



Scottish Birds

published by the
SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB



VOLUME 37(1) MARCH 2017

Scottish Birds

Established in 1958.

Published quarterly by:
The Scottish Ornithologists' Club,
Waterston House, Aberlady,
East Lothian EH32 0PY.

Email: mail@the-soc.org.uk
Phone: 01875 871330
www.the-soc.org.uk

www.facebook.com/ScotlandsBirdClub
twitter.com/ScottishBirding

Editors:

Co-ordinating editor
Ian Andrews

Peer-reviewed papers

Dr Stan da Prato

Assisted by:

Dr I. Bainbridge

Dr M. Marquiss

Dr C.R. McKay

Dr W.T.S. Miles

R. Swann

Articles, news and views

Jimmy Maxwell

Dr Stuart L. Rivers

Harry Scott

Editorial correspondence:

c/o SOC, Waterston House,
Aberlady, East Lothian EH32 0PY.
Email: mail@the-soc.org.uk

To advertise in *Scottish Birds* or
obtain back issues, please contact
Waterston House.

Designed and typeset by:

Pica Design, 51 Charlton Crescent,
Aboyne, Aberdeenshire AB34 5GN.
Email: pica@pica.co.uk

Printed by:

Swallowtail Print Limited,
Unit 2 Drayton Industrial Park,
Taverham Road, Drayton
Norwich, Norfolk NR8 6RL.

Front Cover:

Waxwing, Aboyne, North-
east Scotland, January 2017.
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ISSN 0036-9144

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 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 15 branches around the country and a growing membership of over 3,000. 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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Organisation SC 009859

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President's Foreword



Plate 1. James Main, September 2016. © Doreen Main

Like most members of the SOC, we look forward to the latest issue of *Scottish Birds*. The quality and range of the content is excellent. Just after the last issue landed on our doorsteps I received an email from a former President of the Club. It was very brief – “*Scottish Birds* December 2016 is ... outstanding!” I couldn't agree more. This reminded me of our trip to Islay late in 2016. We met up with a number of birdwatchers, both at the Oa and on the ferries, quite a number of whom were from England. I was astonished just how many were members of the Club, and had been for many years. They all enjoyed being members and particularly looked forward to receiving their copies

of *Scottish Birds*! The comments were unanimously complimentary. This reflects the amount of hard work and creative thought which goes into producing such an outstanding magazine. [Hopefully we will be able to have profiles of the members of the team in the next issue]. This is a huge ongoing commitment and we are extremely grateful to the Editorial Team and all contributors. Ideas for articles and contributions to all the sections are always welcome. Please send us your best photographs too.

Whilst on Islay, we met up with Ian Brooke, who runs the island blog; he and Margaret made us most welcome and kept us up-to-date with what was around. We were happy to learn that the Islay contingent that went to the British Bird Fair in 2015 had all joined the Club.

As I write this we are looking forward to the 2017 Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference on 18 March at the Carnegie Conference Centre, Halbeath, Dunfermline. This year's programme entitled 'Bird Life from Fife' deals with a number of aspects of Fife birds and brings together an excellent line-up of speakers. Thanks to SOC Fife Branch and the BTO Scotland team for all their hard work in organising this event. If you haven't already booked there may still be time! We were fortunate to be at the launch of *The Atlas of Breeding and Wintering Birds of Fife* last year and it will be available at the Conference.

The winter is now well upon us but, even in January, we have not had any really hard weather in Lothian. What we have had are large flocks of Waxwings around the country. On one day alone there were over 300 birds in Gullane - and many interested people watching the birdwatchers.

As in the past three years, the SOC and the Isle of May Bird Observatory will be running a Young Birders' Training Course in July 2017. This course has proved most popular in the past and will once again sponsor six enthusiastic young birders to stay at the observatory for a week to learn about ringing and ornithology skills.

Finally, thanks are due to all SOC volunteers – you do a great service to the Club.

Best wishes to everyone for 2017 – and good birding!

James Main, SOC President



Plate 2. Breeding habitat for Honey-buzzards in the central Scotland study area described in this paper, where up to five territories were present in 2016. Note the mixture of large, commercial, conifer ‘blocks’ in an upland situation and discrete, broadleaf woods and mixed woodland. © *Kenny Little*

An exceptional season at a central Scotland Honey-buzzard study area

K.D. SHAW, C.J. MCINERNY, A. LITTLE, K. LITTLE, J.S. NADIN & R. GOATER

Summary

This paper describes observations of Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* during 2016 at a central Scotland study area. At least 12 (and probably 16) adults and sub-adults were present, with five breeding pairs, and seven juveniles produced. Much behaviour by both breeding and non-breeding birds was recorded.

Birds first appeared in late May following arrival from their African wintering grounds, when short ‘butterfly’ wing-clapping display flights were seen. Little activity was observed during June when incubation occurred, but this changed in July following the appearance of non-breeders. Non-breeding males and females were noted to wing-clap persistently on multiple occasions, which prompted interactions with, and briefer wing-clapping by, breeding birds. Much activity by adults and sub-adults was observed through August with the appearance of juveniles late in the month. Adults and sub-adults departed first, the last seen on 6 September, with juveniles present until 11 September.

The observations made during 2016, when at least 19 (and probably 23) birds were recorded, represent significant numbers of Honey-buzzards in a Scottish context, and may equal or even exceed current breeding densities reported elsewhere in the UK. The possible reasons for these exceptional events are explored.

History of Honey-buzzards in Scotland

The Honey-buzzard is widespread in the Western Palearctic, breeding from Britain and continental Europe through to western Asia (del Hoyo *et al.* 1994, Hagemeyer & Blair 1997, Batten 2001, Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). The raptor is a trans-equatorial migrant, spending the summer in the northern hemisphere to breed, and wintering in sub-Saharan Africa. It is largely a woodland species, where it nests in trees, flying to more open habitats to find food items, mainly social wasps and bees, but also birds, amphibians and reptiles (Trap-Lind 1962, Cobb 1979, McInerny 2014, Harwood & Richman 2016).

Honey-buzzards have been observed in Scotland since the early 19th Century (Thom 1986, Forrester *et al.* 2007). Historically, it was considered a rare migrant, and a very rare and occasional breeder. The first dated record was described in the *New Statistical Account of Scotland* (1834–45) at Chatelherault, Hamilton (Clyde) where one was shot in the autumn of 1831. Breeding was first reported in North-east Scotland at two sites: prior to 1840 at Abergeldie, and at Ballogie in 1867 (MacGillivray 1840, MacGillivray 1855, Gray 1871, Sim 1903).

The very rare, occasional breeding status continued in Scotland until the 1970s when more systematic monitoring revealed that nesting occurred every year (Harvey 2005, Forrester *et al.* 2007). This echoes observations elsewhere in the UK, where it was originally thought to be a rare, but regular, breeder in southern England, only becoming more widespread in England and Wales since the 1990s (Roberts *et al.* 1999, Batten 2001, Roberts & Lewis 2003, Brown & Grice 2005, Clements 2005), although the numbers and persistence of breeding pairs have been questioned (Combridge *et al.* 2003, Mummery *et al.* 2004, Wiseman 2004, Combridge *et al.* 2005). The five-year mean of the maximum number of breeding pairs reported to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) during 2010–14 was only 41 (Holling *et al.* 2016). However, many ornithologists who study Honey-buzzards, including the authors of this paper and the RBBP, believe that published UK population numbers are an underestimate.

In Scotland, breeding was confirmed in Inverness, Highland in 1976 and Moray & Nairn in 1977 (Forrester *et al.* 2007). During 1973–86, a population in one northern area peaked at 13 occupied sites (Harvey 2005), with a further seven occupied sites known in a second area, though breeding was not proved every year (Forrester *et al.* 2007). By the early 1990s, the total Scottish population was around 22 pairs, including 15 pairs in northern Scotland, with nesting in Ross & Cromarty, Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey and Moray & Nairn (Forrester *et al.* 2007). In 1992, five successful nests were located further east. At this time nesting at two new locations further south was confirmed, in Perth & Kinross and Dumfries & Galloway. Later in the 1990s, the number of breeding pairs in northern Scotland dropped to two or three (Harvey 2005, Forrester *et al.* 2007). In 2000, a directed UK-wide survey indicated a maximum of 14 pairs in Scotland, with four confirmed as breeding (Ogilvie 2003). By 2004, there were up to 15 occupied forests in northern Scotland supporting 15–20 pairs. By extrapolation, the total Scottish population was estimated to be about 50 pairs at this time (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

History of Honey-buzzards in central Scotland

In central Scotland, the Honey-buzzard has a long history, being first recorded in the early 19th Century (Forrester *et al.* 2007). In the study area described in this paper, Honey-buzzards were occasionally reported through the first half of the 20th Century. In the 1970s more were seen to the south and east, but it was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that it was recognised that nesting occurred, with 1–2 pairs present annually. By 2006 birds and breeding pairs were being categorized by the authors of this paper through plumage and feather moult patterns, allowing both the identification and ageing of individuals. In 2009 an adult female was found at a new site to the north with, by 22 August, up to four birds seen there, and 2–3 breeding pairs confirmed. On 20 August 2013 five birds were counted, prolonged wing-clapping display observed, and one breeding territory identified (C. McInerny, J. Nadin, K. Shaw pers. obs.). In both 2014 and 2015 there were fewer sightings, despite considerable effort by the authors, but at least two of the territories were occupied.

Study area

The study area, in central Scotland, is approximately 90 km² in extent, ranging in altitude from 48 m to 516 m. Its location is kept confidential in this paper to protect the breeding birds from both human disturbance and persecution.

Approximately 70% of the study area is wooded, much of it with large, commercial conifer 'blocks' in an upland situation (Plates 2–4). However, there are also discrete mature broadleaf woods and mixed woodland both containing Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*. The majority of the woodland is mature, but with some large trees subject to long-term retention. There are also sectors of large conifers including Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis*, Larch *Larix* spp., Norway Spruce *P. abies* and Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*, and other large non-native species such as Douglas Fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, which have grown to maturity in open woodlands.

The tree profile in the study area is similar to those elsewhere in Scotland where Honey-buzzards breed (Forrester *et al.* 2007). In Highland, 66% of nests were built in mixed broadleaf and coniferous forest with, in mixed woodland, nests found in Beech (55%) and Pedunculate Oak (39%). In coniferous plantations, Douglas Fir (75%) and Scots Pine (19%) were preferred. In the rest of the UK, Honey-buzzards are present in a wide range of woodland habitats from ancient broadleaf woodland, mixed broadleaf, to conifer and upland commercial conifer plantations, such as those in south-west Scotland, England and Wales (Roberts & Lewis 2003, Roberts & Law 2014, Harwood & Richman 2016). Though nests are usually located in woods and plantations, they have also been found in smaller copses and even isolated trees (Clements 2005).

Many open places are also found in the study area. These include large commercial clear-fells, intensively and less intensively farmed land, and open moorland managed as sporting estates. There is also a variety of wet habitats with open water: many burns and small upland lochans, small discrete, eutrophic ponds and, on the edge of the study area, large eutrophic lochs.

The Scottish Raptor Study Group describes the preferred habitat of the Honey-buzzard in Scotland as 'undisturbed' (SRSG 2016). Much of the study area is undisturbed; for example one wooded section of c.10 km² has some large, relatively undisturbed blocks between tracks and recreation routes. However, other parts have high human usage, being farmland.

This wide variety of habitats is reflected in the range of other raptor species, which either breed within or otherwise use the study area. These include Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Peregrine *F. peregrinus*, Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Sparrowhawk *A. nisus* and Buzzard *Buteo buteo*. Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*,



Plate 3. Breeding habitat for Honey-buzzards in the central Scotland study area described in this paper. © Kenny Little



Plate 4. Breeding habitat for Honey-buzzards in the central Scotland study area described in this paper. © Kenny Little

Hobby *F. subbuteo*, Merlin *F. columbarius* and White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* have also been recorded. However, only two raptor species were observed to interact with Honey-buzzards in 2016: Buzzard and Goshawk.

Study methods

The study was based on systematic and coordinated observations during the 2016 breeding season, by 15 observers. Ten vantage points (VPs) in the 90 km² study area were used. Simultaneous, coordinated watches were attempted from more than one VP on some days, but with mixed success. Most useful information was obtained by multiple observers viewing from the same VP, especially on days when several birds were seen. Many VP observations lasted 3–6 hours, though some were up to 10 hours. In May, June and September VPs were visited on 2–3 days per week, while in July and August they were visited most days throughout the two months. In total, 466 hours of VP observations were made by the six authors, assisted by nine additional co-observers.

On each visit the numbers and ages of raptor species were recorded. Location, direction of flight and behaviour were also noted. Individual Honey-buzzards were recognised by plumage features, including feather wear and moult patterns (Appleby 2012, Harwood & Richman 2016), both from direct observation and by comparison with existing drawings and photographic records (Plates 5–10). Understanding moult is important when studying Honey-buzzards on their breeding grounds. Females start moult during incubation in June, with males later around mid- to late July. Both sexes then arrest moult for migration, completing it in the winter quarters. In general, moult begins with the inner primary feathers and is normally sequential outwards, but on rare occasions birds may drop feathers out of this sequence. Males replace primary feathers P1–3 and females P2–4. In the study area all breeding adult females developed ‘gaps’ in their wings at the inner primaries, not necessarily the same on both wings and usually different between individuals. Thus by late July wing moult was used both for species identification and for the identification of individual birds. Juveniles are not in moult when seen in late August and early September. These observations allowed both the number of birds within the study area (breeding, non-breeding and juveniles), and the number of territories, to be estimated.

Results

May - arrival dates

The first Honey-buzzard, a pale male, was noted on 25 May. This is likely to represent the true arrival date, as VPs had been occupied during the period 12–24 May for a total of 52 hours, during which no Honey-buzzards were seen.

Honey-buzzards arrive in Scotland predominantly during the second half of May, though earlier arrivals have been recorded (Forrester *et al.* 2007, SRSG 2016). For example, in 2016 elsewhere in central Scotland, singles were seen on 11 and 14 May (C. McInerny, R. Miller pers. obs.), and two were observed on 14 May (D. Wood pers. comm.). In 1994, a bird was seen in this central study area on 22 May (A. Hogg pers. comm.). Elsewhere in the UK, Honey-buzzards arrive on the breeding grounds mid-May in central England (R. Frost pers. comm.), and often from the 19 May in Yorkshire (Appleby 2012, Harwood & Richman 2016).

The pale male was observed three more times in May with, on the last day of the month, two Honey-buzzards seen, and short periods of wing-clapping noted.

June - incubation period

Few birds were seen in June, with only occasional sightings of females flying directly to and from presumed foraging areas. There were several days when observers saw no Honey-buzzards, particularly during the middle of the month. This behaviour likely reflects incubation during the period, when pairs are known to become especially secretive and inconspicuous (Forrester *et al.* 2007, Roberts & Law 2014).

The average first egg-laying date for Honey-buzzards in the UK is 2 June (Roberts & Law 2014). Eggs are incubated for around 32 days, hatching late in June or in early July. However, occasionally in Scotland, breeding has occurred much later: at a Highland nest in 1991, a clutch was not laid until early July, 4–5 weeks later than usual (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

July and August - display and new arrivals

Birds were seen many times during July, the peak period of observation at the study area. This enabled the identification of individuals (Plates 5–10), territories, pairs, breeders and non-breeders. Interactions between individuals assisted this process, especially when they were repeated. It was apparent that there were more territories than in previous years, and that there was a complicated situation involving breeders and non-breeders.



Plate 5. Adult male Honey-buzzard 'Shorty', one of two pale morphs in the study area; he has worn inner primary feathers on both wings and inhabited Territory 5. © Dennis Morrison



Plate 6. Adult female Honey-buzzard 'Doublenick' in a typical view above Territory 2, showing the importance of feather moult in identification; she has moulted inner primary feathers in both wings. © Kris Gibb

Four birds were sighted on 6 July. However, on 7 July up to six were seen, with 2–3 territories mapped based on these observations. A new pair in addition to the 2–3 mentioned was located to the south, containing a pale grey male, one of two conspicuously pale males present in the study area. By mid-month up to 12 individuals were noted daily, including six males. At this time it was assumed that there were six territories. However, subsequently the behaviour of one male implied that he was an unmated bird, suggesting instead five active territories.

The behaviour of non-breeders was striking. Honey-buzzards do not breed until they are 2–3 years old (Roberts & Law 2014), and over 50% of some populations are made up of non-breeders (Clements 2005). There were probably at least six presumed non-breeders at the study site throughout the season. Non-breeders were observed far more than breeding birds, sometimes for long periods: they were seen displaying for up to an hour without a pause, with over a hundred consecutive wing-claps, while breeding birds displayed for a much shorter time with only 15–20 wing-claps.

Two non-breeders were particularly visible during this period. A male named 'Fawnhead' and a female identified as 'Butterfly'. 'Fawnhead', named for his brown head, was seen sitting on the crowns of conifers on a number of days: he was thought to be sub-adult, not having a grey head. 'Butterfly' was seen from 6 July to 21 August. She was observed on 6, 7, 13, 21, 25, 30, and 31 July, and 1, 2, 15 and 21 August. On most of these days she was very visible, and named 'Butterfly' as she displayed often and persistently. For example on 21 July from 17:37 hrs during a flight observed for 43 minutes she wing-clapped 137 times. In the course of this display three adults soared and displayed more briefly, likely in response to 'Butterfly'. Two appeared to be territorial females with the other unidentified. On 30 July from 16:45 hrs 'Butterfly' wing-clapped 73 times over 25 minutes, with this again bringing two other birds in attendance, which also wing-clapped for short periods.

Wing-clapping was noted both high in the sky and low over woods until 24 August. Such late summer wing-clapping has been observed elsewhere in Scotland, and is thought to reflect birds displaying over areas in which they will attempt to nest the following year (McInerney 2014).



Plate 7. Adult male Honey-buzzard from Territory 3 with a prominent sub-terminal tail band. © John Nadin

Birds in flight were also observed interacting with two other raptor species. Honey-buzzards were seen to soar and wing-clap with Buzzards a number of times, and on two occasions an adult Honey-buzzard was harassed by a juvenile Goshawk.

Territories, interactions and breeding success

The number of territories and breeding pairs was estimated. Up to five pairs were counted, with birds recognised by plumage, feather wear and moult patterns (Plates 5–10), and interactions within pairs and between mated birds and non-breeders observed.

Territory 1. This pair is long-established in the study area, with breeding confirmed in previous years. However in 2016, the nest appeared to be further north than in the last three years. The male was dark. He completed much high-flying early in July, though he was not seen subsequently. The female was noted early in the season, but had no distinguishing features. Later in the season she was rarely seen. This lack of observations was judged to be due to the pair becoming secretive during nesting and being successful, producing two young.

Territory 2. Approximately 3.5 km to the north of Territory 1, a second pair contained an extraordinary male named 'Orangetail', due to his unusual orange tail colour. He was noted wing-clapping on many days, often briefly in response to a wing-clapping non-breeder. His mate, named 'Doublenick' had inner primary feather moult on both wings (Plate 6). 'Doublenick' was seen swooping twice aggressively at a soaring Buzzard. On 24 August at 15:16 hrs two birds flew high in parallel flight for 10 minutes, one above the other, with the uppermost bird performing 28 wing-claps.

Territory 3. About 3.5 km to the north-west of Territory 2 this pair consisted of a male with grey upperparts and head, but mid-brown underparts and a sub-terminal tail band (Plate 7); and a more typically plumaged female but with very dark carpals, which was also noted in other females. Three birds were seen soaring at 450–600 m above this territory, when two broke off and engaged in parallel flight, above the third wing-clapping bird. On 21 July at 14:58 hrs a pair was observed flying together for 18 minutes, with some wing-clapping and parallel formation where one flew just above the other.



Plate 8. Adult male Honey-buzzard 'Shorty', one of two pale morphs in the study area; he has worn inner primary feathers on both wings and inhabited Territory 5. © Dennis Morrison

Territory 4. About 3 km to the south of Territory 3 a pair with a pale grey male, and a brown female showing an obvious gap on the inner primary feathers of her left wing. Early in the season this pair was often seen perching on treetops, but this stopped as the season progressed. The resident female was observed wing-clapping low above the wood before a resident male engaged a female intruder in determined parallel flight, eventually seeing her off. On 6 July at 11:08 hrs the territorial female performed 13 wing-claps, before flying into a tree; this was followed by the male flying out to engage an intruder in side-by-side parallel flight.

Territory 5. A new pair not seen in previous years was noted approximately 3 km to the south of Territory 4, in the very south of the study area. The male was named 'Shorty' because his plumage resembled that of a Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* (Plates 5 and 8). The female had inner primary feather missing on the right wing. The pair was observed many times carrying and passing food, and circling over the presumed nest site. However, these birds may have failed to breed as no young were seen.

Young fledged from the third week in August, which is consistent with dates in England, where a range of 31 July to 7 September has been reported (Roberts & Law 2014), and from early August in Scottish studies (Forrester *et al.* 2007). In 2016, a total of seven juveniles was observed. Two were produced from Territory 1, three between Territories 2 and 3, and probably two from Territory 4. Juveniles were seen on six dates: 21, 24 and 27 August, and 6, 7 and 11 September. Separation of individuals in this age class can be challenging, as most juveniles look similar to each other (Duff 2006, Forsman 2016). This was the case in the study area but, even so, two of the three from Territories 2 and 3 were distinctive: both had a large off-white upper-tail coverts patch, but one also had a pale head and pale lesser and median coverts, not noticeable on the other.



Plates 9–10. Field notes used to identify and recognise individual Honey-buzzards in the central Scotland study area. © Kris Gibb

The breeding success in the study area, seven young being produced from five pairs (1.4 chicks/successful pair), is comparable with those elsewhere in Scotland. During the period 1977–2004 breeding data were collected in northern Scotland from 11 locations (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Of 45 breeding attempts 42 (93%) were successful. The 79 young that fledged comprised seven broods with one chick, 33 broods of two, and two broods of three, giving a mean of 1.9 chicks/successful pair. Similar breeding success has been reported in the Welsh population (Roberts *et al.* 1999).

September - last dates of adults and juveniles

On 6 September seven juveniles and three adults were observed, the final day that adults were seen in the study area. The last juvenile was noted on 11 September, making three flights this day. These observations accord with studies elsewhere in the UK: in Yorkshire birds typically remain until 11 September, with an unusually late individual on 22 September (Appleby 2012).

Comparisons of 2016 observations with elsewhere in Scotland

This paper describes significant numbers of Honey-buzzards at a study area in central Scotland during 2016. Up to five territories were mapped based on observation of birds' behaviour and actions, with at least 19 (and probably 23) birds recorded, comprising a minimum of 12 (and probably 16) adults and sub-adults, and seven juveniles. Such large numbers have been reported twice before in Scotland, when up to 13 occupied sites were counted in one area during the period 1973–86 (Harvey 2005), and a further seven sites recorded in a second area (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

Striking in the study area was the apparent high density of the five breeding territories, although this was comparable with previous reports in Scotland. It has been found that forest blocks usually contain single pairs, but larger woods can support two, and three nesting pairs have been observed in one very large block once, where the spacing between adjacent pairs averaged 2.7 km, with a range 2.2 to 3.6 km (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Similar spacing between territories was observed in the study area, with the five presumed nest locations each c.3 km apart. The high densities suggest optimal breeding habitat for Honey-buzzards, low disturbance and also an absence of persecution. It would seem that the mixed woodland and topography provide sufficient food items and nesting opportunities. Consistent with this suggestion, high numbers of social wasps were noted in the study area during 2016 (K. Shaw, R. Goater pers. obs.), along with many amphibians and reptiles (A. Little, K. Little pers. obs.).

Observations at the study area over a number of years suggest that the Honey-buzzard population there is increasing. Previously, 1–2 territories were recorded, with this increasing to 2–3 in past years and the five counted in 2016. This was with comparable observer effort, so the increase appears real. It remains to be seen if numbers are maintained or change in 2017. It is interesting to record, however, that breeding success was relatively high, despite the activities of non-breeders. We will continue to observe the Honey-buzzard population in the future to monitor trends.

Overview of Honey-buzzards in central Scotland

Honey-buzzards breed elsewhere in central Scotland, as they have been noted nesting outside the study area described in this paper. A site is regularly occupied to the south, breeding occurred to the south-east in 2016, and to the south-west birds were regularly seen with one nest found. To the east, birds have been found in suitable habitat at two sites, and to the north two were observed in May 2016. Combined, these observations suggest the presence of up to another six territories, in addition to the five noted in this paper. However, at present, we do not have enough data to estimate the total central Scotland population. Future fieldwork by the authors and co-observers will attempt to address this knowledge gap.

Advice to others considering studying Honey-buzzards in Scotland

There are a few suggestions we can pass to others considering studying Honey-buzzards during the breeding season in Scotland. Be open-minded both about where the species may occur, as it occupies mosaic habitat comprising woodland and open areas, and when attempting to interpret birds' behaviour. Initiate observations in mid-July and not late May/early June, as this is when they are most visible. As a guideline, watch over a potential site for three consecutive full warm, sunny days, ideally with wind, in early to mid-August to detect the presence or absence of birds. Understanding moult is important to allow identification of birds and individuals, and examine every buzzard, as juvenile Honey-buzzards, especially, can look similar to Buzzards (Duff 2006). Finally, it is important to emphasise that Honey-buzzard is a Schedule 1 species, meaning that observations should not cause any disturbance, and that without an appropriate license issued by Scottish Natural Heritage (2016), nests should not be searched for.

Acknowledgements

Nine co-observers have been involved in this study, and we thank them: Stuart Benn, David Douglas, Ian Francis, Kris Gibb, Rod Miller, Brian Minshull, Dennis Morrison, Dave Wood, and most of all Andrew Whewell. In previous years RSPB and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) staff have helped with observations. We have enjoyed good liaison with SOC Local Recorders for the study area over many years: we thank them. Similarly, we are grateful to the chairs of the Raptor Study Groups we have worked with. Liaison with RSPB Scotland has been at an appropriate level - the local level - and we are grateful to the individuals involved. MBEC funded the work for one year, and we thank Paul Bradshaw of MBEC in particular. Jim Steele spent thousands of hours, over four decades, sitting on hillsides discussing the behaviour of Goshawks and Honey-buzzards. Wider afield, Steve Roberts and Rob Clements have been wise advisors and inspirational figures. Stuart Benn, Mark Cavanagh, Kathy Evans, the late Ray Hawley, Angus Hogg, Alan Lauder, Wendy Mattingly, Tim Melling, Chris Rollie and Claire Smith have helped in various ways; and Brian Etheridge (SRSG) and Mark Holling (RBBP) were informed. We are also very grateful to local RSPB staff, members of the Raptor Study Groups and Honey-buzzard enthusiasts north and south of the border who have commented on the manuscript. We thank FCS for sympathetic management of woodlands at the study area. Ray Hawley died during the final draft stage of this paper. He was a fine all-round naturalist and a true Honey-buzzard man. We dedicate our work and this paper to him.

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Ken D. Shaw, 13 Chalmers Brae, Anstruther, Fife KY10 3BY.

Email: kenshaw495@gmail.com

Christopher J. McInerny, 10 Athole Gardens, Glasgow G12 9AZ.

Email: Chris.McInerny@glasgow.ac.uk

Ali Little, 8 South Scotstoun, South Queensferry, Lothian EH30 9YD.

Email: ali_alba@btinternet.com

Kenny Little, 29 Moubray Grove, South Queensferry, Lothian EH30 9PB.

Email: kennylittle@btinternet.com

John S. Nadin, 40 Dempster Place, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 9YN.

Email: john.nadin1@btinternet.com

Rick Goater, Braes' End, Castle Road, Doune, Perthshire FK16 6EA.

Email: rick.goater@btinternet.com

Revised ms accepted December 2016

Response of incubating Golden and White-tailed Eagles to forest road traffic: results of a pilot study

P. COSGROVE, K. KORTLAND, D. SHIELDS, R. POTTER,
J. MURRAY & C. COSGROVE

Very little work has taken place on the potential impact of vehicle disturbance on breeding Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles. Determining whether the routine use of vehicles on forest roads adversely impacts on these two species is important to help inform forest management in Scotland. In 2015–16, a pilot study was undertaken on the national forest estate in mainland Argyll and Lochaber which investigated the impact of routine forest road traffic on 13 incubating Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles.

Observations showed that incubating eagles sometimes responded to sound and visual stimuli from passing forest traffic. However, no discernible responses were recorded during 46 vehicle passes (61%), minor discernible responses were recorded during 29 vehicle passes (38%) and moderate discernible responses were only recorded once during vehicle passes (1%). Forest road traffic did not cause incubating eagles to leave or abandon any nests studied during periods of observation.

Detailed analyses were not considered realistic due to the small sample sizes and we recommend that further studies are carried out in Scotland into the effects of vehicle movements on additional pairs of incubating Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles.

Introduction

Assessing the potential effects of human disturbance on species such as raptors is a complex issue with variable results depending upon the circumstances and characteristics of both the human activity and the species (Grubb *et al.* 2010). In Scotland, all wild birds are legally protected, but some species are considered more sensitive to human disturbance than others and are specially protected under European, UK and Scottish legislation. Birds' avoidance of humans and human activities can have adverse effects on their breeding success, e.g. through chilling, overheating and desiccation of eggs or chicks and starvation of chicks and ultimately the abandonment of a territory (Steenhof *et al.* 2014).

Watson & Dennis (1992) subjectively assessed levels of human disturbance at over 300 Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* nests in Scotland. They found that eagles in territories where disturbance was classified as moderate or severe failed to rear chicks in 74% and 93% of occasions. However, their definitions of moderate and severe 'human disturbance' better reflected deliberate persecution of Golden Eagles i.e. egg collecting, use of poisons, killing of adults and destruction of nests, than occasional, accidental disturbance which was classified as low. Watson (2010) recognised that the consequences of unintentional disturbance on Golden Eagles in Scotland were difficult to quantify and largely anecdotal.

As a result of such concerns, a tool used by conservation managers is to designate 'buffer zones' or disturbance-free, protection zones around nest sites of potentially sensitive species where human activity is restricted at critical times of year (Camp *et al.* 1997). Determining suitable and appropriate management responses to potentially sensitive species nesting in actively managed

landscapes is a challenge faced by forest managers across Scotland. Whilst forest management practices may benefit bird habitats and species in the long-term, short-term direct and indirect disturbance from some forestry management activities could potentially impact on sensitive and specially protected bird species such as Golden Eagle and White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*. A recognised method used to prescribe buffer zones for potentially sensitive bird species involves two basic measures of disturbance distance:

- 'Alert Distance' (AD) - the distance between the disturbance source and the bird; at the point where the bird changes its behaviour in response to the approaching disturbance source; and
- 'Flight Initiation Distance' (FID) - the point at which the bird flushes or flies away from the approaching disturbance source.

If used for informing management practices, understanding the potential influence of AD and FID on both nesting Golden Eagle and White-tailed Eagle should help minimise the potential effects of disturbance related to vehicle use on the national forest estate. Unfortunately, no rigorous studies into the sensitivity of nesting Golden Eagles or White-tailed Eagles to vehicle disturbance from forest road traffic or other types of road traffic have taken place. Recommendations for 'safe working distances' (essentially, buffer zones around potentially sensitive breeding sites) have been made for eagle nests, but vary widely without any objective justification (Ruddock & Whitfield 2007). Failure to recognise the limitations of available evidence is not only detrimental to understanding eagle ecology but it can undermine conservation efforts (Walker *in press*).

Ruddock & Whitfield (2007) reviewed the work done on disturbance distances for 26 'priority' species which breed in Scotland, including Golden Eagle and White-tailed Eagle, and investigated expert opinion, using it to bridge the gap between empirical evidence/data (little of which exists), conservation policy and practical guidance. Their report concluded with a recommendation that observers should measure disturbance distances of breeding birds as a useful mechanism to generate much needed empirical data on disturbance distances for a range of species. The divergence of opinion on disturbance distances in the expert opinion survey for Golden Eagle during incubation was greater than for any other species reviewed, extending from 10–50 m (four respondents) to 1,500–2,000 m (one respondent). The limited empirical evidence pointed to the upper limits revealed by expert opinion as being overly cautious and more research was clearly warranted.

In 2015 and 2016, the authors undertook a pilot study to investigate the response of incubating Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles to potential disturbance from forestry road traffic on Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) land. The results of the pilot study will be used to inform forest management practices and help develop evidence-based protocols for the use of vehicles on FES roads in general proximity to eagle nests, with the aim of avoiding preventable detrimental disturbance to incubating eagles.

Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles are protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 as amended) and Annex 1 of the EU Bird Directive. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 widens this and provides additional protection for both species in Scotland. Unfortunately, Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles suffer from illegal persecution in Scotland and it is likely that behaviours selected for or learned as a result of persecution create an avoidance of other human activities, so that persecution can sensitize birds to other less inimical forms of 'disturbance' (Ruddock & Whitfield 2007). As a consequence it is recognised that individual eagles may have different disturbance thresholds or respond differently to other eagles in similar situations.

Methods

The 2015–16 pilot study was undertaken with a Schedule 1 licence issued by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) under the terms and conditions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Given

the direct persecution threat posed in Scotland (Watson 2010), the eagle nest locations are treated as confidential and letter coded to prevent their identification. Example photographs of one Golden Eagle and one White-tailed Eagle nest investigated are provided (Plates 14 and 15).

Site selection

Site selection was determined by local FES staff, who identified known eagle territories on the national forest estate and nest sites in relative proximity to nearby forest roads in mainland Argyll and Lochaber. In spring 2015, seven occupied Golden Eagle territories and one White-tailed Eagle territory were initially identified, where forestry roads occurred within c. 300–1,500 m of potential nest sites. Three Golden Eagle pairs switched nest sites (away from locations with forest roads in close proximity) and so the 2015 study was conducted on four Golden Eagle nests and one White-tailed Eagle nest. In spring 2016, four occupied Golden Eagle and two White-tailed Eagle territories were identified, where forestry roads occurred within c. 300–1,000 m of potential nest sites. Unfortunately, all four Golden Eagle pairs abandoned or switched nest sites and so the 2016 study was conducted on two White-tailed Eagle nests.

Estimated distances between forest roads and eagle nests were calculated using GIS. Estimated typical use of forest roads by public vehicles was provided local FES staff. Given the uncertainty regarding forestry vehicle effects on incubating eagles prior to the pilot study commencing, FCS operated a protective buffer around the eagle nest sites, meaning that forestry vehicles were not used on forest roads within c. 1 km of nests during the breeding season. Thus, forestry roads near to four of the seven nest sites (A, C, D and E) were considered quiet and had no official forestry vehicle use at all during the breeding season. The three remaining nests sites (B, F and G) had no official forestry vehicle use but some public vehicle use during the breeding season. A brief summary of each surveyed nest site is provided.

Site A description

The Site A nest site was c. 5 km up a forestry road from the nearest public road. The glen is quite popular with walkers and mountain bikers, although it was not clear how many members of the public got as far up the glen as the White-tailed Eagle nest. Estimated typical existing vehicle use of the forest road: weekly. The White-tailed Eagle nest was high up in a tree in a forest block overlooking the forest road, which was c. 270 m away downslope (Plates 12–13). When the bird was incubating it could see directly onto the downslope forest road, with perhaps c. 400 m length of road visible from the nest.



Plate 11. View towards the tree nest from the observer's hidden location, Site A, 2015. © Peter Cosgrove



Plate 12. View of the White-tailed Eagle tree nest, Site A, 2015. © Peter Cosgrove

Site B description

The Site B nest site was c. 2.5 km up a forestry road from the nearest public road. The glen is regularly used by people, with relatively moderate volumes of daily traffic e.g. postal service, farm traffic etc. Estimated typical existing vehicle use of the forest road: daily. The Golden Eagle nest was on a crag, above a forest block overlooking the forest road, which was c. 670 m away downslope. When the bird was incubating it could see directly onto the forest road, with perhaps c. 500 m length of forest road potentially visible from the nest.

Site C description

The Site C nest site was c. 5 km up a forestry road from the nearest public road. The glen is relatively quiet, with limited public use. Estimated typical existing vehicle use of the forest road: monthly. The Golden Eagle nest was on a cliff, above a forest block overlooking the main forest road, which was c. 970 m downslope. When the bird was incubating it could see directly onto the downslope forest road, with perhaps c. 80 m and c. 280 m sections of road visible from the nest at 1,035 m and 1,150 m distances respectively.

Site D description

The Site D nest site was c. 6 km up a forestry road from the nearest public road. The glen is relatively quiet, with limited public use. Estimated typical existing vehicle use of the forest road: monthly. The Golden Eagle nest was high up on a cliff at the end of a forest block overlooking the forest road, which was c. 350 m away downslope (Photos 3–4). When the bird was incubating it could see directly onto the downslope forest road, with perhaps c. 300–400 m length of forest road visible from the nest.



Plate 13. View through a forestry block towards the cliff nest from the observer's location, Site D, 2015. © Peter Cosgrove



Plate 14. View of the Golden Eagle cliff nest, Site D, 2015. © Peter Cosgrove

Site E description

The Site E nest site was c. 6 km up a forestry road from the nearest public road. The glen is relatively quiet, though the forest road is publicly advertised as a tourist driving route. Estimated typical existing vehicle use of the forest road: daily. The Golden Eagle nest was on a cliff, above a forest block overlooking the forest road, which was c. 520 m away upslope. When the bird was incubating it could see directly onto the downslope forest road, with perhaps c. 300–400 m length of road visible from the nest, at a distance of c. 900 m away. The closest part of the forest road to the nest was visually shielded by mature conifers.

Site F description

The Site F nest was c. 100 m from the nearest (minor) public road, with the forestry road running alongside the nest within 50 m of it. The White-tailed Eagle nest was located in the main fork of a wind-snapped Scots Pine *Pinus silvestris* in a clump of mixed conifers. Estimated typical existing vehicle use of the forest road: daily. The forestry road was immediately adjacent to, and at the same height as, the nest. When the bird was incubating it could see directly onto the adjacent forest road at eye level, with perhaps c. 200 m length of forest road visible from the nest.

Site G description

The Site G nest was c. 200 m from the nearest forest roads (one 200 m north of it and one 200 m south of it). The White-tailed Eagle nest was located in a conifer tree within a conifer plantation between the two forest roads. There was a working quarry adjacent to the forest road to the south, c. 200 m from the nest. Estimated typical existing vehicle use of the forest roads: daily. Vehicle passes took place firstly on the forest road to the south, then on the forest road to the north, though it was not possible to get closer than about 500 m to the nest along the forest road to the north, as it was blocked along its eastern section. When the bird was incubating it could see directly onto two forest roads, with perhaps c. 200–300 m length of forest road visible from the nest.

Survey methodology

Local FES staff checked eagle territory occupancy in February–March in both years and confirmed nest site locations in late March and early April (i.e. birds sitting on a nest and so presumably laying and/or incubating eggs). The FES staff also identified potentially suitable locations where observers could watch the incubating eagles without disturbing them or causing them to alter their behaviour. Care was taken to ensure that the access route to each observation point was not visible to the incubating birds.

Teams of two surveyors walked to the predetermined locations to watch the nests using a telescope. A 30 minute minimum settling down period was allowed to ensure that the birds were not alerted to the presence of, or alarmed by, the observers arriving at the predetermined (hidden) observation location. In practice, the observers did not record any eagle behaviour that suggested the birds were aware of the presence of the observers. The distance between the observers and the eagles' nests varied due to topographical features, but was estimated to be:

- Site A - c. 500 m separation between the observers and 2015 White-tailed Eagle nest.
- Site B - c. 1,300 m separation between the observers and 2015 Golden Eagle nest.
- Site C - c. 1,000 m separation between the observers and 2015 Golden Eagle nest.
- Site D - c. 1,400 m separation between the observers and 2015 Golden Eagle nest.
- Site E - c. 800 m separation between the observers and 2015 Golden Eagle nest.
- Site F - c. 1,000 m separation between the observers and 2016 White-tailed Eagle nest.
- Site G - c. 350 m separation between the observers and 2016 White-tailed Eagle nest.

Using two-way radios, forestry vehicles drove slowly (all vehicles complied with a 15 mph maximum speed limit) along forest roads and past adjacent eagle nests - in effect mimicking the 'normal' transit passage of forestry vehicles along a forest road. Whilst this was taking place one observer liaised with the driver, kept time with a watch and recorded the location and activity of the vehicle on the road, while the other observer constantly watched the eagle through a telescope and recorded any changes in the birds' behaviour. Due to logistical considerations, it was not possible to use the same vehicles at all seven widely dispersed locations. The vehicles used were a timber wagon and FES pick-up (Plates 16–17). At two of the three sites where a timber wagon was unavailable, a pick-up with a trailer was used to mimic the rattling sound of an empty timber wagon.



Plate 15 (above). The timber wagon used in this study. © Peter Cosgrove. Plate 16 (below). The FES pick-up used in this study. © Peter Cosgrove

Once well beyond the nest and out of sight of an incubating eagle, the vehicle driver stopped at a convenient location for a break (the duration of which varied between vehicles and site) and turned the vehicle around. The vehicle returned along the same route and stopped at the closest point along the forest road to the nest and visible to the incubating eagle. The vehicle stopped for an average of five minutes with its engine switched off during which time the driver did not get out of the vehicle.



Four potential categories of discernible eagle response to vehicles were recorded on field sheets by observers:

- Category 1 - No reaction to vehicle.
- Category 2 - Minor reaction, bird aware of vehicle, but remains on eggs, turns and looks in direction of vehicle and perhaps bobs head (AD).
- Category 3 - Moderate reaction, bird alert, stands up, gets off eggs in alarm, perhaps moves around, but not does leave nest in response to vehicle (AD-FID).
- Category 4 - Major reaction, bird flushed and leaves nest in alarm and response to vehicle (FID).

It was agreed prior to the study commencing that if the incubating eagles flushed (FID) at any time, the investigation at that nest would immediately stop to avoid further preventable disturbance.

Results

The surveys were conducted between 7 and 15 April 2015 and 14–15 April 2016 during a period of dry weather, avoiding hot, wet or cold conditions; as per Hardey *et al.* (2013) survey recommendations for Golden Eagles. In practice all surveys were conducted during dry weather, providing optimal conditions throughout the survey periods. Tables 1–7 summarise the eagles' responses to vehicle movements at each of the nest sites investigated.

Table 1. Summary of White-tailed Eagle field data collected by observers at Site A, April 2015. Response category: 1 = no discernible reaction i.e. does not move in relation to vehicle pass; * = possible heading bobbing, but begins to preen during vehicle pass and male flies in with food shortly afterwards at 10:10 and then leaves; 2 = minor discernible reaction i.e. looks towards vehicle as it passes; 3 = moderate discernible reaction i.e. when vehicle stops at closest point to nest between 11:07–11:11 female glances towards road at 11:08, at 11:09 stares at stationary vehicles and bobs head, at 11:10 stands up off eggs, stares at vehicle and bobs head, at 11:11 sits back down to incubate once vehicle leaves. Red = female.

Number	Time	Vehicle	Response category
1	09:12	Pick-up	1
2	09:23	Pick-up	1
3	10:01	Empty timber wagon	1*
4	10:56	Loaded timber wagon	1
5	11:04	Pick-up	3
6	11:19	Pick-up	2
7	13:15	Empty timber wagon	2
8	14:11	Loaded timber wagon	2

Table 2. Summary of Golden Eagle field data collected by observers at Site B, April 2015. Response category: 1 = no discernible reaction i.e. does not move in relation to vehicle pass; * = quad bike and dog nothing to do with planned test, ** = no reaction during incubation change over to vehicle pass; *** = preens during vehicle pass. 2 = minor discernible reaction i.e. looks towards vehicle as it passes and bobs head. Red = female; blue = male.

Number	Time	Vehicle	Response category
1	13:10	Empty timber wagon	1
2	13:40	Loaded timber wagon	1
3	13:50	Man on quad bike with dog running alongside	1*
4	14:10	Empty timber wagon	1
5	14:25	Pick-up	1
	14:25	Changeover occurs	1**
6	15:47	Loaded timber wagon	1
7	15:51	Pick-up	1***
8	15:58	Loaded timber wagon	1
9	16:05	Loaded timber wagon	2
10	16:10	Loaded timber wagon	1
11	16:25	Loaded timber wagon	1

Table 3. Summary of Golden Eagle field data collected by observers at Site C, April 2015. Response category: 1 = no discernible reaction i.e. does not move in relation to vehicle pass. 2 = minor discernible reaction i.e. looks towards vehicle as it passes and bobs head. Red = female; blue = male.

Number	Time	Vehicle	Response category
1	10:15	Empty timber wagon	1
2	10:30	Empty timber wagon	2
3	10:38	Empty timber wagon	2
4	10:50	Empty timber wagon	2
5	11:00	Empty timber wagon	1
	11:02	Change over occurs	
6	11:18	Empty timber wagon	2
7	11:25	Empty timber wagon	1
8	11:45	Empty timber wagon	1
9	11:52	Empty timber wagon	1
10	12:05	Empty timber wagon	2

Table 3. continued.

Number	Time	Vehicle	Response category
11	12:15	Empty timber wagon	1
12	12:20	Empty timber wagon	1
	12:21	Change over occurs	
13	14:15	Empty timber wagon	1
14	14:18	Empty timber wagon	2
15	14:24	Empty timber wagon	2
16	14:33	Empty timber wagon	1
17	14:40	Empty timber wagon	2

Table 4. Summary of Golden Eagle field data collected by observers at Site D, April 2015. Response category: 1 = no discernible reaction i.e. does not move in relation to vehicle pass; 2 = minor discernible reaction i.e. looks towards vehicle as it passes. * = male flies in with food and takes over incubation, shortly after vehicle pass. Red = female; blue = male.

Number	Time	Vehicle	Response category
1	13:21	Pick-up	2
2	13:43	Pick-up	2
	13:47	Change over occurs	*
3	14:28	Pick-up	1
4	14:52	Pick-up	1

Table 5. Summary of Golden Eagle field data collected by observers at Site E, April 2015. Response category: 1 = no discernible reaction i.e. does not move in relation to vehicle pass; 2 = minor discernible reaction i.e. looks towards vehicle as it passes. Red = female; blue = male.

Number	Time	Vehicle	Response category
1	10:39	Pick-up	2
2	11:31	Empty timber wagon	1
3	11:53	Pick-up	2
	12:13	Change over occurs	
4	13:27	Loaded timber wagon	1
5	14:12	Empty timber wagon	1
6	15:08	Loaded timber wagon	1

Table 6. Summary of White-tailed Eagle field data collected by observers at Site F, April 2016. Response category: 1 = no discernible reaction i.e. does not move in relation to vehicle pass; 2 = minor discernible reaction i.e. looks towards vehicle as it passes. * = becomes alert, looks around, then settles back down in nest; ** = lifts head up, looks around, then settles back down and ignores vehicle; *** = already standing up moving nest material before, during and after the vehicle pass. Red = female; blue = male.

Number	Time	Vehicle	Response category
1	11:25	Pick-up & trailer	2*
2	11:33	Council bin lorry on public road	2**
3	11:40	Pick-up & trailer	2
4	11:50	Transit van on public road	2
5	12:28	Pick-up & trailer	2
6	12:38	Pick-up & trailer	1***
7	12:43	Transit van on public road	1
8	12:46	Pick-up & trailer	1
9	13:12	Pick-up & trailer	2*
	13:16	Change over occurs	
10	13:20	Pick-up & trailer	1
11	13:25	Pick-up & trailer	1
12	13:50	Pick-up & trailer	2
13	13:59	Pick-up & trailer	1
14	14:05	Pick-up & trailer	2
15	14:14	Landrover	2
16	14:23	Pick-up & trailer	2
17	14:32	Pick-up & trailer	1
18	14:37	Pick-up & trailer	2

Table 7. Summary of White-tailed Eagle field data collected by observers at Site G, April 2016. Response category: 1 = no discernible reaction i.e. does not move in relation to vehicle pass; 2 = minor discernible reaction i.e. looks towards vehicle as it passes. Red = female; blue = male.

(a) South forest road			
Number	Time	Vehicle	Response category
1	10:59	Pick-up & trailer	2*
2	11:17	Pick-up & trailer	1
3	11:42	Pick-up & trailer	1**
4	12:10	Pick-up & trailer	1
	12:15	Change over occurs	
5	13:05	Pick-up & trailer	1
6	13:25	Pick-up & trailer	1

* = becomes alert, sits up and looks around; ** = Moves around nest rearranging nest material before, during and after vehicle pass - no change in behaviour during vehicle pass.

(b) North forest road			
Number	Time	Vehicle	Response category
1	13:40	Pick-up & trailer	1
2	13:54	Pick-up & trailer	1
3	14:10	Pick-up & trailer	1*
4	14:25	Pick-up & trailer	1*
5	14:40	Pick-up & trailer	2
	15:00	Change over occurs	
6	15:18	Pick-up & trailer	1

* = moves around nest changing position on eggs, before and during vehicle pass.

Table 8. Pilot study summary statistics 2015–16.

Species	Number of incubating birds	Number of vehicle passes	Number of responses per response category
Golden Eagle	8	38	1 = 25, 2 = 13, 3 = 0, 4 = 0
White-tailed Eagle	5	38	1 = 21, 2 = 16, 3 = 1, 4 = 0

Discussion

The 2015–16 pilot study has provided empirical data for the first time on responses of incubating Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles to routine forest road traffic. Although the pilot study was undertaken on a relatively small number of incubating Golden and White-tailed Eagles (13 individuals) and vehicle passes (38 for each species), several important findings were made:

- Forest road traffic did not cause eagles to leave or abandon any of the nests studied. Consequently the welfare of the birds was maintained throughout the pilot study whilst valuable data was collected.
- No FID distances were identified within the range of distances studied: Golden Eagle 350–970 m; White-tailed Eagle 50–270 m.
- Direct observations showed that incubating Golden Eagle and White-tailed Eagle sometimes responded to both sound and visual stimuli from forest road traffic.
- Individual eagles exhibited different responses to the same type of vehicle activity at different times.
- It was not possible to determine if birds responded at a particular threshold distance because the birds’ reactions were either non-existent or very minor and subtle to detect at the range of distances studied. The greatest reactions recorded were usually when vehicles were closest to nests and often (but not always) when they stopped, e.g. head bobbing response.
- No discernible responses (Category 1) were recorded during 46 vehicle passes (61%), i.e. there was no observable response from incubating birds to forest vehicles passing by nests in over half of observations.
- Minor reaction responses (Category 2) were recorded during 29 vehicle passes (38%); usually manifested by an incubating bird looking towards a forestry vehicle. Sometimes the incubating birds also bobbed their heads at a passing or stationary vehicle.

- Moderate reaction responses (Category 3) were recorded during one vehicle pass (1%). A White-tailed Eagle at Site A exhibited clearly agitated behaviour towards a FES pick-up that stopped opposite the nest. The same bird exhibited no such response to the same vehicle (and also timber wagons) passing along the route at other times. This suggests that the individual female perceived a stationary vehicle in full view at distance 270 m to be a threat on this one occasion.
- No major reaction responses (Category 4) were recorded during vehicle passes at any nest.
- White-tailed Eagle and Golden Eagle partners continued to provide food and occasionally sticks to incubating birds. Typical changeover behaviour also took place during the study period.

Limitations

The following variables were not investigated by the 2015–16 pilot study:

- Changes in response to disturbance stimuli on different dates and under different weather conditions.
- Detailed analyses were not undertaken because the small sample sizes meant it was not possible to tease out the effects of context (species, bird, nest site, distance or vehicle type).
- Changes in response to disturbance stimuli during different parts of the breeding season (i.e. adults with chicks). The period immediately prior to egg laying, during egg laying and incubation is widely considered to be the most sensitive period in many raptors' breeding cycle (e.g. Hardey *et al.* 2013) and is therefore the period when disturbance effects would potentially be most pronounced. Studies into the potential impact of, for example, vehicle movements on nests with chicks is problematic and more difficult to measure because both parents are often away from the nest foraging. Furthermore, the adults often visit the nest for very short periods of time and hence it would be challenging to determine if an eagle flew off after delivering a prey item (or was indeed kept away from a nest) by, for example, a vehicle moving or stationary along an adjacent forest road.
- The response of incubating eagles to vehicle doors being slammed or drivers getting out of vehicles.
- This study did not consider any potential cumulative effects of multiple vehicle movements over days or weeks. Incubation is likely to be the most sensitive period of the breeding season and the time when vehicle movements should be kept to a minimum. The sensitivity of the nest site is likely to decrease as the breeding season progresses as family ties/bonds with the chicks develop, i.e. adults are considered less likely to abandon chicks than eggs, although this was not tested.

Whilst buffer zones are widely recognised as a method by which to prevent the disturbance of legally-protected and potentially sensitive bird species, most are not based on direct empirical evidence. Such management tools can incur significant costs to the public purse and local communities. In the case of FES, large buffer zones around eagle nests can necessitate the diversion of forest road traffic on to longer, more circuitous routes or block access to substantial forest areas for several months a year. Timber transport lorries cost approximately £2.50 per mile to run on forest roads and long diversions can increase costs significantly over several months of operation. Further issues can arise when timber lorries are prevented from using timber transport routes within forests and are diverted on to public roads. This can result in significant deterioration of the public roads and serious inconvenience to local communities through which the lorries have to pass.

Large buffer zones can also result in the rescheduling of forest operations elsewhere within the forest (such as tree felling) to periods of the year when rain and snowfall make operations more expensive. Operations at such times of the year create their own environmental risks with runoff and pollution of local watercourses more likely. Buffer zones should therefore be well founded in design to prevent actual disturbance of potentially sensitive species. Consequently, the nature and scale of such buffers should be based on evidence of effect when available and not conjecture or speculation.

What little has been published on accidental disturbance of breeding Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles is of limited value to informing management of vehicle use on forest roads in Scotland. For example, Grubb *et al.* (2010) investigated the response of incubating Golden Eagles to heli-skiing and military helicopters in northern Utah, USA. They watched 303 helicopter passes between 0–3,000 m (horizontal distance) in 22 nesting territories and found no effect on early courtship, nest repair or subsequent nesting success. No response occurred in 66% of passes and incubating birds watched helicopters in 30% of observations. Neither their observations nor testing indicated that special management restrictions were required for helicopters flying near Golden Eagle nests in northern Utah.

The use of breeding success (outcomes) as a proxy for direct observation of birds incubating has been reported for disturbance studies. For example, using 40 years of breeding data on Golden Eagles in Idaho, Steenhof *et al.* (2014) investigated whether the proportion of territories and pairs producing young changed over time in relation to 'off highway vehicle' (OHV) use. They found that after a dramatic increase in OHV use from 1999–2009, occupancy and nesting success in close proximity declined significantly compared to territories not impacted by OHV. Their research, which was based on nesting success and not on nest observations, could not determine which types of OHV use were most disturbing or identify disturbance thresholds at which Golden Eagles abandoned their eggs, young or territories. OHV use in the study area centred around all-terrain 4-wheel vehicles, dirt-bikes and rock crawlers operating off road, which were often used to access (formerly) remote areas for camping, fishing and shooting. Thus, the Golden Eagle's negative response to increased OHV use may have been associated with human activities of OHV users other than vehicle use per se.

In Finland, conservation interventions aimed at protecting nest sites of White-tailed Eagles were based around general concerns that disturbance posed by human encroachment and forestry practices adversely affected their breeding success. Santangeli *et al.* (2013) set out to evaluate this approach and found that neither nest occupancy nor breeding success of White-tailed Eagles was affected by the protection afforded to land around the nesting site. In addition, the type of forestry management at the nest site or the presence and vicinity of anthropogenic infrastructures i.e. roads and buildings within 300 m of nests did not have any apparent negative effect on nesting White-tailed Eagles. Once again, the use of breeding success (outcomes) as a proxy for direct observation of nesting birds was used to infer impacts. However, Santangeli *et al.* (2013) did suggest that the situation in Finland might be different to other places due to the low levels of disturbance early in the breeding season because of snow and ice cover.

Much of the forestry land where White-tailed Eagles nest in Finland is highly valuable for timber production and recreation and this, along with an increasing and expanding White-tailed Eagle population, meant that the money that would be needed for protecting nest sites through exclusion zones would be large. The Finnish study showed that such expensive protection measures (i.e. large buffer zones around nests) do not benefit White-tailed Eagles and were considered unnecessary in Finland, with the recommendation that scarce conservation resources should be directed elsewhere. Instead, they suggested that a voluntary scheme with forest managers could be developed to avoid unnecessary impacts.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that further studies are carried out in Scotland into the effects of vehicle movements on additional pairs of incubating Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles to increase the sample size of birds studied. Ideally, such tests should be conducted in both morning and afternoon as this allows for males and females to change incubation duties and so increase the sample size of birds studied at each nest.

- The evidence from this pilot study (acknowledging relatively small sample sizes) indicates that routine use of forest roads by moving forestry vehicles does not cause adverse disturbance to incubating Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles at the distances studied.
- There is some evidence from this study of an adverse reaction from an incubating White-tailed Eagle to a vehicle stopping close to a nest (c. 270 m away). Given that nesting Golden Eagles are widely considered to be more sensitive than White-tailed Eagles, no forest vehicles should be allowed to stop near nests with incubating Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles. Therefore, if forest roads near eagle nests are to be used during the breeding season, then the initial evidence from this pilot study suggests that strictly enforced 'no-stopping zones' should be created on forest roads near to active nests. The current study did not provide an empirical basis for determining what 'near to' meant and further work is required to answer this. However, a vehicle stopping within 270 m of a White-tailed Eagle nest caused an adverse response from an incubating female.
- FES should update their published guidance entitled '*Forest operations and birds in Scottish forests*' (FCS 2006) to reflect the response of incubating Golden Eagles and White-tailed Eagles to forest road traffic. Further work to understand the impacts of disturbance on White-tailed Eagles should be undertaken as part of the national action plan for this species.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following FES staff for their direct help, logistical support and input: Andy Walker, Andrew Ford, John Taylor, Henry Dobson, Pete Madden, Kenneth Knott, David McPhie and Andrew Jarrott. Additional surveyor support was provided by Cat Taylor.

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**Peter Cosgrove, Donald Shields, Robert Potter, Julie Murray and Cameron Cosgrove, Alba Ecology Ltd. Coilntra House, High Street, Grantown on Spey PH26 3EN.
E-mail: petercosgrove@albaecology.co.uk**

Kenny Kortland, Forest Enterprise Scotland, Tower Road, Smithton, Inverness IV2 7NL.

Revised ms accepted December 2016



Plate 17. Lapwing, Mid Deeside, North-east Scotland, April 2014. © Harry Scott

Breeding of Lapwings in Mid Deeside, North-east Scotland

D. JENKINS

This note compares breeding success of Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* in 2009–2016 in the Mid Deeside lowlands (Table 1) with two earlier studies in glens in the hilly Forest of Birse in 1974–2006 (Pout 2006, Jenkins & Watson 1999, 2005). The sites described in the lowland study area are shown in Jenkins & Sparks (2016). Important points are that lowland sites were mostly agricultural (sites B and C, mainly silage or cereal growing) or at the edge of agriculture (site D) with only occasional predator control while the areas used by Lapwings on the hill farms were mostly extensive grazing with limited cultivation there used less frequently. Predator control, especially of Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*, on the hills was constant.

Counting potentially breeding Lapwings was not straightforward. First, especially on the lowlands, territorial display by resident birds began in March before wintering birds had all left.

Counts were then confined to obviously territorial birds, continuing into April and confirmed by numbers incubating. Second, in May/June, most Lapwings, with or without broods, were usually invisible in cultivated grass fields. By this time, return migration into and through the area had started, and the local population now included local failed breeders as well as incomers. Sometimes birds were watched arriving and leaving. Chick survival could not be checked till early grass harvests (dates in Table 1), usually in late June or early July, by which time some fledged young may have left the area (see details for 2014–2016 below). Thus, by late June–early July, counts on lowland fields often showed fewer Lapwings than expected. Contrasted with the glens, the earlier that summer counts could be done on the lowlands the more likely they were to be reliable.

Much less difficulty in checking chick survival to fledging was experienced on the hill farms. This was partly because the grass was often shorter leading to improved visibility, and presumably at least partly due to successful control of predators, because most broods survived. Successful families flocked together on short grass for up to a few weeks into mid-July, enabling their productivity (ratio of young to adults) to be monitored.

In 2009–16, despite increases in overwintering numbers (Jenkins & Sparks 2016), spring counts of Lapwings on the lowland agricultural area were fairly constant and usually in the order of 17–44. This suggests a nesting population of c.8–22 pairs (Table 1). Most breeding pairs of Lapwings were found in grass at sites B and D, with nests less frequent in cereals at other sites. The main hazards during nesting were from agricultural machinery, especially rolling of grass late in the birds' incubation. Loss of eggs (or of young chicks) at that time usually led to desertion and the departure of those particular pairs of adults. Egg loss early in incubation was followed by re-laying.

The lowland study area, 2014–16

2014: The summer of 2014 was unusually fine and good breeding by Lapwings was expected. There were seven pairs at sites A+B, considered as a single unit. However, when silage was cut on 20 June, the total count of Lapwings was only 19, including two flying young. If any more young had survived, I would expect to have seen them. On 27 June, the total was 51, presumably including migrants, and on 1 July only 15 birds. These all flew away, leaving none.

All the birds seen after 27 June are thought to have been immigrants, replacing local birds. From my previous experience at Balloch, where family parties stayed until mid-July, I consider this to be an early date for such migration although it seems likely that in 2014 most local fledglings were dead by 20 June. This led to previously unrecognised early departures of failed adults (they were not in neighbouring fields where I looked for them). The losses of chicks occurred despite the fine weather and the reason for the near total mortality of Lapwing chicks at this site was unknown.

2015: In 2015, spring weather was again unusually dry, with little growth of grass in early May. Five Lapwing pairs nested at site B which was rolled on 28 April and mown on 5 May, in my experience an unusually early date. During rolling, the farmer spotted one brood of Lapwing chicks and carefully avoided them. After mowing, I saw this brood again, but it was

Table 1. Breeding success of Lapwings in the Mid Deeside study area.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Breeding pairs	9	8–10	20	12	13	13	10	13
Summer count:								
date	26 June	30 June	3 July	3 July	21 June	27 June*	5 May*	25 June
numbers	>10	26	2	2	5 [†]	19	16	1
Min young fledged	0	0	1	1	5	5	2–3	0

Note: *see text, [†]2 broods

Table 2. Breeding productivity of Lapwings at Balloch hill farm in upper Feughside, 2001–06.

Date	Pairs in spring	Number of Lapwings counted	Ratio juveniles [†] :adult pairs
2001	21		
18 July		60	
20 July		65	1.09
28 July		40	
21 Aug		0	
2002	22		
July		>70	1.18
2003	21		
26 July		52	0.48
29 July		50	
10 Aug		2	
24 Aug		0	
2006 (Pout 2006)	23		
Up to 14 July		67	0.91

Note: [†] number of juveniles = July total less paired adults

soon reduced to a single chick. In the whole field I found only one other adult Lapwing and no other broods of chicks. The implication was that the other four nests had all been destroyed by the roller, whereupon their adults had left the area. In late July, the behaviour of a single adult Lapwing at site D (Auchlossan) suggested that one small brood (1–2 chicks) was all that had survived at this predominantly grassy area where eight pairs were thought to have had nests and incubated.

2016: In 2016, three broods of small chicks were found at site B on 19 May after the grass was rolled. But there were none on 25 June, two days after the grass was mown, when the site was visited by Dr S. Wanless (only one Lapwing, an adult, was recorded). No chicks were found at the other sites either (13 pairs altogether) and these losses may have been attributable to heavy rain together with predation, possibly from Carrion Crows which were ever-present despite their alleged control.

The main point, clear in Table 1, is that breeding success of Lapwings on the Mid Deeside study area was too poor year-after-year for the populations on the lowland agricultural fields to be sustainable.

The glens

In the glens, however, the situation was different. First, in 1974–2006 in the Forest of Birse, including Balloch farm (Jenkins & Watson 1999, 2005) I found flocks composed of Lapwing families at Balloch each July (see examples in Table 2), and on 13 July 2016 I found a similar flock at nearby Glen Cat. This contained 122 Lapwings of which at least 30 were first year birds, presumably together with their parents. On 19 July 2016, these birds were gone. Summer flocks of Lapwings similar to those which I recorded earlier and in 2016 were known to the gamekeeper in intermediate years at both Balloch and Glen Cat. This suggests that breeding of Lapwings on these hill farms was often good. I am not aware of any evidence that the breeding biology of the Lapwings had changed in the interval between my observations up to 2006 and in 2016, and conclude that the two datasets are comparable. They confirm successful breeding at the two well-grazed hill farms, compared with poor breeding success in the agricultural lowlands. A second study confirming successful breeding of Lapwings at Balloch was done by Pout (2006) (Table 2).

Pout's (2006) study was in Finzean parish, including both Finzean village and Balloch. He recorded Lapwing productivity of 0.41 juveniles reared per hatched nest in the farmland at Finzean and 0.91 at Balloch. For Lapwings, Peach *et al.* (1994) state that in order to replace adult losses, Lapwings should produce in the region of 0.83–0.97 fledglings per pair each year, and Catchpole



Plate 18. Lapwing chicks in hoof print, Dinnet, North-east Scotland, May 2004. © Harry Scott

et al. (1999) estimated that productivity of 0.56 young per pair is necessary for population stability. From these data, the current decline of Lapwings in the Mid Deeside lowlands could be predicted as a result of poor productivity, as at Finzean in 2006. On the other hand, the Lapwing population at Ballochcan should be sustainable at the breeding rate found by Pout and in this study (Table 2).

Acknowledgements

Mr R. Paterson, Head Keeper at Forest of Birse, helped with fieldwork on this estate, and Prof. T.H. Sparks assisted with early drafts of this paper.

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David Jenkins, Whitewalls, 1 Barclay Park, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire AB34 5JF.
Email: jenkins.whitewalls@gmail.com

Revised ms accepted November 2016

Pheasant killing and eating mouse

We have bird feeders holding peanuts on the Rowan trees outside our kitchen window in Glen Errochty, near Trinafour, Perthshire and a cock Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* had been hanging around them for a couple of days in mid-November 2016.

I was watching the Pheasant rooting around under the feeders one morning and saw him 'stabbing' into the longer grass next to the garden fence. I presumed he was simply trying to get a peanut or Rowan berry which had fallen into the long grass, but I was a bit surprised at the ferocity of the pecking and I was amazed when I saw him pulling out a small mouse!

A couple more 'stabs', and they really were 'stabs' as opposed to pecks, and the mouse was well and truly dead. He then brought it into the middle of the lawn and tried pecking at it,

presumably trying to pick off pieces. He gave up on this fairly quickly, however, and then just picked it up and swallowed it whole, head first.

I watched him 'gulping' for around five minutes as he was obviously trying to get it into his crop and I actually wondered if he would choke. However, he managed it and then promptly went back to pecking around for bits of peanut from the feeders. It was quite astonishing to see, and something I most certainly wasn't expecting to witness.

Nial Mackinlay, Tomcraggach, Calvine, Pitlochry PH18 5UF.

BWP notes Pheasants killing a variety of small reptiles and rodents. There are several accounts on the internet, some with photographs, of Pheasants in pens killing mice that presumably had entered the pens in search of food. Eds.



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Stunning holiday cottage overlooking one of the top birdwatching areas in the UK.

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Obituaries

Raymond David Murray (1950–2016)

On 17 September 2016, Scottish ornithology lost one of its modern-day greatest enthusiasts and hardest working field men. Ray Murray had become unwell whilst at high altitude on a guided birdwatching trip near Arequipa in southern Peru. He lost and did not regain consciousness on the way back down despite the attempts of the guide to revive him. At least we know he did not suffer and was doing what he loved best: birding.

Ray was a unique character and gave much of his spare time to bird recording and to the SOC. In the days leading up to and following his funeral in Melrose in early October, tributes from people in all walks of his happy and action-packed life poured in providing much needed comfort to his family. Always confident of his own views, he was much admired, appreciated, treasured, respected and greatly loved. He was naturally curious with a thirst for knowledge. He read widely and was mostly self-taught.

Ray was born on 18 January 1950 to Ann and Harry Murray. Ray and his older sister Val were brought up in Abbeyhill and Clermiston in Edinburgh. He was always interested in nature as a child but his interest in birdwatching started with his grandfather George and their walks out over the Pentland Hills. Unusually for a child of that age, Ray saved his pocket money for bus tickets out to Aberlady to birdwatch, and later as a teenager took longer bus rides to walk along the Berwickshire cliffs. Lacking the funds to enter Edinburgh Zoo through the front door, he would sneak under the fence.

After an education at Leith Academy, Ray studied Geography at Edinburgh University and while there met Sheila, who was to become his constant companion; they married in 1973 after Ray had completed a British Council Scholarship to study Zoogeography at The University of Amsterdam. For their honeymoon, they went bird watching in



Plate 19. Ray Murray, SOC/BTO conference, North Berwick, Lothian, March 2011. © David Palmer / www.photoscot.co.uk

Turkey! On his return from Amsterdam, Ray was accepted as a post-graduate student at Edinburgh University conducting research on bird migration before going on to complete his teacher training course at Moray House.

Ray was a wonderful and dedicated teacher who loved his job. He started his career as a visiting teacher of Environmental Education and taught in all the primary schools in Tweeddale. Later he moved under the umbrella of the Outdoor Education Department where he also taught skiing, orienteering and other outdoor based activities at both primary and high school level. Each winter he would take time off from his SOC activities to organise and then lead the annual skiing trips. Many of his former pupils have said that Ray brought his subject alive for his students with his passion for the natural world. Ray was always bringing in animal skins or wings to illustrate his teaching. He would create such things as erupting mini-volcanoes and weave silly stories that would leave the kids in fits of giggles. Colleagues recalled that the pupils would inevitably be high as kites after Mr Murray had been to visit and that trying to

teach anything like maths afterwards was an exercise in futility.

Ray's interests were not confined to birding. He sang in his local choir, played for the Eddleston Curling Club, enjoyed watching rugby and the Tour de France, and read copious amounts of science fiction. The size of his collection of sci-fi books is comparable to that of his books on birds. He also enjoyed karaoke and I remember car journeys with him listening to electronic dance music.

But of course, it is his immense passion in all things birds and birdwatching which SOC members will know him for. Ever since those youthful days searching for birds within a day's reach of Edinburgh, Ray has led the way inspiring others to look at and learn about birds, and to record what they see. Indeed, one of his mantras was that if you were going out to survey a bird or a location, then you really must count all the birds!

I first met Ray early in 1989 very soon after I moved to Scotland and we became close friends. Recognising our shared interests in bird status and distribution, he took me under his wing and, with the explicit purpose of collecting data for the first bird atlas of south-east Scotland, he took me all around the Borders looking for and counting birds. During this period, I also got to know his dear wife Sheila and the pride of them both: their daughter Anna.

Ray Murray was passionate about many projects, including publishing his work, but not to finish the PhD he had begun at the Free University of Amsterdam with the great K.H. Voous; see their exchange on the Scottish Crossbill where Voous hails "my good friend Ray Murray" (*British Birds* 71: 3–10, 318–9). Reflecting his abiding interest in biogeography, Ray's early contribution to *SB* was "Colonization of Scotland by northern birds, 1820–1977" (*SB* 10: 158–174). It proved controversial, but Ray revelled in such debate and he went on to publish much more, including, rather less controversially, *The Birds of the Borders* (1986). With David Bates, a close family friend at the time (and who kindly provided some additional material for this article), Ray

helped prove the potential of St Abb's Head for rich hauls of migrants, explored Sutherland and the banks and braes of Rannoch from his static caravan, and upper Speyside from Doug Weir's holiday cottage. When North Berwick hosted SOC conferences Ray stayed with David and his family and Ray's entertaining ways made him popular with David's children. Ray was also a hit at conference discos and karaoke sessions. Everyone who knew him has a story to tell about Ray!

There is insufficient space to list all his achievements and the bird-related roles he took on. He became a bird recorder for the old counties of Roxburgh, Peebles and Selkirk in 1978 and then SOC Bird Recorder for the whole of Borders in 1981 following the establishment of the Borders branch of the SOC in 1980. He started the *Borders Bird Report* - the first covered 1979 - and has produced 31 volumes covering 35 years since then, the last published in December 2015. He has been a constant member of the Borders branch committee, serving as Chairman and/or representing the branch on Council on a number of occasions; he was still a member of Council on his death. Such close involvement with the workings of the SOC naturally led him to become President, a post he held for three years between 1993 and 1996, but he continued his close involvement with the Club, especially in the areas of education and bird recording.

Ray gave so much of his time to the SOC, sharing his knowledge of birds and places freely, and he always strived to help people learn about birds and to cultivate their interest. He had a great sense of fun and only this spring auctioned his time and birding expertise to the highest bidder at the Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference in Peebles. This was in aid of funds for the publication of the second local bird atlas for which he played a leading and influential role. Two lucky ladies had his company, each for a day (see 'A magical day with Ray', *SB* 36: 230). Many will have felt his magic through his multiple talks to SOC branches and at conferences on a variety of topics including his foreign trips, Goosanders on the Tweed and local atlas projects.

As a teacher, Ray could not get to distant areas of Scotland in term time, and back in the 1990s I promised him that when he retired we would go to the Outer Hebrides in May. This we did in 2009; we had a very enjoyable and memorable time, surveying tetrads for *Bird Atlas 2007–11* in the mornings and birding in the afternoons. We were lucky to be on North Uist during one of their amazing skua passages and witnessed Long-tailed and Pomarine Skuas low over our heads. It was a very special day for us both.

Although resident in the Borders, he attended almost every meeting of the Lothian SOC Discussion Group, and in recent years also set up and chaired his own SOC Discussion Group in Borders to help promote and organise surveys there. He participated in all the surveys organised by SOC and BTO over the years including goose counts (especially at West Water Reservoir), the annual Rocky Shore Count and organised a recent count of birds on inland waterbodies.

It was in the area of Scottish bird recording that he carved the biggest niche. He was passionate about getting all sightings logged and reported to local recorders, and to make use of those records. He was full of ideas about what the records might tell us. He was editor of the *Scottish Bird Report* from 1990 to 2001 putting in a huge number of hours to save it, when most others in the Club had given it up as a lost cause; since then he had compiled the online version with Ian Andrews. Ray was also one of the team behind one of the SOC's greatest achievements, *Birds of Scotland* (2007), which perhaps more than anything has raised the profile and reputation of the Club.

Ray was the driving force behind two local atlases in south-east Scotland, and his efforts ensured that full coverage was achieved both times. Back in the mid-1980s, the second atlas of breeding birds of Britain and Ireland was being planned and Ray was part of the group which decided that the Lothian and Borders branches could promote and survey all 1,756

tetrads in the two recording areas. Astonishingly, 48% of tetrads were surveyed by Ray himself, almost all of them within Borders. *The Breeding Birds of South-east Scotland* was published in 1998, with Ray as lead author.

Ray and I agreed we should repeat the tetrad atlas survey in parallel with the next national atlas (*Bird Atlas 2007–11*) and we assembled a team of organisers and editors. There were six years of fieldwork, this time in both the breeding season and the winter. Ray was by now retired and again completed much of the fieldwork himself (submitting records for 47% of all tetrads), despite knee operations and, for other reasons, being unable to drive for part of the time - this was made possible with the help of local birders and family for which he was very grateful. For the last three years, a team including Ray has been analysing the results and writing the species accounts. His phenomenal knowledge about not only birds of the Borders, but also the geography of the region, drove him to make new and exciting observations from the data we collected and part of his legacy will be the extensive analyses he has written about many of the birds of south-east Scotland. Ray was lead author on 60% of the species accounts and in typical Ray style, his passion led him to produce detailed and lengthy accounts. The second atlas team are in the process of reducing the number of words so that when printed we will still be able to lift the book! It is a huge shame that Ray will not be here to share the joy of the publication of this new book later this year. This project would not have happened without his enthusiastic input and drive. However, the *Birds of South-east Scotland 2008–13* will be a fitting legacy of and lasting tribute to our very good friend.

Ray oozed boundless enthusiasm, ideas, knowledge and a sense of fun. Our lives have all been enhanced by knowing him. The passing of Ray is a huge loss to Scottish ornithology, to the SOC and to his family and friends.

Mark Holling

Campbell McLellan (1933–2016)



Plate 20. Campbell McLellan, October 2005. © Vicky McLellan

I first met Campbell at the inaugural meeting of the Hamilton Area RSPB Members' Group in 1976 where he became a founder member. He impressed me then, and has done ever since, as a man totally committed to the natural world. In these early days of our group, his knowledge, especially of things ornithological, was freely imparted and of great value to many of the younger and less experienced members, mingled as it usually was with a fair amount of good humour.

In the early 1980s, he was instrumental in our group proposal to the RSPB for a bird reserve in the flood plain area below Motherwell - soon to be called Baron's Haugh.

Living in Motherwell, the reserve became Campbell's local birdwatching patch and also the scene of many early work parties where he and other group members planted trees, mended fences and tried to convince local shooters and revellers that this was now a place for observing and treasuring wildlife.

Much of Campbell's countryside knowhow was acquired in Argyll where he was brought up in the village of Strachur on the edge of Loch Fyne. Son of the local doctor and eldest of four brothers, his education progressed from the local one-room school to Dunoon Grammar which entailed a two-hour bus journey each way every day.

As well as absorbing all the natural influences of the hills and lochs of his surrounding area, he kept fit playing shinty for the local team - the only one of the brothers not to have his front teeth knocked out! He often talked about a local Jackdaw that at matches would call - "Come awa' Strachur!" Later athletic prowess was shown in races and the high jump at the Cowal Games.

Campbell studied medicine for four years at Glasgow University, where he and Jimmy McGregor became friends. They went on many forays into wild areas, at one point hitchhiking down to Norfolk. Much later, they were to meet again when Jimmy officially opened the new Baron's Haugh Reserve in 1988.

A change of heart from studies now saw him doing his National Service in the RAF, eventually working as a medical orderly in Cyprus. After that, Colville's Steelworks in Motherwell was Campbell's first civilian employer and he remained working there for his entire career, latterly as a shift manager. Soon after starting there he met Vicky at a dance in Glasgow and in due course they married. She too would become a founder member of Hamilton Area RSPB Members' Group serving on the original committee. From then on they shared hill climbing and field trips, delivered talks to many societies, surveyed locally for, amongst others, Golden Plovers and Hen Harriers and started a lifelong series of birdwatching trips abroad to places like Bulgaria, Kephallonia, Lesbos, Spain and Majorca. Later, extended visits included America and Canada.

After retirement, he and Vicky moved to Peebles in 1996. Here they met with many kindred spirits in nature and became involved with RSPB and SOC branch work. They were pivotal in the founding of the Osprey Project at Glentress in 2003 with CCTV cameras on an eyrie from the start and a workshop set-up to inform the public. This work was later followed by the current Osprey project at Kailzie Gardens in 2005, where Lady Angela Buchan-Hepburn had a superb cabin built to house lectures and all the CCTV equipment needed for monitoring. Campbell revelled in this kind of exercise and

backed it wholeheartedly as well as many other local wildlife-friendly ventures. World trips continued, latterly including Turkey, Goa, an arduous canoe adventure in Latvia and a horseback trek in Kazakhstan where he even managed to spot an Ibisbill with chicks.

Campbell died in 2016, shortly after the SOC Conference. His wife Vicky has lost a loving life partner. His expertise and canny, generous nature will be greatly missed by all his many friends and the natural world will miss a true stalwart in its defence.

Jimmy Maxwell

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 content will include species recording and data handling, seabird research, bird ringing, Isle of May NNR & aspects of bird observatory life
- Deadline for applications – Monday 1st May 2017 at 5pm
- Course will be held on 1-7th July 2017
- Limited to six participants
- Basic, hostel-style accommodation
- Course substantially sponsored by SOC



To apply and for further information, visit the SOC website: www.the-soc.org.uk



NEWS AND NOTICES

New members

Borders: Mr & Mrs J. Marshall, **Caithness:** Mrs J. Fussell, Dr K. Nicholson, **Central Scotland:** Mr C. Clark, Mr H. Shirra, **Clyde:** Mr & Mrs D. Allan, Mr R. Allison, Mr G. Hanna, Mrs E.A. Krause, Mr A. MacLeod, Dr P. Murcia & Ms M. Varela, Dr R. Nager & Ms K. Jones, Mr & Mrs J. Park, Dr J. Trinder, **Dumfries:** Mr S. Ashton, Mr & Mrs P. Grant, Mr & Mrs S. Imm, **England, Wales & NI:** Miss K. Keegan, Mr S. Roberts, Mr & Mrs S. Turner, Mr I. Watt, Mr A. Wicker, **Fife:** Mrs J. Bamonte, Mr J. Mitchell, Ms E. Ross, **Highland:** Mr A. Fitchett, Mr B. Lawrence, Ms W. May, Mr & Mrs N. McInnes, Mr J. Owen, Mr E. Patrick, Mr I. Plumtree, Ms S. Robson, **Lothian:** Mrs S. Ali, Mr C. Allan, Miss A. Bastow, Ms P. Boreham, Ms E. Bradford, Ms A. Brimelow, Mr D. Cockburn, Mr S. Cunningham, Miss E. Dickson, Mr & Mrs R. Findlay, Mr K. Greig, Miss S. Hannis, Miss A. Hogg & Mr D. Phillips, Mr R. Houston, Miss J. Huijberts, Miss T. Law, Mr & Mrs W. Macfarlane, Mr & Mrs I. MacKenzie, Ms P. McKerrow, Mrs S. Nicholson, Mrs I. Orr, Mr K. Ritchie, Mr & Mrs J. Smalley, Mr A. Templeton, Mr G. Wood, **Moray:** Mr B. Aspinall, Mr & Mrs P. Carpenter, Mrs L. Main & family, **North-East Scotland:** Miss E. Anderson, Mr & Mrs C. Mott, Mr J. Robotham, Mr D. Short, **Orkney:** Mrs P. Wilson, **Overseas:** Mrs B. MacInnis, **Stewartry:** Mr A. Gibson.

200 Club

The latest prize winners are: **November:** 1st £30 Miss James, 2nd £20 Dr McIntyre, 3rd £10 R.N. Cinderey. **December:** 1st £30 A. C. Bastable, 2nd £20 Mrs P. Black, 3rd £10 Mrs Denney. **January:** 1st £30 Dr H. Hissett, 2nd £20 Ms A. Creamer, 3rd £10 Miss Laphthorne.

Conferences

SOC Annual Conference & AGM, 20–22 October 2017, Atholl Palace Hotel, Pitlochry.

Branch updates

Highland, new recorder: Peter Stronach, tel: 01479 851272, email: highlandrecorder@gmail.com Peter replaces Pete Gordon. Council thanks Pete for his time given to the role over the last four years.

Waterston House

Art exhibitions

Carol Barrett 'Brush with the Wild' showing until Wednesday 5 April
Paul Bartlett: Saturday 8 April to Wednesday 24 May
Lucy Newton: Saturday 27 May to Wednesday 26 July

Plate 21. Little glimpse. © Paul Bartlett





Plate 22. Snowy Owl. © Lucy Newton

Laurie Campbell photography

One-day workshops: Saturday 1 April, Sunday 2 April, Saturday 6 May, Sunday 7 May

Laurie first taught photography in 1978 while undertaking a four-year degree course in the subject at Napier University in Edinburgh. As the winner of many awards and author of several books, his work is known worldwide, therefore participants in his workshops are assured of first class tuition, whatever their level of expertise.

These one-day sessions are designed to show participants how to get the most from whatever photographic equipment they happen to own. Throughout the day, the emphasis will be on the basics of exposure and composition together with help in seeing potential for creative photography in the wide range of natural history subjects and landscapes that the group may encounter. With a maximum of six places available per workshop, Laurie is able to spend time on a one-to-one basis with each group member. To check availability, prices and to book on a workshop, please email Laurie directly at info@lauriecampbell.com or call 01289 386736.

Illustrated talk: Friday 5 May (evening - time and ticket price to be announced)

To coincide with the workshops, Laurie will also be giving a presentation on the work he has done over the past year. For more information, visit www.the-soc.org.uk or call Waterston House on 01875 871330

Optics Demo Day

Sunday 14 May, 10am–4pm, Free event

A wide range of binoculars and telescopes to try out in field conditions. Or pop in for some free, friendly expert advice. If there are any models that you are particularly interested in looking at, please let us know and we will do our best to have these available for you to try at the event.

NEW! Dumfries & Galloway Bird Report 2015

Published in January, copies of the 2015 D&G report can be purchased from Peter Swan, 3 Castle View, Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, DG7 1BG, pandmswan@btinternet.com, 01556 502 144. Please make cheques payable to 'SOC



Dumfries and Galloway Branches". The price (excluding p&p) is £8 to non-members and £6 to members. The report is also available for sale at Waterston House.

Donald Watson paintings online

Eleven of acclaimed wildlife artist Donald Watson's paintings have been made public for the first time as a group on a new SOC webpage. They are from the SOC's Library and Archive and the subject matter ranges from the Outer Hebrides to the Isle of May and Aberlady Bay, and from evocative landscapes to bird portraiture. Donald Watson (1918–2005) was a well-known author and bird artist, one of the founding members of the SOC in 1936, and a great friend of the Club throughout his life. The art gallery at Waterston House is named in his honour. You can see the paintings and read more at www.the-soc.org.uk/donald-watson-wildlife-artist.



Plate 23. Donald painting on the Isle of May. © Photographer unknown



Plate 24. Detail from Grey Heron, Greenshanks and gulls, Peffer Burn, Aberlady. © Watson family

Mark Warren - a new member of SBRC

SBRC welcomes Mark Warren as a new member of SBRC, replacing John Sweeney. Mark brings much knowledge to the committee, being a long time birder with the experience of finding, seeing and assessing rare and scarce birds in Scotland. Mark is a member of the Orkney Birds Records Committee.

SBRC would like to acknowledge its gratitude to John Sweeney for his work over the period of his tenure. John has contributed a great deal to SBRC, and we wish him well for the future.

Chris McInerny, on behalf of SBRC

SOC volunteers fly the flag for the Club at several high profile conferences

Winter is typically a quiet time in the events calendar, but it's peak season for conferences! Thanks to Alan Knox, Melvin Morrison, Norman Elkins, Bob McGowan and James Allison, SOC was able to have a presence at two high-profile conferences recently: The Scottish Ringers' Conference in Carrbridge and the BTO Annual Conference in Swanwick. A great opportunity to showcase the SOC to these target audiences, the Club is very grateful to BTO and to the Clyde Ringing Group for allowing us to have a stand at their conference and for such warm receptions! Stacks of *Scottish Birds* sample issues were taken away (with membership forms stapled in!) so HQ looks forward to noting any new members made from our presence at these events.

If you spot an event you think would be worthwhile for your branch to exhibit at, contact Headquarters for advice and materials!

Corrections to *Scottish Birds* 36(4)

■ On page 300, in Table 1B, the mean number of Lapwings present in July 2010 should be 50 not 501.

■ On page 376, Plate 337 should be credited to John Kemp rather than John Nadin. Apologies go to both Johns for this mix-up.



Plates 25–26. (above) Bob McGowan on the Club's stand at the Scottish Ringers' Conference, Carrbridge, November 2016. © Alan Knox. (below) Norman Elkins talks to an attendee at the BTO Annual Conference in Swanwick, December 2016. © Alan Knox



Anyone for Puffin?



Plate 27. Puffin, May 2013. © Harry Scott

Both newspapers and the broadcast media have picked up on the story of a 250-year-old census of St Kilda discovered among the papers of Clan Maclachlan during cataloguing by the National Register of Archives for Scotland (NRAS), the branch of the National Records of Scotland which holds historical papers held in private hands. Until now, the oldest known record of the population dated from 1822. The census lists 90 people living on the main island of Hirta on 15 June 1764 - 38 males and 52 females, including 19 families and nine individuals. Each resident was said to eat "36 wild fowls eggs and 18 fowls" daily making totals of 3,240 eggs and 1,620 birds every day. These figures have been quoted uncritically but deserve scrutiny. They imply that in a year the islanders ate over a million seabird eggs and over half a million birds. The main birds collected by the islanders were said to be Gannets, Fulmars and Puffins. Mike Harris and Stuart Murray (*Birds of St Kilda*) quote the island minister, the Reverend Mackenzie, saying that

up to 12,000 young Fulmars, 2,000 young and 2,000 adult Gannets were taken around 1840. The highest count of any bird killed for food seems to be 89,600 Puffins in 1876. Obviously some species would provide more meat than others. People from Ness in Lewis still eat young Gannets obtained during the annual guga hunt on Sula Sgeir. Young Gannets leave the cliffs weighing around 4 kg. Even if only 1 kg was usable meat how many kilograms of meat would someone eat in a day? According to one observer one Gannet will be shared as part of a meal for four people. At a (somewhat controversial) guga eating competition in Ness the competitors were expected to eat half a guga with potatoes (the winner doing so in just over 3 minutes). The St Kildans also grew potatoes. Other birds are smaller, but 18 still seems a very high figure and it would be interesting if the researchers could provide more details.

Stan da Prato



WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS IN THE CAIRNGORMS

The Grant Arms Hotel



THE WILDLIFE HOTEL

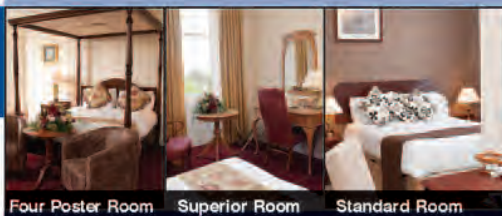


As soon as you walk into the Grant Arms Hotel you realise it isn't just any ordinary Hotel. In short the refurbished Grant Arms is the hotel for bird and wildlife watchers.

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- Early Birder Breakfast if required
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- Special Diets accommodated
- After Dinner Coffee & Tea
- Programme of Talks, Walks and Wildlife Briefings, Films & Quizzes
- Free WiFi
- Complimentary Daily Newspaper
- Hairdryer and Toiletries
- Free Parking
- Free use of BWWC's private Slavonian Grebe Hide
- Boot Wash, Drying Room and Laundry Room.



www.bwwc.co.uk



HOW TO GET THERE

By Road: Grantown is situated just off the A9 Edinburgh-Inverness road.
By Train: The nearest station is Aviemore (14 miles) on the Edinburgh-Inverness line. **By Plane:** Inverness Airport (30 miles) - Flights from most major UK airports; FLYBE from Amsterdam, Belfast City, Birmingham, Dublin & Manchester; EASYJET from Bristol, Gatwick & Luton; BA from Heathrow. Other destinations available from Aberdeen Airport (75 miles). To get the most out of the area you need a car.

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	Superior	£310	£379	£315
	Four Poster	£350	£419	£355
7 NIGHTS	Standard	£445	£581	£455
	Superior	£515	£651	£525
	Four Poster	£585	£721	£595

Price per person. Excludes Christmas, New Year and other Special Breaks. Other lengths of stay are also available. Dogs welcome £20 per room per stay. Single, Twin, Double, Family & Wheelchair Accessible Rooms available. **Special Rates for Clubs, Tours & Conferences.** Terms & Conditions apply.

SPECIAL EVENTS

EASTER BREAK - Fri 14th to Tues 18th April 17
Come and join us for Easter. A full BWWC programme of wildlife watching events is included along with a special Gala Dinner on Easter Sunday.

4 nights DB&B from £340pp

CAPER/GROUSE THEMED WEEK
Sat 22nd to Sat 29th April 17

If you have a special interest in one more of the 4 Grouse species, then this is a good time of year to come, when the birds are at their peak of activity. During this week our regular programme of field trips will be at areas where we hope to see one or more of the 4 iconic Grouse species, Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Red Grouse and Ptarmigan.

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For information on BWWC SpecialEvents
visit www.bwwc.co.uk/wildlife-breaks.php

TO BOOK CALL 01479 872526

www.bwwc.co.uk or email bookings@bwwc.co.uk

BWWC LTD, 25 THE SQUARE, GRANTOWN-ON-SPEY, PH26 3HF

All programmes, talks, walks and rooms subject to availability and liable to change without notice.



Plate 28. Grey Heron securing a vole, Baron's Haugh, Clyde, January 2017. © Frank Gibbons

Sound & Vision

F. GIBBONS

On a cold day in January 2017 at Baron's Haugh RSPB reserve, Motherwell, I noted that some of the previous day's snowfall had remained. Patches of snow, preserved by an overnight frost, formed a patchwork pattern across the marshland. Sheets of thin ice formed under the surface of some of the main body of water and parts of the inlets. Amidst the cold and bleak surroundings, I considered how hard these conditions must impact upon the birdlife. I reflected as a young lad watching huge flocks of Goldfinches struggle in these conditions.

However, whilst in thought, a Grey Heron captured my attention in the frozen margins in front of the Marsh Hide. Apparently sitting almost dozing, it would suddenly spring to life, moving at breakneck speed towards a nearby tussock of grass and stab repeatedly. From the grass, it would pull a vole, making short work of the helpless creature. In a minute, it would be devoured and the Heron would return to nap a bit more. I watched one bird take four voles in around 40 minutes and another had at least three. It is my theory that because the reed and



Plate 29. Grey Heron securing a vole, Baron's Haugh, Clyde, January 2017. © Frank Gibbons



Plate 30. Grey Heron swallowing a vole, Baron's Haugh, Clyde, January 2017. © Frank Gibbons

grass were so brittle with frost and hard snow, the least movement of the poor voles was amplified and I realised that my original theory that all birds suffered in these weather conditions did not apply to the local Heron population. I have rarely witnessed them feed so heartily. I appreciate that some people may have witnessed this behaviour in non-frost conditions, I have too, but not where locating and catching prey appeared so easy.

The next few days brought grey cloud, drizzle and mild weather and I did not see the Herons catch one vole. Indeed, they had reverted back to the water, seeking fish and any unsuspecting aquatic prey. It's interesting that the Heron is a species that I associate with hunting by vision only - it certainly wasn't finding these voles by sight. Hence, what could have been a fairly dull day turned out to be quite eventful and quite a bit of discussion was created amongst the few brave souls who had ventured out.

Frank Gibbons

Email: frank76g@outlook.com

FIELD NOTE: Mink attacking young Gannet

J. ANDERSON

Every September the young Gannets from the Bass Rock are abandoned by their parents and leave the rock for the open sea. They are often too heavy with fat to fly strongly and crash into the sea getting carried by the tide on to local beaches.

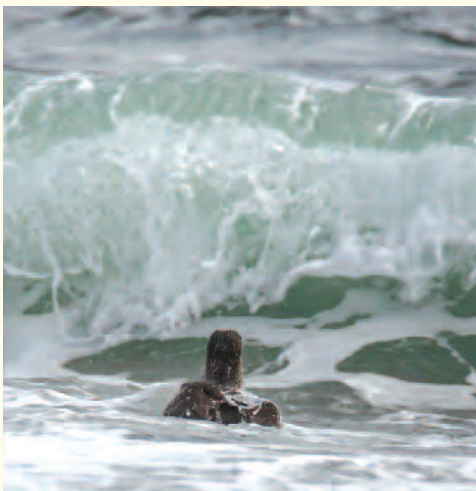
On the afternoon of 21 September 2010, I went down to Fife Ness (the most northerly point of the Firth of Forth) to photograph migrants or passing seabirds. As I walked out to the tide line I noticed a young Gannet sitting on the rocks - a fairly common occurrence at this time of the year, and decided I would take a few shots of it. I had barely focussed on the bird when a movement from the left caught my eye, it was an American Mink darting towards the Gannet. The Gannet, seeing the approaching predator, raised its wings and uttered a deep croak. If these actions were meant to deter the attack they failed as the Mink jumped onto the bird. A struggle ensued, the Gannet biting the Mink until it jumped to the back of the bird's neck at

which point the bird seemed to give up. It was chilling to watch the Mink attempting to sever the spine of the bird and I considered trying to stop the attack. The Gannet by this time was flattened against the rocks but made a final desperate lunge to dislodge the attacker and fell over the edge of the rock into a deep pool with the Mink still holding on. The Mink immediately broke off its attack and swam off, disappearing into a crevice. The bird clambered back onto the rocks, rested for a few minutes, then waddled into the sea and swam off, with several backward glances, but no more than a patch of ruffled feathers on the back of its neck.

The factor that probably saved this bird's life was that it was carrying so much fat that the Mink couldn't get a full bite through the feathers and skin to paralyse the bird. If the bird had not dropped into the pool it would have had more time and may well have succeeded.



Plates 31–34. Gannet before, during and after an attack by an American Mink, Fife Ness, Fife, 21 September 2010. © John Anderson



The images of the attack I consider to be the most important I have taken as they provide a dramatic example of the effect invasive species such as American Mink can have on native wildlife. What better use of a photograph than to help protect the subject? I have taken other images of Mink with a range of prey items. They are well known as voracious predators and on a nationwide scale must cause immense damage. Fortunately, they have disappeared from Fife Ness; I hope for good.

As I watch Gannets flying past Fife Ness now, I sometimes wonder if the survivor is alive and well.

John Anderson, Crail, Fife
www.pbase.com/crail_birder

Getting the most out of your SOC membership

How to get in touch with us:

Email: admin@the-soc.org.uk
Phone: 01875 871 330
Write to: SOC Headquarters,
Waterston House, Aberlady,
East Lothian, EH32 0PY
Online form: www.the-soc.org.uk/contact-us

Over the last few years, the Club's online profile has continued to grow, as has the frequency and extent of our communications with members. As a small charity and a volunteer-led organisation, these have largely included online communications and resources. We appreciate not everyone is on (or wants!) email nor has online access, so where resources allow, branches aim to have printed copies of publications available to read at meetings. Each local newsletter is also uploaded to the relevant branch page on the SOC website, and detailed information - where possible - added about forthcoming evening meetings.

To help you get the most out of your membership of the Club, we've put together a detailed summary of the range of e-communications, publications and sightings notifications available from Headquarters and local branches. We've also included links to external websites, forums and information services that may be of interest to you and other useful links can also be found on the SOC website.

We hope that by highlighting what's on offer to members, those not receiving these communications (who'd like to) will get in touch with Headquarters (unless otherwise stated) to let us know the correct email address in case our messages are ending up in their junk/spam/clutter folders! This is the first place to check for any emails that have appear to have gone astray. However these folders do tend to empty automatically every 7-10 days.

Club-wide communications

The Hoot

(landed August 2016) - goes out to all members
SOC's new quarterly email digest for members includes recent scientific developments and discoveries, interesting facts about our feathered friends, as well as some personal stories to tide you over between the quarterly mailing of *Scottish Birds*. Issue 4 of *The Hoot* is due out in May with subsequent issues scheduled for August, November and February.

HQ Newsletter

- goes out to all members
Occasionally, Waterston House circulates an e-newsletter to members. This circular serves as a reminder of forthcoming events at Waterston House, as well as wider Club news and activities, such as SOC Conferences and the Club's involvement in bird fairs, surveys and special projects.

Art exhibition previews at Waterston House

Invitations to exhibitions, which are usually held on the Friday evening prior to the opening of each show, are sent by email to SOC members in Lothian and surrounding branches (Borders, Fife & Central Scotland). If you would like to be added to the guest list to receive an e-invite, please contact Wendy at HQ, mail@the-soc.org.uk. If you don't have email, we can put you on our postal invite list.

SOC on social media

Details of forthcoming HQ and Club events are posted on SOC's social media pages (on Facebook, users have the option to subscribe to be notified each time a new event is added). The Club shares topical or interesting bird-related news articles from our branches and bird organisations across the world, as well as details of notable or popular sightings. It's also a means to keep up to date with SOC news and activities *as they happen*.



Find the Club's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/scotlandsbirdclub. You don't have to be signed up to Facebook to view the SOC's page.



Follow SOC on Twitter at www.twitter.com/scottishbirding. Again you can view our page without having a Twitter account.



Increasingly, we are using the free online marketing facility, Mailchimp for the Club's e-communications.

Branch-specific communications

Forums/News groups

The most popular platform for sharing and discussing local bird news is online forums. These are free web-based sites (often with an optional alert service) which keep subscribers informed of sightings and sometimes also surveys and other information deemed to be of interest. Managed by a 'moderator', subscribers can post their sightings and comments. Some branches, such as Lothian, also use their local forum to post reminders of forthcoming branch meetings, events or special announcements.

To join the groups, simply type in the links provided (or do a Google search on the group name) and click on 'Join Group' (note: for Yahoo forums, you will be prompted to sign in to your Yahoo email account or to create one).

Talks & outings reminders

Members are emailed a reminder about forthcoming talks being hosted by their local branch. The email is usually circulated a week or so in advance of the meeting and includes, where possible, more information on the speaker and a brief description of the talk. Some branches operate a similar circular to remind local members about forthcoming outings. If you don't already receive these alerts and would like to, please contact Waterston House unless otherwise stated in the branch sections below.

* AYRSHIRE

page on the Club website, and on the Ayrshire Birding website (see below).

Talk reminders: See above.

To subscribe and receive *The Stonechat* directly to your inbox, please email da.scott@tiscali.co.uk

Branch Newsletter: *The Stonechat* (Editor: Tony Scott, da.scott@tiscali.co.uk) comes out twice a year in February and in September. Subscribers are emailed a PDF version of the newsletter and the publication is also available to view on the Ayrshire branch

Website: Ayrshire Birding www.ayrshire-birding.org.uk is sponsored by Ayrshire branch and is a one-stop shop for anything to do with birds and birding in the area -

news, sightings, site guides, latest photos and branch activities.

Forum/News group: Ayrshire Bird News (Yahoo) groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/ayrshirebirding

Ayrshire Birders Abroad: These popular holidays, organised independently by seasoned tour guide and SOC/RSPB member Tony Scott, have taken local members and non-members alike to a wide variety of places both in Europe and further afield. In 2017, Ayrshire Birders Abroad is planning a trip to the north of Ireland (fully booked). Details of future trips will be made available in The Stonechat and on the Ayrshire Birding website. If you would like to be added to the mailing list to receive details of these trips when made available, please contact Tony da.scott@tiscali.co.uk

* BORDERS

Talk & outings reminders: See page 47.

Forum/News group: Borders SOC Bird News Group (Yahoo) groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/bordersbirdnews

Discussion group: Borders Discussion Group meets from September to March on a Monday evening (usually the Monday after the branch meeting) in Melrose. The meetings are usually announced on the Borders Bird News Forum and are open to anyone wishing to attend.



* CAITHNESS

Talk reminders: See page 47.

Website: Caithness Birds www.caithnessbirds.co.uk maintained by branch chair, Julian

Smith, shares the latest branch news, meetings reminders, outings and photographs.



Social media:

 Type "Caithness Birds" in the search bar
 www.twitter.com/caithnessbirds

* CENTRAL SCOTLAND

Talk & outings reminders: See page 47.


Social media:

 Type "Upper Forth Birds" in the search bar
 www.twitter.com/upperforthbirds

* CLYDE

Branch grapevine: To subscribe to Clyde branch's (member-only) daily Grapevine email, contact val.wilson38@btinternet.com As well as sharing notable bird sightings from across the region, Grapevine incorporates images of birds and other wildlife, shares details of forthcoming branch meetings and also alerts members to national and local environmental notices and potential developments that might threaten a site.

Social media:

 Type "Clydebirds" in the search bar.

* DUMFRIES

Talk reminders: See page 47. To receive these reminders, please contact branch Secretary, Pat Abery eastdaylesford@onetel.com

Forum/News group: Dumfries and Galloway Birding (Yahoo) groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/dumfriesandgallowaybirding

* FIFE

Talk reminders: See page 47.

Branch Newsletter: Fife Branch Newsletter (Editor: Paul Taylor, PaulDTaylor43@aol.com) comes out four times a year and features details of branch activities, field trip reports, letters, photographs, sightings and other interesting articles. Subscribers are emailed a PDF version of the newsletter and the publication is also available to view on the Fife branch page on the Club website, alongside back issues. To subscribe and receive Fife Branch Newsletter directly to your inbox, please email PaulDTaylor43@aol.com

Text messaging service: In Fife, local recorder Malcolm Ware (malware74@icloud.com) operates 'Fife Bird News', a free text messaging service with the latest juicy bird sightings.

* HIGHLAND

Talk reminders: See page 47.

Branch grapevine: For the Highland email service, contact Al McNee aj.mcnee@care4free.net

Website: Highland Birds (www.highlandbirds.scot) is a website run by and for members of the Highland branch of SOC as well as any visitors to the region. The site details all the latest bird sightings, as well as giving information on where to go birding. There is a recording page, showing how to submit your bird records, as well as a gallery of previous rarities and information on how to purchase the Highland Bird Report.

* Lothian

Talk reminders: See page 47.

Branch Newsletter: Lothian Bird E-Bulletin (Editor: Richard Leslie, Lothianchair@the-soc.org.uk) is periodically emailed to branch members and includes details of branch talks, outings and activities locally as well as summaries of recent outings and other branch-related news.

Discussion group: Lothian Discussion Group meets September to April, on the first Wednesday evening of the month to plan local survey fieldwork and review results, discuss atlas work and other activities; also to share recent sightings and birdwatching experiences. Meetings are held at 7.30pm in Waterston House. These are open to all SOC members. For more information on the group please email Mark Holling at mark.holling@btinternet.com.

Forum/News group: Lothian Bird News (Yahoo) groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/lothianbirdnews

Social media:

 www.twitter.com/birdinglothian

* MORAY

Talk reminders: See page 47. To receive these reminders, please email branch Secretary, Martin Cook, martin.cook99@btinternet.com

Website: Birds in Moray and Nairn www.birdsinmorayandnairn.org is a comprehensive website operated by Martin. The site includes details of latest sightings, forthcoming survey work (and how to get involved), branch meetings and outings, as well as giving users the option to view or

print the latest and previous editions of the Moray Bird Report – for free!

Beginners Birdwatching Courses: Organised by Martin, these courses run periodically with the next due to take place in the first half of 2017. Please contact Martin (as above) for more info.

* NORTH-EAST SCOTLAND

Talk reminders: See page 47.

Branch Newsletter: North-East Scotland Branch Newsletter (Editor: John Wills, grampian.secretary@the-soc.org.uk) is published once or twice annually and emailed to branch members. The publication is also available to view on the North-East Scotland branch page on the Club's website. A paper copy is posted to members without email/online access.

The newsletter shares details of notable bird sightings and records in the region, research and survey development and updates, branch news and activities and often includes contributions from the Grampian Ringing Group.

Social media:

 Type "ABZ Rare Birds" in the search bar.

* ORKNEY

Talk reminders: See page 47.

Forum/News group: Orkneybirding 'Orkbird' (Yahoo) groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Orkbird

Social media:

 Type "Orkney Birding" in the search bar.

* STEWARTRY

Talk & outings reminders: See page 47.

Forum/News group: Dumfries and Galloway Birding (Yahoo) groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/dumfriesandgallowaybirding

* TAYSIDE

Talk reminders: See page 47.

Forum/News group: Angus Birding News Forum www.angusbirding.com. This internet forum is run by Angus & Dundee Bird Club, but it is open to all, with SOC members encouraged to use the site. It is necessary to register prior to use, but this simply requires an email to the webmaster, Mark Caunt (details on the website).

* WEST GALLOWAY

Talk & outings reminders: See page 47.

Forum/News group: Dumfries and Galloway Birding (Yahoo) groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/dumfriesandgallowaybirding

Some features on the SOC website you might find useful/of interest

Local branch pages

These are accessed via the homepage www.the-soc.org.uk or the 'About Us' tab. Here, you can find links to the latest indoor meetings and outings programmes, branch contacts, publications, recording area and local recorder details as well as links to useful information.

Migrant arrivals table

Every spring/summer, Angus Murray of *Birdline Scotland* provides Headquarters with an often daily (or even more frequent!) update of the latest migrant birds to touch down on Scottish soil, by recording area. This information is copied to an online table available to view on the Club's website www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/ summer-migrants, where you'll also find details of how to add your sightings.

Now in its 14th year of running, the table is a useful tool in allowing comparisons between years and allows you to find out dates for when the first Swallow or Osprey was reported for example, and in which area. Details of particularly interesting or notable arrivals are often posted as small news pieces on the Club's Facebook and Twitter pages.

Scottish Bird Report online

This great and free facility saves you trawling through handfuls of bird reports by allowing you to quickly and easily search all regional bird reports (generally pre-2010 editions) by recording

area(s) and year(s), for any given species recorded in Scotland! The search generates an easy-to-read result in a matter of seconds.

Useful links

www.the-soc.org.uk/get-involved/links This page contains links to bird alert services, accommodation providers and bird tour operators etc.

Get involved...

- Submit your bird sightings! As well as submitting your bird records on BirdTrack www.birdtrack.net, don't forget to let the relevant local recorder know of any unusual or rare sightings www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/local-recorders-network/. Contact details for all bird recorders can also be found on the inside of the back cover of *Scottish Birds*
- Share your birdwatching images from around Scotland (subject to guidelines) www.the-soc.org.uk/get-involved/upload-your-images/
- Find out more about mentoring young nature enthusiasts www.the-soc.org.uk/mentoring/
- Considering leaving a legacy to the Club? www.the-soc.org.uk/leaving-a-legacy-to-the-soc/
- Borrow books from the SOC Library www.the-soc.org.uk/our-headquarters/the-library/
- Find out what events are coming up at Waterston House www.the-soc.org.uk/category/whats-on-waterston-house/
- Buy a nature lover the gift of membership www.the-soc.org.uk/membership/as-a-gift/
- Donate to the Club www.the-soc.org.uk/donate



BOOK REVIEWS

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

Jack Gordon's Birds of Wigtownshire 1890–1935. Richard Mearns & Chris J. Rollie (eds), 2016. Picto Publishing, Wigtown, ISBN 978-0-9562730-4-8, softback, 205 pages, £15.00. Limited to 300 numbered copies.



Jack Gordon (1876–1938) will not be a familiar name to many ornithologists in Britain. He was proprietor of the Corsemalzie Estate, near Mochrum, Wigtownshire, and an avid egg collector of some standing, an entomologist and also a keen observer of birds. He kept extensive notes of the birds he found on his travels around the county, at a time when many species were far more plentiful. Nightjars, Black Grouse and Red Grouse were common near his home and although he didn't have to travel too far to find Comcrakes, Corn Buntings and Choughs, these last three are now considered extinct as county breeding birds.

Having gathered all the bird records he could find from the county during the 1890s to the early 1930s, he commenced work on an avifauna, but this was never completed. His notebooks and typescript passed through several hands before eventually ending up with Chris Rollie. Now nearly 80 years on, the editors have carefully pieced together these scattered records to produce this splendid book. To bring it more up to date they have asked key local experts to add notes on the current status of species and additional records which have occurred since Gordon's day.

This is a very attractively produced book, the text being greatly enhanced by the use of early postcard images, often the only source now available of photographs of long-destroyed buildings or views. As a deltiologist I greatly approve of their use. Quite apart from the main theme on the Birds of Wigtownshire the authors have written an excellent biography of Jack Gordon, obviously quite a colourful character. The publication of this book fills yet another gap in the wide but not yet complete coverage of Scotland with a county avifauna.

The book can be obtained from SOC Waterston House, mail@the-soc.org.uk or The Bookshop, Wigtown, mail@the-bookshop.com (01988 402499).

David Clugston

The Complete Garden Bird Book. Mark Golley with Stephen Moss, illustrated by David Daley. 2nd edition. 2017. Bloomsbury, London, ISBN 978-1-4729-3764-3, paperback, 176 pages, £10.99.

There are too many books on birds and far too many on gardening. Gardening for wildlife is currently fashionable, if poorly understood, so publishers are looking to exploit that part of the market. This book, backed by the Wildlife Trusts, claims to provide all you need to know to attract birds to your garden. It has 40 nicely laid out pages, identifying 70 species that might turn up in a garden. Some are virtually impossible to see in a Scottish garden and becoming scarcer further south, e.g. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and

Hawfinch. Crested Tit or Twite, which do occur in some Scottish gardens, are not mentioned.

However, the main concern about the book is that only three pages say anything about planting. There are 20 pages with some reasonable information on feeding birds, watching birds in garden, nest sites and hazards as well as useful references to BTO garden bird surveys.

Gardens together cover more land than nature reserves in the UK. They are getting smaller and often built over to provide more housing or car parks. Is it realistic to expect gardeners to set aside parts of their little plots for nettles and brambles? The phrase 'wildlife friendly' misses the point; that no one way of managing a garden, or any other piece of ground, will support all forms of wildlife. What helps small wild flowers may discourage song birds. Some of the best sites for birds in urban areas are not in gardens, but on 'waste ground'. This is a pleasant little book at its price point, but an Incomplete Garden Bird Book.

Stan da Prato

Birds, Myth, Lore & Legend. Rachel Warren Chadd & Marianne Taylor, 2016. Bloomsbury, London, ISBN 978-1-4729-2286-1, hardback, 304 pages, £25.00.

Birds have been a fascination to mankind since the beginning of time, and different cultures around the world have developed their own stories and legends about different species. We have all grown up aware of the wise old owl, that storks bring babies, and that greedy people are gannets, but how did these beliefs or legends arise? It is



the very wide diversity of these that the authors have explored, drawing upon both historical accounts and scientific literature, to tell us how the plumage or the behaviour of the species has led to the many colourful tales or superstitions. They have not been content just to deal with European species, but have examined a wide range from all round the globe, and have investigated the sources of so many tales or beliefs.

Whilst loosely grouped into four chapters covering Birds and Us, Sacred to the Gods, Myths of Many Nations, and For Good and Ill, the book actually covers just over 80 species or families world-wide, with separate articles on each. All are beautifully supported with full colour illustrations and superb photos, and the detailed research demonstrates very clearly the enthusiasm the authors have put into this work. I only have one small criticism, in that the source of all the historical illustrations is clearly set out beside or opposite that illustration, but photographers are only credited in very small print in an Annex at the back of the book: I think they deserve more!

Nevertheless, this is a fascinating book, beautifully presented. It is not I think one which most of us will sit down to read straight through, but rather to dip into very enjoyably during spare moments, and it will stay by our armchair or bedside for a long time.

Mike Betts

Birds in Norfolk: a national and international perspective. Andy Brown & James McCallum, 2016. Langford Press, Peterborough, ISBN 978-1-904078-31-9, hardback, 277 pages, £50.00.

Birds in Norfolk is a big book in every sense of the word. I don't know which I enjoyed more, the many and wonderful bird paintings by James McCallum or the meticulously researched information by Andy Brown.

The book starts with a series of superlatives about Norfolk wildlife such as "visited by 440 species; over 5 million birds in the Wash; hosts all four species of European Harrier; supports rarer species such as cranes, golden oriole, breeding terns and avocets" etc.. The following chapters then justify and expand on the statements with in-depth information and records on each group of birds, often going back to the 18th century, and accompanied by beautiful paintings of the relevant species, usually *en masse* and in their characteristic environment.

The chapters range from wintering and passage water birds, to seabirds, and waders, followed by saltmarsh, reedbeds and heath birds, regular winter visitors, migrants rarities and falls of birds, special protected areas and their birds, birds on land not protected and finally in chapter 12, changes in bird life and habitat over the past 200 years.

The information, which includes comprehensive tables and graphs worthy of any birding 'anorak', is full of interest and the bibliography illustrates the amount of research involved to produce this most fascinating tome. Equally impressive is the abundant artwork, with each exquisite painting accompanied by a description of the circumstances of the painted event, and usually painted on site.

As one who has enjoyed many years of birding in Norfolk, I found this book to be most informative

and quite superb. For those who do not know Norfolk, it could only whet their appetite to go and see the birds for themselves.

Judy Greenwood

Wildlife Adventurer's Guide: A Guide to Exploring Wildlife in Britain. Steve Backshall, 2016. Bloomsbury, London, ISBN 978-1-4729-3055-2, paperback, £14.99.

As my young boys are great fans of Steve Backshall, especially his 'Deadly 60' series on television, I had high hopes that this book would educate and entertain me. Admittedly, the book is aimed at a younger readership (perhaps teenage) it is still filled with interesting snippets of information, and some cracking photographs.



The book takes you through forests, along the coast and up the mountains, touching on some of the practical challenges that you will face and the species, both birds and others that you will encounter along the way. Steve Backshall certainly knows his way around the countryside and I did learn a number of new and interesting facts, such as the existence of the Lightbulb Seasquirt, which according to the book "do look like a collection of lightbulbs bobbing about in the current".

As an entry-level book, this has much to commend itself, but I came away thinking that it was lacking in detail. There were no location maps to go with the species and it would have been helpful to have location details mentioned in the captions that went with the pictures.

All in all a very good gift to give to prompt the sense of adventure in a budding adventurer!

Richard Leslie

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. For lots more exciting facts, figures, numbers and movements log on to www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing/publications/online-ringing-reports.

Wigeon

FP10976	Ad m	18/02/01	Loch Flemington, Highland	
	Shot	30/05/16	Berezovskiy, Khany-Mansi AO, Russia	3,802 km E
FP23434	Ad m	02/02/03	Dalcross, near Ardersier, Highland	
	Shot	30/05/16	Berezovskiy, Khany-Mansi AO, Russia	3,806 km E
FH47642	Juv m	18/12/11	Ythan Estuary, NE Scotland	
	Shot	22/09/16	Berezovskiy, Khany-Mansi AO, Russia	3,487 km E

This area of Russia must be important for our Wigeon, with two old Highland birds from two different sites in the Moray Firth being shot there on the same day in spring and an Ythan bird shot there in autumn.

Black-headed Gull

EY21545	Chick	16/06/13	Moorfoot Hills, Borders	
	Reseen	20/07/13	Hogganfield Loch, Clyde (also 10/08/13)	44 km W
	Reseen	23/05/16	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany	1,111 km ESE
	Reseen	14/07/16	Doonfoot, Ayrshire	1,118 km NW
EY55804	Chick	15/06/14	Corgarff, Donside, NE Scotland	
	Reseen	29/09/15	Inverbervie, NE Scotland	67 km SE
	Reseen	08/12/16	Caen, Calvados, France	914 km SSE
EY55608	Chick	03/06/14	Forvie NNR, Ythan Estuary, NE Scotland	
	Reseen	22/04/15	Klepp, Rogaland, Norway	488 km NE
	Reseen	01/06/15	Ythan Estuary	

Some Scottish chicks recorded abroad including an interesting history of a Borders chick heading west in late summer but resighted during the breeding season in Germany.

Little Ringed Plover

NR61992	Chick	29/05/09	Reston, Borders	
	Reseen	10/04/16	Scaling Dam, Redcar & Cleveland	172 km SSE
Colour rings	Chick	14/06/15	Angus	
	Rtpd	31/05/16	Angus (breeding male)	
	Reseen	26/08/16	Torreveija, Alicante, Spain	2,100 km S

Little is known about the migration of our small breeding population of Little Ringed Plovers. The colour-ringed male was resighted on the Mediterranean coast of Spain on autumn passage.

Meadow Pipit

D478356	Juv	14/08/16	Nether Fella, Borders	
	Rtpd	19/09/16	Fields Farm, Near Fawley, Hampshire	562 km SSE

One of the thousands of Meadow Pipits we see and hear overhead heading southwards in the autumn having a rest on the south coast. Recoveries in the BTO reports show many of 'our' birds are heading across the channel to France and Iberia with some even reaching as far south as Morocco for the winter.

Yellow-browed Warbler

BPP882	Juv	09/10/16	St Abb's Head, Borders	
	Rtpd	31/10/16	Nanjizal, Lands End, Cornwall	694 km SSW

Another bumper autumn in 2016 for this ever-increasing passage warbler was summarised in Clive McKay's autumn migration roundup in *Scottish Birds* 36(4). Above is an interesting onwards movement, ringed by Alan Kerr, from one of the many ringed up and down the east coast during October.

Speculation as to the origins of these birds was fuelled by two accompanying Goldcrests caught on the Isle of May that had been ringed in Finland over 1,600 km to the ENE. More definite evidence that some had come from even further east though came from Brownstown Head in Ireland where a Russian-ringed Yellow-browed Warbler with 'MOSKVA' ring VF80099 was caught on 8 October 2016.

Linnet

Z722984	Chick	14/06/16	Scousburgh, Shetland	
	Rtpd	24/10/16	Pilling, Lancashire	674 km S
Y982684	Juv m	27/09/12	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	
	Rtpd	31/11/16	Duthil, near Nethybridge, Highland	242 km S
Z423332	Juv m	22/06/15	North Ronaldsay, Orkney	
	Rtpd	14/12/15	Ardesier, Highland	223 km S

A lot of Linnet ringing by various ringing groups in Scotland, particularly in the Highlands and Northern Isles, has shown that many birds head south from the Highlands and Islands into the Highlands and some further south into North-east Scotland and Lothian. The chick ringed in Shetland seems to have undertaken a longer than usual movement with a slant towards the west as well.

Siskin

D909436	Juv f	15/02/14	Inverness, Highland	
	Rtpd	02/02/16	Verupt, Cuzleu, Ain, France	1,459 km SSE
Z473792	Ad m	02/08/15	Fort Augustus, Highland	
	Dead (cat)	26/02/16	St-Hilaire-St-Mesmin, Loiret, France	1,121 km SSE

Winter 2015/16 was exceptional for Siskins numbers in England (e.g. btoringing.blogspot.co.uk/2015/09/exceptional-siskin-surge.html), starting with large numbers coming into gardens in September ahead of any arrivals from the continent. As a lot of these birds were from Scotland it is not surprising that groups and ringers around the country enjoyed a large number of 'their' ringed birds being retrapped in almost every county of England during the winter before then reciprocating in spring 2016 onwards by retrapping birds which had been ringed in English gardens during the winter. A map of all these ringing and retrapping locations would be one mass of dots showing the widespread dispersal of our breeding birds during the autumn and winter around the UK. The above two birds ringed in Highland show that a few ventured even further afield.

Lesser Redpoll

D531761	Juv	06/08/16	Dalchork, near Lairg, Highland	
	Rtpd	31/10/16	Sint Maartensvlotbrug, N. Holland, Netherlands	818 km SSE

The new 'Siskin', a more recent addition to the garden Niger feeders, shows some similar movement patterns to Siskin but there is still much to be learned about this species numbers, movements and links to food supplies. The Highland bird (above) had made a long and early southward movement.

Like the Siskin, we can get large numbers arriving from Scandinavia but unlike the Siskin there is the distinct possibility of identifying these Scandinavian birds in the hand by plumage, i.e. Mealy (Common) and Arctic Redpolls, with the further challenging conundrum of subspecies of these if you are that way inclined. A Norwegian-ringed bird was retrapped in Clyde during the breeding season and, more recently, Ben Herschell was lucky enough to retrap a Swedish-ringed bird in Montrose (Angus & Dundee) on 11 October 2016, the first ever in his garden and only the second ever to be caught in the UK!

Do migrant Waxwings stick together in the same flocks?

In the first few weeks of January 2017, five different colour-ringed Waxwings ringed in North-east Scotland were resighted in Ireland.

The first, 'LOW' (lime over orange over white), was in Sligo over on the west coast on 7 January, spotted and photographed by Brian and Karen Mullins and Paul Lynch. This bird had been ringed as an adult male (ring no. 95) in Ballater, Deeside, North-east Scotland on 18 December 2016. There then followed a flurry of excitement and sightings in Lucan, Dublin starting with 'BB' (blue over blue) photographed by Rachel Haynes and Shay Connolly on 12 January and still there on the 16th when photographed by Sean Geraty. This bird had also been ringed in Ballater, as a young male (ring no. 11) on 4 December 2016. Over the same period, two others were photographed in a flock of up to 160 birds in Lucan. 'RNO' (red/niger[black]/orange) was photographed on the 12th by Liam Kane and Brian Burke, on the 14th by John Fields and on the 17th by Michael Keating. This bird was ringed as a young female in Aberdeen city centre on 16 December. On the 16th, Thomas Kavanagh snapped a third bird, 'YRO' (yellow/red/orange), drinking at almost the same spot where 'RNO' had been photographed on the 12th. This bird had been ringed as a young male in Kincorth, Aberdeen on 2 December 2016.

Meanwhile in Portadown, Northern Ireland James O'Neill photographed 'LGL' (lime/green/lime) on 14–15 January 2017. This was the third Ballater-ringed bird out of the five in Ireland, ringed as an adult male on 11 December 2016.

The scattering of colour-ringed birds from Ballater observed in Ireland suggest that Waxwings do not stick together in the same flocks.

Figure 1 shows (in blue) birds ringed in Ballater on the same day as Dublin bird 'BB' (ring no. 11) and with resighting information in January 2017. Three birds had moved 58 km east into Aberdeen after the berries ran out in Ballater, whilst 'BB' (ring no. 11), 'GB' (no. 12) and 'RB' (no. 15) moved south to different areas! 'GB' then moved 450 km west into central England.

Birds in red (Figure 1) were ringed in Ballater on the same day as 'LOW', the Sligo bird. Two birds subsequently moved into Aberdeen while others were reported from Leeds and Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire. Two were together in a flock of 50 at Ballmulo in Fife and two were in the same flock at Burntwood, Staffordshire, all over a month after ringing.

Birds in green (Figure 1) were ringed in Perth on 15 December 2016.

So, during the early stages of an invasion at least, the answer appears to be mostly no, but sometimes yes!

The Waxwings have had to depart en masse from their normal wintering grounds in Scandinavia and Russia due to a shortage of Rowan berries. They have an inbuilt impulse to head southwest which brings them to the British Isles in search of food. During this rather unpredictable period in their lives, it is inevitable in such a gregarious species with a very specific food requirement (Rowan berries) that flocks will cohere and break up with much mixing and dispersion but over periods of time individuals will cross paths and co-exist on their travels. Once here this drive gradually diminishes depending on the number of birds involved and the amount and kinds of berries they can find. In Aberdeen, as Rowan berries become ever scarcer, Waxwings still there around Christmas undergo a feeding transition, moving onto tree cotoneaster and various other berry species. It is after this change that dispersal seems to calm down a little bit and colour-ringing has shown that flocks can become a bit more cohesive, particularly where berries are plentiful.

A huge thank you from the Grampian Ringing Group's 'Waxwing Department' to all observers who have taken the time and trouble to send us their great sightings and photographs. It allows us to follow the movements and fortunes of these wonderful birds as they make their way around the country. It wouldn't work without your contributions.

Raymond Duncan

Email: Raymond@waxwing.fsnet.co.uk

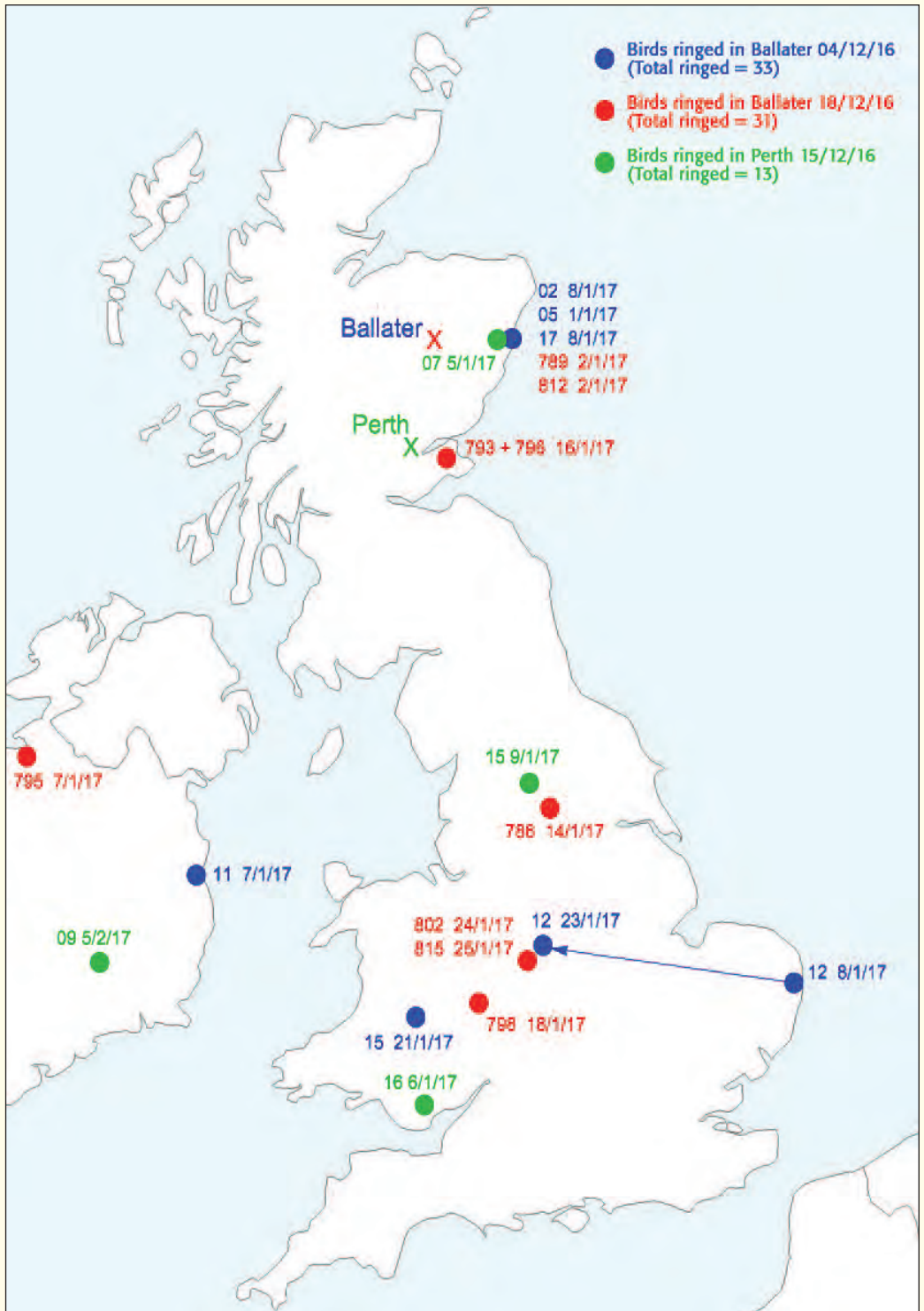


Figure 1. Dispersal of colour-ringed Waxwings during January–February 2017. Ring numbers and resighting dates are shown.



Plate 35. Siberian Chiffchaff ('bird two'), Isle of May, October 2015. © David Steel

'Siberian Chiffchaffs' on the Isle of May in autumn 2015 including the first DNA-confirmed record

A.W. LAUDER, K.D. SHAW & D. STEEL

This paper summarises the occurrence of a DNA-confirmed record of this scarce subspecies on the Isle of May which would constitute the first such proven record for the island. It also describes a second individual which, in light of assessment criteria proposed here, would also constitute a proven record. Earlier records are discussed.

Taxonomy and status of Chiffchaff subspecies occurring in Britain

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* includes six forms, with three occurring regularly in Britain: the nominate *P. c. collybita* from Western Europe as a breeder, passage migrant and scarce winter visitor, *P. c. abietinus* a passage migrant from Scandinavia and eastern Europe and *P. c. tristis* a rare or scarce passage migrant and rare winter visitor from Siberia (Clement & Helbig 1998).

Status and identification of 'Siberian Chiffchaff' in Britain

The status and identification of *P. c. tristis* or 'Siberian Chiffchaff' has received significant attention in recent years, particularly with the advent of the use of DNA sequencing in taxonomy and modern field identification methods. Criteria have become established whereby reliable identification in the field is possible in many cases, though with a number of individuals remaining more challenging with the picture complicated by issues of hybridisation, intergrade or cline with or from the subspecies *P. c. abietinus*. The subspecific status of the so-called 'intergrade' form known as '*fulvescens*' (Dean & Svensson 2005) has thus been debated for some time and only relatively recently have birds with these characteristics

been shown to hold DNA compatible with identification as *P. c. tristis* (van den Berg *et al.* 2009).

The identification features important for record assessment have been discussed by a number of authors, but the primary paper to define these was Dean & Svensson (2005), with additional material since including issues such as the importance of call in field identification (e. g. van den Berg *et al.* 2009). A subsequent review of records by Dean *et al.* (2010) helped establish occurrence patterns and place it as a 'locally assessed subspecies'. A number of local committees have published assessment criteria for the form, for example Pulsford (2008) and Bradshaw (2009). These criteria include reference to colouration of crown, mantle, underparts and bare parts and draw particular emphasis on the importance of call and where seasonally relevant, to moult and song. The distinctive and diagnostic call is required in most cases by most committees, but with some records being acceptable where only a strong suite of visual features is recorded.

'Siberian Chiffchaff' status on the Isle of May

There have been a number of records over the years of *tristis*-type Chiffchaffs, but none have been formally written up or submitted for consideration by relevant identification committees, though in some cases they have been described within *The Isle of May Bird Observatory Special Notes* (Volume 5). The status of the subspecies as a regular autumn passage migrant on the east coast of Scotland, often occurring alongside increasingly regular Yellow-browed Warblers, suggest that it should be encountered on a near-annual basis on the Isle given reasonable coverage in the late September to November period.

The 2015 'Siberian Chiffchaff' records

Bird one: On 28 September 2015, the day started calm and sunny with light and variable winds, as it had been for the previous three days. The party at the observatory did their normal rounds and with a brief spell of light to moderate south-easterly winds they picked up a handful of new migrants, including a few Redwings, a new Lesser Whitethroat and a few Chiffchaffs.

In the late afternoon, AWL and KDS saw a pale *Phylloscopus* warbler by the Bain Trap. It was trapped, and on extraction from the catching box AWL was able to confirm their suspicions that it was potentially a 'Siberian Chiffchaff'. The bird had remained silent during the initial sighting and during processing, so AWL retained a few belly/flank feathers that had been shed by the bird during handling, in case of the need to seek DNA analysis should the bird continue not to call during its stay. The bird stayed until 30 September, but was not heard to call during its entire stay.

The feathers were sent to Professor Martin Collinson at the University of Aberdeen who was able to sequence a section of the bird's mitochondrial DNA and compare this to the equivalent section of DNA from birds from known parts of the species' range. Martin confirmed in correspondence that the bird was "1 bp [base pair] different from a bird from core Yenesei range and similar to other Sibe Chiffies sequenced in Britain, divergent from *abietinus* and other subspp." This confirmed its identity as a 'Siberian Chiffchaff'.

A full description, included the following main points, has been submitted to the IoMRC:

- The bird was small. Smaller than an average nominate Chiffchaff by perhaps some 10% and this showed in the field and was confirmed in the hand with a shorter wing length than average and a weight somewhat lower (about 1 g lower) than other Chiffchaffs caught that week despite a fat and pectoral muscle score of '2'.
- Creamy off-white throat, undertail coverts, centre breast and belly with light warm buff wash to flanks and upper breast sides.
- The crown, ear coverts and nape were grey-brown, distinctly colder in tone than the rest of the bird. The cheeks and supercilium were a warm deep buff fading towards the upper breast sides. The eye stripe was strikingly dark grey-brown extending both in front and well behind the eye. A prominent pale lower eye ring was obvious both in the field and hand.
- The mantle was grey-brown, warmer than the head and slightly contrasting with it. There was a slight olive wash to the mantle feathers, greenish or bright olive tones were



Plate 36. Siberian Chiffchaff ('bird one'), Isle of May, September 2015. © Alan Lauder



Plate 37. Siberian Chiffchaff ('bird two'), Isle of May, October 2015. © David Steel

present on the paler edges to the primaries, secondaries, tertials and tail and these had colder grey feather centres. The tail showed slightly abraded, bleached and pointed tail feather tips. The greater coverts showed a moult limit with six unmoulted outer greater coverts proving the bird's age as a first-year (EURING age code 3). The greater coverts had pale tips and edges and formed a fairly obvious wing bar easily seen in the field.

- The thin legs were strikingly dark, near black; the bill was dark brown with a paler wash on the cutting edges; the eye was dark.

Summary ringing information:

Ring number: HBJ162. Emarginated primaries: 3, 4, 5, 6. Age: EURING 3 (first-calendar-year). Wing point: 3(4). Sex: Probably female. Tail (mm): 44. Wing in mm (maximum chord): 55.5. Bill (to skull) (mm): 12.6. Weight (g): 6.6. Time: 17:00. Fat Score (IPMR): 2. Ringer: AWL.

Bird two: On 4 October 2015, easterly winds were dominating, bringing in a fresh new arrival of birds including an impressive ten Yellow-browed Warblers and a Lapland Bunting. Having entered the Top Trap garden adjacent to the main lighthouse on the island, DS was working his way through a small selection of warblers which were feeding in the shelter of the walled garden when he noticed a pale *Phylloscopus* warbler flycatching in a nearby bush.

Having had the fresh memories of observing the caught and ringed 'Siberian Chiffchaff' just five days earlier, it was striking how similar this bird was in colouration, size and structure. Over the next hour, observations of the bird were made including photographs and DS was confident that this bird was another good candidate for a 'Siberian Chiffchaff'.

The main features of this individual:

- Overall general appearance was of a cold grey looking bird with dark bill, legs and eye combined with a lack of any green colouration and this contrasted with buff underparts.
- Compared with the ringed individual, this bird appeared even paler (especially when seen with the naked eye) with more grey-brown colouration and a lack of any greenish tones

- The 'cold' appearance was exaggerated by a lack of any olive in the crown or mantle, with general grey-brown upperparts compared to the off-white and buff flanks.
- The supercilium and ear coverts were warm buff with a dark eye stripe which ran in front and behind the eye.
- The mantle was grey-brown, similar in colour to the head and crown.
- The greater coverts displayed pale tips to the edge which formed an obvious wing bar in the field (which can be seen in photographs).
- The breast and belly were subtly off-white with warmer buff flanks and at the bend in the wing.
- Bill and legs appeared very dark, almost black in colour which was complimented by a dark eye. The legs were thin in appearance.
- The bird was not heard to call during its stay

A full description was submitted to the IoMRC although the bird was not caught during its stay and therefore no DNA samples could be gathered. The bird was only seen on this day and was gone the following morning

Discussion and conclusions

With confirmed DNA evidence, bird one constitutes the first proven record of *P. c. tristis* on the Isle of May. Had DNA sequencing not been available, the application of assessment criteria from other committees e. g. Bradshaw (2009) to the field and in-hand description and photographs of this bird would also appear to deem the record acceptable.

An examination of records of putative 'Siberian Chiffchaffs' contained within *The Isle of May Bird Observatory Special Notes* (Volume 5) highlighted five records which appear to contain information on field or in-hand characters which could be reviewed against modern assessment criteria e. g. as defined in this paper. Two of these records, on 13 October 1980 and 11 October 1987, appear most likely to be acceptable giving a good description of field characters, including call, and in one case an in-hand description. A review by the Isle of May Records Committee is recommended.

With greater knowledge of the species field characteristics and with its status as a subspecies

to be assessed at local level, it is suggested that where local committees have not yet adopted assessment criteria they might consider adopting the criteria below or developing criteria which are consistent with these.

Proposed assessment criteria:

1. Mantle colour - olive absent in the crown/nape and only minimal olive wash or light streaking in the mantle
2. Upperparts general colouration - presence of a predominantly grey-brown or pale brown hue
3. Absence of yellow away from the underwing
4. Presence of warm buff in the supercilium and ear coverts
5. Presence of buff at the breast sides/flanks
6. Very black-looking bill and legs
7. Call, if heard - a thin, piping monosyllabic Bullfinch-like or Dunnock-like call (or otherwise suitably described to be consistent with the race)
8. If heard singing - a song markedly different from nominate Chiffchaffs

Contextual considerations:

- Records with accompanying good quality photographs may not require support of the call where an individual holds a classic set of visual identification features.
- The range of variation in perception of the subtle plumage tones present on the species can render some records difficult to assess in description-only situations and such cases should be supported by a good description of the call.
- As there are no diagnostic in-hand features, descriptions of trapped birds should also include photographs or be backed up by in-field observations of the bird including descriptions or recordings of its call.
- Applying these to bird two, as a field record, it ticks all the relevant boxes with a set of classic field characters illustrated by a good quality photograph but in the absence of a description or recording of the call.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Professor Martin Collinson for his expert provision of DNA analysis. Thanks to the other observers of the 2015 birds who contributed to discussion: Julian Osborne, Bex Outram, Chris Rollie and Ian Wilson. Thanks to Stuart Rivers for providing scans of extracts from the *IoMBO Special Notes*.

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Alan W. Lauder

Email: alanlauder@hotmail.co.uk

Ken D. Shaw

Email: kenshaw495@gmail.com

David Steel

Email: david.steel@snh.gov.uk

Swainson's Thrushes in Scotland during the autumn of 2016

J. BOWLER, A. STEVENSON & P. ALEY

Tiree, 22–23 September 2016 - the first record for Argyll

Like many birders, particularly those who live on islands, I have been busy planting up my garden at Balephuill on the Isle of Tiree with trees and bushes to attract in migrants on this otherwise essentially treeless island. Since moving from nearby Heylipol in March 2007, our new garden has developed from being an open grassy plot to a decent patch of maturing scrub with banks of willows around the fringes, Alders up the stream and a smattering of other shrubs and trees including a few trusty Sycamores. This change quickly had the desired effect, with the garden, together with another maturing garden next door, proving a magnet for migrants, as well as for an increasing assemblage of breeding and wintering birds.

Species, formerly regarded as rare vagrants on Tiree such as Pied Flycatcher, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Redstart, Yellow-browed Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Barred Warbler, Reed Warbler and Common Rosefinch now occur more or less annually in the garden, together with increased numbers of more common migrants such as Woodpigeon, Goldcrest, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Chiffchaff and Brambling. The garden has pulled in a few rarities since 2007, notably Scotland's first Northern Parula in September 2010, as well as Argyll's first Brown Shrike in October 2011, Argyll's first Eastern Subalpine Warbler in May 2012, Argyll's second Blyth's Reed Warbler in September 2011, two Rustic Buntings in May-June 2014, two Marsh Warblers, two Golden Orioles and Tiree's only Firecrest to date in October 2010. Common Redpolls have bred annually in recent years, whilst the garden has seen Tiree's first ever successful nests of both Goldfinch and Chiffchaff in recorded history. The garden list currently stands at a respectable 165 species!

The morning of 22 September 2016 was clear and sunny with a light southerly breeze and I awoke early to check for new migrants by scanning the trees from our living room windows. There was lots of activity with five Goldcrests new in, plus a male Blackcap, a Sedge Warbler and at least four Robins chasing each other about. I was hoping for an early Yellow-browed Warbler given the numbers that had been arriving over the previous days in Shetland and was checking all the crests closely. At 08:30 a movement at the base of a large willow caught my eye and I focussed my bins on a small thrush-like bird that was facing away from me, having just hopped up onto a low branch. From behind, the rather uniform brown tones above and pale spotting on the greater coverts initially made me think I was looking at yet another first-winter Robin. However, it then turned around to face me and I realised that I was looking at something very different indeed! Instead of the expected uniform orange face and breast of a Robin, I found myself looking at a very small compact thrush with striking broad buff eye-rings and a warm buff wash to the face and breast including a buff line on the lores. There were thin dark lateral throat stripes leading to neat dark spotting restricted to the upper breast, whilst the belly was white and there was a grey wash down the flanks. I knew immediately that I was watching an American *Catharus* thrush, a skulking group of birds that I had long dreamt about finding on Tiree. Fortunately, I have seen all four species on trips to the Americas and the bold buff spectacles combined with the neatly spotted buffy washed chest pronounced this to be a Swainson's Thrush!

Finding rare birds can induce different reactions in me. For some reason I remained perfectly calm when I found the Northern Parula, however, on this occasion I began to shake as the enormity of what I was seeing struck home.

The bird jumped off the branch on rather long pale pink legs and hopped across an open patch of leaf litter under the willows. At this point, the thrill of finding a real Scottish rarity quickly shifted to the need to photograph the bird, as lone rarity hunters are compelled to do. My camera lay 20 feet away on the kitchen table. Should I move to pick it up and risk spooking the bird (only 20 feet away in the opposite direction) or should I continue to watch it? The desire for the record shot won out and after a little more study and the identification safely in the bag, I crept to the table and returned with the camera. The bird was still showing as I slowly pulled it out of its case and I turned it on. However, just as I had zoomed in on the thrush, it hopped behind a low leafy branch and disappeared from sight. Not a problem I thought, the bird had been showing well and would surely return to the same open patch of ground, so I waited. At one point, what I assumed was the Swainson's Thrush re-appeared for a second, but was immediately flushed away by a Robin. I continued to wait. After 30 long minutes it had not returned, so what should I do?

I decided to head out into the garden, as I needed to feed the other birds. I took my binoculars and camera with me, but I failed to connect with the thrush and I reluctantly headed up into my office to work, where I phoned in the news to Angus Murray and put out an e-mail to the Hebridean birding network. Remarkably, just two hours later, I received a return e-mail from Andrew Stevenson saying he was watching another Swainson's Thrush in his garden at Bornish on South Uist! What are the odds that two individuals of this skulking vagrant would turn up on the same morning in the gardens of two Hebridean birders? How many more Swainson's Thrushes turned up unseen that day on the Scottish west coast I wonder?

Andrew's bird was clearly showing much better than mine, as his photos attest. Repeated checks of the garden corner where my thrush had first shown drew a blank, although it showed very briefly at the base of a dense hedge bordering our neighbour's garden, whilst I was scanning from our upstairs bathroom window. Determined to see the bird properly again and to photograph it, I headed out into the

garden in my lunch break. Moving slowly around the garden, I finally glimpsed the thrush flying up out of our vegetable plot and then again as it flew from the boundary hedge line onto a stone wall under some willows in our front garden. In doing so, it had revealed its striking black-and-white striped underwing pattern, whilst its pale buffy eye-ring glowed in the dark shade as it sat on the wall with what appeared to be a small slug in its bill. I picked up my camera and began to focus, but just as I did so, it flipped over the wall and into our neighbour's garden. I followed it very quietly and whilst searching for it on the ground under our neighbour's bushes, suddenly noticed that it was actually sitting in the open on top of a pile of logs watching me! I binned it briefly and then began focussing my camera on it once more but it immediately flipped onto a stone wall, down which it quickly hopped and disappeared into cover again. I could not relocate the bird after that, so returned to work and did not see the bird again for the rest of the day.

The following morning, Jim Dickson (Argyll Bird Recorder) and a couple of others arrived, but obtained flight views only as the bird flicked three times between the two gardens in blustery conditions. It singularly failed to show again on the ground. There was rain all afternoon and it had clearly gone to ground under the dense mass of brambles and *Olearia* hedging between the two gardens and remained unseen, save for a very brief final showing there to me at 18:30 from the bathroom window again. Despite a wet and windy night, the bird appeared to head off overnight on 23 September and there was no sign of it the next day, despite frequent searches by myself and Jim.

It was a heart-stopping privilege to find and watch this skulking Nearctic thrush but I am beginning to wonder if we have now gone a little too far with the amount and density of cover in our garden!

*John Bowler, Pairc na Coille, Balephuill,
Isle of Tiree, Argyll, PA77 6UE.
Email: john.bowler@rspb.org.uk*



Plate 38. Swainson's Thrush, Bornish, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, September 2016. © Andrew Stevenson

Bornish, South Uist, 22–25 September 2016 - the third record for Outer Hebrides

I'm lucky that I work from home and have an office window that looks out on to the garden. It has proved a bit of a distraction at times with various interesting resident and migrant birds visiting.

On the morning of 22 September 2016, I was sitting in the office taking part in a work meeting by teleconference as I often do, but this one was more important than most and was scheduled to last till 14:00. Shortly after 11:00 I had noticed a bird being chased by my Song Thrushes (which were being territorial over the berry bushes) in the shrubby trees and berry bushes and it appeared to be a small thrush. A few minutes later I caught, out of the corner of my eye, a bird flying from the bushes towards my office window. It landed momentarily on the grass before perching up on the whale skeleton just outside only a few feet away. It was facing away from me and it was clearly a small, rather plain olive-brown thrush.

At this point I suspected that it was a *Catharus* thrush, but which one? It cocked its head to one side and I could see the rear of what appeared a buffy eye-ring. The lack of a richer red tail and the buffy eye-ring immediately set me thinking that it was a Swainson's Thrush. I now had a problem as I couldn't leave the teleconference. Thankfully the phone has a mute button so you can hear the conversation but they can't hear you. I hastily typed some emails to a west coast

birding email group which includes the bird news services to let them know. This caused some initial confusion as I'd replied to an email John Bowler had sent earlier that morning about him having a Swainson's Thrush in his garden that morning! A quick clarification, that I was at home in Bornish, resolved matters.

Being so close to the window, my movement to leave the office to get my camera was likely to spook the bird. I managed to sneak out and grab my camera from the living room, however, as I returned it flew back across the garden and into the bushes. I returned to the teleconference only for me to pick up movement in the Buddleia bushes and the thrush to sit out and sun itself. It was now an obvious Swainson's Thrush with its buffy lores and eye-ring being obvious along with a strongly spotted upper breast with a buff wash, the spots fading into slightly greyish flanks. The mute button saw useful employment again as it hid the noise of camera clicks as I grabbed a couple of pics whilst still in the teleconference. Looking back, it was more than a touch surreal at the time.

With news getting out, several local birders arrived in the afternoon and managed to get views as the weather started to deteriorate. I was due to leave the island the next day to go to the SOC Conference and mainland work meetings the following week. The weather was good again early morning and the bird appeared in the Elder bushes again where I heard it call, a liquid 'quip'.



Plate 39. Swainson's Thrush, Bornish, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, September 2016. © *John McInnes*

However, it was again chased off by the Song Thrushes and disappeared for a while, although it reappeared around 08:30, just before some folk, who'd failed to see it yesterday, returned. It remained to at least 25 September.

My garden does attract its fair share of interesting migrants and Swainson's Thrush now tops both best bird on the garden list and best bird seen whilst on the phone. It does have competition for the latter from Blyth's Reed and Greenish Warblers! Over the years, I've had species like Red-breasted Flycatcher, Barred Warbler and Yellow-browed Warblers, although a Gyrfalcon that flew low through the garden one November was a particular highlight.

Andrew Stevenson, Bornish, South Uist
Email: asbornish@hebrides.net

Aith, Fetlar, Shetland, 3–10 October 2016

The morning of 3 October 2016 found Roy McCarthy, Paul Kemp and myself birding on Fetlar. For me this was part of a now regular two-week autumn trip to Shetland; but this was the first time we had ventured to Fetlar from our

base on Unst. The conditions were pretty favourable for Shetland with brisk south-easterly winds, part of a sustained spell of easterlies blowing off Asia. Already this weather had treated us to the likes of Paddyfield, Arctic, Greenish and Icterine Warblers, as well as a Brown Shrike. However, our self-found birds for the trip were restricted to more regular, albeit scarce, migrants like Red-breasted Flycatchers, Little Buntings and Bluethroats.

As we began to work the key birding sites on Fetlar we soon discovered that (even by Shetland's standards) the island has few sheltered spots; and in a cold, strengthening south-easterly it began to feel like hard work! By lunchtime we had reached the far (east) side of the island, with only a couple of Yellow-broweds and a Garden Warbler, two Merlins, two Slavonian Grebes and three Scaup to show for our efforts. Having checked all our intended spots, and with our return ferry not due until late afternoon, we decided to re-check each site as we drove slowly back westwards. The first place we returned to was Aith, where a collection of disused and overgrown farm buildings provides some cover for migrants.



Plate 40. Swainson's Thrush, Fetlar, Shetland, October 2016. © *John Nadin*

Before we had even pulled up the car, I glimpsed a passerine which flew across the road in front of the car. Paul and I briefly exchanged (differing) views over its possible identity, but I felt it looked 'interesting' and quickly stopped the car and got out to search for it.

Straight away, I saw a bird crouched under a trailer. I lifted my binoculars and focused on a small thrush with a prominent pale eye ring and buff-brown tones - "it's a Swainson's Thrush", I exclaimed. Unfortunately, within a few seconds, it flew, though in doing so revealed the unmistakable 'black & white' North American thrush underwing pattern.

During the next hour or so, the three of us searched relentlessly in the difficult terrain between the old buildings, trying to relocate the bird. Our efforts produced some four or five sightings between us - mainly brief views of a very mobile bird; at one point, we rediscovered it sheltering from the bitter wind in an old barn.

Despite not having prolonged views, there was no doubt about the bird's identity. The quite warm brown, upperparts, and plain 'face' with prominent paler buffy eye ring, breast marked with 'soft' dark brown spots, fading to more diffuse, paler spots below, and distinctive underwing pattern, combined to confirm the identification before we had to leave for our ferry. We also noted some slight damage to a primary on one wing.

Having put the news out via BirdGuides, a number of birders got to see the Swainson's Thrush during its eight-day stay, and soon reports suggested it had settled into the area and was showing much better.

The bird's discovery marked the start of a purple patch for Fetlar. Over the next few days, the island hosted White's Thrush, Red-flanked Bluetail, Great Snipe and Pallas's Warbler. Ironically amongst such a phenomenal influx of birds from the east, our best find was a North American species; where it had immediately travelled from must be open to speculation.

Following hot on the heels of my and Steve Young's 2015 Shetland find of Thick-billed Warbler, I can't wait to see what this year's autumn trip to these fantastic islands, brings.

Pete Aley, Plymouth, Devon
Email: peteraley@msn.com



Plate 41. Swainson's Thrush, Fetlar, Shetland, October 2016. © *Larry Dalziel*

Status of Swainson's Thrush in Scotland

This Nearctic species breeds mostly in taiga habitat from Alaska and California eastwards to the Appalachian Mountains and south to Virginia. The entire population is migratory, with central and eastern populations wintering in small numbers in Honduras and Panama and mostly from Colombia and Venezuela south through western and central South America to northern Argentina.

Up to the end of 2011, there were 29 Swainson's Thrush records in Britain, with 12 of those in Scotland (Scottish Birds 35[2]: 164–167). There have been seven further accepted records in Britain to the end of 2015, all but one of them in Scotland:

- 2012:** 23 September, one at Da Loch, Foula, Shetland
- 2012:** 2–3 October, first-winter at Northbay House, Morghan, Barra, Outer Hebrides, with presumed same at Creachan, Barra on 4th
- 2014:** 28 September, first-winter at Norwick, Unst, Shetland
- 2015:** 2–10 June, first-summer at Skokholm, Pembrokeshire
- 2015:** 15–16 June, first-summer at Houbie, Fetlar, Shetland
- 2015:** 28 September, first-winter at Lady, Sanday, Orkney
- 2015:** 4 October, first-winter at Baltasound, Unst, Shetland

It is interesting that six of the seven British records since 2011 are from Scotland, and there appears to have been a definite shift in the pattern of occurrence in recent years. Up to 1999, just four of the 18 British records were in Scotland, but from 2000 to the end of 2015 14 of the 18 records have been in Scotland, and all three records in 2016 were also in Scotland.

A bird on Fair Isle on 15 September 2010 is the earliest date for an individual found in Britain, with one at Dalsetter, Mainland Shetland on 21–23 September 2011 the second earliest, and the Foula bird in 2012 the third earliest. This fits with the idea that early timing of movements of Swainson's Thrushes along the northern parts of the eastern seaboard of North America and

a corresponding early timing and more northerly track of transatlantic weather systems are the main factors involved with the delivery of these birds to Scotland in recent years. Perhaps this has always been the case.

There has been a notable increase in observer coverage on the Northern and Western Isles in autumn in recent years which could explain the rise in Scottish records. Similarly, the decrease in records in autumn from south-west England, and the Isles of Scilly in particular, may reflect the corresponding reduction in observers visiting these areas compared to the 1980s and 1990s. There is also the distinct possibility that there has been a real northward shift in occurrence; a consequence of more transatlantic weather systems occurring in more northerly latitudes than in previous autumns 20–40 years ago. The classic fast-tracking, south-westerly weather fronts that delivered Nearctic passerines to Scilly and south-west Britain and Ireland in the past are no longer the weather conditions many of us pray for in autumn.

The Tiree, South Uist and Fetlar birds found in 2016 all fit within the previous window of records from 15 September to 27 October (one trapped at Sandwich Bay Kent in 1976), with the Tiree and South Uist birds continuing the trend of recent records towards the beginning of the window. Birds have been seen after 27 October, with an individual found at Scatness, Mainland Shetland on 25 October 1980 remaining to 29 October and one on Lundy, Devon in 1987 was present from 15–31 October. At eight days, the Fetlar 2016 bird constitutes the longest staying individual recorded in Scotland, though four birds on the Isles of Scilly (1979, 1984, 2 in 1990), and one on Skokholm in 2015 have remained longer, with the 1987 Lundy bird achieving the longest stay of 17 days.



Plate 42. Brännich's Guillemot, Anstruther, Fife, September 2016. © John Anderson

Brännich's Guillemot, Anstruther, 25–30 September 2016 - the first record for Fife

A.W. LAUDER & K.D. SHAW

Anstruther is an attractive, well-positioned, coastal village in the East Neuk of Fife. Behind the picturesque views and the award-winning fish-and-chip shops there is a toughness and resilience typical of a Scottish fishing village. It has a medium-sized harbour which sadly these days has more yachts than fishing boats. Anstruther is just five miles from Fife Ness, arguably Scotland's most productive birdwatching headland, and is the take-off point for the Isle of May. It has been KDS's home since March 2015. Some of our Isle of May crew have been visiting 'the May' since the mid-sixties, but as a unit we have had a near annual 'late autumn slot' since the mid-nineties.

Our week on the May should have started on 24 September 2016, but high seas meant our departure on the RIB was cancelled until the following day. With some of the crew staying over in Anstruther and the others arriving early the next morning, we had arranged to meet at the harbour half-an-hour before we were due to leave. We gathered by the lifeboat station at the around 08:30 and awaited the arrival of our boatman, Roy. AWL was first to study a lone auk in the outer harbour, a little way off the lifeboat slipway just before 09:00, as he watched it intently KDS too raised his bins. They say that in conversations silences are important and they can be too in the rarity finding process. Both

were thinking the same, either could have spoken the words, but it was KDS who said 'this auk is worth a serious look'. The others, Julian Osborne (JRPO), Jeremy Osborne (JRDO), Mark Osborne (MO), Keith Morton (KMM) and Chris Rollie (CJR) were onto it. Nobody mentioned the word Brünnich's, but we were all on the same wavelength, CJR mentioning his experience in Norway a few months before. Time was running out, 09:05, and Roy, the boatman, had arrived for loading up and departure at 09:30. KDS said to KMM 'right, get as many images as you can' - KMM obliged. MO had his camera in action too. In the process to follow, their shots proved vital.

By 09:15, we had five more minutes on the bird before risking Roy's schedule and his goodwill. Good relations with your boatman are vital to birding on islands! Around 09:20, we had to dash, loading the final gear and setting off at 09:30 and getting final views of the bird from the RIB as we left the harbour, Keith still taking photographs as we passed.

The short ride on the RIB was rough with no time for conversation. However, there was time for all of us to see large numbers of Guillemots and Razorbills on the crossing. On arrival, we quickly got our gear to the Obs and got sorted out. MO checked images of Brünnich's on his camera 'looks pretty good to me'. AWL and KDS met at the Arnott trap 'what do you reckon?'...' yeah, looks good, let's sort it'.

David Steel (Steely) has been the SNH warden for the Isle of May for two short years, but is highly regarded. AWL and KDS went immediately to his office and started the process of pulling up internet images for comparison. We weren't getting very far as most internet images were of adults in full-winter or full-summer plumage, and though structurally helpful we couldn't get a good match up. Steely suggested we Google search 'Thick-billed Murre' instead - a few minutes later we were looking at our bird! Just a single image, of a bird in late summer in Maine, USA, but it was the best we could find (www.maine seabird tours.com/uploads/4/7/8/6/47869091/3521635_orig.jpg)

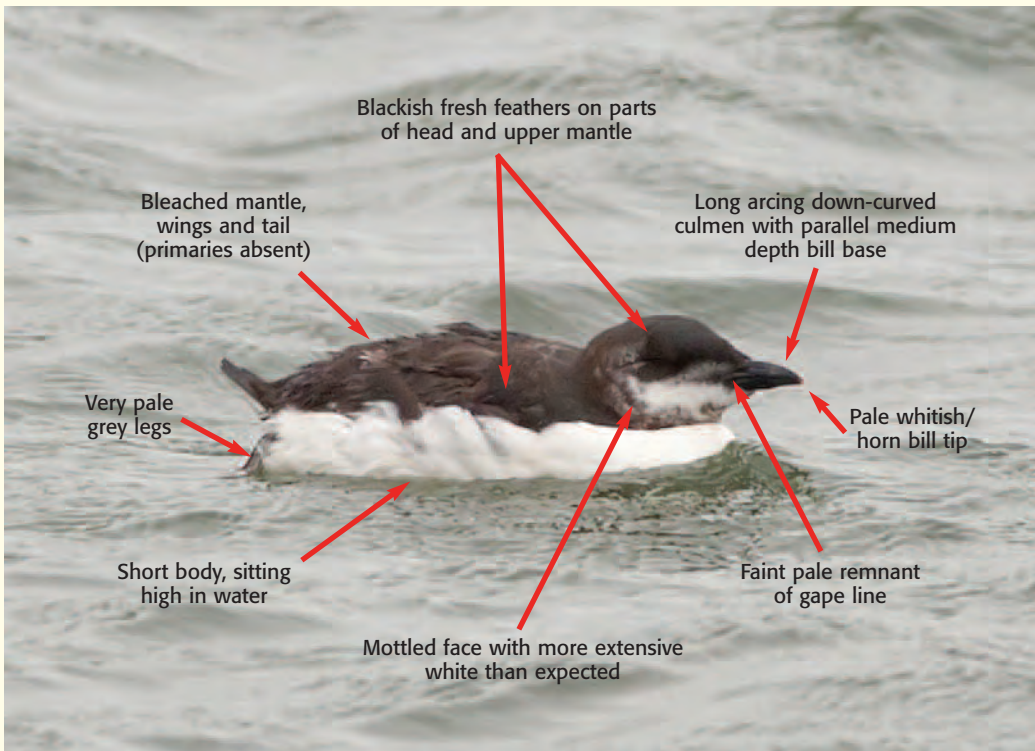


Plate 43. Brünnich's Guillemot, Anstruther, Fife, September 2016. © Keith Morton



Plate 44. Brännich's Guillemot, Anstruther, Fife, September 2016. © *John McInnes*

With our confidence in the identification growing, events started to happen very quickly. KDS called KMM and the images of our bird were put next to the Thick-Billed Murre image. It was a match. The word 'expert' is overused these days, but Killian Mullarney is a true expert and a pal. AWL gave him a call and sent him the images. His response was quick, clean and effective '100% Brännich's'. Before that conversation was finished KDS was on his mobile. David Clugston, Brian Minshull and John Nadin (trusted co-observers) were updated and asked to get down to Anstruther Harbour, the Fife Recorder, Malcolm Ware, was put in the picture and the Fife Grapevine alerted. There was some understandable caginess, but KDS insisted it went out as 'a definite Brännich's'. We are not fans of 'probables' and 'possibles' and anyway, by then we were happy.

There was a positive response from DC at Anstruther: "bird still there, can't see a reason why it's not one". Observers started to arrive, doubts were raised. Rarity finding is usually a process, with a beginning, an end and, somewhere in the middle, a low point that the finders have to survive. In a way, we were in a good position; we had the match, we had Killian's views and being

on the Isle of May, we had a very good excuse for missing the 'bun fight'. KDS spoke to just one person at the harbour, a trusted, experienced friend, "I know the plumage is odd but concentrate on the structure, it's not a Guillemot and it's not a Razorbill...". Truth be told, the plumage was a tricky area. It was flightless, in a plumage not seen in the UK before and we were all learning as we went along.



Plate 45. Brännich's Guillemot, Anstruther, Fife, September 2016. © *David Steel*

Over the next two days the 'identification juggernaut' turned back our way, we started to receive texts of thanks from observers we rated. Our spirits rose, we could survive a week of westerlies after all!

The bird was seen very well by hundreds of observers over the next few days. Its behaviour suggested it was never in the best of health during its stay and, sadly, it was found dead on 30 September. Its corpse is in safe keeping for further analysis and eventual passing to the National Museums of Scotland bird skins collection.

Description and discussion

About the size of a Common Guillemot, perhaps a shade shorter in length. Generally, a very compact auk, looking thick-set, particularly at the front. This impression came from its thicker, shorter neck, rather heavy head and shorter, markedly stouter bill - not as finely pointed as Common Guillemot nor as deep and blunt ended as Razorbill.

The bill and head shape and proportions were critical in identification. Common Guillemot often appears like a miniature diver with a long, fine and rather pointed bill while a Razorbill's bill is distinctive by contrast with a deep, laterally flattened bill and deepest some 2/3–3/4 way towards the tip. Neither of these species show forms in autumn which would compare to our bird's bill, which was roughly largely parallel, of

intermediate depth and with a long arcing down-curve to the culmen from about 1/3 the way to the tip, but still falling well short of that expected in Common Guillemot.

The head structure and proportions were also distinctive; Common Guillemot has a longer neck and a longer, quite angular, head often appearing slightly up tilted. Razorbill has a much thicker neck, a more bulbous head and a deep bill base. Our bird had a distinctly rounded or oval, plump, large-headed appearance with the appearance of being held mainly level or slightly downward emphasised by the long downward-curving culmen.

Generally, the base colour of our bird was black, especially on the upper mantle and head. Not the deep matt black of Razorbill, but black nonetheless. There were extensive bleached and worn feathers on the wings mantle and tail showing paler, brown tones, similar to summer plumage Common Guillemot, and on close study of images, a few brown feathers flecked through the neck. The bird was in heavy wing moult and was flightless. During bouts of diving as it opened its wings it clearly had few, if any, primary feathers showing. This feature and the extensive old, bleached feathers had led us to recognise that the bird was not a juvenile, and both from discussion with KM and from a few internet images we were able to confirm this.



Plate 46. Brunnich's Guillemot, Anstruther, Fife, September 2016. © Arto Maatta

A significant area of our initial debate was the facial pattern; around the face and neck. Our bird looked rather mottled, with a distinct pale area extending up and onto the rear of the eye, certainly not the complete black we would have expected in a winter plumage bird. However, this was not an adult in full winter plumage.

The bill was all black with a small whitish or horn tip - good for Brünnich's. The legs were largely very pale greyish - also a good, if inconclusive, feature.

The big omission among the ID features was the apparent lack of the classic white gape streak, not visible in our field views in poor light, but present, though very faint, in a number of KMMs images. On getting the images up on screen and confirming it was there this final feature helped clinch the ID for us.

One of the images taken by Keith Morton (Plate 43) which we used to confirm the identification is included with this account and annotated with the key ID points.

Perhaps a day or so after we found it, birder Geoff Morgan managed to collect a feather that he saw preened out by the bird and that had floated to shore. It was sent to Professor Martin Collinson for DNA analysis. Later, in correspondence with AWL, Martin confirmed that he managed to get some useable material and to his "surprise it gave 998 bp of very good Brünnich's Guillemot cytb sequence". Martin added that "it was 994/998 bp identical to the two available Brünnich's sequence - one of them (AJ242687) is from Norway (Barents Sea) and the other (U37308) from Alaska".

The bird's geographic origin thus remains clouded, but some additional light may be shed through further follow-up analyses. The species is known to undertake a significant post-breeding swimming migration of up to 40km per day during which it enters a flightless moult period. The bird is unlikely to have arrived that day (some local people suggest it may have been present for some days before) and may even have been present in the North Sea for a long period, perhaps even summering within a colony of Common Guillemots.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of our crew for their input; Julian Osborne, Jeremy Osborne, Mark Osborne, Chris Rollie and Keith Morton. Keith and Mark for their ability to get useful images under severe time pressure. Chris, Mark and Keith for helpful ID comments. Killian Mullarney for being a true expert and a top bloke. David Clugston, John Anderson, Brian Minshall, Malcolm Ware and John Nadin for 'on the ground support', Willie Irvine for collecting and storing the bird's corpse for future analysis and Martin Collinson for, as always, ably providing his professional technical skills in DNA analysis of Geoff Morgan's feather. Lastly, but not least to David Steel for his outstanding support, encouragement and friendship.

Alan W. Lauder

Email: alanlauder@hotmail.co.uk

Ken D. Shaw

Email: kenshaw495@gmail.com

Status of Brünnich's Guillemot in Scotland

This species is a very abundant colonial cliff-nesting auk with a circumpolar breeding range in high Arctic regions of the north Atlantic and north Pacific. The Atlantic populations occur in NE Canada, Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland, and northern Norway east to Spitsbergen, Franz Josef Land and Novaya Zemlya. These birds normally winter in Arctic waters within the limit of the continental shelf, and south of Iceland to 57° N and off west Norway to 60° N.

There have been 44 accepted records in Britain to the end of 2015, with 40 of those in Scotland. There is also a further accepted record still awaiting formal publication of one in Scapa Bay, near Kirkwall, Orkney on 8–12 January 2016 (see www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/work-in-progress). There had been 35 accepted records in Scotland to the end of 2004, including two "At Sea" birds in Scottish waters (Forrester et al. 2007), and the five additional records since then are listed overleaf:

2005: 30 November–20 December, Lerwick & Bressay, Shetland

2006: 4 May, West Sandwick, Yell, Shetland - found dead

2007: 25 March, Scousborough, Mainland Shetland - found dead

2007: 7 November, Girdleness, Aberdeen, North-east Scotland

2011: 17 November, Burghead, Moray & Nairn

The four British records outwith Scotland are: an adult found dead at Middleton Sands, near Morecambe, Lancashire on 15 April 1960; one off Staple Island, Farne Islands, Northumberland on 13 July 1977; one off Filey, Yorkshire on 3 December 2013, and an immature (at least first calendar year) in Poole Harbour, Dorset on 19–31 December 2013.

This species is well-known in Britain for its tendency to be found dead or in ill health, like the Anstruther bird. The first Scottish/British record was one found dead at Craigielaw Point, Lothian on 11 December 1908, and the next nine birds in Scotland (1968–80) were all tideline corpses, with a further 15 since then (to end 2015) also found dead. This amounts to 62.5% of the 40 records. Fortunately, there is an increasing tendency for birds to be found alive, albeit often in poor condition.

The first live British record was the Farne Islands bird in 1977, and the first live Scottish bird was a breeding-plumaged adult off Fair Isle on 16–17 October 1980, though this probably died on the latter date. The 15 birds found alive in Scotland include three adults found in colonies of Guillemots: at Hamnavoe, Burra, Shetland on 3–7 February 1987; at Sumburgh Head, Mainland, Shetland on 16 June to 12 July 1989, and off Oiseval, St. Kilda, Outer Hebrides on 26 May to 8 June 1992. The 1989 Sumburgh bird was present for 27 days; the 2005 Lerwick/Bressay bird for 21 days; the 1992 St. Kilda bird for 14 days, and the 1987 Burra bird and one at Wick of Tresta, Fetlar Shetland on 26–30 December 1997 both for five days, otherwise most live birds are only seen on the day of discovery. One at Gulberwick, Mainland, Shetland in 1995 was taken into care when found on 4 January and released at Wadbister Voe,

Mainland on 1 February, and still off there on 2 February, a total of 31 days - albeit almost entirely in captivity.

As would be expected for a vagrant from Arctic regions, the majority of the 40 records are from the Northern Isles (52.5%). There have been 13 on Shetland (five alive); one on Fair Isle and seven on Orkney (one alive), and the two "At Sea" records are both from latitudes close to Shetland. Perhaps surprisingly there is just one record from the Outer Hebrides (St. Kilda bird), with the remaining records distributed from Caithness (two, both dead), Highland (three, one alive), Moray & Nairn (2011 bird), North-east Scotland (four, two alive), Lothian (five, two alive) and a single bird found dead at Knapdale, Argyll. The relative lack of west coast records may simply be a result of reduced observer coverage.

The spread of find dates split into a broad period from 11 October to 3 April with 36 birds found (90%), and isolated records on 4 May; 26 May; 16 June and 14 July. The Scapa Bay, Orkney bird in early 2016 fits well into the broad autumn to early spring discovery period, but the 2016 Anstruther bird is the only British record found in September. Indeed, this led to some issues in the initial identification process for this bird as it was in a plumage and state of moult never previously encountered in Britain or any of the other European countries where vagrant Brännich's Guillemots have been found.

In addition to the British records, there is one record from Ireland, at Ballyteigue Bay, Co. Wexford on 24 December 1986, and over 80 others in Europe from Finland, Sweden, Poland, Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium and France, plus this species has even been recorded as far south as the Azores.

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Plate 47. Western Orphean Warbler, Loch of Benston, Shetland, October 2016. © Peter Churton

Western Orphean Warblers in Scotland during October 2016

G. MACLEAN, E.J. WILLIAMS & S.J. WILLIAMS

Loch of Benston, 6 October 2016 - the first Shetland record

October 5 - my birthday, and for the past few years this has been spent staying on Shetland mainland, birding with my mates. It has become something of a talking point, that quality birds are always seen in Shetland on my birthday, with Siberian Rubythroat, Thick-billed Warbler and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler being three that spring to mind. This tradition continued in 2016 with two of the crew (Andy Rhodes and Chris Wilkinson) finding the White's Thrush on Fetlar, to add to the Swainson's Thrush which the crew had day-tripped Fetlar to see. With plenty to celebrate, the Highland Park single island malt (we figured that a distillery on Orkney must be the closest to Shetland and therefore the most appropriate) was flowing that evening in the pub in Lower Voe.

I didn't feel at my sharpest the next morning, on what was another extraordinarily bright, calm and mild Shetland day. Our group of six split into our

regular team formation with my team, including Pete Churton and Chris Wilkinson, opting to cover sites to the east of Voe. By mid-afternoon, we found ourselves at Eswick, with no plan of how to spend the last few hours of daylight. With map in hand, I suggested we try the large (by Shetland standards) plantation on the western shore of the Loch of Benston - a site I had passed on many occasions in the car, but never visited. I remembered two of the other guys had given it a go a couple of years back, and as it was on our way - it seemed as good a plan as any. Funny how sometimes we say things which turn out to be prophetic. As we parked the car, ready to cross the moorland to the plantation, I confidently announced to Pete and Chris - *'right - we're gonna put Loch of Benston plantation on the birding map'* Yeah right...

The plantation is not the easiest site to access, which I guess in part explains why I'd never given it a shot before now. With a few hundred metres

of moorland to cover and a significant fenceline to negotiate, the three of us ended up entering the plantation at different times and locations, and soon lost each other. Access into the plantation itself is straightforward with a number of stiles provided, and I walked the length of it, west to east, ending up on the shore of Loch Benston without having seen a single bird or either of the other guys! As going was tough inside the plantation itself, I walked back around the perimeter fence and ended up sat on one of the stiles on the upper north side, enjoying the late afternoon sun. At last - a bird! A Pied Flycatcher flew from one of the bushes bordering the fence line and I alerted the others, whom I could now see inside the plantation. Wanting a better view of the flycatcher - just in case - I approached the fence and flushed what I assumed to be a male Blackcap, which flew a short distance along the fence line, landing in low bushes towards the corner of the plantation in a fairly open area. Although, to some extent, I had already mentally written the bird off as a Blackcap, intuition took over and I checked the bird with bins, which was now feeding towards the top of a bush at a range of 20 m or so. I knew immediately what it was, but was in complete self-denial, having never found anything of this magnitude before. The white eye was not clear on that first view, nor subsequently, perhaps due to the late afternoon light, but the

bird was large, with an ink black cap extending below the eye - there was only one option (not true of course but I had barely remembered that Orphean Warbler was now split to Eastern and Western and I certainly could not recall the features of each). The bird was giving good views at this point and once Pete and Chris had both seen it well and Pete had some acceptable images to insure us against being labelled as fantasists, it was time to tell the outside world and release the pictures once I could get a signal.

The rest as they say - is history. I failed to see the bird again, and sadly, it was only seen by a handful of others prior to dusk. It was no surprise given the cloudless sky that the bird departed overnight. That evening was spent poring over books and Pete's images of the bird. Against expectations, given the prevailing wind direction, the bird was identifiable as a Western Orphean Warbler from the clean buffy underparts and extent of white in the outer tail, visible in the photographs. Not a first for Britain then, but a Shetland first.

When Dennis Coutts commented to me on-site that when the news broke, he'd no idea where the site was - I knew that Loch of Benston plantation was now on the birding map!

Gavin Maclean, Winchester, Hampshire.
Email: gavinmaclean21@virginmedia.com

Plates 48–49. Western Orphean Warbler, Loch of Benston, Shetland, October 2016. © Peter Churton





**Crafty, Firth, 18–21 October 2016
- the first Orkney record**

The phone rang early when I was still in a barely waking-up mode. I hate early morning calls - with an elderly relative in care they're usually bad news in our household, so I was surprised that it was Stuart on the line and a bit put out to be told just that he had caught a bird that - "you might like to see". Thinking it was probably just another Red-breasted Flycatcher - he'd caught one earlier in the autumn, during one of his regular early morning ringing sessions in his garden - and not being one for early mornings I was a bit bristly when I met him a few minutes later. He lives a short drive away and I was still half dressed and only half awake when I took the bird out of the bag, to see a Lesser Whitethroat looking at me. So "what's this all about, it's a Lesser Whitethroat", says I. "It's too big for a Lesser White" was the answer, and my unforgettable reply was "perhaps it's a big one!" only to hear "But the wing's over 4 mm beyond the max for Lesser White". At this stage the grey cells reluctantly began to turn over. A closer look showed a hefty *Sylvia* warbler with a stonking down-curved upper mandible, making for an evil-looking head. A quick look through Svensson, with a few prompts from Stuart showed that my rude awakening was deserved, as here was a cracking Orphean Warbler and I had it in my hand! Thinks to myself "Don't let the **** thing go". He already knew what it was of course and was only looking for confirmation before releasing the news. Next in line for a phone call was Alan Leitch who also lives nearby. "I'm busy, you'll have to make it quick, I'm just off out." "Er, well, we've got an Orphean Warbler in the hand here". "I'll be right over" and he arrived it seemed before he'd put the phone down.

Plates 50–52. Western Orphean Warbler, Firth, Orkney, October 2016. © Morris Rendall

The rest is more mundane - the bird was processed and photographed, identified as a Western on plumage characteristics and released shortly afterwards. We expected it to disappear into the extensive bushes in Stuart's garden, but instead it flew promptly across the road into the Sycamores in the garden of an empty neighbouring house. It remained there for the remainder of its stay, only making occasional brief visits to Stuart's garden. It was often elusive as it managed to remain out of sight in the trees where it would have been expected to be easy to find in the minimal autumn leaf cover, but patience was usually rewarded in the end. During its stay, it was enjoyed by all the local birders who came out of the woodwork and quite a few made the trip from mainland Britain. Lots of happy smiles all round and a rather self-satisfied Stuart!

Description

Appreciably bigger than Lesser Whitethroat, but broadly similar in plumage. **Upper parts:** entirely blue-grey. Ear coverts darker, blackish with a blue-grey wash, in some lights almost concolorous with upperparts, at other times blacker and more obvious. This dark colour extended on to the lores. A small clean white fleck just in front of eye. **Underparts:** throat and loreal area white, cleanly demarcated from the dark ear coverts, but less well defined against the off-white breast. Rest of underparts off-white, flanks with a pale buff wash. Longest undertail coverts white with no dark streaks or marks confirming it as Western. Feathers near vent buffish but some staining

apparent. **Remiges:** primaries and secondaries dark, wing coverts blue grey like upperparts. **Retrices:** the tips of all the tail feathers were quite badly worn. The outer tail feather (retrix 6) had an all-white outer web, the white on the inner web extending more than half the width of the web and separating the grey distal part from the quill. White on r5 was confined to a spot on the very tip of the inner web and on r4 it showed merely as a diffused whitish tip although this would have been better defined in fresh plumage. **Eye:** entirely dark (which aged it as a first year bird). Upper mandible dark grey-black and strongly decurved. Tip of lower mandible dark grey-black with pale base. Legs blackish.

Biometrics

Wing formula: emarginated on 3, 4, 5. Longest primary: 3, 4. Bill length: 4.2 mm. Head and bill: 37.0 mm. Wing: 78 mm. Weight: 23.3 g.

*Jim & Stuart Williams,
Fairholm, Finstown, Orkney
Email: jim@geniefea.freeserve.co.uk*

Status of Western Orphean Warbler in Scotland

This species has relatively recently been elevated from subspecies status following the split of Orphean Warbler into Eastern and Western species. It breeds from the Iberian Peninsula and northern Morocco and Libya eastwards through southern France to Switzerland and Italy. It is entirely migratory and winters in sub-Saharan Africa from southern Mauritania and northern Senegal eastwards to Chad.

*There is one previous record of 'Orphean Warbler' in Scotland - trapped and ringed at Seaton Park, Aberdeen (North-east Scotland) on 10 October 1982. Plumage features suggested it was probably a female, and possibly of the western form (hortensis). Following the adoption by BOURC of the split of Orphean Warbler into Western and Eastern species (Sangster et al. 2012), a review of previous records was undertaken. Only one of the four records was deemed acceptable as Western Orphean:
1955: 20 September, Portland Bill, Dorset, one trapped*

The Aberdeen record and three others were considered not possible to ascribe unequivocally to one or other species (Hudson et al. 2013, 2014):

1967: 22 October, Porthgwarra, Cornwall, one trapped

1981: 16–22 October, Kitty Down, St. Mary's, Scilly, male

1991: 20–22 May, Saltash, Cornwall, singing male

There are two subsequent records which have both been assigned to Western Orphean Warbler:

2012: 29 May, Hartlepool Headland, Cleveland, first-summer

2013: 10 November–5 December, St. Brides, Pembrokeshire, first-winter

Four of the first five records of 'Orphean Warbler' were all from south-west England, but the Aberdeen bird and subsequent records do not conform to that pattern, and the two 2016 birds would constitute the first and second definite records of Western Orphean Warbler for Scotland. It is not yet clear if the more northerly trend of occurrence is due to changes in observer coverage, purely to changes in autumn weather patterns or just random chance, or most likely a mix of all three. It is remarkable that two individuals of this species managed to find their way from SW Europe to the Northern Isles when there were such dominant easterly airflows at the time. It seems likely that their initial displacement was towards Scandinavia/Baltic States, but that in itself would be remarkable. There are no records from Ireland, but elsewhere in NW Europe north of the breeding range birds have been recorded in Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands and Ouessant, NW France. To date, there are no British records of Eastern Orphean Warbler.

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Plate 53. Northern Wheatear, South Mainland, Shetland, October 2016. © Jim Nicolson

Four wheatears in a day

R. RIDDINGTON

Autumn 2016 was notable for many things in Shetland. The multiple Siberian Accentors and Pine Buntings were perhaps at the top of the list for most people (the Nesting Orphean Warbler and the Lambaness Fea's/Zino's Petrel would undoubtedly have been up there if they had been twitchable), but a trio of rare wheatears in south mainland Shetland in late October was another major highlight. A female **Pied Wheatear** at Scatness arrived on 14 October, and that bird stayed faithful to a short stretch of the coastline along the west side of Scatness for almost two weeks, being last seen on 24th. An **Isabelline Wheatear** along the road to Noss, near the Loch of Spiggie, was first discovered late in the day on 15 October and identified for certain the following day, and it too settled down for a lengthy stay, being last seen on 21st. Finally, perhaps the most attractive bird of the three, a splendid male **Desert Wheatear**, was found on Scousburgh Sands (also near Spiggie), one of Shetland's most picturesque beaches, on 18 October, when photos were posted of the bird on Facebook. It too remained until 21st.

Thus, on 19–21 October, it was relatively straightforward to notch up four species of wheatear with very little travelling in between - all three rarities, plus one or two late Northern Wheatears, could be seen within a drive of little more than 10 km. Many of the Shetland birders, me included, couldn't resist collecting that particular set on the 19th - and for most of us, more effort was needed to find a lingering Northern than the three rarities! Shetland (including Fair Isle) has never been the easiest place to find a rare wheatear - there have been just four previous records of Isabelline, eight of Desert and nine of Pied - and being able to see three on the same morning is unprecedented for the islands.

Roger Riddington

Email: editor@britishbirds.co.uk

Plates 54–56 overleaf (top left). Isabelline Wheatear, Loch of Spiggie, Shetland, October 2016. © *Larry Dalziel*. **(top right).** Pied Wheatear, Scatness, Shetland, October 2016. © *Roger Riddington*. **(bottom).** Desert Wheatear, Scousburgh sands, Shetland, October 2016. © *Jim Nicolson*



Aspects of late autumn -early winter 2016

C.R. McKAY



Plate 57. Let the feast begin! Waxwings, Gullane, Lothian, 17 January 2017. © Ian Andrews

This report brings together sightings from across Scotland to highlight interesting aspects of the period October–December 2016. The list of sightings is not comprehensive, and is based on the most easily accessible and analysable database records held by BirdTrack, BirdGuides and Trektellen, supported by reports in local birding grapevines and bird observatory blogs. It focuses upon non-rarities.

One species dominated the late autumn/early winter period in 2016 - **Waxwing**. A phenomenal total of 1,754 records was received by BirdTrack and BirdGuides from 10 October to the year end. Typically, the first arrivals were in Shetland, with three singles on Unst and Out Skerries on 12, 13 and 15 October. New arrivals were soon spread through Shetland, Fair Isle, Orkney, the NW Highlands, the Hebrides and east coast counties. The largest three flocks were 200 at Kinlochbervie (High) and 70 at Drumbeig (High), both in the far north-west, and 79 near

Keith (M&N). Small numbers also appeared in Iceland at this time (*Birding Iceland website* notendur.hi.is/yannk/birdnews.html), pointing to an “over the top” arrival in the north and north-west of Scotland. By the month’s end 174 reports had been submitted (see Figure 1a).

Birds continued to arrive in the **first two weeks of November** (361 records, 100 locations, 40 flocks of 99+ birds, Figure 1b). The biggest flocks were restricted to only nine sites, with the largest gatherings being in Moray & Nairn - up to 500 in Elgin, 300 in Forres and 100 in Mosstodloch; there were also 300 in Gullane (Loth), 170 in Aviemore (High), and flocks of 150–200 at Pitlochry, Dunkeld and Perth (all P&K) - had they followed the A9 south? In contrast, flocks were fewer and flock sizes smaller at the traditional sites along the east coast from Aberdeen southwards (with the notable exception of Gullane). Perhaps others were in less well-watched areas in Highland and western glens?

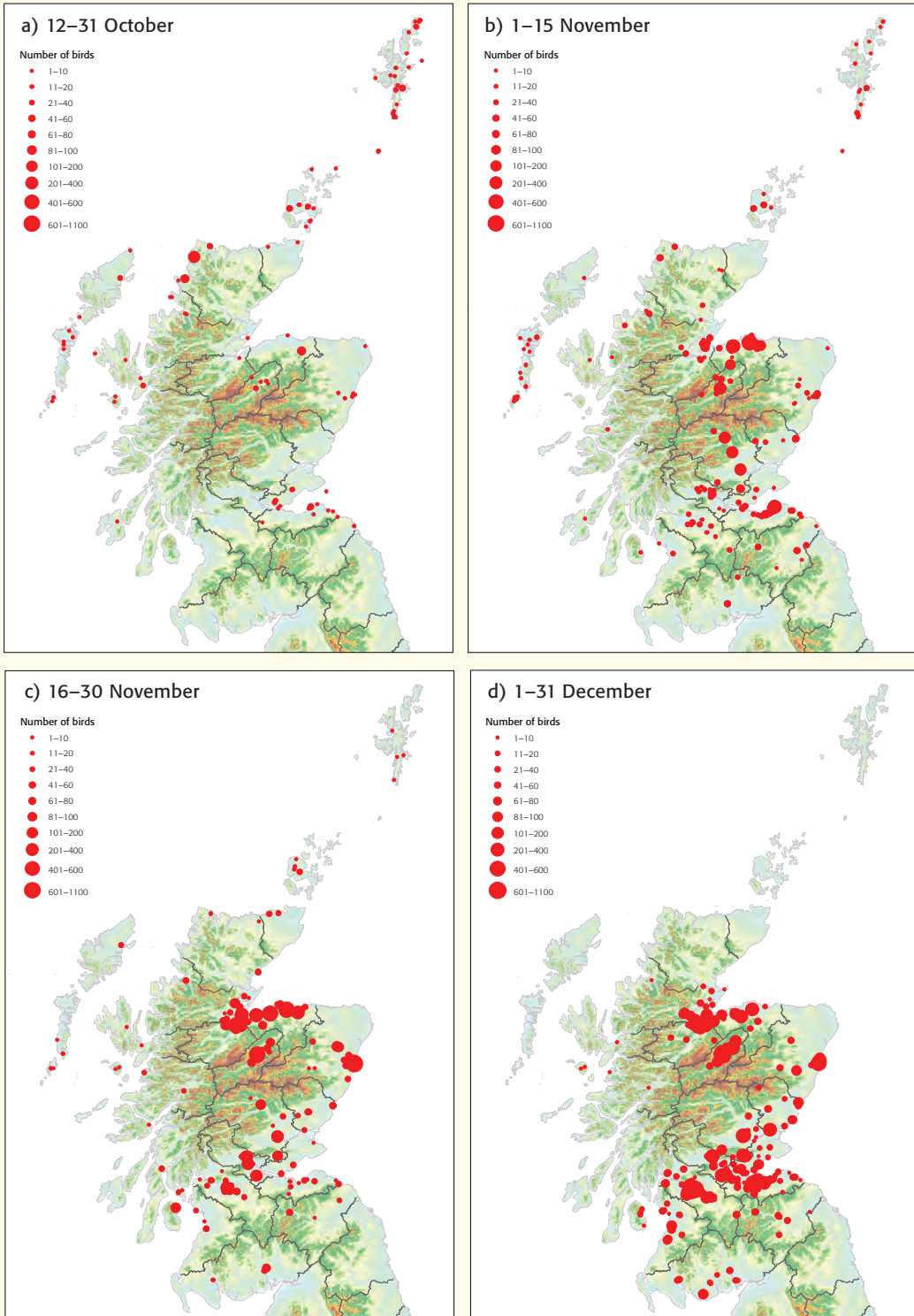


Figure 1. Distribution of Waxwings in Scotland, October–December 2016.

During **16–30 November** numbers and distribution continued to increase (422 reports, 94 flocks of 99+ birds, Figure 1c). There were 27 counts of 250+ birds, and this was perhaps the main arrival period into mainland Scotland. Birds were now widely distributed across northern, eastern and central regions, with some filtering through to Ayrshire and Argyll & Bute. But birds were now becoming scarce in ‘arrival’ areas in the northern and western isles, possibly suggesting the build-up of birds in the lowlands was due to redistribution of earlier arrivals rather than fresh immigration. Flocks could now be seen in car parks and suburbs with berry-bearing shrubs in most towns and cities, with some massive gatherings: 500 in Aviemore (High) on 18th, 500 in Elgin (M&N) on 23rd, 600 in Forres (M&N) on 24th, 530+ in Aberdeen (NES) on 27th, and 420 in Inverness (High) on 29th. The trilling of Waxwings in the treetops became a familiar sound against the blue November skies.

A further 797 reports were received in **December**, including 176 flocks of 99+ birds, and 34 counts of over 250 birds, but the areas in the north and west in which the birds had first arrived were now almost deserted (Figure 1d). On 15 December, 1,100 were in Aviemore - the largest flock of the period, possibly indicating southward movement and aggregation of birds from Moray & Nairn where numbers in Elgin and Forres had started to decline. Flocks of 500+ birds were seen in Aberdeen, Glasgow and Inverness, whilst flocks of 250+ birds were present in Dunblane, Dundee, Edinburgh, Elgin, Falkirk, Musselburgh, Nethybridge and Perth. Ringing returns from birds ringed by Grampian and Tayside Ringing Groups showed that onward movement to England and Wales was well underway by this time, as suggested by the lower total numbers in late December as compared to the two previous fortnightly periods (see Table 1).

How many birds might have been involved in this autumn's immigration? With records now

held on the BirdTrack database it is possible to make an educated guess. Table 1 shows the sum of the maximum count for each site for each period. This helps to minimise duplication e.g. there will be only one maximum count for each period for Aberdeen, one for each period for Aviemore etc., and may even lead to underestimation of numbers. On this basis, numbers peaked in early December when 15,570 birds recorded. Interestingly, when discussing the record Waxwing invasion year of 2004 in *The Birds of Scotland* Raymond Duncan estimated that a minimum of 15,000 birds had been involved. Perhaps this was an under-estimate as in that year there were several reports of flocks of 1,000+ birds whereas in 2016 we have only had one such record (so far).

Raymond Duncan has previously highlighted the importance of the berries of Rowans *Sorbus aucuparia* to Waxwings (*The Birds of Scotland*). Presumably in the past Waxwings fed mainly on the berries of native Rowans in the glens and on moorland edges. But the spectacular shows of red berries of these fine trees are quickly stripped by the autumn flocks of Fieldfares and Redwings which both greatly outnumber Waxwings and usually arrive earlier in the autumn. A similar story was played out in the streets of Dunblane (UF) this autumn, where my hopes of seeing Waxwings feeding on the roadside red-berried Rowans which were still present in early October were dashed by the resident Starlings, Blackbirds, Mistle Thrushes, Magpies and Woodpigeons which had completely denuded these trees well before the Waxwings arrived at the month's end. However, it was notable that the ornamental varieties of Rowans such as the yellow-berried ‘Joseph Rock’ and the pink-berried ‘Pink Pagoda’ in supermarket car parks and suburban gardens were still heavily laden, apparently untouched. Are these varieties less tasty or nutritious? Do they ripen later? My reservations about the garish pink berries on a huge Pink Pagoda Rowan in a neighbouring garden changed overnight when a flock of 190 Waxwings arrived on 29 November

Table 1. Sum of maximum counts per site for each period, October–December 2016 based on records submitted to BirdTrack and BirdGuides.

October	Early November	Late November	Early December	Late December
899	5,930	12,590	15,570	10,890

to feast on them! Frantic 'mob-feeding' bouts when the Rowan was alive with gold, grey and yellow were interspersed with periods of calm when the flock settled in the top of a Sycamore in my garden to digest their meal - producing a constant and very audible rain of droppings on the dry leaves below. At the time of writing (January 2017) there isn't a berry to be found on any Rowan in Dunblane, yet there are many Cotoneaster bushes thick with their red berries, but the Waxwings appear to have shunned these and moved on to pastures new.

The importance of urban and suburban areas is clearly shown in the December map. It would seem the town and landscape planners and their trees have inadvertently created an ecological niche perfect for Waxwings. There are several ways in which Waxwings are well adapted to exploiting this colourful harvest: their lack of fear of man means that bushes in car parks that the more timid winter thrushes would consider out of bounds are well within the Waxwing's sights; their highly sociable flocking nature and 'mob-feeding' give them safety in numbers in exposed locations (though many still fall prey to Sparrowhawks); their smaller size (Waxwing 58 g, Redwing 64 g, Starling 85 g, Blackbird 100 g, Fieldfare 108 g) and their acrobatic skills (see plate 59) enable them to take berries from the outermost twigs that are inaccessible to the other species.



Plate 58. Waxwings mob-feeding on ornamental, white-berried Rowans, Musselburgh, Lothian, 27 November 2010. © Ian Andrews



Plate 59. Acrobatic Waxwing feeding on Cotoneaster berries, Aberdeen, North-east Scotland, January 2017. © Stanley William Wright

A new wintering population of White-billed Divers in Scotland?

Whilst the Waxwing invasion was spectacular, it wasn't unprecedented, unlike the finding of up to 13 **White-billed Divers** off the island of Papa Westray (Ork) in November–December by David Roche, the RSPB summer warden who had decided to stay on the island for some autumn birding. If the birds remain this could be the first wintering "population" ever found in UK "inshore" waters. David has kindly supplied the following notes:

"By late October, autumn on Papa Westray (aka Papay) was starting to feel that it had reached its end, despite what was still being unearthed further north, and, despite the unseasonably mild weather, winter felt that it had more or less arrived. Being on Orkney, winter birding is still able to surprise, and a sea-watch on 10 November in calm seas did just that when I found two White-billed Divers off the north-west coast of Mull Head. Not altogether unexpected given the location, but what did come as a surprise was the fact that there were actually six birds present. White-billed Divers are recorded annually around Orkney, though with the exception of returning individuals, there had never been, to my knowledge, a known wintering population discovered in Orkney waters. Further visits found birds still actively feeding on the west side of Mull Head, whereby they would demonstrate a predictably loyal feeding pattern, drifting north with the tide

before eventually flying back in to feed in the slightly calmer waters on the west side of the tidal rip. Birds would often land close to other White-billed Divers, keeping very much to themselves and ignoring any groups of Great Northern Divers. Whilst the Great Northern Divers tended to feed in the more sheltered waters between Papay and Westray, the White-billed Divers mostly fed in the slightly more open sea, generally at about 1,000–1,500 m range. Even when viewing at this distance, they were surprisingly easy to identify, appearing strikingly brown on the head and neck (rather than dark grey or black) and with their pale bills always looking long and upturned; against the background of a light sea the bills were often almost invisible. Convinced that there were likely to be more birds involved than those I had seen to date, a visit on 5 December found six birds close together, soon to be followed by another single, a bird flying over the top of it, and then a new group of four birds! One which I had earlier been watching was still feeding closer to the choppy waters of the tidal rip, bringing the tally to an impressive 13 individuals. Challenging weather conditions made later visits very difficult, though one bird did offer a close fly past whilst I was taking shelter from the wind on 2 January." These are record autumn-winter counts for White-billed Diver in Scotland, and it will be interesting to see whether the birds remain in the area till the spring, and whether they are joined by others, as in the recent discoveries of spring staging flocks in Lewis and North-east Scotland.



Plate 60. White-billed Diver, St. Margaret's Hope, Burray, Orkney, 4 January 2017. © Paul Higson

NOTE: Identification of White-billed Divers requires good views and lots of experience of Great Northern Diver. The bill of Great Northern Diver can also look pale in certain lights!

Surely one of the great Scottish autumn migration spectacles is the arrival of the **Barnacle Geese** at Loch Gruinart, Islay (Arg). Easterly winds delayed their arrival in 2016, with the first significant arrival not until 17 October when 3,500 trickled in during the day. By the evening of the 18th 6,500 were present, but the main arrival came on the next day when a constant stream of flocks came in off the sea from the north west past Ardnave Point and slowly made their way to the top of Loch Gruinart to earn a well-earned rest after their 1,100 km flight from staging grounds in Iceland; at close of play James How had counted 30,230! A truly magnificent sight - well worth a visit to Islay in mid October to witness!

A large arrival of 476 **Whooper Swans** was recorded between Salterhill and Duffus Castle (High/M&N) on 30 October. Subsequent gatherings included 164 by the River Clyde between Covington and Thankerton (Clyde) on 17 November. Good numbers were present in the valleys of the Tweed and Teviot (Bord) on 3 December with 234 at Dykegatehead, 200 in the Teviot Valley and 11 at Folly Loch. The wintering flock of **Greenland White-fronted Geese** at Gartocham (Clyde) numbered 175 birds on 23 December.



Plate 61. White-billed Diver, Water Sound, Burray, Orkney, 20 January 2017, showing the brown colouration of the head and hind neck. © David Jarrett



Plate 62. Newly arrived Barnacle Geese at Loch Gruinart, Islay, Argyll, 19 October 2016. © James How

Over 60 **Woodcock** were flushed from roadsides along L Katrine (UF) in the early morning of 30 November. The first **Jack Snipes** returned on 2 October, when two were on Papa Westray (Ork), and singles were at Girdleness (NES) and Barns Ness (Loth). There were significant October falls on Fair Isle (Shet) of 28 birds on the early date of 6th and 27 on 15th. Birds were widespread by the month's end, with reports from over 60 sites. In November, impressive numbers were present at favourite wintering haunts in the Clyde area, with up to 50 at Cathkin Marsh and up to 27 at Bishopston. This must be one of the best wintering areas in the UK for this species. Inland **Oystercatchers** were on the Tweed (Bord) and at Insh (High) in December.

Late autumn marks the main period for the mysterious migration/dispersal movements of the **Woodpigeon**. Visible migration watches at the Braes of Doune recorded 23,797 >W in early November as birds headed into the Trossachs/Loch Lomond area where feeding flocks of 1,000+ birds were at Gartocham (Clyde) and around the Lake of Menteith (UF), apparently associated with a good acorn crop.

It was a good autumn for **Shore Larks**. The first arrival was single on Fair Isle on 12 October, quickly building to seven birds by 17th - the first autumn flock on the island since 1991! Other



Plate 63. Shore Lark, Tentsmuir, Fife, January 2017. © John Anderson

singles were on Out Skerries (Shet) on 13th and Burray (Ork) on 16th - all good finds. But the most amazing find was a single on the 579 m summit of Scald Law in the Pentland Hills (Loth) on 22nd, presumably part of the same influx that brought 14 to Tynninghame (Loth) the next day. In Fife, a single arrived on the Isle of May on 31 October, and another (or the same) was well 'inland' on the north side of the Forth at Valleyfield on 15 November, and notable for the county were two at Tenstmuir from 18 December present to the year end. However, it was the flock that remained at Tynninghame (Loth) that stole the show, with up to 12 during early November, then a sudden increase to 20 birds on 20th, followed by a steady increase to a maximum of 37 on 6 December - thereafter numbers of these handsome tundra larks declined to 15–20 by the year end.

Great Grey Shrikes arrived in good numbers in October. The first was on Fair Isle on 4 October - feasting on 2 Meadow Pipits and a Blackcap, the latter carrying a Norwegian ring! Singles were present on the island on and off to the end of the month, and this was the main period of arrivals/passage at other locations in the northern isles and along the east coast. Away from the east coast other October records came from Uig, Skye (High) 16th, Grass Point, Mull (Arg) on 16–17th, Mersehead (D&G) 19–20th, Glen Esk (A&D) 24th, Arddlach (High) 28–30th and Newton Stewart (D&G) on 30th. In November, late passage birds were at Scousborough, Mainland (Shet) on 10–11th and at Papa Westray (Ork) on 22nd, whilst three others were present briefly at Devilla Forest (Fife) on 4th, Newton Stewart (D&G) on 7th, and Rothesay, Bute (Arg) from 23–27th. A single at Tynninghame (Loth) on 28 November remained until 3 December, with other December records coming from Moine Mhor (Arg) 16–17th, Loch Mahaick (UF) 17–27th and Forest of Birse (NES) on 31st.

A **Blue Tit** which took up residence in a garden at Bornish, South Uist (OH) in October was still present on 14 December. In mid-October, there was a small arrival of the white-headed **Northern Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus* with two at Sumburgh (Shet) on 14th, three at Boddam (NES) 16–18th and four on Sanday (Ork) on 17th. These birds quickly moved on, and may account for two seen

subsequently at Loch Beg, Mull (Arg) on 7 November and one at Townhill (Fife) on 28 December. Maybe more will turn up as the winter progresses. It appeared to be a very good year for the British race of **Long-tailed Tit** also with noisy flocks reported widely. A **Goldcrest** at the Glebe, Tiree (Arg) was the first mid-winter record of this species for the island. There was an unusual report of a **Dipper** feeding at a flood pool in a garden in Nithsdale Road, Pollokshields (Clyde) on Christmas Day.

Good numbers of **redpolls** were present in many areas earlier in the autumn, though many appear to have moved on. In North-east Scotland, Euan Ferguson and Carmen Azahara ringed 2,117 **Lesser Redpolls** and 42 **Common (Mealy) Redpolls** during October and November. They note: "We had very few retraps and it felt like big numbers of bird were moving through. Our biggest catches were 324 redpolls on 29 October and 286 on 13 November. By the end of November numbers dropped and we were only catching 50 redpolls a session. We caught 18 controls, the first ones were mainly juveniles ringed in the Highlands, but in November we also started to catch control adults, mainly ringed on the east coast of England in previous winters. We've had three birds recovered so far, two in Yorkshire and one in South Lanarkshire." Bob Swann of Highland Ringing Group went one better with a bird ringed at Dalchork (High) controlled in Sint Maartensvlotbrug (Netherlands). A flock of 200 was at Insh (High) on 23 December. There have been no reports of large numbers of **Crossbills** or **Bramblings** so far this winter, with mostly small flocks scattered across the country.

Small numbers of migrant **Hawfinches** arrived at island locations during 3–18 October - five in Shetland, one in Orkney and one on North Uist (OH). At the same time, there were singles (also migrants?) at Chirnsidebridge (Bord) on 22nd and Dava (High) on 23rd. In November, a small flock set up residence in Grantown-on-Spey (High) from 14th feeding on cherries by the River Spey, with 14 present by the 26th, increasing to 19 by 31 December - a record count for the Highlands. At the same time and only 7 km distant up to nine were present near Nethybridge (High)! In contrast, there was only one report from Scone Palace (P&K) - a single on 25 November.



Plate 64. Brood of two Ravens, Highland, 2 January 2017. © Carrie Weager



Plate 65. Barn Owl nestling ringed Upper Forth, 21 November 2016. © Anne Cotton

Breeding

There was a late breeding record of **Barn Owls** in Upper Forth where Anne Cotton ringed a brood on the exceptionally late date of 21 November (Plate 65). The chicks probably wouldn't have fledged until December. Even more remarkable was a brood of two **Ravens** in a nest on a coastal cliff in the Highlands found by Cathy Weager on the incredibly early date of 2 January 2017 (Plate 64)! Assuming the chicks were about three-weeks-old at the time of the photo, and an incubation period of 21 days, then the eggs must have been laid some time around 20 November.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to: Nick Moran of BTO for extracting Waxwing BirdTrack records and locations: Josh Jones, BirdGuides for supplying records; David Roche for use of his notes on White-billed Divers; Ian Andrews for preparing the distribution maps; Ian Andrews, John Bowler, Anne Cotton, Euan Ferguson, Paul Higson, Alan Leitch, Carrie Weager, Andrew Stevenson, Bob Swann and Stanley William Wright, for additional information and photos.

*Clive McKay, 28B High Street,
Dunblane FK15 0AD.*

Email: clive.mckay@btinternet.com

Scottish Bird Sightings

1 October to 31 December 2016

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.

The reappearance of the Eastern Kingbird was unexpected, but unexpected is somewhat inadequate to describe the multiple arrivals of Siberian Accentors - a near mythical, long-hoped-for vagrant, high on many wish lists - truly amazing! Prolonged easterly airflows delivered many other Palearctic rarities in one of the most productive autumns ever. By late November/December Waxwings began to arrive in better numbers than for several years, but otherwise it was normal service resumed.

Bewick's Swan: one was at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 10 December. **Bean Goose:** first of the winter were nine flying over Sanday (Ork) on 1 October. Thereafter, small numbers in Central Scotland/Lothian; maximum 12 at Dunbar (Loth) on 16 October, and Orkney where peak of eight on North Ronaldsay on 30 October. **Taiga Bean Goose:** first report of regular Fannyside/Slammanan flock (Clyde/UF) on 10 October, with

peak count of 250 on 15 October.

Tundra Bean Goose: scattered single-figure counts from Northern Isles to Highland and NE Scotland, with peak of nine on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 18–24 October. **Snow Goose:** adult white morphs were still at Findhorn Bay/Kinloss (M&N) on 1–11 October; at Caerlaverock WWT Reserve (D&G) on 19 October; one at Udale Bay RSPB Reserve (High) on 20th and presumed same at Beaulay Firth/Munlochy/Tore (High) on 22–28th; at Blackness (UF) on 27 October; at Caerlaverock again from 2–3rd and 19 November; at Redcastle, Beaulay again from 4–6 November; flying over Powfoulis/Airth (UF) on 26 November; at Alness (High) on 1–4 December; at Loch Eye, near Tain (High) from 20 December, and at Loch Ashie, near Dores (High) on 30 December. Three blue morph birds were at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 10 November. **Canada Goose: vagrant forms - Todd's (interior):** two were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve, Islay (Arg) on 19 October, with one still on 20th; one at Loch Gorm, Islay on 26th and three there on 31 October; one near Caerlaverock WWT Reserve (D&G) on 16 November, and nearby at Mainsriddle (D&G) on 28 November; **Lesser Canada Goose (parvipes):** one was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 20–21 October; **Richardson's Cackling Goose (hutchinsi):** one at Loch Gruinart RSPB on 18 October, up to 10 on Islay on 19th; at least seven still to 31 October, two on 1 November and one still on 30 December.

American Wigeon: drakes were in Ork (3), High (3), OH (3), Arg, D&G, NES, A&D and P&K. **Green-winged Teal:** drakes were in Ork (5), Shet (2), High/M&N (3), OH (2), Arg (3), D&G (5), A&D (4) and P&K. **Black Duck:** the returning drake (since 2011) was still at Loch Sunart, Strontian (High) throughout.

Ring-necked Duck: single drakes were at The Cuilc, Pitlochry (P&K) from 28 October to 19 November and 8–31 December, and at Loch Faskally (P&K) on 1 December; at Kilconquhar Loch (Fife) on 2–3 November; at Loch a' Phuill, Tisee (Arg) on 5 November; at Carlingwark Loch (D&G) from 28 November to end December; at Loch of Skail, Mainland (Ork) on 2–28 December; at Milton Loch (D&G) on 17 December, and Loch Scarmclate, near Clayock (Caith) on 17 December. **Lesser Scaup:** a drake was at Loch of Boardhouse, Mainland (Ork) from 26 November into 2017, and one at Loch Ryan, Stranraer (D&G) on 24–31 December. **King Eider:** the only record was of a drake off Burghhead (M&N) on 3 November. **Surf Scoter:** a juvenile was off Ardvule, South Uist (OH) from September to 23 October; a juvenile off Everland, Fetlar (Shet) on 1 October; a juvenile flew past Uisaed Point, Machrahanish (Arg) on 27 October; the returning adult drake was off Musselburgh/Joppa (Loth) from 2 October into 2017; with other adult drakes at Inganess Bay, Mainland (Ork) on 2 October, with presumed same at Bay of Meil, near Kirkwall (Ork) on 21–22nd; again off Ruddons Point, Largo Bay (Fife) on 31 October to



Plate 66. Surf Scoter (top right) with Velvet Scoter and Slavonian Grebe, Musselburgh, Lothian, October 2016.
© Ian Andrews

8 December; in Hascosay Sound, Yell (Shet) on 4 November; flying past Fishtown of Usan (A&D) on 6 November, with presumed same in Lunan Bay (A&D) also on 6th; at Aberlady Bay (Loth) on 12th and 20 November, and off Gullane (Loth) on 3 December; off Out Head, St Andrews (Fife) on 24 November; in Bluemull Sound, Yell/Unst (Shet) on 27 November to 5 December, with presumed same in Hascosay Sound, Yell on 2 December; two in Kirkwall Bay, Mainland (Ork) on 6th, with three there 10th, and possibly one of these at Wide Firth, Inganess Bay, near Kirkwall on 18 December. A female was at Loch Ryan (D&G) on 20 December, and another off Eastfield (Loth) on 27 December.

Hooded Merganser: an adult drake was at Barr Loch, Lochwinnoch RSPB Reserve (Clyde) on 7–10 October, at Kilbirnie Loch (Ayr) on 9–21 November, at Lochwinnoch on 23rd, at Kilbirnie on 24 November to 13 December, and Lochwinnoch again from 18 December into 2017. **Smew:** a redhead was at Barr Loch, Lochwinnoch RSPB Reserve (Clyde) from 8 November to 29 December; two redheads on

North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 14 November; two on Hogganfield Loch (Clyde) on 16 November; two on Loch Gelly (Fife) on 2–3 December, with one still on 17th; a redhead at Lochore CP (Fife) on 3–19 December; a drake off Dalgety Bay (Fife) on 5 December; a redhead at Loch Leven (P&K) on 11 December, a drake there on 18–28th; a redhead at Milton Loch (D&G) on 18–27th; a redhead at Loch Eye (High) on 19–29th; a drake on North Loch, Sanday (Ork) on 19–31st; a redhead at Castle Semple Loch, Lochwinnoch on 21–31st; a drake at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 22–29 December, and a drake at Carstairs, River Clyde (Clyde) on 26 December.

White-billed Diver: one flew past North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 6 November; six were off Papa Westray (Ork) on 10 November, with four still on 19 November, and at least five on 27 November; one off Burra Ness, Yell (Shet) on 21 November; then 13 off Papa Westray on 5 December, with five still on 27 December, and one in Colgrave Sound, Fetlar/Yell (Shet) on 13 December. **Black-necked**

Grebe: one was off Thorntonloch (Loth) on 3 November; two off Girdle Ness, Aberdeen (NES) on 7 November; singles off Ferry Ness (Loth) on 9 November; off Gullane/Aberlady Bay (Loth) on 20–27 November and 16 December; at Loch of Skail, Mainland Ork from 2 December into 2017, and at Whitesands Quarry, Dunbar (Loth) on 10 December into 2017. **Balearic Shearwater:** one was off Corsewall Point (D&G) on 18 October, and one off Girdle Ness, Aberdeen (NES) on 7 November. **Bittern:** one was still at Loch of Kinnordy RSPB Reserve (A&D) from September to 27 December; one at Gartloch (Clyde) on 24–25 October; at Errol (P&K) on 20 November; at Montrose Basin (A&D) on 27 November, and at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 28 December. **Little Egret:** poorly reported from the usual SW and central Scotland haunts; notable records again included one or more on Orkney - on Sanday on 6–8 October and 1 November, then at Loch of Sabiston, Mainland on 11 December, and at Loch of Banks, Mainland on 12 December; with

other wanderers at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 29 October and Baltasound, Unst on 2 November; on Fair Isle on 1 November, and at Grimsay, North Uist (OH) on 25 November. **Great White Egret:** singles were at Caerlaverock WWT Reserve (D&G) from September to 1 November; at Loch Tighe na Creige, near Lairg (High) on 11 October; at Guardbridge, Eden Estuary (Fife) on 17th; at Montrose Basin (A&D) from 21 October to 7 November, and nearby at St. Cyrus (NES) on 13 November. **Glossy Ibis:** one was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) from 30 October to 15 November; one flew over Letham Pools, near Collessie (Fife) on 25 November, and one at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 18–19 December.

Honey-buzzard: one flew over Haroldswick towards Skaw, Unst (Shet) on 1 October. **Marsh Harrier:** one flew east over Veensgarth, Mainland (Shet) on 1 October; one was at Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 1–3 October, and nearby at Loch of Hillwell, Mainland (Shet) on 4 October. **Northern Harrier:** the returning male was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) again from 23 October into 2017. **Pallid Harrier:** a juvenile was near Boddam, Mainland (Shet) on 12 October, with (presumed) same nearby at Loch of Hillwell, Mainland on 12–13 October. **Hobby:** one was at Browhouses (D&G) and a juvenile at Mull of Galloway (D&G) on 24–25 October. **Gyr Falcon:** a white-morph bird was over Craig Phadrig, near Inverness (High) on 25 October; others were reported at Frustigarth, Shapinsay (Ork) on 17 December and on Islay (Arg) on 22 December. **Spotted Crane:** two were on Fair Isle on 13 October, and one on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 24 October. **American Coot:** one was at Loch nam Feithean, Balranald, North Uist (OH) from 11 November into 2017. **Crane:** an adult was at Liniolate, Benbecula

then at Loch Bee, South Uist (OH) on 1 October; an adult was near Stromness, Mainland (Ork) on 11–19 November, with presumed same near Eastabist, Dounby, Mainland on 23 November, and at Yesnaby, Mainland (Ork) on 27 December.

Killdeer: a first-winter was at Sandwick, Mainland (Shet) from 13 November into 2017. **American Golden Plover:** at least one juvenile was at Allathasdal, Barra (OH) on 1–8 October; a juvenile on Sanday (Ork) on 2 October; an adult at Heylipol, Tiree (Arg) on 3rd, and presumed same at Crossapol, Tiree on 6–10th; a juvenile at Esha Ness, Mainland (Shet) on 4th; a juvenile at Ardvule Point, South Uist (OH) on 11–18th; a juvenile nearby at Boisdale, South Uist on 23rd; two juveniles at Ardvule Point on 24th, and a juvenile nearby at Bornish on 25 October, and another juvenile was at Bornish machair on 14 November. **Pacific Golden Plover:** one flew over Rattray Head (NES) on 9 August. **Semipalmated Sandpiper:** the two juveniles at Vaul Bay, Tiree (Arg) remained to 1 October. **Baird's Sandpiper:** a juvenile was at Dornoch Point (High) on 2 November. **Pectoral Sandpiper:** one was at Roos Loch, Sanday (Ork) on 3 October; a juvenile at Baleshare, North Uist (OH) on 3–4 October; a juvenile at Ardvule, South Uist on 8–11 October, and one at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 13–15 October. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** a juvenile was at The Range, South Uist (OH) on 1–2 October; one was at Boddam, Mainland (Shet) on 9–16 October. **Great Snipe:** one was at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 2–3rd and 5 October; one on Fair Isle on 3 October, and one at Houbie, Fetlar (Shet) on 8 October. **Red-necked Phalarope:** one was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 3 July, with three there on 17 July and four on 19th; one on Arran (Ayr) on 31 July; one at Lamba Ness,

Unst (Shet) on 12 August; one was at West Gerinish, South Uist (OH) on 25 September. **Grey Phalarope:** one was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 2 October, two there on 5th, and one still on 6th; two flew past Scoughall (Loth) on 6 October, and one was at Ardtalla, Islay (Arg) on 25 December.

Pomarine Skua: About 105 were seen in October, with high counts of 10 past Embo (High) on 13th, 19 off North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 29th, and 10 off Papa Westray (Ork) and 32 west at Butt of Lewis, Lewis (OH) on 31 October. About 40 reported in November, with peak counts of nine over Kessock Bridge, Inverness (High) on 1st, eight past Papa Westray (Ork) on 2nd; six off North Ronaldsay on 3rd; three off Fishtown of Usan (A&D) on 6th, and finally a juvenile off Enbo Pier (High) on 20th. **Long-tailed Skua:** a juvenile flew past Fife Ness (Fife) on 1 October; two past Torness (Loth) on 2nd; a juvenile was off the Uig, Skye to Tarbert, Harris (High/OH) ferry on 3rd; three juveniles from the same ferry near Uig on 4th, and finally one past Burnmouth (Bord) on 22 October. **Ring-billed Gull:** an adult was at Strathclyde CP (Clyde) on 29–31 December. **Mediterranean Gull:** very few reported away from the Firth of Forth or Ayrshire, but notable records elsewhere included one at North Tolsta, Lewis (OH) on 14 October; Broadford Bay, Skye (High) from 28 October, and an adult at Brora (High) on 30 December. **Yellow-legged Gull:** one was at South Alloa (UF) on 2 November, and an adult at Balgray Reservoir (Clyde) on 9–28 November. **Iceland Gull:** second-winters were at Inverurie (NES) and Bishopburn, Loch Ryan (D&G) on 3 October; at Tobermory, Mull (Arg) on 4–8 October; at Elgin (M&N) on 7–9th; on Fair Isle on 14th; at Loch of Stenness, Mainland (Ork)

on 22nd; on Papa Westray (Ork) on 26 October. In November 18 birds were noted all singles except for two juveniles at Ardevenish, Barra (OH) on 6th, with others ranging from Shetland to Islay (Arg) and Lothian. Around 40 were reported in December, from Shetland to Tiree (Arg) and Cambus (UF), and mostly singles except for counts of two on Eigg on 7th; on Fair Isle on 21st; at Scrabster (Caith) on 28th; and at Westing, Unst (Shet), at Portree, Skye (High) and at Fraserburgh (NES) on 29 December and three on Papa Westray (Ork) on 25 December. **Kumlien's Gull:** a third-winter was at Scatness, Mainland (Shet) on 18 November, with an adult there on 16–18 December. **Glaucous Gull:** just 11 birds reported in October - all singles from Shetland to Loch Ryan (D&G) and Kingston and Spey Bay/Losiemouth (all M&N). More numerous in November with over 50 noted, mostly in NW including high counts of three at Lamba Ness, Unst (Shet), three at Skaw, Unst, seven at Norwick, Unst and 10 at Baltasound, Unst all on 20 November. In December about 55 reported from Shetland to Lendalfoot (Ayr) and Peterhead (NES), again mostly in NW, with higher counts of three on Fair Isle on 21–27th, four on Papa Westray (Ork) on 25–27th, and four at Peterhead on 29 December.

Turtle Dove: one was at Broadford, Skye (High) on 5 October, and, it or another, at Galtrigill, Skye on 25 October.

Snowy Owl: one was at Bay of Brough, Westray (Ork) on 18 November. **Hoopoe:** singles were at Easter Quarff, Mainland (Shet) from September to 2 October; at Butt of Lewis, Lewis (OH) on 6 October; at Kingston, North Berwick (Loth) on 6th; at Stove, Sanday (Ork) on 13–23rd; on Foula (Shet) on 14th; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 14–19th and

24–30th; at Rattray Head (NES) and at St Abb's Head (Bord) on 15th; at Wester Quarff (Shet) on 17th; at Isbister/Skaw, Whalsay (Shet) on 18–27th; at Glen Lyon, near Aberfeldy (P&K) on 23rd, and at Durnamuck, Little Loch Broom (High) on 29 October.

Wryneck: one was on Fair Isle on 7 October. **Eastern Kingbird:** the Barra bird was refound at Bornish, South Uist (OH) on 2 October.

Brown Shrike: one was at Burness, Sanday (Ork) on 6 October, and one at Lower Voe, Mainland (Shet) on 6-8 October.

Isabelline Shrike: one ('Daurian') was at Girdle Ness, Aberdeen (NES) on 18-20 October.

Red-backed Shrike: singles were at Cunningsburgh, Mainland (Shet) on 1 October; at Fladdabister, Mainland (Shet) on 1st and 6 October; at Laxo, Mainland (Shet) on 1st and 8-10th; on Foula (Shet) on 2nd; Sands of Forvie NNR (NES) on 3rd; at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 7-19 October; at Skaw, Unst (Shet) on 12th; on Islay (Arg) on 11th; and at Evie, Mainland (Ork) on 22 October.

Great Grey Shrike: In October, single migrants (unless stated) were on Fair Isle (2), Mainland & Bressay (Shet) (3), NES, Isle of May, Loth (2), Easter Ross (High) and Sanday (Ork). Then in the west and SW: Skye (High), Mull (Arg), D&G (3), Isle of Bute (Clyde Is) and Arg. Also records from A&D, High, Fife, Mainland (Shet), Papa Westray (Ork), Loth, UF and NES to the end of the year.

Firecrest: one was on the Isle of May on 5–7 October, with two on 6th, and others on 9th and 16 October; one on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 6th; one at Auchmithie (A&D) on 9th, and one at Finstown, Mainland (Ork) on 29 October. **Short-toed Lark:** one was still on Fair Isle to 2 October, and one on 4th and 7 October; one at Kyles of Scalpay, Harris

(OH) on 7 October; one at Loch of Hillwell, Mainland (Shet) on 11 October and one at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 23rd.

Woodlark: one was at Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 17 October; one at Northdale, Unst (Shet) on 12 November; two at Saxa Vord, Unst on 17 November, and at Northdale, Unst on 19th, and one at Norwick, Unst on 21 November. **Shorelark:** one was on Fair Isle on 12 October, with five there on 16th, seven on 17–18th, five on 19–24th, four on 25th, three on 26th, six on 29th, and five still on 30th; one on Out Skerries (Shet) on 13–14th; one at Hillside, Burray (Ork) on 16th, one at Scald Law, Pentland Hills (Loth) on 22–23 October; 14 at Tynninghame (Loth) on 23 October, with 12 on 24th, eight on 25th, six on 26th, four on 28th, and one nearby in Belhaven Bay on 29th; one at Aberlady Bay (Loth) on 30 October, and three on the Isle of May on 31 October. The Tynninghame flock was present into 2017, with peaks of 30 on 23rd and 34 on 24 November, and 27 on 5th and 37 on 6 December. Otherwise, in November there were singles on the Isle of May and at Aberlady Bay still on 1st; on Fair Isle on 8th; at High Valleyfield (Fife) on 15th; and at the B6355/Faseny junction, Lammernmuir Hills (Loth) on 20 November; and in December there were two at Tentsmuir Point (Fife) from 18th into 2017.

Greenish Warbler: one was at Lettan, Sanday (Ork) on 8 October.

Arctic Warbler: singles were on Fair Isle on 2 October; at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 12 October, at Cuidhir, Barra (OH) on 13th, and at Kergord, Mainland (Shet) on 14 October. **Pallas's Warbler:** singles were at Hamars Ness, Fetlar (Shet) on 4 October; at Barns Ness (Loth) on 6–14 October; at Eswick, Mainland (Shet) on 8th; at Tresta, Fetlar on 8–10th; at South Collafirth,

Mainland (Shet) on 13th; at St Abb's Head (Bord) on 14th; one at Gorie House, Bressay (Shet) on 15th; at White Sands Bay, Dunbar (Loth) and Thorntonloch (Loth) on 15th, with two at Torness (Loth) also on 15th and one still there and one nearby at Skateraw on 16th; singles at King's Links, Aberdeen (NES) and Stonehaven (NES) on 16th; at Tarbat Ness (High) on 17th; in Montrose (A&D) on 18th; near Scalloway, Mainland (Shet) on 18th, and at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 21 October.

Yellow-browed Warbler: widespread in October, but generally with site counts in single figures: about 630 on Shetland, around 100 on Fair Isle; around 200 on Orkney; at least 100 on the Outer Hebrides, and at least 290 throughout the rest of Scotland. A major arrival on 2 October brought the best day counts for several areas with 23 on Bressay and 25 on Foula (both Shet); 72 on Fair Isle; 18 on Papa Westray, 86 on Sanday and 51 on North Ronaldsay (all Ork); 35 at

Collieston and 23 at Sands of Forvie (both NES); four at Fishtown of Usan and four at Arbroath (both A&D); 16 on the Isle of May, and 14 at Barns Ness (Loth). Other top recording area counts were: 30 on Barra (OH) on 9th; four on Tiree (Arg) on 9th; and six at Tarbat Ness (High) on 9th, and nine at St Abb's Head (Bord) on 8–9 October. In November, there were singles at Ardmore Point, near Cardross (Arg) on 1–2nd; at Lerwick, Mainland (Shet), on Fair Isle and at South Glendale, South Uist (OH) on 3rd; at Balephuill, Tiree (Arg) on 5–7th; at Bayhead, North Uist (OH) on 10th, and at Carinish, North Uist on 23–27 November. **Radde's Warbler:** singles were on Foula (Shet) and Fair Isle on 2 October; on the Isle of May on 6–8 October, and at Skateraw (Loth) on 16 October. **Dusky Warbler:** singles were at South Nesting, Mainland on 8 October; on Out Skerries (Shet) on 9–14 October; at Wester Quarff, Mainland (Shet) on 10th;

on Fair Isle on 12–14th; on the Isle of May on 14th; at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 15th; at Grutness, Mainland (Shet) and St Abb's Head (Bord) on 16th; at Barns Ness (Loth) on 16–21st; at Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 17–19th; on Fair Isle on 20th; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 22–23rd; at Gorie, Bressay (Shet) on 25 October; at Baltasound, Unst on 30 October to 2 November and at Burravoe, Yell (Shet) on 3 November.

Barred Warbler: there were at least 19 on Shetland in October; elsewhere there was one on Fair Isle on 1 October, and three on 2 October; singles at Port Nis, Lewis (OH) on 1st; at Stove, Sanday (Ork) on 5th; on the Isle of May on 6th, one on 16th, and two there on 24 October; singles at Tarbert, Harris (OH) on 7th; at Durness (High) on 12th; at Newtonhill (NES) on 20–28 October; at Sunnybank, Deerness, Mainland (Ork) from about 20 October to 11 November; two on

Plate 67. Pallas's Warbler, Torness, Lothian, October 2016. © Stuart Gillies



the Isle of May on 24 October, and one at Balmeddie CP (NES) on 25 October. **Western Orphee Warbler:** a male was at Loch of Benston, Mainland (Shet) on 6 October, and a first-winter was at Firth, near Finstown, Mainland (Ork) on 18–21 October. **Lanceolated Warbler:** one was on Fair Isle on 2–4 October, and one at Boddam, Mainland (Shet) on 2 October. **Icterine Warbler:** one was still at Halligarth, Unst (Shet) on 1 October, one was at Glendale plantation, Trondra (Shet) and one on Fair Isle on 20 October. **Paddyfield Warbler:** one was at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 2–3 October. **Marsh Warbler:** one was at Levenwick, Mainland (Shet) on 7 October. **Blyth's Reed Warbler:** one was still at Voe, Mainland (Shet) to 4 October, and singles at Levenwick, Mainland (Shet) on 2nd; on Fair Isle on 2nd and 6 October; one on Bressay (Shet) on 2nd; at Barns Ness (Loth) on 3rd; at Wester Quarff, Mainland (Shet) on 4th; at Northdale/Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 4th; on the Isle of May on 5th and 10th; on Out Skerries (Shet) on 6th; at Loch of Benston, Mainland (Shet) on 7th; at Lettan, Sanday (Ork) on 8th; at Skaw, Whalsay (Shet) on 9–16th, and at Balephuil, Tiree (Arg) on 22 October.

Waxwing: see pages 56–57 and 81–84. **Rose-coloured Starling:** a juvenile was still at Scalloway, Mainland (Shet) on 1–24 October; a juvenile at Ullinish, Skye (High) on 20–22nd; a juvenile at Uig, Lewis (OH) on 22–23rd; a juvenile was at Hunterston (Ayr) on 26 October, and at Largs (Ayr) on 2–3 November.

White's Thrush: one was at Hamnavoe, Mainland (Shet) on 3 October; one at Kirkwall, Mainland (Ork) on 3rd; one at Houbie, Fetlar (Shet) on 5th; one at Skaw, Unst (Shet) on 7th, and one at Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 17th.



Plate 68. Red-flanked Bluetail, Kergord, Shetland, October 2016.
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Siberian Thrush: a first-winter male was at Uyeasound, Unst (Shet) on 6 October. **Swainson's Thrush:** one was at Aith, Fetlar (Shet) on 3–10 October. **Black-throated Thrush:** one was at Housay, Out Skerries (Shet) on 3 October; a first-winter female was at Sullom, Mainland (Shet) on 4 October; a male was at Queenamidda, Mainland (Ork) on 9 November and then at Dale, Mainland (Ork) on 10–14 November. **Siberian Rubythroat:** a male was on Fair Isle on 18 November. **Bluethroat:** there were at least 22 on Shetland in October. Elsewhere there was one on Fair Isle on 1 October, with two there on 2nd, one on 3–4th, one again on 8th; one on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 3rd; one at Belhaven Bay (Loth) on 21–22nd and nearby at Tynninghame (Loth) on 25 October, and at Sandside Bay, Mainland (Ork) on 24–30 October. **Red-flanked Bluetail:** singles were on Fair Isle on 2nd, 6–7th and 12–13 October; on Out Skerries (Shet) on 2 October; at Denburn Wood, Crail (Fife) on 5–6th; at Aith, Fetlar (Shet) on 6th; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 7th

and 13th; at Dale of Walls, Mainland (Shet) on 10th; at Hoswick, Mainland (Shet) on 11th; at Kergord, Mainland (Shet) on 15–18th; at Tarbat Ness (High) on 16th - the first for the recording area; at Geosetter, Mainland (Shet) on 20th and one at St Abb's Head (Bord) on 30 October. **'Eastern Black Redstart':** one was at Tomess (Loth) on 2–22 December - the first Scottish record. **Siberian Stonechat:** one was at St Abb's Head (Bord) on 14 October; one on Fair Isle on 14–25 October; one at Toab, Mainland (Shet) on 15th; one at Sandwick, Mainland (Shet) on 17–18th (probably *stejnegeri*), and one at Tynninghame Bay (Loth) on 26 October (probably *stejnegeri*). **Isabelline Wheatear:** a first-winter was at Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 16–21 October, and one at Machir Bay, Islay (Arg) on 23 November to 3 December. **Pied Wheatear:** a first-winter female was at Scatness, Mainland (Shet) on 14–24 October, and a male at Donmouth, Aberdeen (NES) on 30 October. **Desert Wheatear:** one was at Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 18–21 October.

Red-breasted Flycatcher: at least 28 were on Shetland in October, and one at Hoswick, Mainland (Shet) on 1 November. Four were on Fair Isle on 2 October, and singles on 4–5th, 12–13th, and 15 October. Elsewhere singles were at Westbrough, Sanday (Ork) on 1 October; at Eastside, South Ronaldsay (Ork) on 5–7th; at Auchie Glen (D&G) on 5th; at Barns Ness (Loth) on 6th; at Mull of Galloway (D&G) on 6th; at Auchmithie (A&D) on 7th; at Tarahomn, Deerness, Mainland (Ork) on 7–8th; two at St Abb's Head (Bord) on 8th, with one there on 13–14th; singles at Holland, South Ronaldsay and Newtonhill (NES) on 16th; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 17–18th; at Castlebay, Barra (OH) on 20–22nd; at Brevig, Barra on 21–30th, and at Balephuill, Tiree (Arg) on 22 October. **Siberian Accentor:** one was near Mossy Hill, Scousburgh, Mainland (Shet)

on 9–10 October - the first record for Britain. It was followed by one on Fair Isle on 20 October, and a different bird there on 22nd; one at Lund, Unst (Shet) on 22–27th; one at Sandside Bay, Deerness, Mainland (Ork) on 24–29th and one at South Dale, Fetlar (Shet) on 26 October. One was at Knockmuir Wood, Avoch (High) on 6–13 November.

Yellow Wagtail races: a bird of one of the eastern races (*plexa/simillima/tschutschensis*) was at Balivanich, Benbecula (OH) on 23 October, with others of probable eastern origin at Loch of Hillwell, Mainland (Shet) and Carinish, North Uist (OH) on 11 October, at Sumburgh and Pool of Virkie, both Mainland (Shet) on 12th and at Boddam, Mainland (Shet) on 18 October. **Richard's Pipit:** two were on Fair Isle on 3 October, one still on 4–6th; one was at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on

4th; one at Tres Ness, Sanday (Shet) on 4th; one at Halligarth, Unst on 5th; one at Gardie House, Bressay (Shet) on 6th; one at Scatness, Mainland (Shet) on 9th; one at West Burra, Mainland (Shet) on 10–12th; one on Papa Westray (Ork) on 10 October; two on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 11th, and one still on 13th; one at Durness (High) on 12th; one at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 13th; one at Aberlady Bay (Loth) on 15th; one at Murcar golf course (NES) on 22nd October, and one at Troup Head (NES) on 29 October. **Olive-backed Pipit:** on Shetland singles were at Ollaberry, Mainland on 3 October at Uyeasound, Unst on 7th; at West Burra, Mainland on 11th; at Boddam and at Scatness, both Mainland on 14th; at Weisdale, Mainland on 15th, and at Kergord, Mainland (Shet) on 15–16 October. On Fair Isle, there was one on 4–6 October, two there on 7th, one still on 8th, one on 10–11th, two on 12th, one on 13th, two on 14th, three on 15th, two on 16th, and one on 17–20 October. Elsewhere singles were at Ardmhor Plantation, Barra (OH) on 6th; at White Sands Bay, Dunbar (Loth) on 8th; at St Abb's Head (Bord) on 13th; on the Isle of May on 13–15th, and one at Crossburn, Birsay, Mainland (Ork) on 16 October. **Pechora Pipit:** one was on Fair Isle on 2–15 October. **Red-throated Pipit:** singles were on Fair Isle on 2 October, 5–6th and 10–14 October.

Common Rosefinch: singles were still at Norwick, Unst on 1–5 October; at Fladdabister, Mainland (Shet) on 1 October; at Skaw, Whalsay (Shet) on 1st; three on Fair Isle on 2nd, and two still on 3rd; singles at Haroldswick, Unst on 5–6th; at Hoswick, Mainland (Shet) on 5th; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 6th and 8th; on the Isle of May on 11th; at Pierowall, Westray (Ork) on 12th; at Mire Loch, St Abb's Head (Bord) on 14th; at Skaw, Whalsay and at Lochmaddy, North



Plate 69. Pechora Pipit, Fair Isle, October 2016. © Steve Arlow

Uist (OH) on 18th; on Fair Isle and at Brevig, Barra (OH) on 21st; at Norwick, Unst on 22–23rd, with two on 24–25th and one still on 29 October, and one at Dale, Evie, Mainland (Ork) on 25–30 October. An unusually late one was at Norwick, Unst on 4 December. **Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll:** one/singles was at Baltasound/Clingera/Uyeasound, Unst (Shet) on 2–7 October; singles at Aith, Mainland and nearby at East Burrafirth (both Shet) on 7 October; at Burwick, South Ronaldsay (Ork) on 8 October; at Ordale Airport, Baltasound, Unst on 12th; on Out Skerries (Shet) on 12th; at Clingera, Unst again on 18th; at Baltasound School, Unst on 24 October; one at Sullom Plantation, Mainland on 6 November; two at Baltasound on 14–17 November; one still on 18–20th, and one at Burravoe, Yell (Shet) on 4 December. **Coues's Arctic Redpoll:** one was at Lerwick, Mainland (Shet) on 21–23 October, with a new bird on 24–28th, with two on 29th, and one on 30–31st; one at Gorie, Isle of Bressay (Shet) on 23rd; three at Baltasound School, Unst (Shet) on 24th, with

one still on 25 October; one at Baltasound on 13th, two on 14th, and one still on 20 November.

White-throated Sparrow: an elusive first-winter was present at Lochmaddy, North Uist (OH) on 2–29 October. **Snow Bunting:** Present throughout the period with highest count on Shetland of 12 on Fetlar on 11 November; Fair Isle higher counts were of 12 on 11 October, 20 on 18th, 66 on 29th, 139 on 30 October, and 20 on 9 November; on Orkney, the best totals were 61 on North Ronaldsay on 6 October, and 21 there on 2 November. Noted on the Outer Hebrides in single figures except for 17 at Butt of Lewis, Lewis on 29 October, 10 on Barra on 6 December and 13 at Traigh Mhor, Barra on 14 December. Elsewhere mostly single figure counts as far south as Lothian and Dumfries & Galloway, with higher counts of 25 at Sands of Forvie NNR (NES) on 12 November, 35 at Dunbar (Loth) on 15 November; 20 at Lochwinnoch RSPB Reserve (Clyde) on 27 November; and 50

at Nairn Bar (M&N) on 18 December. **Lapland Bunting:** Noted throughout in low numbers with higher counts on Shetland of 18 on Foula on 2 October and 21 at Munness, Unst on 6 October; on Fair Isle of 16 on 2–3 October, 22 on 6th, 17 on 7th, and 18 on 18 October; on Orkney of 57 on North Ronaldsay on 2 October and 50 on Sanday on 4–5 October, and on Outer Hebrides of 100 at Eochar, South Uist on 1–8 October, 40 there on 23rd and 20 on 29 October. Elsewhere high counts were 13 at Barrapol, Tiree (Arg) on 2 October, six at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve on 15 October, and eight at Aberlady Bay (Loth) on 30 October and 11 there on 20 November. **Pine Bunting:** an exceptional total - a female was on Fair Isle on 11–15 October, two females on 16th; three on 17th (British record day count); two still on 18th and one on 19th; a male was at Loch of Hillwell, Mainland (Shet) on 21 October; a male on Fair Isle on 22–26th October; a female near Loch of Grimsetter, Bressay (Shet) on 25 October, and a first-winter male at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 30 October. **Ortolan Bunting:** one was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 6th and 8 October; one near Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 7 October; one at St Abb's Head car park (Bord) on 8th, and one at Loch of Hillwell, Mainland (Shet) on 9–13 October. **Little Bunting:** there were up to 50 on Shetland in October and three in November; at least 13 on Fair Isle in October and two in November; 15 on Orkney in October; on the Outer Hebrides there was one at Creachan, Barra on 9–10 October; one at Northbay, Barra on 14 October; one at North Loch Eynort, South Uist on 17 October, and one at Sgallairidh, Barra on 4 November; the only others were one on the Isle of May on 3 October; one on 5–7th, with three on 8–11th, one on 13–14th, one on 17–18th, and two on 19th.

Plate 70. Pine Bunting, Fair Isle, October 2016. © Steve Arlow



SOC Branch Secretaries

Ayrshire: Anne Dick
Rowanmyle House, Tarbolton, Mauchline KA5 5LU.
Tel: 01292 541981
Email: a_m_dick@btinternet.com

Borders: Neil Stratton
Heiton Mains, Main Street, Heiton, Kelso TD5 8JR.
Tel: 01573 450695.
Email: neildstratton@btinternet.com

Caithness: Angus McBay
Schoolhouse, Weydale, Thurso KW14 8YJ.
Tel: 01847 894663
Email: angmcb@btinternet.com

Central: Neil Bielby
56 Ochiltree, Dunblane FK15 0DF.
Tel: 01786 823830
Email: n64b68@gmail.com

Clyde: Ian Fulton
8 Barrachnie Avenue, Baillieston, Glasgow G69 6SR.
Tel: 0141 773 4329
Email: soc.clyde@btinternet.com

Dumfries: Pat Aberly
East Daylesford, Colvend, Dalbeattie DG5 4QA.
Tel: 01556 630483
Email: eastdaylesford@onetel.com

Fife: Caroline Gordon
25 Mackie Crescent, Markinch, Glenrothes KY7 6BB.
Tel: 01592 750230
Email: sweetbank101@gmail.com

Highland: Kathy Boniface
Alt Dubh, North End, Tomatin, IV13 7YP.
Tel: 01808 511740
Email: kathyboniface@aol.com

Lothian: Doreen Main
Seatoller, Broadgait, Gullane EH31 2DH.
Tel: 01620 844532
Email: doreen.main@yahoo.com

Moray: Martin Cook
Rowanbrae, Clochan, Buckie AB56 5EQ.
Tel: 01542 850 296
Email: martin.cook99@btinternet.com

North-East Scotland: John Wills
Bilbo, Monymusk, Inverurie AB51 7HA.
Tel: 01467 651 296
Email: grampian.secretary@the-soc.org.uk

Orkney: Helen Aiton
Cuppar, Evie, Orkney KW17 2PJ.
Tel: 01856 751482
Email: helendavidaiton@hotmail.co.uk

Stewartry: Joan Howie
The Wilderness, High Street, New Galloway,
Castle Douglas DG7 3RL.
Tel: 01644 420 280
Email: joanospreys1@btinternet.com

Tayside: Brian Brocklehurst
146 Balgillo Road, Broughty Ferry, Dundee DD5 3EB.
Tel: 01382 778 348
Email: brian.brocklehurst1@btinternet.com

West Galloway: Geoff Sheppard
The Roddens, Leswalt, Stranraer DG9 0QR.
Tel: 01776 870 685
Email: geoff.roddens@btinternet.com

SOC Local Recorders

Angus & Dundee: Jon Cook
01382 738495
1301midget@tiscali.co.uk

Argyll: Jim Dickson
01546 603967
meg@jcdickson5.plus.com

Ayrshire: Fraser Simpson
recorder@ayrshire-birding.org.uk

Assistant recorder: Angus Hogg
dcgos@globalnet.co.uk

Borders: Position vacant

Caithness: Sinclair Manson
01847 892379
sindairmanson@btinternet.com

Clyde: Iain Gibson
01505 705874
iaingibson.soc@btinternet.com

Clyde Islands: Bernard Zonfrillo
0141 557 0791
b.zonfrillo@bio.gla.ac.uk

Dumfries & Galloway:
Paul N. Collin
01671 402861
pncollin@live.co.uk

Fair Isle: David Parnaby
01595 760258
fibo@btconnect.com

Fife: Malcolm Ware
07733 991030
malware74@icloud.com

Forth (Upper): Chris Pendlebury
07798 711134
chris@upperforthbirds.co.uk

Assistant recorder: Neil Bielby
n64b68@gmail.com

Highland: Peter Gordon
01479 821339
recorderhighland@outlook.com

Isle of May: Iain English
01698 891788
i.english@talk21.com

Lothian: Stephen Welch
01875 852802
lothianrecorder@the-soc.org.uk

Moray & Nairn: Martin Cook
01542 850296
martin.cook99@btinternet.com

NE Scotland: Nick Littlewood
07748 965920
nesrecorder@yahoo.co.uk

Orkney: Jim Williams
01856 761317
jim@geniefea.freeserve.co.uk

Outer Hebrides: Yvonne Benting
07501 332803
recorder@outerhebridesbirds.org.uk

Perth & Kinross: Scott Paterson
01577 864248
pkrecorder@the-soc.org.uk

Shetland: Rob Fray
01950 461929
recorder@shetlandbirdclub.co.uk

PhotoSPOT

Plate 71. What a winter for Waxwings in Moray, with both Elgin and Forres hosting huge flocks in November 2016. Usually, just after the forerunners start arriving in the northern isles, huge numbers then arrive on the north-east coast around Aberdeen but this year it was the turn of Elgin and Forres to experience the first large arrivals of the winter.

Luckily, I live in an area of Elgin where Rowan trees in surrounding gardens are abundant, I never had to go much beyond the front door to view great flocks of up to a thousand birds at times.

Waxwings really are fantastic birds to watch, with great colours and of course those waxy tips on their wings too. The noise they created reached a crescendo as they flew overhead. Even non-birders were excited to see the flocks, with many people asking me where Waxwings come from?

Equipment used: Nikon D7100, 500mm f4 lens, manual, ISO 720, shutter 1/2500, aperture f4.

David Main, 69 Mayne Road, Elgin, Moray IV30 1PD.

Email: eileen1624@btinternet.com



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