at Fleck, Mainland (Shet) on 17–20 October. **Richard's Pipit:** on Shetland singles were at Virkie, Mainland on 8–9 October; at Sandness, Mainland on 11th, Sullom on 20th and Levenwick, Mainland on 30 October. Two were on Fair Isle on 1 October, with singles on 6th, 9th and 12th, two on 13th, and one intermittently to 2 November and another on 17 November. Two were on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 18 October, with one still on 21st, and two on 22 October. Away from the Northern Isles one was at Barns Ness (Loth) on 18 October, and one at Kilchattan, Colonsay (Arg) on 18 October. **Olive-backed Pipit:** on Shetland one was still at Baltasound, Unst on 1–2 October; at Hamister, Whalsay on 4th, Greenmow, Mainland on 5th, Aith, Mainland on 9th, Vidlin, Mainland on 19–20th, and on Foula on 26–28 October. On Fair Isle there were singles on 2 October, 8th, 12–13th, two on 14th, one on 15th, and singles on 20–26th and 31 October to 2 November. One was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 4–6 October. **Pechora Pipit:** all were on Mainland Shetland: one was still at Levenwick on 1–2 October; one was at Isleburgh on 4th and one at Toab on 10–12 October. **Red-throated Pipit:** singles were on Out Skerries (Shet) on 6–9 October, and Fair Isle on 12–24 October. **Water Pipit:** one at West Hynish, Tiree on 19 November would be the first Argyll record if accepted, and one was at Gullane Beach (Loth) from 1–4 December, and again on 29 December. **American Buff-bellied Pipit:** one was on Foula (Shet) on 5–29 October; one was at Mid Yell, Yell (Shet) on 6 October.

Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll: in October singles were on Shetland at Norwick, Unst on 7th; at Sandwick, Mainland on 11th; at Quendale, Mainland on 13th; at Mid Yell, Yell on 13–14th, and Sandwick, Mainland on 20th, with

one at Eoropie, Lewis (OH) on 8th and nearby at Port Nis, Lewis on 13th. **Coues's Arctic Redpoll:** one was on Fair Isle on 14 October; one trapped and ringed on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 17 October; one at Castlebay, Barra (OH) on 20th; one at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 20–22 October; one, probably of this form, was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 14th and 20 December, and one was at Hillwell, Mainland (Shet) on 30 December. **Common Rosefinch:** singles were at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 1st and 16 October; at Kilminning, Fife Ness, Fife on 4 October; on Foula (Shet) on 4–5th, 8th, 11–12th and 14th; at Seli Voe, Mainland (Shet) on 7th; at Castlebay, Barra (OH) on 20 October, and on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 30 October. **Northern Bullfinch:** several birds of the nominate (Northern) form were noted in October, including a male on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 13–17th; two on Fair Isle on 15–20, with at least one to 22nd; three at St Abbs (Bord) on 22nd. Singles were at Nethybridge (High) on 7 November and at Achavandra Muir (High) on 20 November. **Hawfinch:** presumed migrants included up to 17 on Shetland in October, plus one on Papa Westray (Ork) on 1–6th; one at Skirza, Freswick Bay (Caith) on 2nd; one at Kilminning Castle, Fife Ness, Fife on 11th; one on Fair Isle on 20 October; one at The Hope, South Ronaldsay (Ork) on 21st, and one at Inverkeithing, Fife on 30 October.

Snow Bunting: good-sized flocks evident on the Northern Isles in October, with highest counts of 1,000 on Fetlar on 9th and 800 at Skaw, Whalsay (both Shet) on 5th, 206 on Fair Isle on 15th and 343 on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 12th. More widespread in the east in November with peaks of 102 at Newburgh (NES) on 4th; 140 North Ronaldsay on 5th; 150 at Sands of Forvie NNR (NES) on 20th; 100 at Kinshaldy Beach, Fife

on 22nd, and 100 at Balgarva, South Uist (OH) on 26th. More dispersed in December with high counts of 100 at Nairn (M&N) on 18th; 70 at Grenitote, North Uist (OH) on 28th; 61 still at Kinshaldy Beach on 8th; 57 on North Ronaldsay on 20th, and 56 at Bornish, South Uist on 26 December. **Lapland Bunting:** fairly low numbers, mostly in the north and west, with about 60 in October, including peaks of 12 at Balranald, North Uist (OH) on 13th and eight on Fair Isle on 14th. At least 11 reported in November with three on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 6th and three at Loch Gorm Islay (Arg) on 18th, and four were at Coldingham (Bord) on 29 December. **Rustic Bunting:** one was on Fetlar (Shet) on 8–9 October; a first-winter male was at Rigifa Farm, Cove (NES) on 1–3 November. **Little Bunting:** on Shetland singles were at Sumburgh Head, Mainland on 1 October; at Sandness, Mainland on 2nd; at Skaw, Unst on 3–8th; at Ollaberry, Mainland on 4th, at Haroldswick, Unst, and at Bigton and Channerwick, both Mainland all on 5th, at Norwick, Unst on 5–7th, at Sullom, Mainland and on Foula on 15th, and Quendale, Mainland on 16–22nd, and at Hoswick, Mainland on 25–28 October. One was at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 2 November, and one at Halligarth, Unst from 23 November to 1 December. One was on Fair Isle on 1 October, one on 9th, one on 11–13th, with two on 12th, another on 14th, then two on 23rd, with one still to 27 October; with singles on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 21–22 October and from 30 October to 8 November. Away from the Northern Isles, one was at Aird Mhor, Barra (OH) on 22 October. **Cape May Warbler:** a first-winter female was at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) from 23 October to 2 November. **Ovenbird:** one was at Holland Farm, Papa Westray (Ork) on 6 October.

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Plate 109. Having decided to head down to Loch of Kinnordy, Angus and Dundee, for first light on 1 December 2013, my wife and I spent an enjoyable couple of hours at each of the three hides seeing some good birds, including the regular drake Smew. It was a brilliantly bright, but very cold day, a good three degrees colder than when we left Stonehaven, so from the Swamp Hide we decided to move on to the Montrose area. As is customary, I usually take longer to pack up and leave, I continued watching for a few more minutes whilst my wife headed back to the warmth of the car.

I said farewell to the only other people in the hide, a couple of Aberdonian birders, before I left but soon I was distracted by a few Bullfinches just above me along the trail. As I waited for a clear view of them, one of the guys nipped out from the hide to tell me that there was a male Bearded Tit zipping about the reeds.

Bearded Tit are always such a delight to see in Scotland, though I've always found them a bit of a challenge to photograph. This time however, I was in the right place at the right time! The lighting was tremendous and even though the bird was typically restless and moving about quickly, it did venture up towards the top of the rushes on one occasion. Leaning on the side window of the hide for support, I managed to quickly capture a sequence of very pleasing images. The 'beardie' was only in view for perhaps two minutes in total, so I will be eternally grateful to the two birders for giving me the shout - I must apologise for forgetting their names. On returning to the car, my wife thought I was winding her up but after she saw some of the pictures on the camera screen, she did agree I had a valid reason for being late this time!

Equipment used: Canon 7D with Sigma 120-400mm IS lens, shutter speed 1/500 sec at f5.6 and ISO 500.

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