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Long-tailed Skua, East Burra, Shetland, July 2011.
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Scottish Birds is the quarterly journal for SOC members, and is published in March, June, September and December annually.

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

An archive of the journal is available on the SOC website, where links can be found to other Club publications including the *Scottish 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.

Annual membership rates*

Adult (aged 18 and over)	£	36.00
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For non-UK addresses, there is a £15.00 supplement to all categories to cover postage.
Rates valid until end of August 2019 (†31 December 2019), subject to change thereafter.

For more information about the Club and its activities, including details of how to join, please visit www.the-soc.org.uk or contact Waterston House on 01875 871 330, or email membership@the-soc.org.uk

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Plate 154. James Main, Aberlady, Lothian, July 2016. *© Doreen Main*

President's Foreword

The past few months have been busy ones for the Club. In July, the fourth successful Young Birdwatchers' Training Course took place on the Isle of May organised by the Club in conjunction with the Isle of May Bird Observatory. As in previous years six keen youngsters stayed on the island for a week learning ringing, recording and other skills. The course was led by Stuart Rivers and Mark Oksien and assisted by Alison Creamer, with support from CEH and SNH.

On the organisational front our Librarian Karen Bidgood bade farewell to the Club earlier this year to live in Cumbria with her husband Nigel. We wish them both well. Karen was not only an excellent librarian but also was a valued member of the Waterston House team who was willing to turn her hand to anything if needed. We also welcome Susan Horne, who has volunteered in the Library for some time, and takes over as Librarian from Karen. The Club is also looking to recruit a Finance Officer to take over from Jean Torrance, who has been a mainstay of the Club for many years and who will be retiring in December. Jean has contributed hugely to the Club over the years and will be much missed.

A Finance Committee has been formed under our Treasurer Andrew Thorpe to oversee the management of the Club's finances. This covers a variety of areas as many things have an impact on cash flow. A small Strategy Group has also been formed to consider the Club's position in the future. The remit is wide-ranging and the Group is looking at the strategy and overall governance of the Club, its structure and operations. This is to ensure that we comply with the Charity Regulator's requirements. There are a number of projects under consideration at the moment, including a major web-site redesign and a mobile application - watch out for developments.

The art exhibition at Waterston House by Lucy Newton was very successful and the current exhibition is a joint one between John Hatton and Robert Greenhalf.

I should like to remind you all that the SOC Annual Conference will be held at the Atholl Palace Hotel, Pitlochry from 20–22 October. The theme is 'Movements and Migration'. To paraphrase the title of one of the talks 'Why are they here and what do they do when they are not?' seems to sum it up. There is a varied programme with many excellent speakers from Scotland, England and Holland. A detailed programme is on the website. There may be places left and, if you haven't booked already, give Kathryn Cox at Waterston House a call. I do look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.

With the migratory season coming up I hope you all have a good autumn's birding

James Main, SOC President

Potential occurrence of the Long-tailed Skua subspecies *Stercorarius longicaudus pallescens* in Scotland

C.J. McINERNY & R.Y. McGOWAN

Two Long-tailed Skuas Stercorarius longicaudus *reported in Scotland, an adult male collected at Sule Skerry, Orkney in June 1908, and an adult observed at East Burra, Shetland over four summers during 2009–2012, showed features suggesting the east Siberian and Nearctic subspecies* S. l. pallescens. *If confirmed they would be the first two records of that subspecies for Scotland and the UK. At present, the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) does not accept records of the subspecies in Britain without independent confirmation of their origin, such as a ringing recovery, as 'BBRC's research has not established criteria by which a vagrant could be identified' (BBRC 2016, Stoddart 2016). This note puts these observations on record pending future developments, so that they can be considered and, if accepted, added to the* Scottish *and* British Lists.

Background

Long-tailed Skua is a trans-equatorial migrant, breeding in Arctic regions during the summer, and flying to areas of the southern Atlantic and Pacific Oceans at other times of the year (del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). Two subspecies are recognised: *S. l. longicaudus* (hereafter *longicaudus*) breeding in the Western Palearctic from northern Fennoscandia to Russia, and *S. l. pallescens* (hereafter *pallescens*) breeding from eastern Siberia to Nearctic regions of Alaska, Canada and Greenland. While Siberian and western Nearctic populations of *pallescens* migrate through the eastern Pacific, populations of both subspecies from eastern Canada, Greenland, Fennoscandia and Russia migrate through the mid-Atlantic (Cramp & Simmonds 1983, del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). Each year variable numbers of *longicaudus* are observed in Scotland both on spring and autumn migration, as they move past the country (Griffin & McInerny 2007, Forrester *et al.* 2007, McInerny & Griffin 2007, Wynn *et al.* 2014). In contrast, *pallescens* has not officially occurred in the UK, with the subspecies on neither the *British* nor *Scottish Lists*.

The presence of *pallescens* on the *British List* has a somewhat curtailed history. It was added on the basis of a specimen collected at the Sound of Harris, Outer Hebrides by Richard Meinertzhagen on 19 August 1941, and preserved at the Natural History Museum, Tring (BMNH 1965.M.4109) (BOU 1958, 2009). However, a number of British records based on Meinertzhagen specimens were subsequently removed from the *British List* due to the likelihood of fraud (BOU 1993, Knox, 1993, Kehoe 2006). Following a recommendation that Long-tailed Skua should be treated as polytypic, with *pallescens* considered valid (Sangster *et al.* 2004), the status of this subspecies on the *British List* was reviewed: as the Sound of Harris record was the only occurrence in Britain, it was removed (BOU 2009).

Other reports

Shetland 2009–2012

An adult Long-tailed Skua summered at Easter Heog, East Burra, Shetland on four consecutive summers 2009–12. The bird was observed amongst a colony of Arctic Skuas *S. parasiticus,* where it set up territory, attempting to find a mate (Harrop 2010). The locations and dates were:

Kettla Ness, Burra, Voe, and Easter Heog, East Burra: 22 June to 23 July 2009.
Easter Heog, East Burra and elsewhere on Burra: 27 May to 17 July 2010.
Easter Heog, East Burra and elsewhere on Burra: 12 May to 3 July 2011.
Easter Heog, East Burra, elsewhere on Burra and Wester Quarff: 12 May to 19 July 2012.

This individual had plumage features, including pale underparts with white flanks and belly, and just a grey vent, suggesting *pallescens* (Cramp *&* Simmonds 1983). Though in some published photographs the underparts looked slightly darker, direct field observations showed strikingly pale flanks and belly (C. McInerny pers. obs.). These features are in contrast to those shown by *longicaudus* which instead exhibits consistently darker underparts, with grey flanks, belly and vent, with just a pale small breast 'bib'. One of the authors (C.M.) has seen many hundreds of *longicaudus* and *pallescens* in the North Atlantic and North Pacific Oceans, respectively. The East Burra individual most closely resembled those seen in the North Pacific, suggesting that it was *pallescens*.

To explore further whether the Shetland bird might be *pallescens*, Long-tailed Skua specimens of both subspecies were examined at National Museums Scotland (NMS), Edinburgh. Only skins of adults (having unbarred underwings) were considered. Sub-adults were disregarded, as this age-class of both subspecies shows pale underparts and are therefore indistinguishable (Cramp *&* Simmonds 1983).

Figure 1 shows a series of Nearctic and Western Palearctic specimens, segregated by collection locality. The majority were collected during the breeding period. The Nearctic specimens (Birds 1–9) being *pallescens* show pale bellies and flanks, though Bird 6 is slighter greyer. In contrast, the Western Palearctic specimens (Birds 11–14) being *longicaudus* show grey bellies and flanks, though Bird 12 is slightly paler. Two specimens showing contrary underside colouration are presented in Figure 3: a Nearctic specimen with a greyer belly (Bird 1), and Western Palearctic specimen with a paler belly (Bird 2). For an explanation of these, see later.

Orkney 1908

One specimen, an adult male collected at Sule Skerry (Orkney) on 9 June 1908 (NMS.Z 1908.124; Figure 1, Bird 10; Figure 2, Bird 2), is noteworthy. It most closely resembles the Nearctic birds, having a very pale belly and flanks. Indeed, the Sule Skerry individual has the palest underparts of any of the *S. longicaudus* specimens at NMS (Figures 1–2). The exceptional paleness of this specimen might be the reason that it was originally registered as an Arctic Skua, though that identification was corrected a few years later.

Taking the Nearctic and Western Palearctic specimens at NMS as a benchmark, both the Shetland summering individual and the Orkney specimen have pale bellies and flanks, most closely resembling Nearctic birds. Thus, at least two individuals from Scotland show features of *pallescens*.

Figure 1 (opposite). Specimens of Long-tailed Skuas at National Museums Scotland, showing birds from Nearctic and Western Palearctic regions, with individuals being subspecies *S. l. pallescens* and *S. l. longicaudus*, respectively. The Sule Skerry (Orkney) specimen collected on 9 June 1908 most closely resembles those from the Nearctic having a pale belly and flanks, and is thus likely to be *S. l. pallescens*.

		Location	Gender	Date	Accession number
Neactic	1	Floeberg Beach, Ellesmere Island, Canada	F	28 June 1876	Z.1898.4.317
	2	Kane Valley, Ellesmere Island, Canada	F	23 June 1876	Z.1898.4.316
	3	Discovery Bay, Ellesmere Island, Canada	F	July 1876	Z.1958.71
	4	Davis Straits, Canada/Greenland	-	1878	Z.1888.84.312
	5	Davis Straits, Hudson Bay, Canada	-	-	Z.1897.14.24
	6	Bethel, Alaska, USA	F	27 June 1962	Z.1962.36.21
	7	Little Beluga Cliffs, Goodnews Bay, Alaska, USA	-	14 June 1964	Z.1974.119.9
	8	Duke of York Bay, Southampton Island, Canada*	-	17 August 1821	Z.1823.62
	9	Hudson Strait, Canada	-	-	Z.1823.62
	10	Sule Skerry, Orkney, Scotland, UK	M	9 June 1908	Z.1908.124
Western Palearctic	11	Pechora River, Russia	F	Summer 1875	Z.1897.14.25
	12	Hipporjarvie, Lappmark, Sweden	M	28 July 1906	Z.1943.61.3448
	13	Kielastasti, Lapland, Finland	-	18 June 1861	Z.1956.3 (3282)
	14	Holm, Norfolk, England, UK	M	September 1910	Z.1952.19.1942

*This specimen was collected by Sir William Parry, on the day that he named the location, Duke of York Bay (Parry 1840).

	Location	Gender	Date
1 Nearctic	Little Beluga Cliffs, Goodnews Bay, Alaska, USA	-	14 June 1964
2 Orkney	Sule Skerry, Orkney, Scotland, UK	M	9 June 1908
3 Western Paleactic	Pechora River, Russia	F	Summer 1875

Figure 2. Specimens of Long-tailed Skuas at National Museums Scotland, showing birds from Nearctic and Western Palearctic regions, with individuals being subspecies *S. l. pallescens* and *S. l. longicaudus*, respectively. The Sule Skerry (Orkney) specimen collected on 9 June 1908 most closely resembles those from the Nearctic having a pale belly and flanks, and is thus likely to be *S. l. pallescens*.

	Location	Gender	Date	Accession number
1 Nearctic	Churchill Fort, Hudson Bay, Canada	-	-	Z.1845.6
2 Western Paleactic	Storelva, Varanger, Norway	F	26 June 1939	Z.1953.19.1943

Figure 3. Specimens of Long-tailed Skuas at National Museums Scotland, showing birds from Nearctic and Western Palearctic regions, with individuals being subspecies *S. l. pallescens* and *S. l. longicaudus*, respectively. These individuals show atypical belly and flank colouration; for an explanation, see main text.

However, del Hoyo *et al.* (1996) states that 'individuals with characteristics of *pallescens* occasionally occur in the nominate race [subspecies]'. This statement is based on data presented in Cramp & Simmonds (1983) describing variation in underparts colour:

Greenland (Nearctic) (76 adults in sample): 50% *pale*, 44% *medium*, 6% *dark*.

Fennoscandia (Western Palearctic) (17 adults in sample): 94% *dark*, 6% *medium*, 0% *pale*.

Where *pale* is 'white, except for vent or at times lower belly and lower flanks'; *medium* is 'at least upper belly white, upper flanks and vent grey'; and *dark* is 'belly flanks and vent all grey, at times also chest'.

The del Hoyo *et al.* (1996) statement refers to *medium* birds, with 6% in the Western Palearctic and 44% in the Nearctic. This appears to explain the paler Western Palearctic individuals from NMS shown in Figure 1 (Bird 12) and Figure 3 (Bird 2). Indeed, the Cramp & Simmonds (1983) Nearctic data showing 6% *dark* birds also explains the greyer Nearctic individuals in Figure 1 (Bird 6) and Figure 3 (Bird 1).

Importantly, data in Cramp & Simmonds (1983) show that although 6% of Western Palearctic birds can have underparts *medium* in colour, 0% are as pale as *pale* Nearctic birds. Thus, any *pale* bird is likely to have originated from the Nearctic, and so be *pallescens*. Both the Orkney and Shetland individuals show pale underparts similar to the *pale* Nearctic birds, and should be attributed to *pallescens*. Neither could be classified as having *medium* underparts, a situation where sub-specific identification remains unclear.

Further reports

Other birds showing paler bellies and flanks suggesting *pallescens* have been reported in Scotland. Two have been seen at Hound Point (Lothian): one on 30 September 1988 and the other on 27 August 1998 (Griffin & McInerny 2007). On both occasions these were only brief, distant field observations, and the records were not submitted for consideration. Another was an immature present on Fair Isle on 23 June 1956 (Williamson 1957) but, as stated, immatures of both subspecies have pale underparts, and are inseparable.

The combination of these and the submitted reports, from 1908 to the present, suggest that *pallescens* may be a rare and under-recorded vagrant in the UK. Its appearance in Britain is plausible, considering the migration pattern of east Canadian and Greenland breeding birds through the mid-Atlantic to the southern Atlantic (Cramp & Simmonds 1983, del Hoyo *et al.* 1996). They are likely to be displaced eastwards into European waters after strong anti-cyclonic winds, which are known to result in trans-Atlantic vagrancy of Nearctic birds every year.

The suggested Nearctic origin of the Shetland bird may explain its unusual breeding behaviour. Within the European range, Long-tailed Skua nests at high elevation at lower latitudes, usually on mountaintops; only at much higher latitudes are pairs found at lower altitudes, sometimes near the sea (Cramp & Simmonds 1983). Thus, the sea level site on Shetland where the bird established territory is uncharacteristic, and could be explained by it being an out-of-range Nearctic vagrant. Other Long-tailed Skuas in Scotland attempting to breed have been observed at high altitudes, for example on the Cairngorm plateau (Badenoch & Strathspey) (Oliver 1975); these birds behaved like typical *longicaudus* from the closer Fennoscandian breeding areas. However, the one confirmed breeding record in Scotland also involved a pair at sea level at Barry Buddon (Angus & Dundee) in 1980, with one bird returning in 1981 (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Interestingly, the only existing image of this pair, a painting reproduced in Forrester *et al.* 2007 (page 734), shows both birds with pale bellies and flanks. One might reasonably speculate that these too were *pallescens*.

Conclusions

This paper describes two reports of Long-tailed Skua in Scotland, both showing plumage features suggestive of *pallescens*. Current BBRC procedures indicate that records of *pallescens* will not be accepted to the *Scottish* or *British Lists* without independent supporting evidence, such as a ringing recovery. This note puts these observations on record so that they can be considered as *pallescens*. It is also hoped that the publication of these accounts will highlight to observers the features of *pallescens* in case a ringed individual is found in Scotland in the future.

Acknowledgements

We thank the Shetland Recorder, Rob Fray, for details on the East Burra Long-tailed Skua. Thanks also to the anonymous referee whose comments helped improve the manuscript.

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Plate 155. Wilson's Warbler, Port Nis, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, October 2015. © *Graham Jepson*

Amendments to The Scottish List: species and subspecies

THE SCOTTISH BIRDS RECORDS COMMITTEE

In 1993, the Council of The Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) delegated to the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) responsibility for producing a *Scottish List* and publishing regular amendments. The list was first published in 1994 and SBRC appointed a Subcommittee to maintain it; the current members are Dave Clugston, Ron Forrester, Angus Hogg, Bob McGowan, Chris McInerny and Roger Riddington.

SBRC established several principles for the original version of the *Scottish List*, which are still followed. The British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) has maintained the official *British List* since 1883 and SBRC adopts its taxonomy, sequence, scientific and English names for the *Scottish List*. Similarly, species categorization follows BOU.

The BOU Records Committee (BOURC) normally only adjudicates on the first British record for any taxon. The responsibility then lies with the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) for acceptance of all subsequent records of rare species and subspecies in Britain. Similarly SBRC is responsible for acceptance of records of species and subspecies which fall outside the remit of BBRC, but which remain rare in a Scottish context. Decisions by BOURC, BBRC and SBRC automatically apply to the *Scottish List*.

The *Scottish List* was most recently published in full in 2011, with updates in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 (Forrester 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016). Since then, there have been several publications that affect the *Scottish List*. BOURC has published its 46th Report (BOU 2017). BBRC (Hudson *et al*. 2016) and SBRC have produced reports for 2015 (McGowan & McInerny 2017).

The current version of the Scottish List can be found on the SOC website at: www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/the-scottish-list

Taxonomy and the Scottish List

Last year (*Scottish Birds* 36: 200), we reported that BOURC had disbanded its own Taxonomic Subcommittee and were reviewing global taxonomies with a view to adopting one system for all BOU activities including the *British List*. BOU have now announced that from 1 January 2018 they will adopt the International Ornithological Congress (IOC) World Bird List for all its taxonomic needs, including the *British List*. It is expected that 'The British List: A Checklist of Birds of Britain (9th edition)' using the new taxonomy, will be published by BOU in January 2018. It is anticipated that this will have a significant effect on the *Scottish List*, a revised version of which, should be available later next year.

BOURC decisions which affect the Scottish List

Greater Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

This species is renamed Canada Goose (BOU 2017).

BBRC decisions which affect the Scottish List

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii*

1984 Argyll Craigens, Islay, 2CY+, 26 March (R A Hume) (*British Birds* 109: 571).

BOURC recently admitted Cackling Goose to the *British List*, with the first record being a bird in Lancashire in 1976. BBRC has since accepted nine records from Scotland, the above record being the earliest and therefore becomes the 1st Scottish record. Cackling Goose has several subspecies, but as yet, none of the Scottish records have been determined to subspecies level.

Add to *Scottish List* Category A. Subspecies undetermined. Status Code V. Place between Canada Goose and Barnacle Goose.

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*

2015 Outer Hebrides Port of Ness, Lewis, 1CY+ male, 13–17 October, photo (R H Dennis, B A E Marr *et al*.) (*British Birds* 109: 627).

1st Scottish record. Add to *Scottish List* Category A. Subspecies undetermined. Status Code V. Place after Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Scottish List category totals

As a result of the above changes the *Scottish List*, category totals are now:

Category A	512
Category B	6
Category C	8
Total	**526**
Category D	10

There are currently more outstanding potential first records for Scotland than at any time in the past. Hopefully many of these decisions will soon be positively resolved and appear in print to allow inclusion in our next report.

Records of species and subspecies recorded in Scotland on up to 20 occasions

Comprehensive lists of all records of species and subspecies recorded in Scotland on up to 20 occasions now appear on the SOC's website in tabulated form (www.the-soc.org.uk/up-to-20-occasions). The lists are updated annually.

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Plate 156. Pink-footed Geese, Fife, December 2010. © *John Anderson*

The status of the Pink-footed Goose at Cameron Reservoir, Fife from 1991/92 to 2015/16: the importance of regular monitoring

A.W. BROWN

Cameron Reservoir, Fife has been a Pink-footed Goose roost since the early 1950s with numbers on national counts ranging from 2,000 to over 5,000 up to winter 1990/91 resulting in the site receiving SSSI, SPA and Ramsar designations. Regular monitoring since winter 1991/92 recorded roosting birds on many occasions with some peak counts of over 10,000 birds and an exceptional count of 27,300 in October 1993. Most of the peaks did not occur on national count dates emphasising the value of additional counts. However, from the mid-1990s frequency of use and the numbers of birds began to decline with none roosting by winter 2009/10 until a limited return in 2014/15. The reasons for the decline are unclear as birds still frequent nearby feeding areas, but given the statutory designations pertaining to the site certain management measures, such as a reduced water level in winter and clearance of some bankside scrub, could be undertaken to determine if this is of benefit to the roost.

Introduction

The annual Grey Goose Census co-ordinated by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) is the principal means of gathering data on the numbers and distribution of Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrynchus* in Britain during October and November (Mitchell *et al.* 1997, Mitchell & Hearn 2004, Mitchell 2015). The Grey Goose census uses a methodology (dawn and dusk counts) to record those species, not readily monitored by the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), which feed away from the water body during the day and use the site to roost at night (Gilbert *et al.* 1998, Holt *et al.* 2015 and www.bto.org/webs-reporting). The main weakness of the formal Grey Goose census is that by using fixed count dates in October and November it can overlook and underestimate the overall importance and value of a site to geese in terms of when the annual peak count occurs, and the pattern of use throughout the winter.

The data gathered through the Grey Goose census supports the legal obligation of the UK to conserve waterbirds and their associated habitats through a system of site protection. These statutory designations include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-3614) and international conventions and directives, namely Ramsar sites (www.ramsar.org) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) (jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-162). Implicit in this process is the need for good quality data based on regular monitoring of such protected sites both as part of the site condition monitoring required to be undertaken by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) for such designated sites in Scotland and to inform site management decisions to the benefit of the species for which the site is designated.

Pink-footed Geese were not specifically recorded in East Fife until the 1870s. Large flocks were recorded at the mouth of the River Tay by the early 1900s, and it was considered to be common in Fife by the 1930s (Berry 1939) with large numbers present along the Tay and in the East Neuk fields by the 1950s (Baxter & Rintoul 1953, Smout 1986). However, count data for specific roost sites prior to the 1950s are limited, although it is known that Bean Geese *Anser fabilis* used Cameron Reservoir until at least 1954 (Atkinson-Willes 1963) with Pink-footed Geese being recorded there since then (Boyd & Ogilvie 1969). During the Second World War wires were strung across the reservoir to deter flying boats from landing so it is unlikely that geese used the roost at that time. By the 1980s, around 6,000 were recorded as present during October and November (Madders & Welstead 1989).

Cameron Reservoir has been counted regularly under the annual Grey Goose Census counts since 1960/61. These data resulted in the site being designated as a SSSI in 1984 (after previous notifications in 1955 and 1971), owing to it being "the most important winter roost for Pink-footed Geese in North East Fife, regularly supporting more than 5% of the world population" (SNH 2010). The site was subsequently designated as a SPA and Ramsar site in 1994 owing to it holding an average peak ranging from 6% to 7.2% of the Icelandic/Greenlandic population of this species (JNCC 2008). A threshold figure of 1% is the basis for the site designation process (Musgrove *et al.* 2011).

Whilst the national goose counts have provided the basis for identifying the overall population total and informed the site designation process, additional counts at Cameron Reservoir throughout the winter have enabled site specific trends in goose use of the site to be determined (Brown 2006, 2009, 2010). Similar work has been undertaken at Gladhouse Reservoir, Lothian (Brown & Brown 2009a), Fala Flow, Lothian (Brown & Brown 2011) and West Water Reservoir, Borders (Brown & Brown 1992, 2007).

This paper presents the results of this detailed monitoring for Cameron Reservoir, incorporates earlier data where appropriate and discusses the implications of the counts on site management relative to the site protection process.

Study area, aims and methods

Cameron Reservoir (NO470113) is situated about 6 km south of St. Andrews, Fife, at an altitude of 146 m (Figure 1). It has a surface area of 43 ha and a perimeter of 4 km (eip.ceh.ac.uk/apps/lakes/detail.html#wbid=24588) making it one of the largest freshwater bodies in Fife and certainly the largest in east/north-east Fife (Corbet 1998). The reservoir was constructed in 1914 to supply drinking water to St Andrews, but this use was discontinued by the early 1990s. The site is fenced and bounded by conifer plantations on the north and south sides merging into a bankside margin of willow carr. The north side also has willow carr interspersed with coarser grassland. Angling from bank and boat takes place from March to October, recently extended to November, and a circular walk encompasses the site.

From winter 1991/92 regular roost counts, usually at dusk, were undertaken throughout the winter from October to March. These counts enabled the peak to be determined, which may not necessarily coincide with the national Grey Goose count dates, thus enabling the value of and use of the site by geese throughout the winter to be determined (Brown 2010, Brown & Brown 1992, 2007 and unpublished data). Additional counts between 1970/71 and 1990/91 were available from WeBS counts (BTO) but these have not been included as they likely refer to feeding rather than roosting birds.

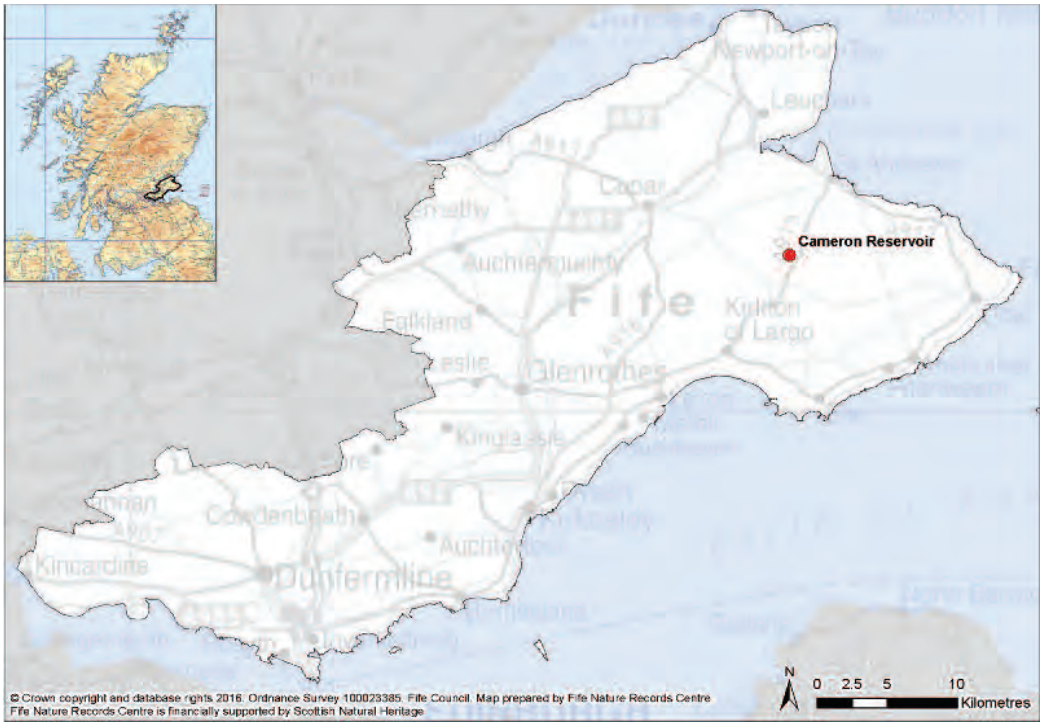

Figure 1. The location of Cameron Reservoir, Fife.

Results

Although the data gathered since 1991/92 are the focus of this study, earlier counts are presented to place the more recent counting period into context.

National counts 1950s to 1990/91

The November national counts of Pink-footed Geese from 1951/52 to 1990/91, including data extracted from the national count scheme since 1960 (Boyd & Ogilvie 1969; annual goose reports

published by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust) show a fluctuating pattern of use overall to the mid-1970s. More frequent counts of over 5,000 occurred from 1977/78 (Figure 2).

National counts 1991/92 to 2015/16

The November national counts for the period 1991/92 to 2015/16 (Figure 2) show the continuation of, and even greater fluctuation, in the pattern of use. Numbers exceeded 10,000 birds on three occasions in the 11 years to 2001/02, whilst other counts were generally below 3,000. The last substantial count of 8,900 was in November 2003 after which there was a major decline with no birds recorded at all from 2009/10 to 2014/15 before a count of over 3,000 birds in November 2015.

Peak counts 1991/92 to 2015/16

To determine how frequently the November count recorded the peak count during each season, additional counts were undertaken throughout each winter from 1991/92. The month of the peak varied with November recording the peak in just eight of the 21 years when geese were present with another eight peaks in October or December. The peak winter counts and the month of the peak (Figure 3) indicates that up until winter 1997/98 peaks of over 10,000 birds were recorded in six of the seven winters, the highest count being 27,300 in October 1993.

Comparison of the number of geese recorded on national roost count dates with the peak number roosting on other dates throughout each winter (Figure 4) indicates that in most winters, other than in 1994/95 and 1995/96, the peak winter count was not recorded on a national count date.

Until 1997/98, the number of occasions on which roosting geese were recorded compared with the number of occasions on which no geese were recorded during each winter were relatively similar, indicating frequent use of the site as a roost (Figure 5). Thereafter, the decline in the number of occasions in which geese used the roost was apparent even when the number of roost count visits increased in the 2005/06 to 2008/09 period. Overall, in the seven winters from 1991/92 to 1997/98 over 87% of roost counts recorded geese. For the period 1998/99 to 2004/05 this had declined to 49% of counts then to only 18% by 2005/06 to 2015/16, but with none in the period 2009/10 to 2013/14 before a recent slight recovery.

The greater number of counts undertaken each season from 1991/92 enabled the pattern of use during October, November and December to be investigated. Figure 6 presents the months in which counts exceeded the national threshold for site designation and shows a clear decline in the number of occasions on which the threshold value was exceeded. Additionally, there was a change in the pattern of autumn/early winter use of the site from a preference for October up to the mid-1990s, November by the late 1990s and early 2000s and then December by the mid-2000s.

The decline in the number of geese using the roost is further illustrated by comparison of both the peak annual counts and national counts as a percentage of the national population during the period from 1991/92. To allow for the fluctuation in pattern which occurs on an annual basis these results can be summarised by comparing the mean peak counts and the mean co-ordinated national count peaks in five-year periods (Figure 7). The GB 1% threshold for Pink-footed Geese has increased from 1,100 in 1991/92 to the current 3,600 (Musgrove *et al.* 2011). Figure 7 indicates that up to the period 2001/02 to 2005/06 average counts for five-year periods above the threshold level were attained for both national count date counts and peak counts. Since then national counts have not attained that level whilst peak counts have not done so for the period 2011/12 to 2015/16.

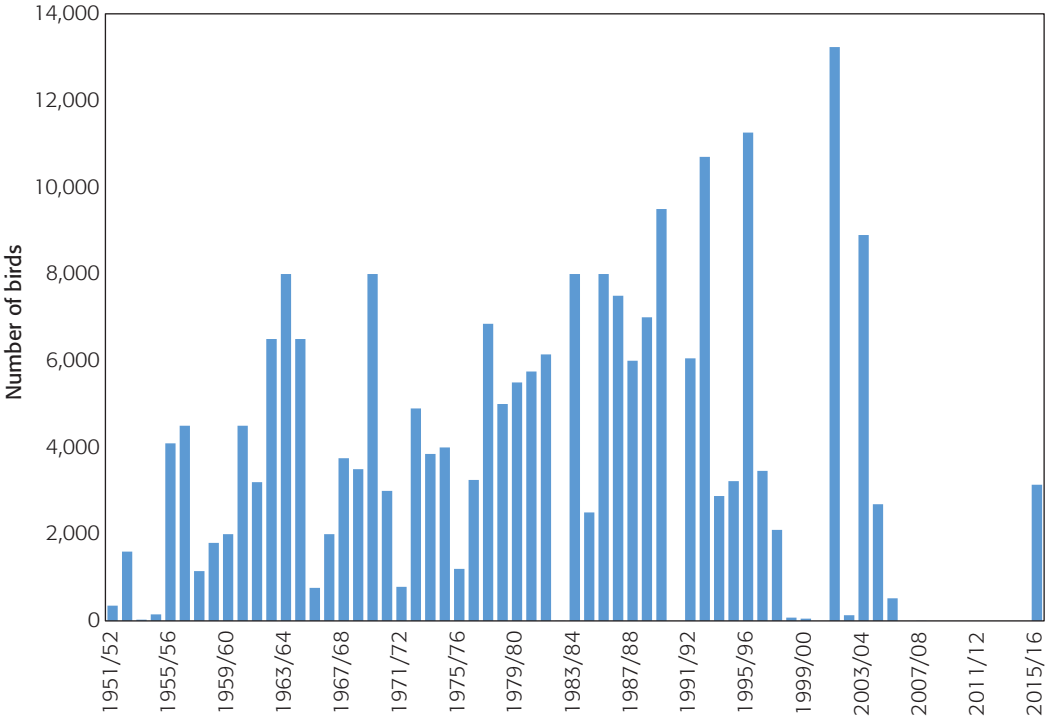

Figure 2. National counts of Pink-footed Geese in November at Cameron Reservoir, Fife, 1951/52 to 2015/16.

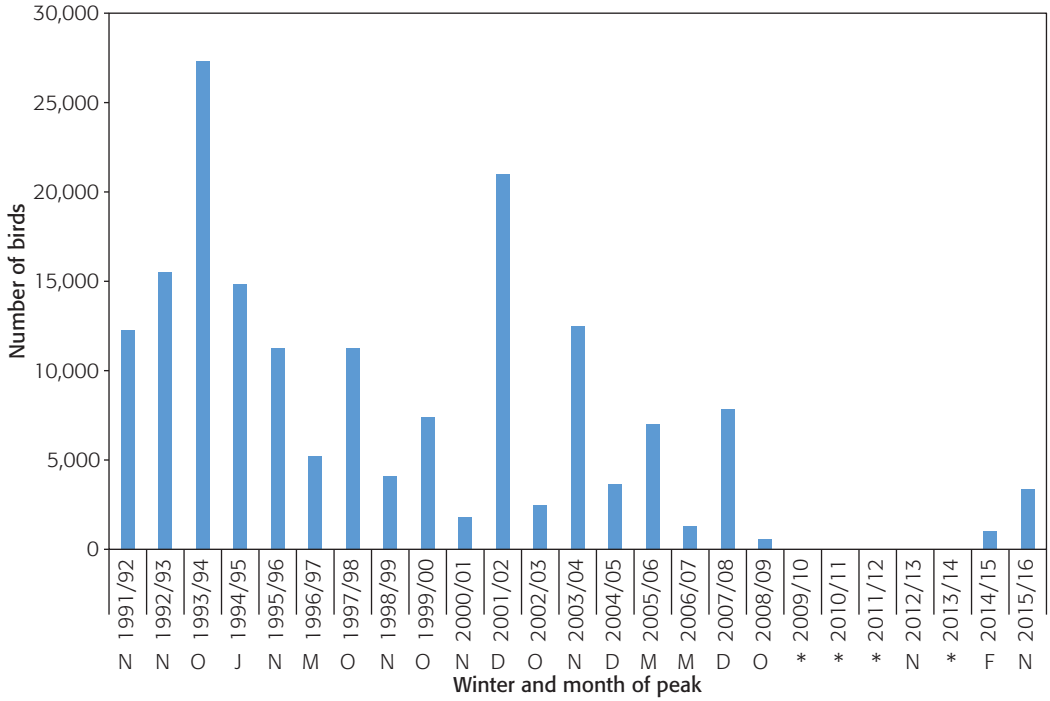

Figure 3. Peak counts (with month of peak) of Pink-footed Geese, Cameron Reservoir, Fife, 1991/92 to 2015/16. J = January, M = March, O = October, N= November, D = December.

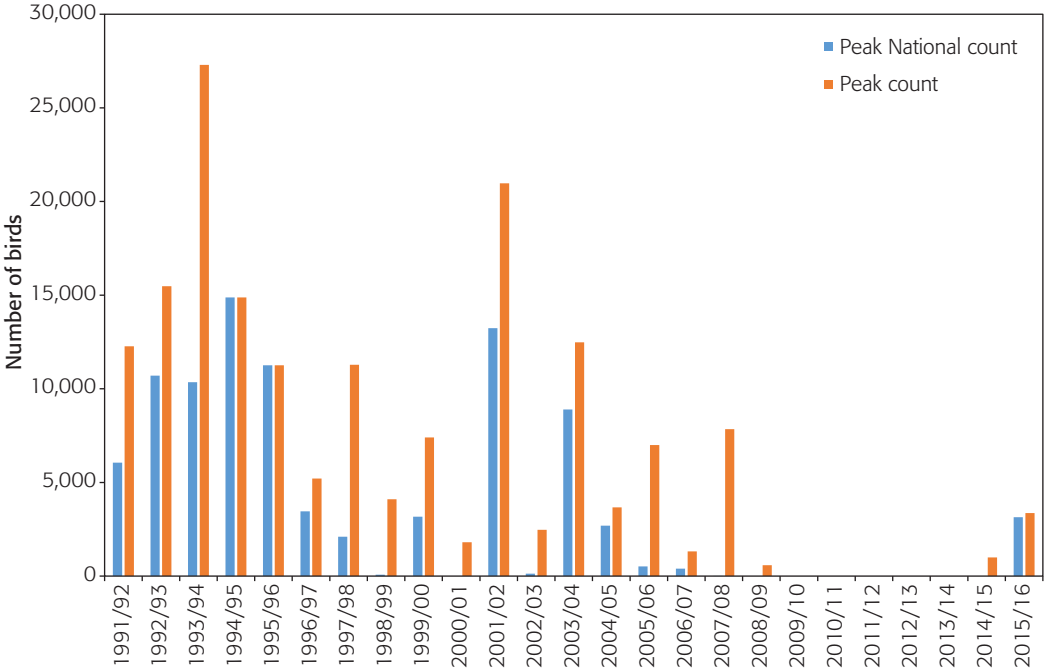

Figure 4. Maximum 'national counts' of Pink-footed Goose compared with peak winter counts, Cameron Reservoir, Fife, 1991/92 to 2015/16.

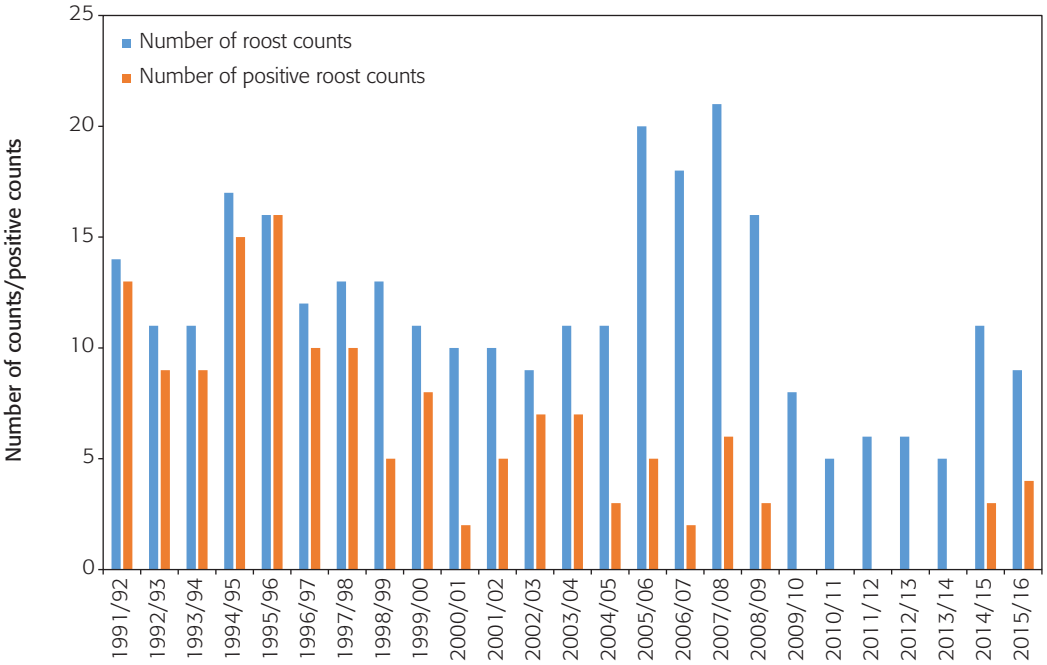

Figure 5. Annual number of Pink-footed Goose roost counts and number of counts recording roosting geese, Cameron Reservoir, Fife, 1991/92 to 2015/16.

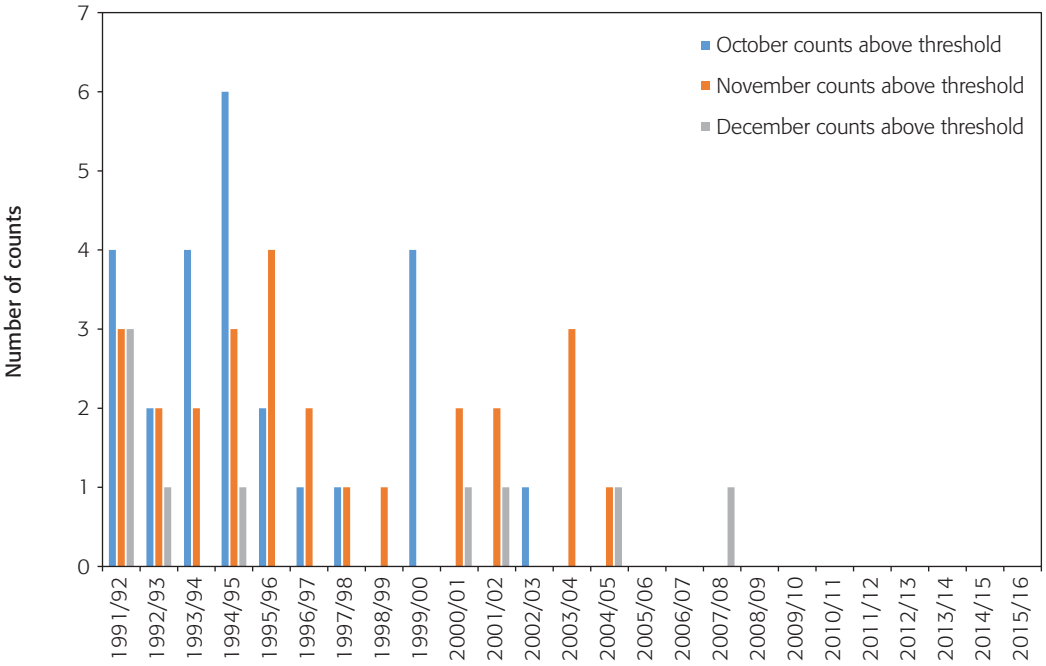

Figure 6. Frequency of Pink-footed Goose roost counts at Cameron Reservoir, Fife, with above the GB 1% threshold level for site designation in October to December, 1991/92 to 2015/16.

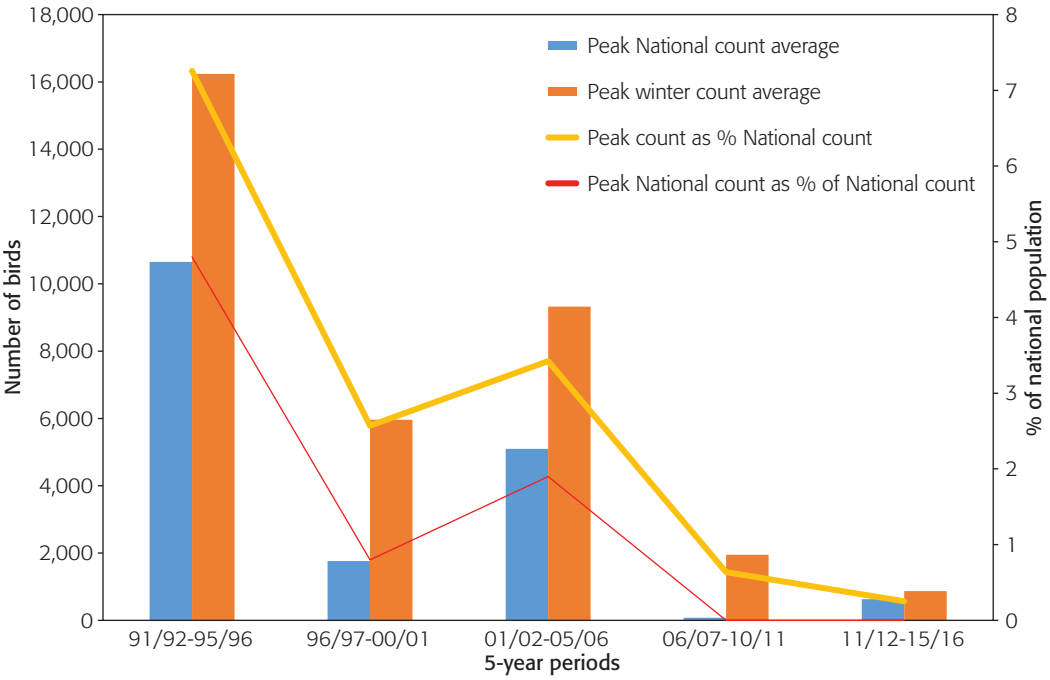

Figure 7. Five-year average roost counts of Pink-footed Geese at Cameron Reservoir, Fife, based on peaks on national count dates and peaks on all-winter counts and their percentage of the national population, 1991/92 to 2015/16.

Discussion

From winters 1990/91 to 2015/16 regular roost counts at Cameron Reservoir, in addition to the national counts, showed that the winter peak could occur in any month from October to March but with October and November being the principal time for this to occur. From 1991/92 to 1997/98 the peak roost was regularly over 10,000, corresponding with an increase in the national population at that time (Mitchell & Hearn 2004). Thereafter, other than occasional counts of over 10,000 until 2003/04, a steady decline began at Cameron, despite an increase in the national population (Mitchell 2015), with both lower peak counts and fewer, variable and short-lived roosting occurrences. By winter 2008/09, there was only one positive roost count and by winter 2009/10 the roost had been abandoned before roosting birds returned in winter 2014/15. Ironically, the decline occurred just after the site had been designated a SPA and Ramsar site (JNCC 2008).

Prior to 1991/92, the main counts were restricted to November and it has not been possible to determine how the geese used the roost at other times during those winters. The findings presented in this study demonstrate how regular counts over a long period, in addition to nationally coordinated counts, can provide a much fuller understanding of the value and importance of a roost site, its frequency of use, changes that occur and the implications for site designation, conservation and management. Whilst the national counts have been the basis for site designation, with numbers meeting the required 1% population threshold, additional counts have consistently shown higher numbers of the total population using the Cameron roost. Similar findings have been found with other waterfowl using Cameron Reservoir by comparing monthly Wetland Bird Survey counts (WeBS) with additional counts (Brown 2006, 2010).

The statutory designations afforded to Cameron Reservoir for its Pink-footed Goose roost place an obligation on the UK Government to monitor such sites and ensure that they are conserved for their specified interest (jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1359). When Cameron Reservoir was designated as a SPA and Ramsar site the citation stated that the site regularly held 6,760 birds during the period 1986/87 to 1990/91 (NCC 1992). Brown (2006) showed that the average five-year peak roost counts from 1991/92 to 1995/96, whilst indicating a decreasing trend in numbers and fluctuation in peaks over a series of winters, were well above the site qualification threshold for national and international importance (Baker *et al.* 2006, Musgrove *et al.* 2007). Data from this study has shown that up until the period 2001/02 to 2005/06 the average peak was still higher than that at the original site designation but subsequently declined to below the 1% threshold level.

Why this decline has occurred at Cameron Reservoir is unclear. However, it is a major consideration in securing the conservation status of the site. The Conservation Objectives of the SPA states that the "population of the species as a viable component of the site" must be maintained (gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/index.jsp). What is of concern is that the decline in numbers using the roost to below the 1% threshold level has not seen any positive management actions undertaken to try and reverse the decline and comply with those objectives. In the late 1990s/early 2000s, proposals were under consideration by Fife Council for the establishment of a Local Nature Reserve at Cameron Reservoir in which all interested parties would be involved in the management of the site, with the protection of its goose roost as the central focus. Unfortunately, this initiative stalled owing to ownership issues and since then the long-term future of the site has been in doubt.

Various factors may be involved in the decline including changes in feeding areas, increased disturbance at the site from activities such as shooting and fishing, greater public access, change in water quality and water levels, predators and habitat changes. Monitoring of feeding areas associated with the roost took place throughout the study period (pers. obs.) and recorded between 2,000 and 9,000 birds in these areas during the period when no birds were roosting; indeed, these birds were, on occasion, recorded overflying the reservoir to roost elsewhere (pers. obs.). Shooting pressure at or near the site did not appear to increase, and whilst the fishing season has expanded

into the period when geese use the site, dawn and dusk restrictions are in place thus minimising potential conflicts. There has been an increase in public access since the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the associated access code, and, with part of the footpath at the site now a core path, there is the potential for increased disturbance impacting upon recovery of the goose roost.

Those factors relating to natural changes at the site could be potentially more significant in affecting the roost. It seems unlikely that a change in water quality, with regular algal blooms occurring in summer and the reservoir changing from mesotrophic to eutrophic (Pritchard *et al.* 1992, Ecos Countryside Services 1992, 2006), will have impacted upon the geese. Mink *Vulpes vulpes* have been replaced by Otter *Lutra lutra* in recent years and the latter are now observed regularly. Otters are known to predate ducks (Harris & Yalden 2008) so their presence at a goose roost may cause some disturbance, but it is unclear if this would cause the roost to be abandoned. However, change in habitat, in part associated with site management, may be an important contributing factor.

When Cameron Reservoir was used for water supply purposes, water levels fluctuated with rainfall levels and level of demand, with exposed shoreline often present in late summer/autumn and early winter. Since the reservoir became redundant, water levels have tended to remain high on a more regular basis (pers. obs.). This has resulted in encroachment of willow carr along much of the shore edge, perhaps discouraging birds from using the roost by limiting opportunities for geese to haul out along the shore as well as making the site appear more enclosed, in contrast to sites such as West Water Reservoir with its extensive shoreline and open views (Brown & Brown 2007). Indeed, conifer trees on the north side were felled in the 1950s leaving mostly grassland (Madders & Welstead 1989) at the time when Pink-footed Geese first began to roost at the site. Removal of some of the scrub vegetation and/or reduction of the water level in autumn/early winter could be a key management consideration in reversing the decline in use of the roost. Indeed, the return of geese in winter 2015/16 in larger numbers than for many years occurred when the water level was lowered for operational, not conservation management, reasons suggesting that this is a specific management tool requiring further examination as the most practical action to take to determine if this has any impact upon goose use of the site. Perhaps even a permanently lowered water level may be of benefit, but this would then require on-going management to prevent scrub encroachment onto the exposed shore and may conflict with the fishing interests.

Any management action would need to be accompanied by detailed monitoring over several years to ascertain if this has any positive effect on the use of the roost. Such management would contribute to both the site monitoring process and the obligation in the Birds Directive to provide for the conservation of Pink-footed Geese at the site. Whilst the designation of specific sites for individual species is susceptible to changes in that species distribution and use of an area, which site specific management may not be able to resolve, it is important that all potential management options and causes of change are fully investigated and actioned.

Within Fife, the loss of the Pink-footed Goose roost at Cameron Reservoir has not seen a reduction in overall numbers as birds have used other roost sites (pers. obs.). This has been demonstrated elsewhere in Scotland (Brotherston 1964, Newton & Brotherston 1973, Bell *et al.* 1988, Giroux 1991, Bell & Newton 1995). How geese use an area, and individual sites within it, can vary considerably both within and between winters so it is important to look at a suite of sites to understand their overall value. Data for south-east Scotland (Brown & Brown 2008, 2009b) has shown the value of an on-going monitoring programme to determine the extent of any changes which may be occurring in the frequency and timing of use of specific roosts, and to help identify the reasons behind such changes which may have both local and national contexts. Ideally, such monitoring needs to be linked to a feeding study to determine the association between roosts and feeding areas, what the preferred feeding crops are at different periods of the winter and how this can assist with goose management regimes.

National Goose counts have undoubtedly helped to identify key goose roosts in the UK. This study at Cameron Reservoir has shown how additional monitoring enables a fuller assessment to be made of the value of the roost throughout the winter and its importance at the national, regional or local level. In this study, it has shown a decline in use, but the process could be equally applied at many other sites and for a variety of species to determine overall value and importance. This would help to identify any management prescriptions to help secure the continued use of the site for geese or other waterfowl. Knowing what is there and placing this into a wider context of site assessment is essential to the long-term conservation of both species and sites.

Acknowledgements

I thank the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust for access to goose counts at Cameron Reservoir prior to 1991, through their annual reports. Also, I am grateful to the WeBS partnership (the British Trust for Ornithology, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the Joint Nature Conservancy Committee (the last on behalf of the statutory nature conservation agencies: Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage and the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland), in association with the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust) for access to relevant WeBS counts for Cameron Reservoir. Some of the data presented in this paper was used in reports to SNH (GRA/APP/CUP 8033 and GRA/APP/CUP 10320) and the grant assistance received to gather data and prepare those reports is gratefully acknowledged.

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Montagu's Harrier breeding in Scotland - some observations on the historical records from the 1950s in Perthshire

R.L. MCMILLAN

Introduction

The first comprehensive summary of the occurrence of Montagu's Harrier in Scotland was contained in *The Birds of Scotland* (Forrester *et al*. 2007). The author of the species account, Chris McInerny, concluded that had it not been for the criminal behaviour of sporting interests and gamekeepers, at a time of significant range expansion of the species in the 1950s, we might all have been able to still enjoy such a beautiful bird breeding in Scotland. Though Montagu's Harrier had attempted to breed in Scotland earlier, the first successful breeding was at Braco Moor in south Perthshire in 1952 (Blake 1953, 1977, 2001, Blake & Stephen 1953). Birds were present in the area in successive years, and bred again in 1953 and 1955, which was thought to be the last breeding occurrence in Scotland. This paper provides significant additional information for the historical record.

Background

Edward Blake (1927–2009) reported the first successful breeding of Montagu's Harrier in south Perthshire in 1952, though it was only after the second breeding success in 1953 that details emerged (Blake 1953, Blake & Stephen 1953). Blake lived in Dunblane and was familiar with the area. It is not known what previous experience he had of harrier species, but up until the early 1950s, even Hen Harriers were extremely rare in Scotland following long-term persecution by gamekeepers (Blake 1976), so his experience may have been limited. Blake was also known to the author by the late 1950s. Some of the events which subsequently unfolded were known by the author from that time, though much of the detail was missing. Blake was very helpful to Chris McInerny who approached him in 2005 for information when writing the account for *The Birds of Scotland*. Much of the detail, both new and old, in that account was provided and confirmed by Blake from his personal notebooks.

Summary of Montagu's Harriers in Perthshire 1951–56

1951. Whilst it may not be connected, a male Montagu's Harrier was shot within 10 miles of Perth (location unknown) in late April 1951 (MacKenzie 1951).

1952. Blake reported finding a pair of Montagu's Harriers at a moor in the Central Highlands. They successfully fledged a single young. This was not reported until 1953 (Blake 1953, Blake & Stephen 1953). Details of the site were not disclosed at the time, but were confirmed subsequently by Blake to refer to Braco Moor (Forrester *et al*. 2007).

1953. The pair of birds returned to the same site, but the female was shot at the nest. The male then successfully brooded and reared two young which fledged successfully. David Stephen visited the site with Blake and photographed the bird. Stephen and Blake provided supplementary feeding to the chicks. Details were published within a few weeks of the fledging (Blake 1953, Blake & Stephen 1953).

1954. Possibly the same male was found on Cromlix Moor, 4.5 km south-west from the Braco site and was present throughout May until 11 June. Though the bird was territorial, it was unable to find a female (Blake 1977).

1955. A pair bred successfully on Cromlix Moor, producing five eggs, but fledging three young. One of the young was shot by the local gamekeeper and pole traps were set for the others, but despite this, two young apparently survived (Blake 1977, Forrester *et al.* 2007).

1956. A male was seen in the area between Braco Moor and Cromlix on May 6. This represents the final observation of the species in the area.

None of the information from 1954–56 appears to have been published until more than 20 years later (Blake 1977), but was confirmed and added to in Forrester *et al.* (2007) following input from Blake.

Given the national significance of these records, it was evident there were information gaps at the time, not necessarily fully clarified by Blake's 1977 paper. Whilst it can be understood that there was a wish for sensitive site details to be withheld, other legal factors which are discussed below may have clouded the issue.

Questions of identification

In the *Scottish Field* article (Blake & Stephen 1953) David Stephen admits it was only when close views were obtained of the nest from the hide, and from studying subsequent photographs, that the male was identified as a Montagu's Harrier. This was confirmed by the author when researching a paper on raptor persecution on Atholl Estates in Perthshire (McMillan 2011). The author visited Catherine Ferguson, daughter of a former Atholl Estates' Head Gamekeeper, Fergie

Plate 157. Male Montagu's Harrier brooding chicks, Braco Moor, Perth & Kinross, 1953. © *David Stephen*

Ferguson, to obtain photographs to illustrate the paper. Fergie Ferguson had been a close friend of Stephen who regularly visited Atholl to photograph wildlife. Looking through family photographs, the author found black and white photographs, taken by Stephen, of a male Montagu's Harrier brooding and feeding two chicks. Two of these photographs had illustrated the *Scottish Field* article and are shown below. Another colour photograph by David Stephen from *Scottish Field* is reproduced in *The Birds of Scotland* (Forrester *et al.* 2007) on page 51.

Anecdotal evidence then emerged that Blake had taken Stephen to what he regarded as a Hen Harrier nest in 1953. According to Catherine Ferguson, an argument regarding the identification broke out. It was some days later before Blake conceded in a phone call to Stephen that it was indeed a Montagu's Harrier.

The male Montagu's Harrier was in the same area as in 1952, and was assumed by Blake to be the same bird. Based on Stephen's 1953 identification, it therefore appears that a retrospective report was made for successful breeding in 1952. The successful breeding in 1953 and identification of Montagu's Harrier by Stephen, was immediately followed by a piece from Blake in the September issue of *The Edinburgh Bird Bulletin*, and a joint article with Stephen in the November issue of the *Scottish Field*. The *Scottish Field* article was to be "described by Edward Blake" and "photographed by David Stephen". However, a written introduction by David Stephen admitted to the identification issue and was perhaps a means to communicate the true facts, which Blake may have been reluctant to publish at the time.

Plate 158. Male Montagu's Harrier feeding chicks, Braco Moor, Perth & Kinross, 1953. © *David Stephen*

Mistakes in harrier identification are easily made, more especially at that time given their rarity. Donald Watson admits that in 1959 when harriers were first located in Galloway, it was some time before he was convinced he was watching Hen Harriers, and not Montagu's or Pallid Harriers (Watson 1977 p. 177).

Some unique legal consequences

The moorland occupied by the Montagu's Harriers in Perthshire was managed for driven grouse shooting. When a female Montagu's Harrier was shot at Braco Moor in 1953, it is unlikely the species was afforded any legal protection in Scotland (A. Stewart pers. comm.). The species was

not included in the list of protected species in the Perthshire Protection of Wild Birds Order 1898, although Hen Harrier was. Once the Protection of Birds Act 1954 was enacted, Montagu's Harrier was a Schedule 1 species. In respect of the persecution in 1955 at Cromlix, there was a clear breach of this legislation, as there was in the use of pole traps in that year, as these had been banned since 1904. Blake admitted to springing two pole traps at Cromlix. A young bird was subsequently shot, ironically on 'the glorious' Twelfth 1955 (Blake 1977). Blake claims "the lives of the other two were spared once I had words with the gamekeeper concerned." Perhaps little known to Blake at that time, Lady Auckland of Cromlix Estate had commenced civil interdict proceedings to prevent him "entering upon or interfering with the lands and estate of Cromlix, Parish of Dunblane and Lecropt." The precise terms are not known, but it was thought to be for general disturbance and interfering with legal traps. Interim Interdict was granted at Dunblane Sheriff Court on 30 August 1955, and Blake did not lodge defences or appear personally to defend the action. The warrant granting interdict was served on Blake by registered post on 31 August 1955, on which date according to his notes, he was back at the Montagu's breeding site and reported that the territory was deserted (Blake 1977). The only sighting reported by Blake in 1956 was on 6 May when he saw the male on Cromlet Hill. Undeterred by the interdict, he was clearly back monitoring the area. Two days later he was again in the area, but his luck had run out and he was caught. On 5 July 1956, he was found guilty of Breach of Interdict and fined £10 with an alternative of 60 days imprisonment.

Although the Montagu's Harrier attempted colonisation appeared to end in 1956, Blake continued to visit the area, probably to search for Hen Harriers, and on 27 May 1962, he was again found on the estate and was prosecuted. He subsequently pled guilty to Breach of Interdict and was fined £15 with an alternative of 60 days imprisonment. Although the interdict was a civil process, its subsequent breach was a criminal offence, so, by 1962 Blake had two criminal convictions trying to protect harriers. The author is unaware of any other instance in Scotland where a civil interdict has been taken out to prevent a naturalist from protecting and monitoring wildlife, and which subsequently led to criminal convictions against them.

Discussion

The interdict proceedings by Lady Auckland were probably implemented because there was insufficient evidence for the police to report Blake for any statutory offences, or common law crimes such as Malicious Mischief (Vandalism) in regard to interference with legal traps. It is likely that a degree of collusion existed with the local constabulary who Blake had complained to on a number of occasions, but no action had been taken (J. Bayne pers. comm.). It is not known whether Blake had been asked to leave Cromlix Estate previously and had refused. With support from gamekeepers and other staff, civil interdict appeared to be the easiest option for the estate, and the absence of any defence from Blake meant it was uncontested. Blake's subsequent actions in breaching the interdict were matters for his own judgement.

The author lived in a village adjacent to the estate and joined Perthshire and Kinross-shire Constabulary in 1963, working at the Dunblane Police Office until 1966. That widespread persecution was taking place on Cromlix Estate was highly likely, and given the circumstances it is suspected that all species of harriers would be ruthlessly removed. The relationships between the police, local estates and their gamekeepers was such that any complaint regarding raptor persecution would be a low priority and possibly ignored.

It is unlikely that Blake's behaviour would be condoned by some in the ornithological establishment. This might explain why full details of such a significant event were not published until 1977, and not in a national journal. In *Birds in Scotland* (1986) there was an opportunity for Thom to include Blake's work, but the species account for Montagu's Harrier is brief, and ignores the detail.

Blake proved to be an excellent field observer, who took detailed notes on nest structure, egg laying, prey and general behaviour. Many of his observations were made from a hide. In 1953, the male successfully reared two chicks following the shooting of the female when the chicks were only 3–5 days old. It is apparent that Blake and David Stephen provided food to the chicks which may have contributed to the subsequent fledging. Blake (1977) claimed that there was no other instance known where a male Montagu's Harrier, in the absence of a mate, had successfully brooded and fed small chicks to the point of fledging. Considering Blake was holding down a full-time job at the time, his dedication in the field was admirable, a point acknowledged by David Stephen.

Though Blake was convicted of crimes, it was in fact Lady Auckland of Cromlix Estate and the estate's gamekeepers who were committing the real crimes.

It was known that Blake kept detailed notebooks and papers. It was his wish that these be passed to the University of Stirling on his death (Judi Passmore pers. comm.). In order to verify some of the detail contained in this article, the author contacted the university to discover that they had destroyed the papers. However, the account for *The Birds of Scotland* contains the relevant detail from Blake's notebooks.

Montagu's Harrier was able to expand its range in Britain in the 1940s and 1950s mainly due to the lack of keepering during the war years and immediately thereafter. The colonisation in Perthshire and successful breeding in Kirkcudbright in 1953 were short lived and human persecution was undoubtedly a major factor. It is the only species of raptor recorded in Scotland which successfully colonised, only to be exterminated, and which 60 years later remains absent as a breeding bird.

Acknowledgements

The late Jimmy Bayne from Dunblane, a friend of Blake, was familiar with the terms of the Cromlix Estate civil interdict. Allan Stewart provided advice on the legal protection of Montagu's Harrier in 1952–53. Roy Dennis and David Jardine provided helpful comments on an early draft.

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Scotland's Bean Geese and the spring 2017 migration

The migratory movements of the flock of approximately 200 Taiga Bean Geese *Anser fabalis fabalis* wintering on the Slamannan plateau (Falkirk, Upper Forth) have been studied in detail since 2012 (Mitchell *et al.* 2016). Insights into the day-to-day and annual migratory movements have been provided by 11 of the geese fitted with Global Positioning System (GPS) tags attached to plastic neck collars. Whilst to date the location data generated by the GPS tags has largely confirmed the findings of the conventional monitoring undertaken on behalf of the Bean Goose Action Group (BGAG) on the plateau for the past 20 winters, they have proved revelatory when they are elsewhere in their annual cycle. So it proved in spring 2017.

In winter 2016/17, tags on four Bean Geese caught in October 2015 remained active, providing daily location data. The geese tend to leave Scotland in February, heading east across the North Sea to a recently discovered, but presumably traditional, staging area at Pandrup in north-west Denmark (see Mitchell *et al.* 2016 for details). This note describes the eventful migration of spring 2017 undertaken by the four tagged geese.

The four geese comprise a breeding pair (Tag 27, an adult female and Tag 29 an adult male), Tag 30 (an adult female) and Tag 10 (an unpaired adult male). All four birds gave location data throughout the winter from the time of their arrival back at Slamannan in October 2016. On the morning of 6 February 2017, Tags 10, 27, and 29 probably left Slamannan a little after dawn, at about 06:30 (back-calculated from subsequent location data and flight speeds) and headed east out into the Firth of Forth. Location data for Tag 30 during the evening/early morning are lacking but,

Table 1. Chronology of movements of *fabalis* Bean Geese on spring migration from Scotland to Denmark 5 February to 3 March 2017. Codes in left hand column refer to map annotations in Figures 1–2. Movement of Tag 10 as per Tags 27 & 29 up to 8 Feb and arrival on Orkney.

Label	Date	Time (GMT)	Comments
Tag 30 (Figure 1)			
a	5 Feb 2017	12:00	At Slamannan, Upper Forth
b	6 Feb 2017	12:00	Crossing North Sea
c	7 Feb 2017	00:00	Recorded on coast near Lemvig, Denmark
d	7 Feb 2017	12:00	At Pandrup, NW Denmark
Tags 27 and 29 (Figure 1 and 2)			
1	6 Feb 2017	00:00	At Slamannan, Upper Forth. Estimated time of departure 06:30
2	6 Feb 2017	09:24	Recorded flying just to the south of the Isle of May
3	7 Feb 2017	00:00	Overnights mid North Sea
4	7 Feb 2017	18:00	Recorded 20 km to the south-east of Fair Isle
5	8 Feb 2017	00:00	Overnights on Stronsay, Orkney
6	9 Feb 2017	00:00	Recorded near Loch of Hundland, west Mainland, Orkney
7	9 Feb 2017	12:00	Recorded near Castletown, Caithness
8	10 Feb 2017	12:00	Recorded flying south over the Cairngorms
9	10 Feb 2017	18:00	Recorded back at Slamannan
10	20 Feb 2017	12:00	Recorded at Slamannan
11	20 Feb 2017	18:00	Leaves coast after passing Berwick-upon-Tweed
12	21 Feb 2017	00:00	Recorded at Esbjerg, Denmark
13	21 Feb 2017	06:00	Arrives at Pandrup, NW Denmark to join rest of Scottish wintering flock
Tag 10 (Figure 2)			
1	2 Mar 2017	07:00	Leaves Stromness, Orkney
2	2 Mar 2017	11:00	Crossing North Sea, flying east
3	2 Mar 2017	14:00	Arrives near Vanse, southern Norway
4	3 Mar 2017	06:00	Resumes migration east towards Denmark
5	3 Mar 2017	09:00	Arrives at Pandrup, NW Denmark to join rest of Scottish wintering flock

based on location data later that day, Tag 30 may have left Slamannan even earlier (possibly late evening on 5 Feb) and on a more southerly route, which proved to be to her good fortune. We know that by noon on 6 Feb, Tag 30 was recorded at 55.24°N, 5.45°E some 470 km across the North Sea (b in Figure 1), and certainly by midnight, it had made landfall in west Denmark (Table 1). Unfortunately, it is not known how many birds successfully made the crossing that day since no contemporary counts were available from Pandrup.

Location data from Tags 27 and 29 indicated a different fate. The birds were recorded passing just to the south of the Isle of May at 09:24 on 6 February and appeared to take a more northerly course than Tag 30 out towards the middle of the North Sea (Figure 1). By noon, the birds were flying into a 40 km/hour south-easterly headwind (Figures 3 & 4). At 18:00, the geese were at 57.02°N, 2.55°E, some 340 km east of the Isle of May and by then the wind had strengthened to approximately 50 km/hour. The geese battled on and were recorded at 57.19°N, 2.96°E (only 30 km further east) at midnight where they were possibly resting. What happened next is not known; the geese may have decided to abandon the crossing and head back towards Scotland, or perhaps they simply could not outpace the strength and direction of the easterly wind that then carried them on a conveyor north-west. The next location point placed the geese 20 km to the south-east of Fair Isle at 18:00 on 7 February, 24 hours after being stranded in the middle of the North Sea. They made landfall on Stronsay (Orkney) by midnight and then moved to west Mainland (Orkney) on 8 February.

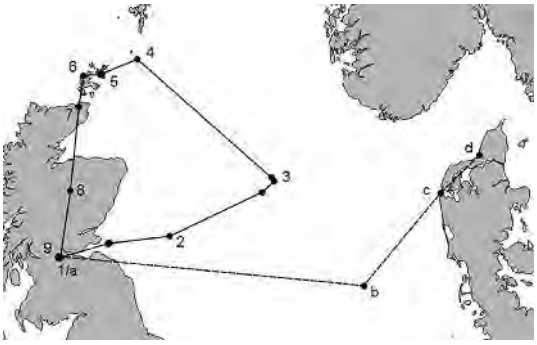

Figure 1. Movements of *fabalis* Bean Geese with Tags 27 and 29 (solid line) and Tag 30 (dashed line) from 6–7 February 2017.

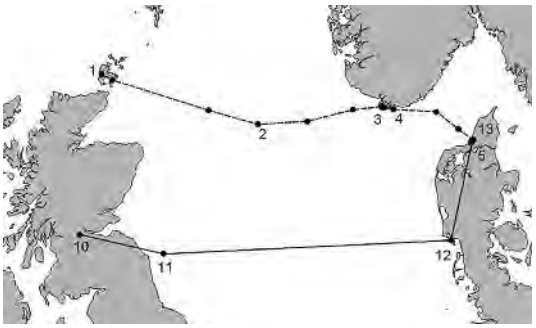

Figure 2. Movements of *fabalis* Bean Geese with Tags 27 and 29 (solid line) from Slamannan to Denmark, 20–21 March 2017 and Tag 10 (dashed line) from Orkney to Denmark 2–3 March 2017.

Up to this point, although the location data were not synchronised, it is highly likely that three of the tagged geese (Tags 10, 27 and 29), were flying together, possibly within a larger flock of Bean Geese. Despite alerting birdwatchers on Orkney, the flock could not be located and so there is no record of the number of geese involved in the failed migration (but see below). From this point, Tag 10 separated from the others. Tags 27 and 29 then moved to Castletown in Caithness, arriving by noon on 9 Feb. The following morning (10 February) the two tagged geese headed south and, remarkably, arrived back at Slamannan by 18:00, taking what looks like a direct southerly route via Cairn Gorm. The roundabout journey had taken approximately five days and the pair had covered a distance of approximately 1,225 km. On 10 February, a flock of 90 Bean Geese was recorded at Slamannan by Rick Goater, but subsequent to that date the maximum count recorded at Slamannan by AM was of only 12 birds (including Tags 27 and 29). It is not known, therefore, how many Bean Geese were involved in the failed migration.

The pair then attempted a second crossing leaving Slamannan on the afternoon of 20 February (Figure 2). A more southerly route was taken across the North Sea and the geese were successful, making landfall in Denmark by midnight later that day.

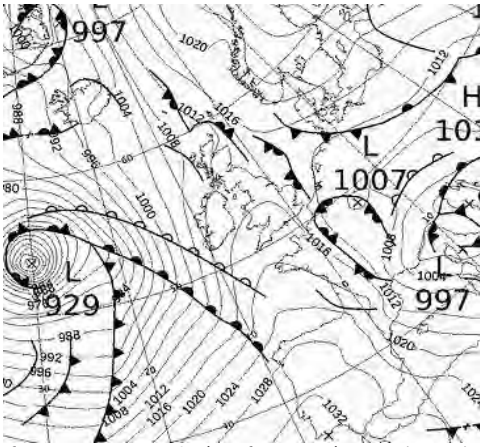

Figure 3a. Barometric chart for 6 March 2017 (00:00). *Source www.wetterzentrale.de*

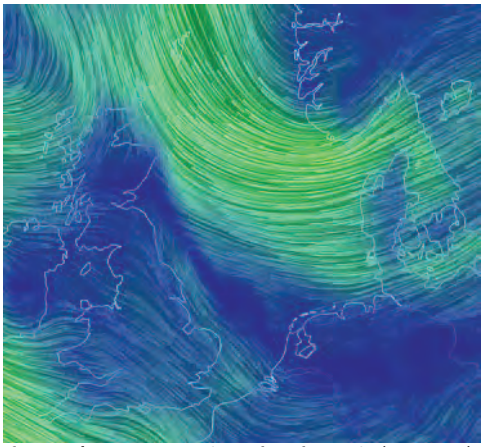

Figure 3b. Representation of surface winds 6 March 2017 (12:00). Blue, generally calm; wind shown by green/yellow lines. *Source earth.nullschool.net*

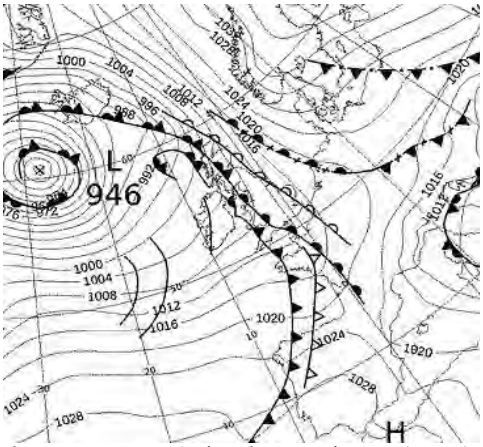

Figure 4a. Barometric chart for 7 March 2017 (00:00). *Source www.wetterzentrale.de*

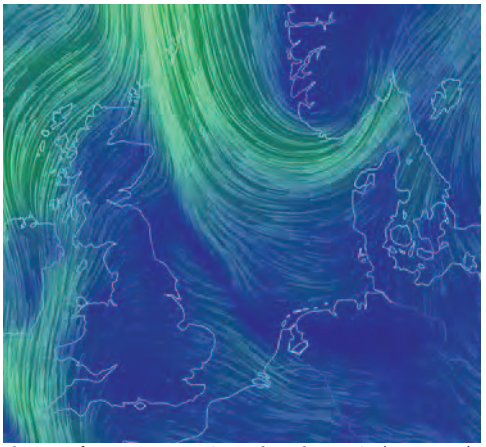

Figure 4b. Representation of surface winds 7 March 2017 (12:00). Blue, generally calm; wind shown by green/yellow lines. *Source earth.nullschool.net*

During this time, Tag 10 had remained on Orkney. It spent 10 days near Loch of Swannay, before moving south to fields near Stromness on 17 February. It remained there for a further 13 days. It was seen together with Greylag Geese *Anser anser* and on its own (A. Leitch pers. comm.). On 2 March, it left Orkney at dawn and headed east across the North Sea, arriving on the southern coast of Norway by 14:00 (Figure 2). Having rested, it then resumed its journey leaving southern Norway at dawn on 3 March and arrived at Pandrup in Denmark by 09:00 where it re-joined the rest of the Scottish flock.

The movements of the tagged geese, described by lightweight GPS tags, provided a remarkable insight into migration strategies, and raises important questions. Some adults completed the migration (Tag 30), some were pushed back, returned to the starting point and tried again (Tags 27 and 29) whilst we know that one goose (Tag 10) remained in a novel area it had been windblown to - Orkney - and tried again from there. It confirms that large birds such as geese can fail to cross the North Sea and make it safely back to land to try again. It highlights how rare birds can turn up in odd locations and successfully re-orientate, even on their own (Tag 10). But perhaps most surprisingly, it confirms that birds once displaced by a storm event, can re-orientate and head back to their original starting location and try again (Tags 27

and 29). We assume that neither Tag 27 nor Tag 29 had visited Orkney before, yet, within a day, they had plotted and flown a course due south and arrived back at Slamannan to try again – perhaps knowledge is contained by one or two birds within such a displaced flock or perhaps each bird is capable of navigation from scratch?

Without contemporary counts in Denmark, and with a staggered departure, we are unsure if any birds departing Scotland on 6 February did not survive the crossing. Unfortunately, therefore, we are none the wiser as to how many of Scotland's Bean Geese were caught up in the North Sea storm. For such a small population (the maximum winter count in 2016/17 was of only 216 birds) such an event may have been catastrophic to some birds, particularly the less experienced first winter geese.

Tagging data has provided a remarkable insight into failed migrations, how rare birds occasionally turn up in odd locations, and what happens to them afterwards. Further, it has provided some good records of 'technological vagrancy' (as perhaps first documented in Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga clanga* being first recorded for Zambia and Tanzania on the basis of satellite-tagging data Meyburg & Meyburg 1999). Indeed, the movements of Tag 27 and 29 arguably constitute the second-ever record of Taiga Bean Geese for the Isle of May (David Steel *pers. comm.*), as well as notable records for each of the Orkney and Caithness SOC recording areas.

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Scoters in Fife

I recently drew attention to the decline in sea ducks wintering along the Fife coast, specifically in St Andrews Bay and Largo Bay (Elkins 2011). Waterfowl in both bays are counted for the BTO/RSPB/JNCC Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and winter distribution maps of all sea ducks in Fife can be found in Elkins *et al.* (2016).

In St Andrews Bay (part of the Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary SPA), peak winter numbers of Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* decreased from 3,000–5,000 prior to 2004/05 to fewer than 1,000 subsequently. Flocks numbering more than 1,000 were still present in autumn although fluctuating markedly. The winter minimum was reached in 2011/12, when fewer than 90 birds were located between November and February. In winter 2015/16, numbers recovered, with over 2,500 present in January 2016. This was exceeded in the following winter, when a flock of 1,200 as early as July 2016 had increased to 5,000 by November, numbers not recorded since the 1990s. Between 3,000 and 5,000 individuals were still present in February 2017.

In Largo Bay, where highest counts had always been made in spring rather than winter, numbers fell below 700 after the 2007/08 winter although counts have been more sporadic. Small flocks are also found west of Largo Bay. Although fewer than 400 have recently been recorded along this coast, there was an increase in 2016/17 when 940 were counted in December 2016.

The numbers of Velvet Scoters *Melanitta fusca* have not shown a comparable increase. After winters when the St Andrews Bay counts regularly exceeded 1,000, a marked decrease occurred from 2004/05, coinciding with the decrease in the Common Scoter. Most subsequent winters saw fewer than 100, although 200 were counted in January 2016. In Largo Bay, this species decreased to below 200 from winter 2008/09 although 677 were counted in December 2015, the highest winter count since November 2006 and exceeding counts of Common Scoter at that time.

The recovery in Common Scoter numbers in St Andrews Bay is not readily explained. It had earlier been assumed that the decline was due to autumn flocks perhaps not remaining in winter. The situation now seems to have reverted to that prior to 2005. As sea ducks often feed out of sight of land-based counters, there is always doubt about the reliability of fluctuations recorded from land, with changes perhaps depending more on flock mobility. Some duplication may also occur if birds move between count sectors. Winter numbers counted in the rest of the Firth of Forth SPA, of which Largo Bay forms a part, have also fluctuated significantly. Further afield, large scoter flocks off North-east Scotland peak in autumn at a time when there is also a peak in St Andrews Bay. Time will tell if the return of birds in winter is maintained here or whether flocks continue to move around in the wider area, perhaps often out of view. Although nationally important numbers of a species (in this case Common Scoter, for which the GB site threshold is 1,000) may appear to fall below the threshold in an SPA, this may not always be permanent.

It should be emphasised that WeBS counts are normally only undertaken between September and March with partial counts in other months. Some WeBS winter counts may not always be fully completed. My thanks to the regular WeBS counters who monitor these ducks.

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A recent increase in sea duck numbers has been noted on the south side of the Firth of Forth. John Harrison, East Lothian Council warden for Aberlady Bay, counted 4,300 Common Scoter, 530 Velvet Scoter and 877 Eider on 13 March 2017, with 1,405 Eider on 27 February 2017. There was a count of 852 Velvet Scoter on 12 December 2016. These are higher counts than have been recorded off Gullane/Aberlady in recent years but similar to those made in the past. Eds

Obituaries

Sandy Anderson (1927–2017)

Plate 159. Sandy Anderson being presented with the SOC Branch Recognition Award, November 2015. © *Nick Picozzi*

Alexander (Sandy) Anderson, shipyard draughtsman, artist, taxidermist, hill-walker, skier, explorer, zoologist, raconteur, brewer of fine beer, family man, friend to many, Honorary Member of the SOC and recipient of the 2015 SOC Branch Recognition Award, enjoyed a long and fruitful life. He died peacefully on 13 March 2017 at the Auchmacoy GP Unit in Ellon, aged 89 years.

I (AD) first met Sandy back in 1953 when I was 15 years old. He had been sent a dead Grey Squirrel from someone who wanted it stuffed and mounted. In those days, with such exotic requests you were advised to go to the University. Sandy was the taxidermist and I found my way to his little attic room. To my delight, it took him months to do the job and so I used to visit to check on progress. There were always lots of interesting things to see; dead birds, a wreck of Leach's Petrels, an ailing Puffin and much more. Once he had a Golden Eagle with a broken wing and I brought rats which my dog had killed to feed it. Wonderful experiences for me. We kept up that friendship until he died.

In *Nine Lives the Memoirs of Sandy Anderson* (privately published) Sandy vividly described his childhood growing up in a tenement in wartime Aberdeen. At school, he was described as "good at art" so when he left school in 1942 he was sent to train as a draughtsman in the shipyards. In 1946, he met Professor V.C. Wynne-Edwards who offered him a post as technician and taxidermist in the Natural History Department at the University of Aberdeen. Then followed scientific expeditions to Baffin Island, the Flannan Isles, St Kilda (three times), Svalbard and, later on, to Ghana. Whilst employed at the University Sandy worked part time towards his degree in zoology. When, in 1958, Culterty Field Station was established at Newburgh on the Ythan Estuary, Sandy was appointed as research assistant to the director George Dunnet. For many years, he was involved in supporting the research of the field station staff, including the biology of Starlings, water hens, *Hydrobia* snails, and in particular the long term study of Fulmars on Eynhallow in Orkney. During his time at Culterty Sandy helped very many Honours and PhD. students and made countless long-lasting friendships. AD once had occasion to write to the *New Scientist* Letters page and soon received a reply from Switzerland asking, "How is Sandy Anderson?" In later years, he and Norma visited many of these former students in various parts of the world: Israel, Australia and New Zealand.

Sandy gave long, faithful and valuable service to the SOC. Indeed there is a Minute of the Aberdeen branch from 1949 stating, "We have a very promising young man, Sandy Anderson". He served the branch for a number of years as Council member; he attended branch meetings regularly until just a couple of years ago when ill health restricted him. He had also been at every single SOC conference until the late 1990s; the last one he attended was in 2003. He was made an Honorary Member in 1983 and was given the Branch Recognition

Award in 2015 (Plate 159). Possibly the last article Sandy wrote was for *Scottish Birds* in December 2011 titled "A reflective view of the SOC on its 75th anniversary".

Sandy was one of the first bird ringers in Scotland and served on the Ringing Committee of the BTO. He worked on ageing and sexing techniques on the Fulmar and pioneered patagial wing tagging. Indeed, the paper that he wrote on the subject in 1963 in *The Journal of Wildlife Management* with his characteristically neat, clear diagrams and detailed instructions is still cited today.

In 1982, Sandy now in semi-retirement, became the Recorder for the North Sea Bird Club and brought to this task the same attention to detail and conscientiousness that characterised all his work. He had a well-equipped workshop and was very good and deft with his hands so it was not surprising that Martyn recruited him to assemble a replica skeleton of a Sabre-toothed Tiger that had been purchased for the Zoology Museum at Aberdeen University. The mounted skeleton is a lasting reminder of his taxidermy skills.

Sandy lived a long, useful and eventful life and gave dedicated service to the SOC and Scottish ornithology. He was a highly regarded ornithologist, a great raconteur, excellent company and very courteous to all who he met. He is survived by Norma, his devoted wife of 56 years, their three children, Peter, Murray and Carolyn, and his seven grandchildren, of whom he was very proud.

Alistair Duncan and Martyn Gorman

Lance Leonard Joseph Vick (1938–2017)

Plate 160. Lance Vick, Tyninghame, Lothian, year unknown. © *family photo*.

Lance was born and educated in Surrey before earning a scholarship to University College, London, where as an undergraduate he studied physics and later completed his PhD in theoretical physics. In 1961, he married Sally, the girl next door - more precisely four doors along - from his home village of Blindley Heath in Surrey and 1964 saw the birth of their first child, Mary, who was tragically to die from cancer at the age of 20. In 1964, Lance took up an appointment to lecture in mathematical physics at the University of Edinburgh, where he was to remain for the rest of his career. His son, John and second daughter Lucy, were born in Scotland. Lance began birdwatching while taking the children out for walks around Blackford Hill and Pond, and along the Braid Burn through the Hermitage. At work, he helped develop the department's course in mathematical physics to a level that was recognised internationally. However, Lance switched entirely from physics to birding as soon as he left work and when he took early retirement in 1997 it had been with the prospect of many years of birding ahead of him.

When the Edinburgh Ringing Group was formed in the early 1970s, Lance was actively recruited due to his nest finding abilities which were exceptional. He was an active member of the

group from 1974 onwards. He ringed extensively at Bawsinch and Hadfast sometime staying overnight in his campervan. Although an academic by profession when birding he concentrated on field work, but in the 1970s his colleague persuaded him to write several articles for the Edinburgh Ringing Group report on Musselburgh Lagoons, Bawsinch SWT Reserve, Stonechats in and around Edinburgh (this was when they bred in Holyrood Park) and breeding Dippers on the South Esk river system. His long-term studies of Wheatears and Ring Ouzels in his second home - the Moorfoot Hills - although never published in full were referred to in Valerie Thom's *Birds in Scotland* (1980) and in *The Breeding Birds in SE Scotland* (1998). Lance's studies were also acknowledged in Ian Burfield's 2002 PhD on the breeding ecology and conservation of the Ring Ouzel. Dipper data collected by Lance and JHB allowed one of the first assessments of the extent to which Dippers can be polygynous and how rates of polygyny vary between years and was later incorporated in an important paper in *Bird Study* by Jeremy Wilson (The breeding biology and population history of the Dipper on a Scottish river system. 1996 *Bird Study* 43: 108–118).

With fellow birders such as Bob and Betty Smith, Lance ensured that the Moorfoot reservoirs were well watched through Gladhouse's heyday and beyond into the 1990s. Like many of us, he revelled in the unpredictability of migration. He couldn't believe it when he witnessed three Pomarine Skuas descend on Gladhouse Reservoir after a thunderstorm in May 1982. His long summer breaks from university work were always used to good effect, undertaking month-long explorations around southern France with Sally in his trusty VW campervan. La Brenne and the Pyrenees were favourite destinations.

He was very much an all-round birder. His acute observational skills in the field were used to good effect in many aspects - counting, looking for migrants and rarities, ringing, studying breeding birds and nest finding. In 1988, IJA recalls seeing him run (a rare sight in itself) along the seawall path at Musselburgh river mouth. Before mobile phones, this was a clear sign that he had found something good - it was, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper! Lance has two Scottish 'firsts' to his name - Spotted Sandpiper at Tyninghame in 1971 and Forster's Tern at Musselburgh in 1985. His list of discovered rarities is impressive and testament to his knowledge, observational skills and the time he spent in the field, with no less than three Baird's Sandpipers and two White-winged Black Terns at Gladhouse to mention just two species.

Lance was a mentor to many. If you met him at Musselburgh, he was always keen to share his knowledge, explaining how to get the most out of the site in terms of weather and tide. He was also quick to pass on the Musselburgh WeBS counts to IJA! He was a regular attendee at the SOC Lothian Discussion Group meetings, held in those days in Regent Terrace.

Lance diligently contributed his numerous observations to local bird reports and his Wildfowl Counts for Musselburgh and the Moorfoot Reservoirs were submitted to the national scheme. His distinctive 'LLJV' initials made frequent appearances in every report. His last entries in the local recorder's database are his wildfowl counts across the Edinburgh lochs in 2003. Many of his notes are now held in the SOC Archives. He helped pioneer the use of computers during his time at Edinburgh University, and had his health not deteriorated, he would have used modern technology to its full in his long-term passion of birdwatching.

Sadly, and cruelly for an active field man, Lance was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1997, the same year that he retired. Over the many years thereafter, he relied increasingly on Sally to accompany him on his local birding trips which remained part of his routine even as his mobility became restricted.

Lance passed away on 17 May 2017 donating his body to medical science. He is survived by his devoted wife Sally, two of his children, John and Lucy, and four grandchildren, Robyn, Joe, Arwen and Iona.

Ian J. Andrews, John H. Ballantyne & Ken Bowler

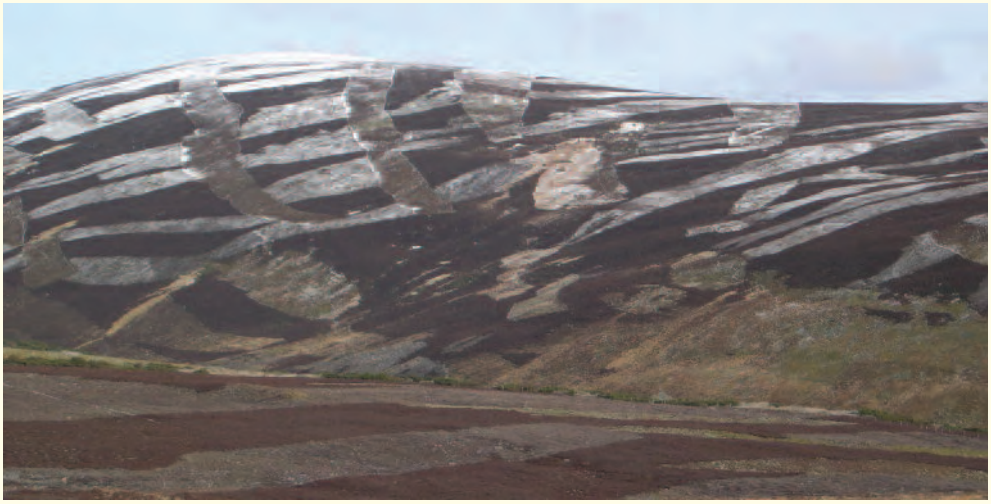

Plate 161. An intensively managed grouse moor showing the typical vegetation mosaic created by burning and cutting. © *Ian Francis*

The conservation impacts of intensifying grouse moor management

P.S. THOMPSON & J.D. WILSON

Red Grouse occur widely throughout the hills and moors of Scotland with highest densities occurring on moors managed for driven shooting. Grouse shooting first became popular as a sporting pursuit in the 1850s with the development of the breech-loading shotgun, improved rail access to upland areas and royal interest in hunting. This heralded a new era for the Scottish uplands with large tracts of land managed as hunting estates for grouse and deer.

Grouse moors typically comprise a mix of bog, heath and grass habitats and are found in the uplands, beyond the limits of enclosed agricultural land use. These habitats are afforded special protection, supporting plant communities and non-avian fauna listed under the EC Habitats Directive and a suite of birds listed under Annex 1 of EC Birds Directive (Thompson *et al*. 1995) and are also our largest carbon store and main source of drinking water (Van der Wal 2011). Conflict between grouse shooting and other environmental interests can be marked where intensive habitat management, predator control and disease control are deployed to secure high post-breeding densities of grouse (Werritty *et al*. 2015) that can then be 'driven' over static lines of shooters (Hudson 2008). Management practices include vegetation burning ('muirburn') to create a mix of young and old Heather as food and cover for grouse, control of predators of grouse (mainly crows, Red Fox, Stoat and Weasel), and killing of Mountain Hare and Red Deer and medication of both grouse and sheep to reduce parasitic worm and louping-ill viral infections in grouse (Watson & Moss 2008). Over the course of the 20th century, the area of moorland managed for grouse shooting has declined from its Edwardian heyday (Hudson 1992), as grouse moors have given way to sheep walk, deer forest and forestry (Robertson *et al*. 2001, Ratcliffe 2007). However, in the remaining core grouse moor areas in the Southern Uplands and eastern Highlands of Scotland and the northern

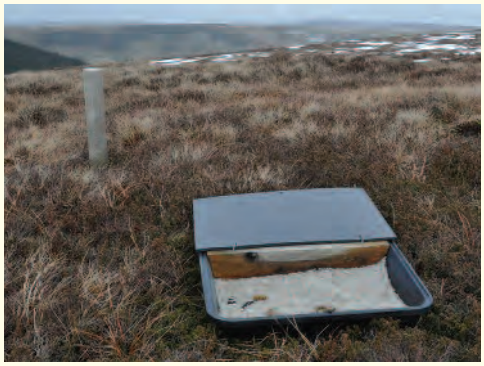

Plate 162. The treatment of grouse with medicated grit has resulted in a major increase in grouse numbers and a major reduction in parasitic worm numbers in grouse. © *Tim Melling*

Pennines of England, there is evidence of intensification of grouse moor management since the 1990s (Douglas *et al*. 2015). Previous research by the Game Conservancy Trust (now Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust) concluded that driven grouse shooting was only economic when post-breeding grouse densities reached at least 60 grouse per km2 (Hudson 1992). Since the use of medicated grit became routine, the average post breeding (July) density has risen to a modern-day high in Scotland of 191 grouse per km2 in 2014 (GWCT 2016). The rise on English moors is even more striking with the post breeding density rising to a peak of 370 grouse per km2 in 2014 (GWCT 2016).

In early 2016, the RSPB set out its growing concerns about the environmental impacts of intensive, high-output, driven shooting of Red Grouse in a *Viewpoint* paper published in *Ibis* (Thompson *et al*. 2016) and summarised here. Intensification involves all the main management practices associated with grouse moors, including muirburn, grouse medication and predator control.

Burning frequency is increasing, with peatland vegetation (overlying deep peat) routinely burnt for grouse shooting in some parts of Scotland (Douglas *et al*. 2015). Whilst there is a lack of consensus about the impact of burning, especially on peatland vegetation and the underlying carbon stored as peat (e.g. Glaves *et al*. 2013, Chapman *et al*. 2017) it is increasingly clear that burning has a profound impact on peatland hydrology and peat properties (Holden *et al*. 2015). This may in turn impact on the long-term condition of upland peatland habitats (via exposure, drying out and erosion) and on water flows, increasing the risk of downstream flooding particularly during storm events (Holden *et al*. 2015). These wider environmental impacts of modern-day grouse moor management on peatland condition have been studied mainly in northern England where the long-term impacts of grazing, burning and drainage may be compounded by the historic impact of industrial pollution and impacts of wildfires (Blundell & Holden 2015), and remain less well understood on grouse moors in Scotland.

Grouse are susceptible to a disease caused by a parasitic nematode worm. Prior to the development of techniques to reduce worm burdens in grouse, grouse numbers in Scotland cycled over a period of four to eight years with the worm found to have a negative impact on grouse productivity (Hudson 1992). The development of medicated grit to treat grouse disease has driven a major increase in post breeding grouse numbers with worm burdens reduced greatly (Newborn & Foster 2002, GWCT 2016). However, the impact of medication on the upland environment remains poorly studied and understood. Related practices such as the killing of Mountain Hares (a tick host), to reduce the spread of louping ill virus by ticks, has increased markedly since the early 2000s (Harrison *et al*. 2010, Patton *et al*. 2010, GWCT 2015), with severe declines in hare numbers recorded on some sites (Watson 2013).

Plate 163. There are increasing concerns with the number of Mountain Hares killed on Scottish grouse moors. © *Tim Melling*

Plate 164. The legal killing of Foxes and crows carried out on driven grouse moors benefits a number of birds of conservation importance including the Curlew. © *Gavin Thomas*

Whilst the legal shooting and trapping (using traps and snares) of Foxes, crows, Stoats and Weasels may improve the breeding success of ground-nesting birds such as Curlew, Golden Plover and Lapwing (Fletcher *et al*. 2010), predator control has increasingly extended to the illegal killing of raptors with clear negative population effects on species such as Hen Harrier, Peregrine and Golden Eagle (Etheridge *et al*. 1997, Amar *et al*. 2012, Whitfield *et al*. 2007, Whitfield & Fielding 2017). Despite the difficulty of detecting wildlife crime in upland areas, the RSPB documented 779 confirmed persecution incidents in Scotland between 1994–2014, including 468 poisoning offences and 173 birds shot, comprising Buzzard (461 confirmed offences), Red Kite (104), Peregrine (80), Golden Eagle (37) and Hen Harrier (30) (RSPB Scotland 2015). The review further noted that 57% of poisoning incidents (2005–14) were associated with grouse moors and 86% of those convicted of bird of prey persecution related incidents (between 1994–2014) were gamekeepers (RSPB Scotland 2015). Evidence of the impacts of illegal predator control on raptor populations in Scotland continues to mount. For example, in the north-east just two pairs of Peregrines nested on grouse moors in 2014, with only 7% of known nesting ranges occupied (NERSG 2015). Similarly, Hen Harrier numbers declined in north-east Scotland from 28 breeding pairs in the 1990s to a single pair in 2014 (Rebecca *et al*. 2016). Merlins have recently been claimed by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust to be faring better on grouse moors (Sotherton *et al*. 2017). However, during the last decade of a 30-year study of Merlin in the Lammermuir Hills, Heavisides *et al*. (2016) noted an intensification of predator control, more frequent Heather burning, an increase in the use of medicated grit and the appearance of new tracks to service windfarms located on grouse moors. Over the same period, the number of pairs of Merlins breeding on the study area fell from between 12 and 21 pairs before 2006, to 8–10 pairs in the last year of the study (Heavisides *et al*. 2016).

The fitting of satellite tags to birds of prey is now adding a new dimension to our understanding of the impacts of illegal persecution on raptor populations. In August 2016, RSPB Scotland issued a press release announcing that a satellite-tagged Golden Eagle had disappeared in the northern Monadhliath, the eighth satellite-tagged Golden Eagle to disappear in the area in five years (www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/rspb-news/news/423406-satellite-tagged-golden-eagles-disappearing-in-the-monadhliath-mountains). These birds joined a growing list of other satellite-tagged Golden Eagles that had disappeared in suspicious circumstances in the uplands of Scotland, and can be added to those which had been confirmed as having been illegally killed. Since 2009, four tagged birds were found to have been poisoned and one was found with injuries consistent with having been trapped (both legs were broken). Previously, the RSPB raised similar concerns about a significant number of tagged eagles disappearing in upper Strathdon (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-27142843), and a further bird vanished in identical circumstances in March 2017.

Following publication of the story about the unexplained disappearance of Golden Eagles in the Monadliath (11 August 2016), the Scottish Government commissioned Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to examine whether there was a pattern of suspicious activity surrounding the disappearance of satellite-tagged Golden Eagles in the Scottish Highlands. SNH published the report in May 2017 (Whitfield & Fielding 2017). Of 131 satellite-tagged Golden Eagles, 41 (31%) disappeared under suspicious circumstances with records of these birds significantly associated with the locations of other recent records of known illegal persecution. The disappearances occurred predominantly in the central and eastern Highlands with the report concluding that relatively large numbers of the satellite-tagged Golden Eagles were probably killed, mostly on or near some grouse moors

Plate 165. An analysis of Golden Eagles fitted with satellite tags between 2004 and 2016 found that 31% of tagged birds disappeared under suspicious circumstances. © *RSPB Scotland*

where there is recent, independent evidence of illegal persecution (Whitfield & Fielding 2017). As a consequence of the impact of illegal killing on survival rates, the Golden Eagle population in the eastern Highlands is suppressed and the prospects for recovery poor (Whitfield & Fielding 2017, Hayhow *et al*. in press).

Subsequent to the publication of Thompson *et al*. (2016), a petition was lodged calling on the UK Government to ban driven grouse shooting. This petition attracted over 120,000 signatures and resulted in a debate in Westminster. In July 2016, the Scottish Raptor Study Group launched a petition calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce a state regulated system of licensing of gamebird hunting. This petition, publicly supported by the RSPB, was heard by the Petitions Committee in October and passed to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee. In February 2017, SNH published a review of game bird law and licensing arrangements across 14 European countries (excluding the UK) (Pillai & Turner 2017). All 14 countries considered in the review have a legal framework for regulation of hunting (irrespective of whether or not ownership of land and wildlife is public or private), use a system of licensing of individual hunters, and may withdraw an individual's licence when they fail to comply with hunting law. Across most of the countries considered, hunters undergo a practical and theoretical 'test' to assess their understanding of hunting law, game management and nature conservation. The findings mirror a previous report by Mustin *et al*. (2012) which noted that many more game birds are shot in the UK than any other country, largely due to the shooting of rear and release Pheasant and Red-legged Partridge. Clearly, there is no reason why a 21st century system of licensing cannot be introduced in Scotland to manage game and game shooting more effectively, thereby ensuring that those who shoot game adhere to rules and standards (as set out in a statutory code of practice) that are consistent with the wider protection of Scotland's natural environment. Those who choose not to adhere to the rules would risk prosecution and loss of their right to operate a driven grouse shoot.

Plate 166. The increasingly intensive management deployed on some grouse moors has driven Scottish grouse bags up to a modern day high. © *Chris Tomson*

RSPB Scotland believes that improved regulation (licensing) supported by more effective detection, enforcement and prosecution of wildlife laws is required to ensure legal and environmentally sustainable management on upland estates. This is consistent with the findings of a report on preventing, investigating and prosecuting wildlife crime (HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland 2008). Recent decisions by the Crown Prosecution Service Scotland to drop a number of cases based on the use of film evidence, including the shooting of a Hen Harrier and the setting of a pole trap, highlight the difficulty of securing successful prosecutions. Alternative approaches to drive up standards, such as the Wildlife Estates Scotland initiative have failed to deliver the desired change.

Following the publication of Whitfield and Fielding (2017), the Scottish Government announced the establishment of an independently-led group to examine the environmental impact of grouse moor management practices such as muirburn, the use of medicated grit and Mountain Hare culls, and to recommend options for regulation including licensing and other measures which could be put in place without new primary legislation. The Cabinet Secretary further announced her intention to commission research into the costs and benefits of large shooting estates to Scotland's economy and biodiversity (news.gov.scot/news/golden-eagle-deaths).

Despite the findings of the recent report on the fate of satellite-tagged Golden Eagles, there are positive signs that some estates are changing. Whilst territorial Golden Eagles are absent from many grouse moors, they are beginning to recolonise grouse moors in parts of the northern Monadhliaths and breed successfully (Stuart Benn, pers. comm.). Shooting continues on these moors showing that eagles and grouse shooting can coexist. The recovery of Golden Eagles and other raptors on grouse moors is reliant on many more estates making the change necessary to live alongside birds of prey. Only time will tell if this is indeed a new dawn.

Acknowledgements

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NEWS AND NOTICES

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Borders: Mr G. Barber, Mr J. McWatt, **Central Scotland:** Mr A. Liddell, Miss I. Risk, **Clyde:** Mr G. Docherty, Miss P. Haigh, Mr J. Hunter, Mr & Mrs D. Tillman, **England, Wales & NI:** Mr J. Bennett, Mr J. Dawson, Mr C. Dickinson, Mr C. Hartley, Mr M. Hodgkins, **Fife:** Miss H. Coburn, Mr Z. Semperger, **Highland:** Mr T. Laidler, Dr G. MacGeoch, Mr D. MacKenzie, Mr S. MacLennan, Mr D. Stevens, Mr M. Thompson, Mr M. Warren, **Lothian:** Mr P. Anderson, Miss Z. Blaszczyk, Ms S. Cheah & Mr P. Fineron, Mr & Mrs D. Gray, Dr D. Kell, Mr P. Leggate, Mr & Mrs I. Matson, Dr T. Roy, **Moray:** Dr G. Campbell, **Overseas:** Mr & Ms D. McDonald, Mr I. McLean, **Scotland - no branch:** Mr D. Cooper, Mr N. Giles, Mr P. Harris.

200 Club - Standing Orders

As announced in the June issue (*Scottish Birds* 37: 152–153), the 200 Club lottery scheme was wound up in June. Notification was circulated by email (or by post, where we have no email address) to members of the scheme in April to advise that they should contact their bank to cancel their standing order. Unfortunately, the Bank of Scotland failed to close the 200 Club bank account on the date we instructed and, as such, we received a number of standing order payments. The account has now been closed but if you have made this year's subscription (£12) to the scheme unintentionally and would like a refund, please contact the office as soon as possible on 01875 871330. Otherwise, your payment will be treated as a donation to the SOC.

2017 SOC Annual Conference & AGM

20–22 October 2017, Atholl Palace Hotel, Pitlochry. Join us for an exciting programme of talks on the topical theme of migration. For programme details and/or to book your place, visit the SOC website or call the office on 01875 871330.

Conference theme suggestions

Each year, attendees at the Club's autumn conference are asked to complete a feedback form where there is space to provide any suggestions on how we can improve the event. These comments are extremely helpful and we do try to take them on board. However, we are equally keen to hear from *non-attendees* whether they would like to see future programmes cover specific topics or areas of birdwatching/ornithology. We welcome any suggestions to mail@the-soc.org.uk or feel free to post your comments to Waterston House (address on inside front cover).

2018 Scottish Birdwatchers' Conference

Saturday 17 March, SRUC, Barony Campus, Dumfries. Programme and booking information will be included with the December issue of *Scottish Birds*.

Waterston House

New SOC Librarian

We are delighted to welcome Susan Horne to the team at Waterston House. Susan took up the part-time post on 1 September 2017, replacing Karen Bidgood who retired earlier in the year (*Scottish Birds* 37(2): 153). Susan will already be familiar to some members from her attendance at conferences and to others from her volunteering in the Library for several years, during which time she heroically took the Library Committee minutes and latterly joined the

Plate 167. Susan Horne, Waterston House, Aberlady, July 2017. © *S. Cox*

Committee. She brings a wealth of experience to the role and has just completed her master's degree studying Book History at Edinburgh University, with particular emphasis on 19th century bird illustration. If you wish to get in touch with any library enquiries, Susan can be contacted at library@the-soc.org.uk.

Art exhibitions

Keith Brockie: Saturday 16 September to 15 November

Darren Woodhead: Saturday 18 November to 10 January 2018

Plates 168–169. (above) Kingfisher. © *Darren Woodhead.* **(top)** Eider. © *Keith Brockie.*

Aberlady Goose Watch

Tuesday 3 October & Thursday 12 October, 5.30 pm, £6.00 ((£4.00 child/SOC member). John Harrison returns to Waterston House to give his popular illustrated talk on the migrating Pink-footed Geese that overwinter in nearly Aberlady Bay. Places are limited so advance booking is essential.

Optics Demo Day

Sunday 15 October, 10 am–4 pm, 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.

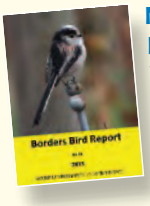
Details of all upcoming events at Waterston House are available at www.the-soc.org.uk

Branch updates

Lothian: branch Secretary, Morag King, 7 Durham Terrace, Edinburgh EH15 1QJ. Tel: 0131 258 4638 abercorncottage@gmail.com. Morag replaces Doreen Main, who stood down at the branch AGM in April, after dedicating nine years to the role. Council wishes to thank Doreen for all her hard work, commitment and enthusiasm for managing Lothian branch activities. Although no longer on the branch committee, Doreen continues to volunteer regularly at Waterston House as well as serve on the Club's Management and Finance Committees.

Orkney: recorder Jim Williams, change of email address: jim.geniefea@btinternet.com

Dumfries: new secretary: Lesley Creamer (see inside back cover for contact details). Council wishes to thank outgoing Secretary, Pat Abery, for her dedicated service to the branch over the past ten years.



NEW! *Borders Bird Report* No.32 (2015)

This latest report, which covers 2015 data, is available for sale at Waterston House, priced at £5.00. For mail order purchase, please call Malcolm Ross on 01896 755523 or send a cheque for £6.50 (includes p&p) payable to 'SOC Borders Branch' to: 24 Netherbank, Galashiels TD1 3DH

Council is grateful to Tom Brewis for kindly taking on the role of editor of the publication. Tom, based near Berwick-upon-Tweed, replaces former Borders Bird Report editor, Ray Murray, who sadly passed away last year.

Plate 171 Castlehill Heritage Centre, Caithness, June 2017. © Angus McBay

Branch news: Caithness

Castlehill Heritage Centre, where the Caithness branch meets, held an open day in June 2017 to celebrate 10 years since they opened to the public. There were several years of work before the opening to convert the buildings from a semi-derelict farm to its present state. All the organisations which use the centre were invited to set up a stand. The exhibition was open for a week after the open day. Thanks to HQ our stand looked very professional and attracted a lot of interest.

Angus McBay, Caithness Branch Secretary

Plate 170. Eric Maughan, Branch Treasurer (foreground) and Sinclair Manson, local bird recorder (background) at the SOC stand, Castlehill Heritage Centre, Caithness, June 2017. © Angus McBay

Plate 172. Sinclair Manson, local bird recorder (left) discussing a point with Julian Smith, Branch Chair at the SOC stand, Castlehill Heritage Centre, Caithness, June 2017. © Angus McBay

NEW! *The Birds of Colonsay & Oronsay*

An island avifauna and bird atlas published by the Argyll Bird Club and written by past SOC President, David Jardine, alongside co-authors, Mike Peacock and Ian Fisher. Copies of the book can be obtained by mail order from the Colonsay Bookshop, priced at £25.00 each plus £4.00 UK p&p. Call 01951 200 320 or email byrne@colonsay.org.uk A limited supply of the book is also available for sale at SOC HQ (not for mail order). A review will be published in a future issue of *Scottish Birds.*

Back issues of *Scottish Birds* free to a good home

One of our members in West Sussex is keen to find a good home for his run of *Scottish Birds* from 1967! If you or someone you know is interested in getting hold of old past issues, please email mail@the-soc.org.uk More-recent back issues can be purchased from Waterston House for £7.00 plus p&p.

Membership subscription rates

As advised to members in the June 2017 issue of *Sottish Birds*, I recently undertook a review of subscription rates in consultation with the Club's Development Officer. As a result of that, a recommendation was made to SOC Council at its June 2017 meeting that the adult membership rate should be increased to £36.00 from 1 September 2017, and all other membership categories would be increased in the same proportion. Council, in turn, agreed and accepted these recommendations.

In fixing the new rates, account was taken of the fact that no increase in membership has been made since September 2013, although the Club's operating costs have increased during that period, as has the rate of inflation.

The current rates will remain until 2019, when they will again be reviewed in line with Council policy.

The revised rates are published on the inside cover of this issue and renewal reminder notices will state the new rates. Advance notice by email (or post, where we do not hold an email address) of the change was issued in August to all members who pay their membership by Direct Debit.

The contribution of members to the Club is both acknowledged and greatly appreciated and we hope that we can count on your support for next year and beyond.

Andrew Thorpe, Honorary Treasurer

Vacancy for Finance Officer/ Bookkeeping Clerk

As the Club has grown over the years, the need to maintain and finance a relevant, fully-operational HQ and website, produce high-quality publications and ensure a secure and up-to-date membership database have all placed increased financial demands on those responsible for keeping the Club's accounts up to the standards required of its charitable status. To help deal with this, a Finance Committee has recently been formed.

Currently, the Honorary Treasurer has an over-arching role, as an appointed Trustee of the Club, to ensure that the SOC fulfils its charitable responsibilities and duties as required by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). The Treasurer is required to report regularly to Council and the Management Committee.

Day-to-day bookkeeping is currently carried out by staff member, Jean Torrance, who works two days a week. The main tasks in this role involve maintaining records in our accounting system (currently *Quickbooks*), entering petty cash and staff wages, conducting bank reconciliations, dealing with quarterly VAT returns and annual Gift Aid claims. In addition, the Bookkeeper is required to provide reports from Club accounts to the Treasurer as required for Council meetings etc.

The current Bookkeeper intends to retire at the end of this year and the Club will shortly be actively seeking an individual who can fulfil the role as described above, but **in addition** have a role which involves a greater responsibility for Club finances.

The Finance Officer would report directly to the Treasurer and attend meetings of the Finance

Committee. The role would involve taking a pro-active approach to managing the organisation's finances and investments and potentially introducing a system of budgeting. A review of the current accounting system could, potentially, also be undertaken. Being a new post, there is an opportunity for developing the role over time, in agreement with the Treasurer.

Ideally, candidates will be required to have a background in accounting and/or associated qualifications or experience and be in a position to work at HQ in Aberlady for up to three days a week initially. Salary would be commensurate with appropriate experience and qualifications on a pro-rata basis.

Anyone interested in obtaining further details should e-mail the Honorary Treasurer at Treasurer@the-soc.org.uk

Young Birders' Training Course 2017

On Saturday 1 July 2017, six more young birders aged 16–25 years, set sail for the Isle of May to take part in this year's Young Birders' Training Course, which is by the Club and the Isle of May Bird Observatory, on the island. Read about what they got up to on their island adventure on the SOC website, from late October onwards!

SBRC - seeking a new committee member

SBRC is seeking a new member for the committee to replace John Bowler, who retires later this year. To maintain geographical representation across Scotland SBRC would prefer a candidate from south-west areas of Scotland. Any potential candidates should send their name to the Secretary (Chris. McInerny@glasgow.ac.uk). If more than one name is put forward, a ballot will be instigated, with Local Recorders having one vote each.

Chris McInerny, on behalf of SBRC

Frederick Cornelius d.2017

We have just learned that Pastor Cornelius, as he was known to SOC conference goers, has died. A minister in the Lutheran church in his native Germany, he was a long-standing Club member and a regular Annual Conference attendee who used to say grace at the annual dinner. He always used to call the Club office to make his booking and have a friendly chat. His late wife was Scottish which started his connections with this country. He kept in touch until very recently with Daphne Peirse-Duncombe who remembers him with great affection. A considerate and kindly man, he had no family.

Plate 173. 2017 Young Birders' Training Course participants, at the top of the Low Light, Isle of May, July 2017, (left to right) Amy Hall, Emma Anderson, Lewis Hooper, Alison Creamer (SOC), Hannah Lemon, Ally Lemon and Alex Adamoulas. © *Stuart Rivers*

Plate 174. The whole party (from left to right: Dougal Andrew, Dan Bateman, Bob Smith, John Arnott, Ian Wallace, David Wilson, Peter Naylor and Joe Cunningham), St Kilda, July 1956. © *Dougal Andrew*

Memories of the three St Kilda visitors in July 1956

D.I.M. WALLACE, D.G. ANDREW & D. WILSON

Will Miles's 'Birding St Kilda' (*Scottish Birds* 36(4): 336–347) caused us to recall our 'marooning' on Hirta from 3 to 12 July 1956. As the three survivors from the third of four expeditions in that summer, we wish to point out that our visit was partly motivated by the imminent occupation of Hirta by the Army in 1957. Hence an end to 26 years of that isle's complete abandonment as a human station, the start of rockets whizzing over into the Atlantic from South Uist and a last chance to commune with the resident ghosts and touch a few of their remaining artefacts.

Beginning with those of James Fisher and Max Nicholson, the bird records for the high summer of 1956 were published in the *Scottish Naturalist* (1957: 94–112). A few of the finds bear repeating in comparison to those of the following six decades of modern observations. Dougal believes that the most fateful was his of a pair of Bonxies on 10 July. In our time they were nearing extinction; now they harass other declining seabirds over hundreds of sea miles. Surprisingly in the 350–400 Starlings that I counted on Hirta on the 10th, "birds of the year heavily outnumbered adults". Starlings were also obvious on Dun and in 'large numbers' on Boreray in late June. We were unprepared for them to be the commonest passerine of the archipelago. A sad loss over the 60 years is the Twite. We found it in pairs at seven sites and the three or four pairs in the village area had reared young.

Plate 175. Ian Wallace and John Arnott (2 & 3 from left) with a crowd of Spanish fisherman, St Kilda, July 1956. © *Dougal Andrew*

St Kilda Wren

St Kilda Field Mouse

Plate 176. Images from the pre-digital age... and the Outer Hebrides 48 years apart. © *D.I.M. Wallace*

Three of Scotland's endemic taxa. Above; St Kilda Wren. Right; St Kilda 'Field' Mouse, sketched in July 1956. Below; Hebridean Wren, sketched in June 1994 (and showing a marked colour tone variation across only 75 miles).

Hebridean Wren

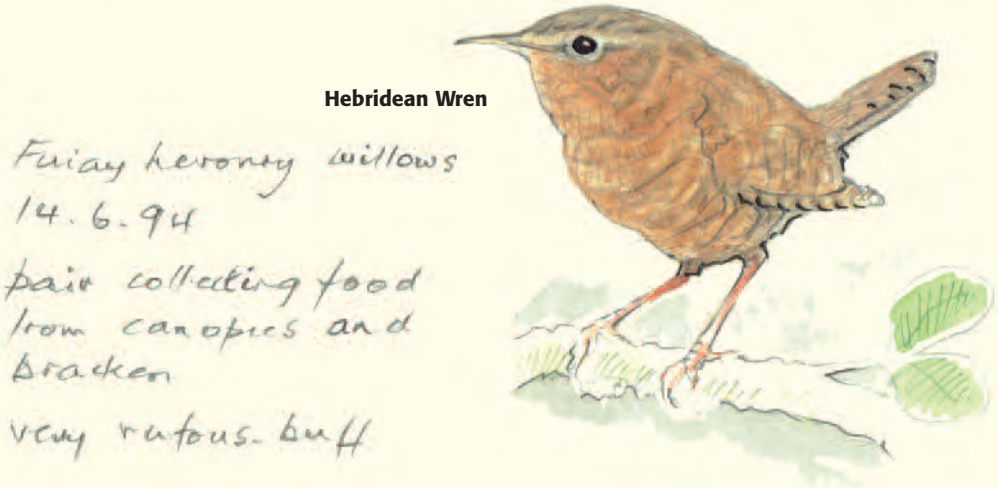


Plate 177. Ian Wallace, Dan Bateman and Dougal Andrew inside the Manse, St Kilda, July 1956. © *Dougal Andrew*

Intent mainly on nocturnal revelling with tubenoses and (courtesy of Eric Simms) tape-recording their wondrous calls, we were not ready for diurnal invasions of Spanish fishermen. On 7, 8 and 9 July, pairs of trawlers anchored in Village Bay to amalgamate catches of Hake made c.8 miles south-west of Hirta. Two long fraternisations seriously depleted our whisky and their rioja and brandy. Thus distracted we gave little thought to vagrants, but David found a Grey-headed Wagtail on the Cambir on 7 July. Also in an early prequel to their recent regularity in Iceland, the fourth expedition enjoyed an invasion of Crossbills with up to 20 in at least two parties from the 16th to19th.

Miles's list of St Kilda rarities from 1894 to 2015 (first op. cit., Table 2) has provoked Ian into an analysis of their likely common origins. What a special profile the 100 exhibit: 26 from the Nearctic, 36 from the bridge of the High Holarctic and 30 from North Eurasia; only seven from Southern Europe and just one from the South Atlantic - a 'far NW Isle effect' and no mistake. To us in 1956, however, St Kilda's endemic taxa were much more compelling subjects. Ian drew the Wren (*Troglodytes t. hirtensis*) and the Mouse (*Apodemus flavicollis hirtensis*).(Also shown in their illustration is the much more rufous Hebridean Wren (*T. t. hebridensis*) sketched on Fuiay, off Barra, c.75 miles ESE on 14 June 1994 (or 38 summers on!)

Finally, re St Kilda's history of human exposure, we note that 'marooning' remains a fairly apt term for the 1956 tenures of the still-intact Manse and Factor's House. Our entire (pre-information technology) connection to the rest of Planet Earth was Skipper Cunningham and his fishing boat *Maid of Harris*. When tardily in the night of 11/12 July he extracted us, we were down to digestive biscuits and a last few fags!

Ian Wallace, Dougal Andrew and David Wilson, remembering John Arnott, Dan Bateman, Joe Cunningham (not related to Skipper), Peter Naylor and Bob Smith.

Mount Pleasant Farm, Main Road, Anslow, Burton-upon-Trent, East Staffs DE13 9QE.

Plate 178. Muirburn. Periodic burning of the heather, to encourage growth of new heather on which the grouse feed is often done to excess, leaving an unattractive, unproductive landscape that contributes to rapid run-off, erosion and flooding. Lammermuirs, October 2015. © *Ian Poxton*

Where have all the Merlins gone? A lament for the Lammermuirs

A.W. BARKER, I.R. POXTON & A. HEAVISIDES

Back in the 1980s, the Lammermuir Hills of Berwickshire and East Lothian were very different from today. No giant pylons loped across the landscape, rutted estate tracks were few and far between, and wind farms as yet unimagined. Clumps of old Scots Pine and weather-beaten storage huts - often recycled railway wagons - dotted an undulating moorland covered in banks of deep heather, revealing here and there bare patches burnt either by shepherds or gamekeepers. Sheep-rearing and game-shooting rubbed along together as they had for generations.

Compared with now, winters were longer and colder, summers warmer and drier. When spring arrived, Skylarks and Lapwings, Curlews and Cuckoos, Redshanks, Dippers and Meadow Pipits were present in force, and even the casual visitor might come across a Ring Ouzel, Merlin or Short-eared Owl. Although the habitat looked tailor-made for them, Hen Harriers were rare, and the now ubiquitous Buzzard was unknown. Peregrines were also scarce, for the land formation offered few obvious nesting sites. Undeterred, we created artificial ledges along steep-sided burns, hoping to tempt the odd pair to settle. Which they did. On one occasion, after two chicks had fallen into the water, the survivor was rescued by a gamekeeper and returned to the nest. Nowadays, such an action would be unimaginable.

Plate 179. The authors processing a brood of Merlins for ringing (Ian Poxton, sitting, Alan Heavisides, behind and Andrew Barker, right), Lammermuirs, June 2003. © *Mark Holling*

This was the upland world three fresh-faced Lothian birders (Plate 179) first explored in 1984, when they launched their study of breeding Merlins, full details of which have now been published (Heavisides *et al.* 2017). It would last for 30 seasons, until an altercation with gamekeepers in 2014 led to its unexpected ending. By this time, we were well into our sixties and had grown reliant upon vehicular access to get about in the hills. When early in 2015 the usual permission to drive some of the moorland tracks was suddenly rescinded, we decided to call time on our work. By then, however, it was not just the attitude of once friendly gamekeepers that had changed. Above all, the look of the Lammermuirs themselves had altered almost beyond recognition. Wherever we watched there were now roads, wind turbines and power lines (Plates 180–181), and with the intensification of the heather management regime - the 'muirburn' - the hills had been transformed into a bizarrely striped patchwork of thin heather and charred earth (Plate 178).

Also gone by 2014, along with much of the deep heather, were the moorland shelter belts where old Carrion Crow nests could be reutilised by tree-nesting Merlins. These shabby woods soon proved attractive to Buzzards as they began their rapid spread across eastern Scotland. In 1984, we discovered a pioneer's nest in a mature plantation beside the Whiteadder Reservoir, but before very long this wood, home to Redstarts as well as Buzzards, had been felled, and the ground then reverted to heather. A decade later all these shelter belts had been chopped down - ostensibly they impeded the ease with which the moor could be driven by the beaters - and today, nobody would guess they had once formed an integral part of the Lammermuir landscape. Gone too by 2014, like most of the sheep whose needs they serviced, were the dilapidated goods trucks that offered safe nesting for Swallows, Pied Wagtails and sometimes even Barn Owls (Plate 182).

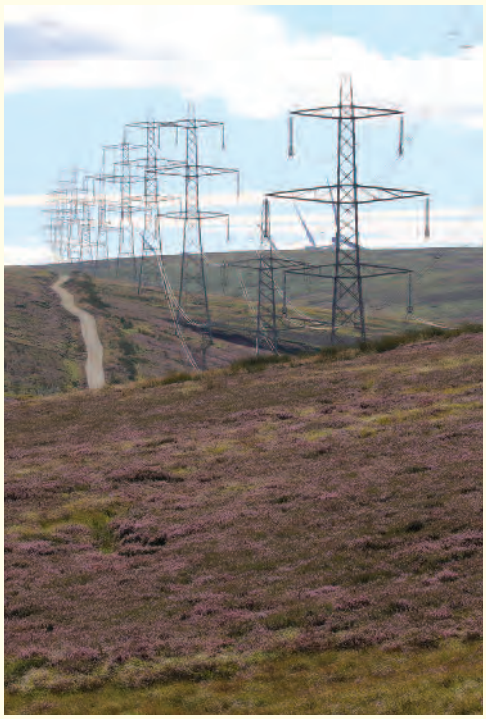


Plate 180. Pylons and hill tracks. During the study period a line of pylons was erected through the middle of the study area, and numerous hill tracks bulldozed. Lammermuirs, August 2016. © *Ian Poxton*

Plate 181. Wind turbines. During the latter part of the study period over 140 turbines were erected in two main clusters within the study area, Lammermuirs, August 2016. © *Ian Poxton*

Plate 182. Old railway truck. Throughout the study area there were several of these, together with derelict buildings and sheds, which were used for storage of hay bales. They provided ideal nesting sites for several species of birds. Most have now been removed. Lammermuirs, August 2016. © *Ian Poxton*

Plate 183. Rail traps. In the early years of the study none of these were found in the Lammermuirs, however in recent years there has been a massive proliferation with resultant by-catches of unintended victims, including numerous Dippers and at least two fledgling Ring Ouzels (pictured). Lammermuirs, June 2013. © *Ian Poxton*

Formerly bird-rich watercourses are nowadays straddled by rail traps, sometimes set no more than 50 m apart. Their purpose is to eradicate Stoats and Rats but since their inception about a dozen years ago they have also killed amber-listed Dippers and red-listed Ring Ouzels (Anon 2014) (Plate 183). Conservationists are justifiably concerned about the proliferation of these traps, whose legality is often unclear. In 2014, we discovered a desiccated young Ring Ouzel in the same trap that had killed another juvenile Ring Ouzel the year previously. When we confronted the gamekeepers shortly afterwards an argument flared, eventually triggering the termination of our Merlin study. Recently, far away from the hills, one of us fell into conversation with a Lammermuirs gamekeeper. Asked why the estates had decided to withdraw their cooperation after many decades of apparently amicable cooperation, he did not mince his words; the knowledge we were accruing about the way the moors are now managed was reckoned by many of his colleagues to constitute a threat to their job security. We had to go.

Today, Red Grouse are pampered as never before in the Lammermuirs, but in the shooting industry's battle to protect them from any possible exposure to 'vermin', the hills have become a much poorer place for other native wildlife. Presumed to carry ticks which spread the louping ill virus, lethal to Red Grouse, Mountain Hares have become an increasingly important target for gamekeepers. In the spring of 2014 alone, upwards of 1,500 Mountain Hares were 'controlled' in the Lammermuirs, leading to widespread indignation when the extent of the cull was revealed in a Sunday newspaper. The landowners did not dispute the extent of the slaughter, while a spokeswoman for the Duke of Northumberland claimed in mitigation that all the carcasses from his estate had been sold to the local game dealer (Edwards 2014). However, there is a strong

Plate 184. Stink Pit. Not seen in the early years, these consist of piles of decaying remains of animals and are surrounded by snares, which are set to trap Foxes that are lured in by the smell. The stink pit featured included numerous Mountain Hares, Foxes, a Roe Deer, and fish heads in the plastic container. Lammermuirs, April 2014. © *Ian Poxton*

chance some others will have ended up in the 'stink-pits' warmly advocated by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust in its 'Middens factsheet' (GWCT 2015), and increasingly used as another form of 'vermin' control in the Lammermuirs. Carcasses of Foxes, Stoats, Mountain Hares, Roe Deer, Pheasants, corvids, even fish heads, are bundled into a trench and left there to rot. Snares are then set up around the pit, to lure Foxes attracted by the stench from the midden (Plate 184).

Because today's intensified rearing regime makes Red Grouse very prone to disease, ever more extreme measures are now taken to preserve their fragile health. During the hours of winter darkness, they are dazzled by powerful lamps before receiving medication. In addition, numerous trays of medicated grit are now laid out across the hillside for the grouse to ingest at leisure. What effect such uncontrolled dosing may have on the health of the humans who eventually consume these birds is yet to be examined. The shooting fraternity's refusal to abandon the use of toxic lead shot adds a further layer of potential poison to a grouse supper. Did the Scottish Moorland Group bear this in mind when it launched the publicity campaign extolling the 'Gift of Grouse' (SMG 2015a)?

The changes we saw unfolding during our long study in these hills were not exceptional, but typical of a process repeated across upland Britain wherever Red Grouse are intensively managed for recreational shooting. Whether they even remain truly wild birds is debatable. What is unarguable, however, is that the intensification of land management in the Lammermuirs, coinciding with major shifts in weather patterns and the industrialisation of the landscape in connection with power generation, has coincided also with a significant slump in the fortunes of nearly all wild birds living there with the exception of Red Grouse.

By the time our study ended, it was evident that Merlins in the Lammermuirs were having a hard time of it, even though there was thankfully no evidence of their illegal persecution. On the contrary, many keepers and landowners showed

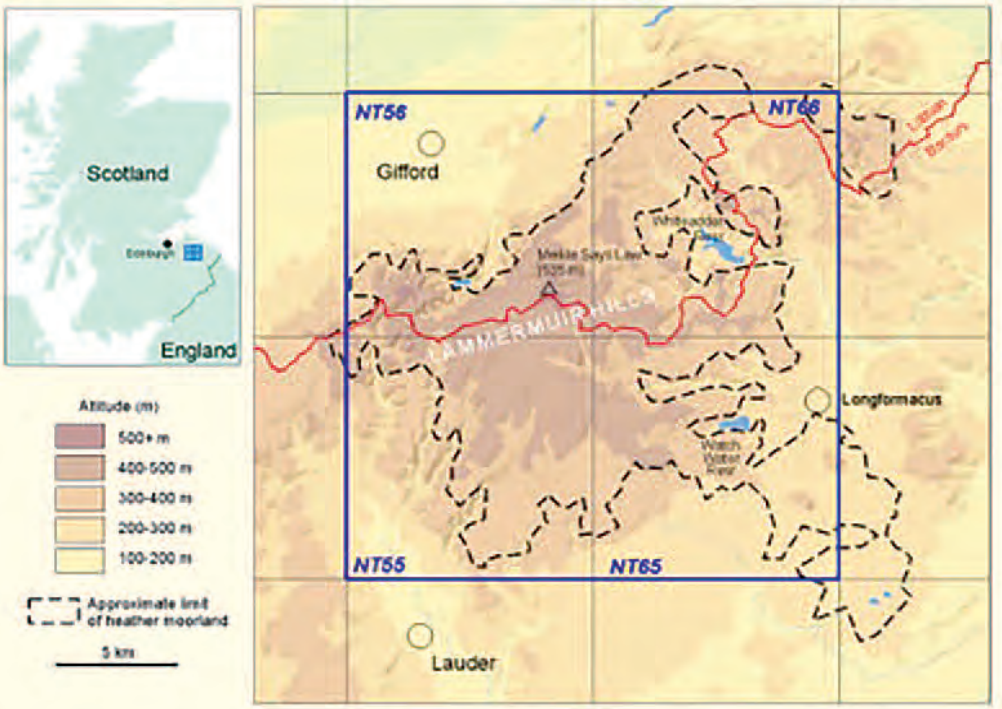


Figure 1. Map showing location of the Lammermuir Hills, Lothian/Borders.

an enlightened attitude towards the species, which they consider no threat to Red Grouse, and seemed happy to support our endeavours. Before the start of the breeding season we would write to several landowners informing them of our work, and at the end of every year we submitted ringing data to the British Trust for Ornithology. Summaries of our study went to recorders and were published in local bird reports; we also published annual summaries in the reports of the Lothian and Borders Raptor Study Group. After 2004, summaries were also sent to the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme and subsequently published in its reports.

The study area comprised an area of about 350 km², with the fieldwork taking place between the end of March and late June/early July (Figure 1). Armed with the necessary licenses and permits, we began the annual cycle by establishing roughly where Merlins were holding territory. This could be a long, wearisome process, and as the population declined, it was not unknown for weeks to elapse without us catching sight of a Merlin. Having eventually determined their territory, we would then carefully watch as the birds returned to the nest. Once the eggs had hatched, we waited until the chicks were almost ready to fledge before ringing them. Prior to this we weighed and measured the birds to establish their sex, since males and females require differing ring sizes.

Plate 185. A brood of five nestling Merlins at the ideal age for ringing, Lammermuirs, July 2009. © *Ian Poxton*

Over the years, we eventually established 38 potential breeding territories, although the largest number of nests found in a single year never exceeded the 13 located in 1989. Our lowest tally was the three nests found in 2012. The lack of human disturbance in these undramatic hills, coupled with the intensively managed nature of the terrain itself, which reduced the threat from land predators like Foxes and Stoats, meant that the breeding success of Merlins was consistently high even as the breeding population went into steep decline. The reasons for the fall in the Merlin population, which conceivably could lead to local extinction, are complex. They may be linked to conditions on the breeding grounds and to problems with winter food supplies once the Merlins have departed from the Lammermuirs at the end of the summer (Heavisides *et al.* 2017).

Recoveries from the 732 (mostly nestling) Merlins (Plate 185) we ringed over the course of our study showed that most wintered in lowland areas of the UK, where the numbers of the farmland birds they depend upon for food have dropped steeply in recent years. As a result, fewer Merlins may be returning to the Lammermuirs to take up territory in spring, and those that do come back may not be in optimum breeding condition. On arrival, they now find fewer areas of suitably deep Heather for them to breed in than before, while large areas of sterile burnt ground no longer provide either the nesting habitat or the potential food source for the Meadow Pipits which Merlins in turn rely upon as their chief source of prey (Heavisides *et al.* 1995). It may be no coincidence that when the conservation status of Merlin changed from 'amber' to 'red' in December 2015, that of the once omnipresent Meadow Pipit itself turned from 'green' to 'amber' (Eaton *et al.* 2015).

Colder, wetter springs affect not only Grouse and Merlins but all other birds in the Lammermuirs. Throughout our study, during which we repeatedly checked the same places at roughly the same time, we made a point of ringing all the wader chicks we were able to catch. In effect, the parts of the Lammermuirs we visited gradually became akin to what ringers

term a 'constant effort site'. When we reviewed our data after the conclusion of the study, it was palpable that the decline in wader numbers was as significant as the drop in the Merlin population. For many years, we would ring roughly 100 wader chicks annually - predominantly Lapwing, Curlew, and Oystercatcher - but by the end of the study that number barely crept into double figures (Heavisides *et al.* 2017). Curlew numbers in particular had plummeted, pointing perhaps to the well-attested impact upon them of large-scale wind-turbine developments (Brown *et al.* 2015). However, as with Merlins, the factors behind the collapse of the breeding wader populations are complex and not fully understood. The grouse industry insists that its management practices encourage excellent breeding conditions for waders (The Moorland Association 2014), but this does not appear to be the case in the scorched, degraded heather monoculture which constitutes the Lammermuir Hills today.

Over the three decades of our study, the Lammermuirs became increasingly devoid of what were once regularly occurring species. By 2014, Grey Partridges and breeding Short-eared Owls were a thing of the past, while the sound of the Cuckoo had grown ever rarer. Burns which had previously held good numbers of Dippers and Common Sandpipers now seemed to us to hold fewer than before. Whether this is partially attributable to the indiscriminate use of rail traps or to the accumulated effect of muirburn upon the water quality and its invertebrate life is hard to say (Brown *et al.* 2014). It could, of course, be neither. Almost certainly, however, breeding opportunities for Ring Ouzels have been reduced by the incineration of the heather along steep-sided cleuchs, contrary to the Scottish Government's code of practice for muirburn (The Scottish Government 2011). A more surprising development is the fatal attraction which rail traps seem to hold for young Ring Ouzels.

The parlous state of the Hen Harrier on driven grouse moors being the subject of intense scrutiny and increasingly acrimonious public debate, readers of this journal may well ask how these birds fared in the Lammermuirs, whose habitat seems eminently suitable for them. Our records reveal we discovered just three Hen Harrier nests over the entire period, the last one being found in 1994. Their very absence from these hills of course constitutes ground for suspicion in itself, and we have little doubt that they remain unwelcome in the Lammermuirs. Hen Harriers being such easily observed birds, their whereabouts can never remain secret for long. Nevertheless, when from time to time we did come across them, our hopes were always raised, and never more so than when watching a pair sky dancing. On one occasion, quite early in our study, we decided to inform the gamekeeper of their presence. We gambled that if *he* knew that *we* knew harriers were on his patch - he was bound to discover them anyway - then he might just feel constrained to leave them alone. Unsurprisingly, that was the last we saw of them, but a lesson had been learned.

Latterly, as we observed the steady decline in the breeding bird populations of the Lammermuirs (apart from Red Grouse and the introduced Red-legged Partridge) the more we questioned how, and in whose interests, this publicly subsidised land is managed. Inevitably, given the nature of the evidence, we concluded that just one thing really matters for the majority of those who own and manage the land today: its capacity to produce higher numbers of Red Grouse for recreational shooting than are naturally sustainable. The interests of everything else appear subsidiary. However, growing public disquiet at their behaviour is putting pressure upon landowners at least to appear more environmentally responsible, and this can lead to oddly contradictory behaviour. In the Lammermuirs, as one estate grubs out the last remnants of semi-natural birch scrub, another plants native hardwoods, perhaps to encourage the revival of the vanishing Black Grouse. A further estate advertises its efforts to conserve Juniper scrub and to restore moorland peat by blocking drainage channels, but still burns acres of ground every year (SMG 2015b).

As we took our leave of these hills and their birds, we wrote to the landowners and their gamekeepers, thanking them for their cooperation in what had become one of the longest-running studies of its kind in Britain. We expressed gratitude especially to those who had

remained willing to grant us continued vehicle access to their estates. To others we suggested that by thwarting our ability to collect important scientific data they might risk reputational damage at a time when the activities of sporting estates are under increasing and frequently hostile scrutiny from several angles. We received just two replies; one of which, from the Lammermuirs Moorland Group, promised a more detailed response which has never materialised. That our presence on these moors ended in such an abrupt manner remains for us a matter of frustration and regret. Although we cannot pretend to have provided the answers to why so many bird species are faring poorly in upland areas like the Lammermuirs, we know that the future absence of the data we consistently provided over such an extended period will do nothing to help remedy an increasingly disturbing situation.

Acknowledgments

We thank Ian Andrews for generously providing the map of the Lammermuir Hills. Most of all we are grateful for the support of our families who tolerated our absence over so many years when we were 'away doing the Merlins'.

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Plate 186. Gannet parent and chick, St Abb's Head, Borders, 8 July 2017. © *Zander Salmond, NTS*

Gannets at St Abb's Head and Bass Rock

J. CLEAVER

For the first time on record, a Gannet chick has been recorded at St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve in the Borders. The chick was first seen on 7 July 2017 at a nest on Foul Carr, one of the site's large seabird stacks.

Up until last spring, National Trust for Scotland's (NTS) Senior Ranger at the reserve, Liza Cole, was aware of only two or three occasions in the last 30 years in which Gannets have been reported settling down on the cliffs at St Abb's Head. However, in late May 2016, a number of birds were observed prospecting Foul Carr, with a few settling on the stack and pairing up, looking like they were getting ready to breed.

In a first for the reserve at the time, one pair were seen bringing in nesting material which for Gannets, typically includes seaweed and kelp fronds. According to the *Seabird Monitoring Handbook* definition, this counts as an Apparently Occupied Nest (AON).

This year, things stepped up a gear; prospecting birds came earlier and in larger numbers. On 10 May 2017, around 70 Gannets were observed scouting out Foul Carr, with many pairs settling and performing courtship behaviours. However, as with last year, after a short flurry of activity most of them left, and in late May only three pairs remained. Two of these pairs built nests on the seaward side of the stack and according to reserve records, deserted their nest sites by 12 July. The other remaining pair settled on the landward side of the cliffs.

The sighting of an egg at the beginning of June (which was the only Gannet egg record at St Abb's Head this year), was a first for the reserve. Sadly however, there wasn't to be a happy ending for the chick which hatched in early July (Plate 186). On 19 July, Liza reported that both the parent and chick were absent from the nest.

Gannets at the Bass Rock, East Lothian

An aerial survey of Apparently Occupied Sites (AOS; *a site occupied by one or two Gannets irrespective of whether nest material was present*) at Bass Rock carried out in June 2014, resulted in the Rock gaining the title of the world's largest colony of Gannets, with a total of 75,259 AOS; a 57% increase since 2004 (Murray *et al.* 2015). There is now reportedly limited suitable, unoccupied nesting habitat on the upper parts of the rock, which may explain why some birds are beginning to look elsewhere, both on, and off the Bass.

"Gannet numbers continue to increase within the present breeding area, as in section 11 (see Plate 187), but the build-up of non-breeders on the landing rocks may eventually lead to breeding there, but is equally likely to see them prospecting elsewhere on the Scottish coast. More than likely St Abb's Head is the result of Bass overspill. The other large North Sea colonies are also thriving to the north, for example Troup Head near Banff, has seen breeding taking place in new areas west of the main colony", reports Stuart Murray.

A Gannet colony at St Abb's Head?

"With the Bass Rock full up, thousands of immature Gannets are looking for a place to breed. St Abb's Head looks set to be Scotland's 17th gannetry, only the second on the Scottish mainland. If the spectacular increase at the other mainland colony at Troup Head is anything to go by, in 30 years' time St Abb's Head could have more than 6,000 pairs of Gannets" Professor Sarah Wanless, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

The possibility of a Gannet colony at St Abb's Head brings with it mixed emotions for the site's rangers. What effect might the arrival of Gannets (a species which appears to be less sensitive to climate change and over-fishing than a number of other seabird species, Murray *et al*. 2015) have on these populations?

"Over the last 20 years seabird numbers at St Abb's Head have declined from 80,000 to just under 45,000 birds, reflecting UK wide declines. The only species that have maintained their numbers have been Guillemots and Razorbills. The stack on which the Gannets have chosen to

Plate 187. Bass Rock from the south, 10 August 2017. Survey section 11 is hemmed in by the fort walls and the landing rocks to the right of the wall and below the lighthouse. © *Stuart Murray*

Plate 188. Gannet apparently trying to brood a Guillemot chick, Bempton, East Yorkshire, July 2016. © *Michael Babcock, RSPB*

breed is a favoured breeding area for Guillemots, so I fear as Gannet numbers increase, as they are bound to, the Guillemots will be pushed out" Liza Cole.

Two hundred miles down the coast from St Abb's Head, Bempton Cliffs in East Yorkshire, has recorded a dramatic increase in their Gannet population from around 20 pairs almost 50 years ago, to 13,400 pairs (to the nearest hundred) in 2017. Interestingly, colony counts for the Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs Special Protection Area (SPA) since 2000 reveal that populations of Guillemot and Razorbill in the SPA have been steadily increasing, with Kittiwake numbers fluctuating but remaining largely stable.

That being said, Seabird Research Assistant at RSPB Bempton Cliffs, Michael Babcock, cautions that sharing the cliffs with Gannets likely has some effect on individual birds. For example, Guillemot utilise the broad ledges for breeding that Gannets also favour.

Michael's team have found that in sections of the colony where Gannets and Guillemots co-exist, Guillemot numbers are still on the increase, but not to the same degree as in areas of the cliffs without Gannets. Guillemot productivity also appears to be lower than average in plots with Gannets nesting on them and productivity has fallen as more Gannets start to nest on the plots.

"During the course of Guillemot productivity monitoring over four years, I have seen a number of Guillemot breeding attempts fail when eggs or chicks were lost because of Gannets (presumably young birds prospecting for breeding sites) landing on ledges where Guillemots were breeding. A few times I have even seen Gannets land on a ledge and then appear to try to brood a Guillemot chick whose parents they have driven off (Plate 188)" Michael Babcock.

Thankfully Michael notes that these shared areas are, up till now at least, relatively small compared to the size of the whole colony and it is still the case that other Guillemots continue to breed successfully in them. He adds: *'there are also large areas of the colony suitable for Guillemots where it seems to me unlikely that Gannets will become established because of the cliff structure'*.

Numbers of Kittiwakes at St Abb's Head have sadly decreased by 85% over the last 25 years. Whether there is potential for Guillemots who've lost their territory to Gannets to colonise areas of the cliff previously occupied by Kittiwake, is unknown. Traditionally these species utilise different areas of the cliff with Kittiwakes preferring to nest on narrow ledges.

"This feels very much like a pivotal moment for the seabird colony at St Abb's Head, and only time will tell what will happen in the years to come" Liza.

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Jane Cleaver, SOC Development Officer

BOOK REVIEWS

Birds of the Indonesian Archipelago: Greater Sundas and Wallacea. James A. Eaton, Bas van Balen, Nick W. Brickle & Frank E. Rheindt, 2016. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, ISBN 978-84-941892-6-5, 496 pages, hardback, £ 60.

One interesting and rewarding aspect about reviewing a field guide is that it often encourages the reviewer to revisit their own notes for the area. This guides covers one of the most fascinating and complicated regions on our planet, so many memories. However, this creates several challenges for the authors; the number of species - 1,400 plus, including over 600 endemics - alone is a challenge, then there is the geography of the region (which includes 16,000+ islands), the complicated mapping, and the ever-changing taxonomy.

Most of these challenges are met in this guide. You could argue that some of the illustrations are a bit small and perhaps the text a little terse. The guide itself is a little large and heavy for the field but I guess it has to be. One of these challenges, the taxonomy, has been turned into a positive. The taxonomy for each species is dealt with in the species text. This is commendable and rather well done. Sure, the taxonomy will change (probably next month) but any field guide is a snapshot in time, to some extent, isn't it?

There are 27 illustrators (and over 2,500 illustrations) including many heavyweights, the general quality is very good indeed, but there is variation and this combined with the small size renders a few illustrations (e.g. the bitterns) not particularly helpful. On the other hand, the mapping work is simply incredible - a huge piece of work. There is a map for each species! Again, they are a little small (or is that just my age?) but very convenient, placed right next to the illustration. The planning of each plate must have been a major undertaking in itself.

Some may argue, at £60, it is a bit expensive for a field guide, even a big one. I would argue the opposite - with so much work from so many talented people, this is a bargain. When I return, I will take it with me, although I may not carry it every day!

Ken Shaw

Birds of Caithness: including the breeding & wintering atlas 2007–2012, Revised Edition. Edited by P. Davey, S. Manson, E. Maughan, D. Omand, & J. Smith. 2016. Caithness Branch of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. ISBN 5060269679480, hardback, 456 pages, not available for purchase.

The DVD version of the Birds of Caithness was reviewed in SB 36(2):171, and at that time we said that this excellent work should be read by many more people than the 200 DVDs made available at the time - and that a reprint would be necessary. It is with great pleasure then to see that it is now available in hardback book format. A limited number of books have been published on subscription only but, unfortunately, it is no longer available to buy. It has been bound such that it cannot be laid flat, but it is robust and now we can see those wonderful photos and pore over the maps in the comfort of an armchair. Both the DVD and the book are available, to members, to borrow from the SOC library.

Mark Holling

Note from editorial team: There are no immediate plans to publish a reprint. However, should circumstances change, Caithness SOC will notify Waterston House and also publicize more widely.

Falcons. Richard Sale, 2016. New Naturalist 132, Collins, London. ISBN 978-0-00-751142-6, paperback, 594 pages, £35.

The falcons concerned in this book are the four British and Irish breeding species, namely the Peregrine, Kestrel, Hobby and Merlin.

The writer Richard Sale has quite recently published a monograph on one of these species *The Merlin* (see review *Scottish Birds* 36: 40). This new lengthy book contains a somewhat condensed version of the contents of the Merlin and similar-sized accounts for each of the other species. All aspects of breeding biology and habitat, diet, mortality, movements and wintering etc. are covered in some detail. This book is, however, a comparative study between these four species rather than simply a collection of monographs. The author draws

heavily on the extensive published data from several British and Irish raptor studies as well as his own personal experiences, images and observations. Relevant information from studies elsewhere in the world is also incorporated and it includes a usefully extensive reference list.

The opening chapters discuss similarities and differences between the species. I found the chapter titled 'Hunter and Hunted' fascinating although some of the physics and mathematics of flight somewhat challenging! The four species accounts which follow are filled with interesting observations and illustrated with numerous graphs and images. There are some very good photographic studies of individual birds but also many smaller images which help illustrate the points made in the text.

The final chapter 'Populations: Past, Present and Future' usefully summarises what is known about population changes for each of the species. The historical effects of factors such as habitat change, human persecution and pesticides impact are summarised. The present situation appears to be mixed with Hobby clearly increasing and spreading, but Kestrel worryingly decreasing. Merlin and Peregrine may be stable overall, but changes in distribution occurring. Clearly with comparatively small populations, as the author says, there is a need for vigilance.

As a raptor enthusiast, I found this book to be quite absorbing and I learned a lot from it. I would also think that most keen generalist birders who want to know about the detail of bird species lives should find plenty in this book to keep their interest.

Alan Heavisides

Songs of Love and War: the dark heart of bird behaviour. Dominic Couzens, 2017. Bloomsbury Natural History, London, ISBN 978-1-4729-0991-6, hardback, 256 pages, £16.99.

Couzens is a prolific author, but a good one. He starts this book with a prologue describing adventures and hikes with his 11-year-old son in the outdoors. This theme of discovering the natural world and trying to explain it runs through the 11 chapters of the book, starting with song then the stages of the avian breeding cycle, competition, mortality, roosting, a chapter on Robins, then migration, navigation, the role of birds in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony and finishing with 'a thousand cuts' where he discusses the declines in so many songbirds once considered common British birds. There is a useful bibliography. He has a good and wide ranging knowledge of the science behind his writing and the book is recommended as a very readable discussion of many of the issues currently affecting our songbirds.

Stan da Prato

Identification of European Non-passerines - a BTO Guide. Second edition. Jeff Baker, 2016. BTO, Thetford, ISBN 978-1-908581-67-9, 463 pages, paperback, £15.

This long-awaited update to the guide frequently referred to simply as 'Baker' is now even more of a must. With colour illustrations throughout, it has been expanded to cover over 150 species, hence the slightly bigger size. For gull enthusiasts, there are tables of identifying features to help separate Caspian and Yellow-legged Gulls, including first-year birds, and some great illustrations to help ageing Puffins, which also feature on the book's cover. An added bonus is the inclusion of sections on over 30 of the more commonly encountered wader species. These are taken from the *BTO Guide to Holarctic Waders*, but updated in places including moult details. The introductory sections are very familiar with an added table of Euring ageing codes. The species accounts have been updated to reflect advances in knowledge in sexing and ageing, the latter more easily presented in chronological order. Some of these updates will benefit birdwatchers too, for example, the removal of previous ageing options for Great Spotted Woodpeckers using the white spots on the tips of the primaries and unmoulted primary coverts (both since found to be unreliable). At only £15 from the BTO website, this book continues to be tremendous value.

Andy Coates

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: **rduncan393@outlook.com** *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.*

This edition of the Ringers Round Up comes from the Clyde, Lothian and Borders Ringing Groups and Argyll ringers. It summarises the ringing projects from these areas over the winter and spring period 2017.

Winter

Once again Clyde Ringing Group (CRG) concentrated winter efforts on catching and ringing Jack Snipe, this time for the 23rd consecutive winter. We have two main study sites, the first a small area of wetland owned and managed by Glasgow City Council - Windlaw Marsh near Carmunock - and our best site at Cathkin Marsh East Kilbride, owned and actively managed for Jack Snipe, by the SWT. We made visits to these sites on alternate weekends in what turned out to be our most successful winter ever, catching and ringing 128 new Jack Snipe and re-trapping four from previous winters. Our best total prior to this was 81 individuals. I suspect the strong easterly winds in the autumn that brought large numbers of eastern migrants to Scotland may have also been responsible for this high total of Jack Snipe.

Up until this winter we had ringed over 600 birds but without a single follow-on recovery, so in March 2016 we developed a new side to this study, gaining permission to deploy leg-mounted geo-locators on Jack Snipe, a UK first. We managed to get four out onto large male birds that month and we were keen to get one back. Despite our efforts this winter we failed to do so but got our other 16 locators fitted to new birds and returning adults. With nothing known about the origins of Jack Snipe in Scotland we can only hope to recapture one or more over the next 2–3 winters and make a start on learning where they are from and where they move to.

The finding of a winter roost of Oystercatchers and Curlew on Arran kept the CRG's wader theme going, with small numbers of Common Snipe, Jack Snipe, Redshank and Lapwing not to mention bycatches of Short-eared Owl and Merlin! Dazzling at night also produced 17 Woodcocks and several Common Snipe.

The year ended on a high with the CRG ringing a total of 7,707 birds of 103 species and adding Red necked Phalarope to the species list, this is our best year for some time.

While we in the west have lost all our winter stubbles and the birds along with them, the Lothian and Borders RGs work hard over the winter in their areas: Lothian (Mike McDowall) - mist-netting farmland finches and buntings, and whoosh-netting Linnets near Gifford, East Lothian; Borders (Tom Dougall) - mist-netting and 'whooshing' finches near Leadburn; and Borders (Alan Kerr) - mist-netting finches near Reston, Berwickshire.

Spring

Clyde Ringing Group

For Clyde ringing continued in the New Year, mainly at garden feeders, catching mostly finches and although it was a quiet winter for Brambling overall, there was a small flock at Salsburgh which kept on producing birds (50 ringed) up until late April.

The early spring finch passage, which started in mid-February, was one to be remembered, with a sudden influx of Siskin, peaking on 18 March and producing huge numbers (over 600 ringed and 12 UK controls) of birds passing through several sites, especially the Salsburgh garden,

Plate 189. Whimbrel, Isle of Arran, Clyde Islands, 30 April 2017. © *Liam Reid*

into mid May. Smaller numbers of Lesser Redpolls, Goldfinch and a handful of Common Redpolls (including our first ever recovery for this species), made for some busy mornings.

Wader ringing continued into the spring with another new project of colour ringing/leg flag on passage Whimbrel on Isle of Arran. Terry and Chris Southall have ringed Whimbrel here for many years but the hope is the flags will produce re-sightings from potential breeding and wintering sites.

Borders Ringing Group

The year started well with three farmland sessions in January producing new birds as follows: one Jack Snipe, 33 Blackbirds, 24 House and 69 Tree Sparrows, 18 Chaffinches, 36 Yellowhammers and 21 Reed Buntings.

The spring and early summer were very productive in terms of migrating Siskin and Lesser Redpoll, and details of Siskin catches in one garden in Peebles are presented below. The same garden, between January and June, yielded 217 new and 13 controlled Lesser Redpolls - not huge numbers in themselves, but the previous four years put this in context, when totals ringed ranged from 17 to 69, and controlled from 0 to 6.

Processing totals for Siskin in a Peebles garden, January–June inclusive:

Year	Ringed	Controlled
2017	2417	47
2016	1727	52
2015	85	1
2014	912	27
2013	315	6

Locations of Peebles-ringed Siskin, January–June 2017:

Month	Locations (single birds, unless indicated otherwise)
Jan	Surrey, Borders, West Lothian
Feb	Surrey, North Wales, Cheshire, Borders, Highland
Mar	Greater Manchester, North Yorkshire, Cumberland, Grampian, Highland (3)
Apr	Dumfries & Galloway, Borders (3), Central, Mull, Grampian (2), Highland (4), Fair Isle
May	Borders (4), Argyll & Bute, Highland

It has been a productive season - compared to recent years - for Black-headed Gull chick survival, and Oystercatchers, Curlew and Barn Owls, too, seem to have had a good year. A juvenile Reed Warbler was ringed at St Abb's Head in the breeding season.

Apart from the Siskins, there have also been interesting recoveries and re-sightings of:

Whooper Swan: adult female ringed at Jokuldalsheidi in Iceland on 14 August 2008, seen at Caerlaverock and Cumbria in January to April 2009 at Lower Derwent Valley for the same period in 2010, then in Wigtown and at Martin Mere in January and February 2011, before moving to Folly Loch, Borders in March of that year. It was unreported until February–March 2017, when it was back at Folly Loch.

Mute Swan: a first-summer male caught in a moult flock at Berwick-upon-Tweed on 30 July 2000, was killed by a car in February 2017 in its 18th year, at Tweedbank.

Black-headed Gull: one ringed as a chick in the Moorfoot Hills on 16 June 2013, was re-sighted at Kobenhavn, Denmark on 20 January 2017, possibly an unusual choice for a wintering location - but maybe the bird now resides on the continent.

Ringing recoveries

The recoveries reported back to the Clyde RG by BTO were dominated by the birds ringed during the previous autumn migration, a selection of the most significant are given in full below, however as a brief summary: Of birds ringed in October and November we had follow on recoveries of Lesser Redpoll: in Lancashire, South and West Yorkshire, the West Midlands, Worcestershire, Lincolnshire, Suffolk (2) and Norfolk.

Similarly, the spring arrivals of Siskin included birds ringed in Suffolk, Surrey and Manchester in the winter and passage birds from Nottingham, Shropshire and Cheshire. Onward movements have included one to Grampian and five in the Highlands so far, very similar to those for Borders.

Goldfinches are proving to be an interesting bird. For years there were very few about and the odd recovery we had was relatively local but over the last ten years they have increased in number and appear to have followed Siskins into gardens and have benefited in both terms of population recovery but have also given us the chance to ring many more. The result of this has shown similar wintering areas in southern England to that of the Siskin and Lesser Redpolls but also that France is a regular destination, we have had two recaught there and this spring saw our fifth French ringed bird caught here in the Clyde/Argyll area, this time at Machrihanish (details of which are awaited).

Selected recoveries

Blackbird

LJ49204 4F 05.11.15 Holland, North Ronaldsay B.O., Orkney
4F 15.11.16 Damhead Farm, Carluke. 412 km 376 days

LC74963 3M 16.10.16 Isle of May BO, Fife
3M 06.12.16 Isle of Arran. 176 km 51 days

CH78241 3M 23.12.13 Amisfield, Haddington, E. Lothian
R 4M 08.11.16 Vlieland, The Netherlands. 580 km 1,051 days

Song Thrush

RL15834 3 21.09.16 Isle of May BO, Fife
3 15.10.16 Damhead, Carluke. 89 km 24 days

Chiffchaff

JBT159 3 01.10.16 Damhead, Carluke
3 27.11.16 Eastleigh Sewerage Farm, Hampshire. 553 km 57 days

Lesser Redpoll

S596508 3 17.10.16 Drum, Aberdeen
3 23.11.16 Damhead, Carluke. 174 km 37 days

S595413 3M 09.10.16 Drum
5 23.07.17 Garmony, Isle of Mull. 222 km 287 days

Z444868 3 01.10.16 Damhead
3M 26.11.16 Hollesley Head, Suffolk. 532 km 56 days

Siskin

D020491 5F 14.04.16 Lerwick, Shetland
6F 29.03.17 Drumla, Isle of Arran. 573 km 349 days

S765175 6m 07.03.17 Culford School, Suffolk
6M 23.03.17 Drumla, Isle of Arran. 515 km 16 days

S235001 5M 03.04.16 Tal Goed, Conway, Wales
6M 29.03.17 Manse, Salsburgh. 288 km 360 days

S032326 6M 18.03.17 Manse, Salsburgh.
6M 02.05.17 Nigg Ferry, Cromarty Firth, Highland. 210 km 45 days

S032537 5M 30.03.17 Manse
5M 13.04.17 Inchberry, Moray, Grampian. 200 km 14 days

S195629 5M 05.03.17 Peebles
R 08.03.17 Inverness, HR 211 km 3 days.

S196199 5F 23.03.17 Peebles
R 30.03.17 Near Kilday, HR 240 km 7 days

S197418 6M 30.04.17 Peebles
R 07.05.17 Cnoc, Loch Lomond, Argyll. 113 km 7 days

S192064 5M 11.04.16 Peebles
R 07.03.17 Orrell, Manchester. 239 km 173 days
R 05.06.17 Aros, Isle of Mull 201 km 300 days

Goldfinch

S295848 4F 05.12.16 Litlington, East Sussex
6F 16.04.17 Damhead, Carluke. 608 km 132 days

S307303 4F 15.10.16 Lower Basildon, West Berkshire
4F 10.04.17 Damhead, Carluke. 502 km 177 days

Z076466 5M 19.03.16 Calf of Man BO, Isle of Man
6M 26.03.17 Drumla, Isle of Arran 155 km 372 days

Common Redpoll
Z601163 4 12.10.16 Isle of May, Fife
6M 29.04.17 Manse, Salsburgh, 90 km 199 days

This selection of the most significant recoveries reported this spring include good examples of migrants from the east passing through the coasts and on into central, southern Scotland on a broad front. The Isle of May features strongly, not surprisingly given the large numbers both passing through there in October but also the large numbers ringed last autumn.

The finch recoveries show wintering and passage sites as well as migration routes and overshoots (Siskin previously in Lerwick), the selection from Peebles shows just how quickly some of these birds are moving north. The late spring recovery of the Common Redpoll from the Isle of May is our first ever. The bird was not identified to species at ringing but is said to be potentially a *rostrata* (Greenland) race when re-caught, but this has still to be decided by Scottish Rarities' Committee.

Colour-ringing projects

Clyde RG
Pied and White Wagtails. Colour over BTO RL, two colours or single lettered white ring on LL.
Small gulls; Black-headed Gull; red with white 2*** RL, BTO LL,
Common Gull; yellow with black RL 2***, BTO LL.
Large gulls. Herring, LBB and GBB Gulls, have white rings with red digits on LL (mainly) and BTO RL. All have 2 numbers and a letter then finish with :C.
Sandwich Tern. White with black digits (E01–00) on LL, BTO RL.
Oystercatcher. Left leg white with black, one letter and two digits, right leg blue over BTO.
Curlew. Left tibia green with two white digits. Right tibia, green and right leg BTO.
Whimbrel. Left tibia yellow flag with two digits, right tibia red, left leg BTO.
Nuthatch. Combinations of singe colour over BTO RL and up to two colours on LL.

Please report any of the above to iainlivcrg@googlemail.com, I will return ringing data and any other reports for that bird.

Borders and Lothian RGs
Common Sandpiper. Adults and young, combinations of orange or red inscribed rings and red or orange single colours.
Black-headed Gull. White, black inscription 2AAA onwards and now 2BAA up, Tom Dougall Borders RG
Common Gull (Stuart Craig, in Borders). White, black inscription 2XAA upwards.

Argyll Ringers
Finding out more about Hoodies. In an attempt to find out more about Hooded Crows (love them or hate them... we don't know a lot about their movements and even less about their population demography) David Jardine has been colour-ringing nestlings on Colonsay and will be interested in any sightings from Argyll or elsewhere. Previous work with metal rings has shown that birds do disperse from the island; a nestling ringed on Colonsay in May 2013, was found at Bunnahabhain, Islay the following February. This summer another Hoodie, ringed as a nestling on Colonsay on 22 May 2007, was caught in a crow trap on 25 May 2017. The current longevity record for a Hooded Crow is of a bird shot at Lockerbie, Dumfries & Galloway which had been ringed in Opland, Norway six years, four months and three days previously.

Plate 190. Black-headed Gull, Hogganfield Loch, Clyde, 6 April 2016. © *John Malloy*

Plate 191. Hooded Crow, Colonsay, Argyll, 10 June 2017. © *David Jardine*

A selection of colour-ring reports

Pied Wagtail

L976460/White C1 4M 12.08.12 E. Kilbride, S. Lanarkshire
RR 15.02.15 Torrelavega, Santander, Spain 1,384 km 917 days (RR = ring read in the field)
L976479/white FN 3J 12.08.12 East Kilbride
RR 3 05.12.15 Fornos, Aviero, Portugal 1,682 km 1,210 days

White Wagtail

Y127986 4 15.09.11 East Kilbride
RR 26.07.12 Husavik, Suaur-Azingeyjars, Iceland 1,340 km, 174 days. This is our third in Iceland.
L976459/W+O 3J 12.08.12. East Kilbride
RR 11.10.16 Hugh Town, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly. Note this bird was ringed while still in juvenile plumage, proof that White Wagtails pass through Scotland before post juvenile moult is complete.

Common Gulls

Birds are ringed as chicks (N) or adults at sites in the Clyde Estuary and a few inland, most birds are re-sighted in the Clyde Estuary but further south, but we have six reports in Ireland or Northern Ireland, and two in Merseyside. One example given shows return passage in the spring.

EX64140/2A58 N 07.07.13 Hunterston, Clyde Estuary
RR 14-10-14 until 12.02.15 Whitegate, Cork Harbour, Cork, Eire
RR 03.11.15 Rostellan, Cork, Eire
RR 22.03.16 Gylnn, Larne, Co. Antrim, N. Ireland

Black-headed Gulls

So far, all the birds have been ringed as chicks. Most were at colonies in Lanarkshire and more recently some at Hunterston, Clyde Port. Reports mainly show that birds move up into the central belt, Motherwell, Glasgow and the Stirling area, for the winter, but some move much further, with reports from Edinburgh, Musselburgh, Bardsey Bird Observatory (North Wales), Redcar and Cleveland, Rutland Water (Leicestershire), Northern Ireland (four) and Eire with the furthest given below;

EY20569/2E08 N 07.07.13 Elvanfoot, S. Lanarkshire
RR 11.01.15 Tamar Estuary, Plymouth, Devon

Large gulls

For the Clyde RG, we started in 2012 concentrating on Lesser Black-backed Gulls with fewer Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls. For Lesser Black-backed Gulls, c. 15% get reported in their first winter, well above the 4.2% we get for a lifetime of metal only ringed. Chicks, once independent move south, very few get reported until they arrive on the north-west coast of Spain, typically in late August and early September, suggesting they fly directly over the sea. They then move south through Portugal and many spend the winter and their first 2–3 years in Iberia and Morocco with smaller numbers (or fewer observers) in West Africa. There is a drift north in the summer, but very few return to the UK. The use of the colour rings has given us an incredible insight into the life histories that we never could get from the metal only ringing, which mainly generate 'found dead' recoveries. We regularly get multiple reports of the same individuals, a sample are shown in full.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

4Y9/GV04630 N 28.06.14 Horse Isle, Ayrshire
RR 16.12.14 Malaga Harbour, Spain
RR 10.03.15 Rio Guadalquivir, Cordoba, Spain
RR 28.07.15 Elzenburgh, Oss, The Netherlands
RR 12.07.16 Garryhill, Co. Carlow, Eire
2S3/GR33063 N 29.03.13 Horse Isle, Ayrshire
RR 15.03.14 Veleze, Malaga, Spain
RR 30.10.14 Albion Landfill, Albert Village, Leicestershire
RR 02.01.15 Cacela Velha, Algarve, Portugal
RR 13.04.15 Cantabrian Sea, N. Spain (seen from oceanographic survey vessel)
Dead (diseased) 20.05.17 Horse Isle, Ayrshire

A sad end to an amazing life history, we found this female bird freshly dead in the colony. This is our first colour-ringed bird back on Horse Isle, without the colour ring we would only ever have had the ringing date and the found dead date!

Lothian RG

Lesser Black-backed Gulls John Davies (johncdavies@blueyonder.co.uk) A sample of 100 chicks was ringed on Inchcolm on 5 July 2016. Using inscribed orange rings (001–100:F). Up until the end of 2016 a total of 36 reports from 18 individuals had been received. By the end of July 2017 this has reached 74 reports from 34 individuals, with birds back in England and some seen as far as Morocco and Mauritania.

Two multiple reports are shown in full but there were three others reported from Spain and 13 from Portugal.
008:F GV38108 RR 06.08.16 Baron's Haugh, Motherwell
RR 23–28.10.16 Great Pool, Tresco, Isle of Scilly
019:F GV38119 RR Playa de Arnela, A. Coruna, Spain
RR 17.10.16 Praia da Matosinhos, Porto, Portugal

Kittiwake Ringed as chicks on Inchkeith by the Lothian RG; this selection of recent reports show movements to northern France in April and again in July.
ET66991 16.07.01, RR 20.04.17 Boulogne Sur Mer, Pas-de-Calais, France 667 km
EG46119 05.07.03, RR 15.04.17 Boulonge
RR 04–15.07.17 Boulonge
EL98111 14.07.07, RR 24.04.17 Escalles, Pas-de-Calais, France 580 km

Hopefully, you have enjoyed finding out about the activities of the 'southern' ringing groups and west coast ringers. Please take the time to check birds for rings and colour rings and please report them to the BTO or directly to the ringers in charge of the project. You will be sent life histories for your bird and will be contributing to vital information on our important bird populations.

Iain Livingstone, Clyde RG

Plate 192. Richard's Pipit, Fair Isle, June 2016. Taken in evening sunshine. © *Lee Gregory*

The identification of an interesting Richard's Pipit on Fair Isle in June 2016

I.J. ANDREWS

When a large pale pipit appeared briefly in front of me on Fair Isle on 4 June 2016, I have to admit Tawny Pipit was the first species that came to mind. It flushed ahead of me as I was walking over the maritime heath on the Brecks. After another tantalising view, I put the news out, but it was not until two hours later that Deryk Shaw relocated it near Kirki Mire. Again, distant views suggested Tawny, but as the grainy photographs were checked, it slowly became clear that that was the wrong call. Lee Gregory and others certainly thought it was a Richard's Pipit once they had checked his photographs that evening.

The bird moved between the Brecks, the Kenaby tattie strip, Kirki Mire and various fields in the vicinity until late the next day. It was not at all approachable and it wasn't until 20:00 on the 5th that Lee finally got some decent photographs (Plates 192 & 196). It was not seen again.

Description

Size: calling it a 'large' pipit may be misleading, as it wasn't that large and clearly smaller and less bulky than a Skylark (Plate 198). Altogether, it was a compact bird, rather than long and lanky; an over-sized Meadow Pipit might be the best way to describe it. It had a short-necked appearance, rarely, if ever, extending its neck up.

Jizz/habitat preference: the bird preferred the open maritime heather which it often returned to. It fed on the short, cropped vegetation, often running, but also spending time crouched behind tussocks of grass. It also visited short, grazed turf, the sides of a tattie rig and at times it disappeared into tall, tussock grass. It kept a horizontal rather than upright stance. Its flight was low and direct and it never hovered on landing.

General appearance: the bird always appeared pale, almost sandy in overall tone, with richer buff on the flanks and extremely well-marked, pale-edged coverts and remiges. This was the most Tawny-like part of its appearance. In the low evening light, the colour appeared richer (Plate 192).

Head (Plate 193): the head was generally indistinctly marked. The appearance of the crown varied. In some views, it could appear mainly pale with thin lines of darker streaks, in other it looked mainly dark (Plate 193a–b). A slightly darker area above and in front of the eyes was often evident. A broad pale supercilium extended from the bill to immediately behind the eye. The eye appeared black and was rather small in proportion to its face (see comparison with a typical autumn Richard's in Plate 196). A pale eye-ring was conspicuous. The ear-coverts were mid coloured, merging into a darker, but thin, moustachial stripe which extended to the gape. The sub-moustachial stripe was pale (an obvious feature) and below that, the malar stripe was fine and dark, and also rather weak (and extending just to the bill). Apart from these indistinct, fine lines (moustachial and malar stripes), the lores were pale (distinguishing it from Tawny Pipit). The chin was clean and pale. The rounded head was a consistent feature, rather the flat and sloping into the bill. In this respect it resembled a Meadow or Tree Pipit (Plate 193b).

Bill: the bill was rather short and deep (see comparison with a Richard's in Plate 196). The upper mandible was dark with a pale cutting edge, whilst the lower mandible was largely horn-coloured, except for a darker tip.

Nape/mantle: the nape was paler (and greyer in some lights) than the crown or mantle, merging into a mid-coloured mantle with clear dark centres to the feathers. Most mantle feathers only had fine, rather inconspicuous, streaks down their centre, but on the 'shoulder' some had more extensive dark centres.

Breast/belly: fine, dark, almost blackish, streaks extended across in a band across the bird's pale chest, to form a neat pattern. Below these, the lower chest was buffer. The bird appeared to have some plumage damage to its belly. Its flanks were a distinctly brighter, rich buff.

Plate 194. Richard's Pipit, Fair Isle, June 2016. Detail of the wing coverts. © *Lee Gregory*

Plate 193 a–b. Richard's Pipit, Fair Isle, June 2016. The detail of the head pattern from different angles. © *Lee Gregory and Ian Andrews*

Wings: all the median and greater wing coverts and tertials exhibited broad pale fringes - an obvious feature including clear wing bars. The median covert bar was the most prominent, but the greater coverts were more worn. The median coverts showed pointed dark centres and broad pale tips. The secondaries and primaries were hardly visible in the folded wing, but the primaries were also seen to have narrow pale fringes.

Tail (Plate 195): the tail was rather short - as seen on the ground and in flight. The white outer tail feathers were particularly obvious. The outer tail feather (T6) appeared all white, with an extensive outer and inner web on T5 (with a dark shaft and dark inner corner visible). T3–4 were all dark, with T1–T2 having clean, pale brown fringes.

Legs/feet: the bright, straw-coloured legs and feet were a clear feature, appearing almost orange in some lights. Its legs appeared 'in proportion' and not particularly long or lanky. Particular effort was made to photograph the all-important hind claw. This was only partially successful (Plate 197). In some pictures, it appears curved and rather short; in others, it looks longer and rather straight.

Call: the bird was frustratingly silent.

Discussion

Thoughts of Tawny Pipit were soon a distant memory, and although Richards Pipit was getting most votes, there was also the niggling idea that Blyth's had not been conclusively ruled out - and the bird did look smallish and compact and was silent! This thought of Blyth's Pipit was even more evident, when photographs of a bird identified as such on Bardsey (18–19 May 2016) were found on the internet (Stansfield 2016) [this record has since been accepted as a Blyth's Pipit by BBRC]. So, with 'ask the audience' tending towards Richard's Pipit, I decided to 'phone a friend', well, email Per Alström. Per replied almost immediately: "I'm sure it's a Richard's, especially because of the not very clear-cut wing bars, with the pattern on the median and greater coverts fitting RP, the fairly weakly streaked mantle and crown, the latter more heavily streaked on the sides than in the centre. The photo [see below] appears to show a typical RP hind claw."

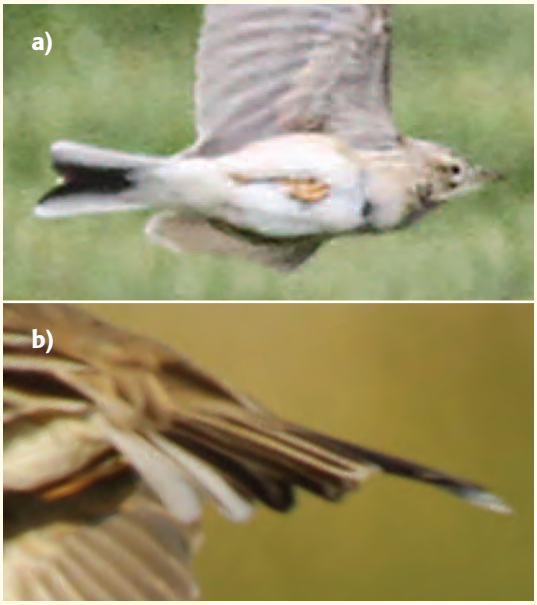

Plate 195 a–b. Richard's Pipit, Fair Isle, June 2016. The tail pattern and length in flight. © *Lee Gregory and Ian Andrews*

Killian Mullarney also confidently identified the bird as a Richard's Pipit: "While the shape of the dark centres/pale tips to the median coverts can sometimes be ambiguous in these species, I think the pattern shown by the Fair Isle bird is firmly indicative of Richard's, showing a decidedly 'pointed' shape to the dark centre. The apparently rather small-looking bill is something that can be seen in quite a few Richard's Pipit photos." KM was also reminded of the controversy that surrounded the infamous 'Portland Pipit' in spring 1989 (Grant 1989), a bird which he considered to be a Richard's Pipit.

The fact that the Richard's/Blyth's Pipit pair can present challenges has been recognised for many decades. The need for detailed observation has always been paramount, and thankfully photographs now allow these details to be shared and wider opinions to be sought. My impression of this bird's size, shape, proportions, stance and behaviour set alarm bells ringing, but the detail, to which Per Alström and Killian Mullarney attribute great importance, clearly points to Richard's. In addition, the photographs also highlight how different even the detail on an individual bird can vary between images. Not only can the overall colour tones appear different in various light

Plate 196 a–b. **(a)** 'typical autumn Richard's Pipit', Fair Isle, 20 October 2015, compared to **(b)** the 'interesting Fair Isle Richard's Pipit', June 2016. Note the differences in bill proportions and relative size of the eye. The October bird is in first-winter plumage with retained juvenile median and greater coverts. © *Steve Arlow and Lee Gregory*

Plate 197 a–e (left). Richard's Pipit, Fair Isle, June 2016. Various attempts to capture the length of the hind claw length. At this resolution, differentiating the claw from vegetation is not always easy! © *Lee Gregory and Ian Andrews.* **Plate 198 (below).** Richard's Pipit (front) compared with Skylark, Fair Isle, June 2016. © *Ian Andrews*

conditions, but assessing how prominent the wing bars were and how streaked the crown was is fraught with conflicts.

Interestingly, and as an observation only, the so-called 'Chinese Richard's Pipit' '*sinensis*' is a small Richard's taxon with a relatively short tail and hind claw. So, presumably there are Richard's Pipits such as this interesting Fair Isle bird somewhere within the species' extensive Asian breeding range.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Lee Gregory and Ciaran Hatsell for their input (and Lee especially for his invaluable photographs), Per Alström for his prompt reply to my email (from Mongolia!) and Killian Mullarney for his valued comments.

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Ian Andrews, Musselburgh.
Email: ijandrews@live.com

Plate 199. 'Atlantic Canada Goose' - the form that was introduced. Our introduced bird, *B. c. canadensis*, has a very whitish breast and only little breast barring. The pale breast extends around the back of the neck as a pale wash ring on most (but a bit variable) and fairly pale overall body plumage. They have very big and longish bills and big bodies. Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Northumberland, 17 June 2017. © *J.G. Steele*

'Canada Geese' from Canada: do we see vagrants of wild birds in Scotland?

J. STEELE & J. NADIN

If you are a Scottish birder you will know the Canada Goose, a species which breeds in a wide (and growing) local population. They also undertake 'semi-migrations' as huge groups of 'English' birds migrate up to the Beauly Firth to moult in summer. They are generally all very similar and the very first birds came here from around 250 years ago. They did not fly here - they were initially carried from North America by British explorers and seafarers, coming home on their boats, to eat on the journey or to keep as decorative birds on arrival home. Whatever the plan, birds arrived and doubtless more came over the years and they became well distributed, including in Scotland. However, this article is not going to be about these, but about very different-looking birds that occur in the wild in North America and potentially occur as migrants in Scotland.

However, it is important to look at our well-established British birds first and then recognize that the situation in North America is infinitely more complex.

Britain and North America

So before going further **look now at Plate 199 and the associated notes**. These are the birds that have been introduced.

The birds are big, their necks are long, and there are subtle plumage and structural features that are important. This is our starting point, the **Atlantic Canada Goose** (*Branta canadensis canadensis*), big and pale. The true, wild birds of this race breed in Newfoundland and the most eastern fringes of Canada, and migrate relatively short distances as far as north-east USA.

However, if the whole area of Canada and USA are considered, this is just one race of many. You will find yourself exposed to a staggering variety of 'Canada Geese'. There are forms that are tiny - as small as a Mallard and very dark, through to a vast bird approaching the size of a swan and very pale. In between there is pretty much everything else. The smallest birds are generally those that breed right up in the arctic and winter in the deep-south of USA. The paler birds are more likely to be eastern, the dark ones are more western, but as you will see, this is certainly not absolute.

So, our introduced British residents are *B. c. canadensis*, but do we get anything else in Britain and if so what and where?

Species, races and the rare arrivals

The North Americans have long-recognised the huge variation in their Canada Geese and over the last century the scientists identified 11 or 12 different looking 'races'. It was the best they could do in the mid-20th century because seeing the breeders is not straightforward in the arctic and sub-arctic and the variation is difficult to clarify. They predicted that, with time, a much better understanding would be achieved. However, more than half-a-century later nothing has really changed. So, there are still theoretically 11 currently recognised 'races' but there may be far more 'forms'. In the last decade or so, two North American academics suggested that we are looking at several different species (Hanson 2006, Anderson 2010) and in fact well over a hundred different races, though there are differences between the authors as to how these are interpreted. This work was based on study of hundreds of skins and the old-fashioned world of museum specimens certainly exposed the huge variation like nothing else.

Back in Britain, the Canada Geese were mostly seen as just our boring introduced geese, classed as 'Category C' and believed to be all the same. There were reports of 'wild' birds from a few observers, particularly in Scotland who recognized the possibilities, but there was no clarity as to what these might be. Then two Canada Geese were photographed with grey geese initially in North-east Scotland in late 1992. Both were then shot in Perthshire in January 1993, but one had been ringed in the previous winter in Baltimore, USA. So BBRC and BOURC had to deal with Canada Goose and accept it as a 'Category A' species, a bird that got here naturally. So what was it? It was thought to be the race *B. c. interior* ('Interior Canada Goose' or sometimes called 'Todds Canada Goose') or possibly *B. c. parvipes*. More have followed, but more on that later.

Next, a species split

Very recently, another very important thing happened; the Canada Goose has been split by both the North Americans and British into two different species (e.g. BOU 2017). The very recognizable small true arctic forms were recognized as a completely different species. So, the 11 'races' are now split between two full species (seven races for 'Canada Goose' and four for the newly separated 'Cackling Goose').

Table 1. Classification of Canada and Cackling Goose subspecies.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* **(or Greater Canada Goose)** *Large, long-necked, large-billed*		**Cackling Goose** *Branta hutchinsii* **(or Lesser Canada Goose)** *Small, shorter neck, small-billed*	
RACES		*RACES*	
'Atlantic Canada Goose'	***B. c. canadensis*** *(UK breeder, possible vagrant?)*	**'Richardson's Cackling Goose'**	***B. h. hutchinsii*** *(vagrant)*
'Interior Canada Goose' or **'Todd's Canada Goose'**	***B. c. interior*** *(vagrant)*	**'Small Cackling Goose'** or **'Ridgeway's Cackling Goose'**	***B. h. minima*** *(escape potential)*
'Lesser Canada Goose'	*B. c. parvipes*	'Taverner's Cackling Goose'	*B. h. taverneri*
'Giant Canada Goose'	*B. c. maxima*	'Aleutian Cackling Goose'	*B. h. leucopareia*
'Moffitt's Canada Goose'	*B. c. moffitti*		
'Vancouver Canada Goose'	*B. c. fulva*		
'Dusky Canada Goose'	*B. c. occidentalis*		

So, Table 1 details the classification that we now have. The birds in **bold** overleaf are the most interesting for Scotland. Those with an underline have peripheral relevance. For further complexity unfortunately different people use different names for the same race, so all are noted here. There are even differences for the simple main titles but we will go with 'Canada' and 'Cackling'.

The split means we have something to start on. There are two species, Canada Goose and Cackling Goose and both may occur in Britain as wild birds arising naturally from North America. So, do we get them?

Well, there are now annual Scottish records of both of these species, though few. These are true rarities and almost all occur in the west with our wintering Barnacle and Greenland White-fronted Geese. Let's start with the 'new species', the Cackling Goose. We will use the English term for the full species (Canada Goose and Cackling Goose), but for the next level (race) the scientific name will be used as there are different English versions (noted on the list) which can carry confusion.

Cackling Geese - the little ones

Welcome to a true, good-looking rarity species, and this one really looks very different. As you will see, there are different versions even in one subspecies, and in future there may be further splits.

Four 'races' are currently in the list for Cackling Goose (*B. hutchinsii*). Only one, *B. h. hutchinsii*, is likely to be a true vagrant here. Of the other three, we definitely need to understand one that is a relatively common escape (*B. h. minima*). We we will look at this later. Another, *B. h. taverneri*, has been claimed in Britain but may not exist at all and if were one to be claimed again it would be necessary to show that there is no other explanation.

***B. h. hutchinsii* ('Richardson's Cackling Goose')**

So, this is the one we are really interested in: ***B. h. hutchinsii* or 'Richardson's Cackling Goose'.** These breed right along the edge of the Arctic Ocean in Canada and Alaska. However, there are also some birds annually in the vastness of Greenland, seemingly relatively few, but a possible source for the birds seen in Scotland. They are definitely not all the same.

To see them in Europe the best chance by far is with the Barnacle Geese in the Hebrides (Islay particularly) that breed in Greenland, but only half a dozen or less are scattered within thousands of Barnacles. The other Barnacle Geese winter on the Solway and breed a little further east, so they can occur with them but are seemingly not annual. Even tinier numbers have come in through different routes but far from annually.

So, now view Plates 200–207, different birds photographed from the last few years. Look in detail at the first five that are similar, and then the three that are different and read the comments.

They are all very small, but the plumage is hugely variable. Frankly, it seems incredible for this to all be one race but right now, that is how

Plate 200. Islay, Argyll, 5 March 2016. © *John Nadin*. **Plates 201–202.** Islay, Argyll, 2–3 March 2017. © *John Nadin*. **Plate 203.** Tayinloan, Kintyre, Argyll, 1 November 2012. © *John Nadin*. **Plate 204.** Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Northumberland, 23 November 2006. © *Stefan Mcelwee.* **Plates 205–206.** Islay, Argyll, 2–3 March 2017. © *John Nadin*. **Plate 207.** Islay, 30 January 2010. © *Stefan Mcelwee.*

Plates 200–204. 'Richardson's Cackling Goose' - the common form. Five typical examples of the usual vagrant Cackling Geese in Scotland. They are small, very similar in size to Barnacle Geese (though slimmer neck), and with a short triangular bill. They are overall a strong pale buffy tone on the body with barring right onto breast. Small differences are seen between them, a couple with thin white strap on the breast/neck join, another with a fine dark line on chin, but generally similar. Three are with Barnacles on Islay, but they can arrive with other species. The bird in Plate 203 had just arrived with Greenland White-fronted Geese (Kintyre) and the other (Plate 204) arrived in Northumberland with a Barnacle Goose, but as soon as it found big numbers of local Canadas, it joined that flock. **Plates 205–207. 'Richardson's Cackling Goose' - marked variation.** There are many birds apparently of the same current race *(B. h. hutchinii)* but which look rather different. The first example (Plate 205) is bigger than any Barnacle, quite dark right onto the breast and warm toned. The bird has a typical short neck and slightly larger bill, and is probably just at the top end of size. Then there is a tiny bird, (Plate 206) smaller than any Barnacle Goose, bright white on the breast, silvery tones and larger chin white and lower size of black on the head and neck. It is lovely! The final bird (Plate 207) is perhaps the most unusual, small but with longish and thin bill and deep smooth buff generally across the body and a really contrasting thick white bar at the front of the breast.


200)


201)


202)


203)


204)


205)


206)


207)

Plate 208. 'Ridgeway's Cackling Goose' - a different race, *B. h. minima*, highly likely to be an escape. The size is very small (some are Mallard size), the smallest race of Cackling Goose. It is extremely dark and shows very little in terms of light bars and the breast itself seems even slightly darker that the rest of the body, which is itself very, very dark. The neck is very short and the bill is tiny. Near Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, 21 February 2017. © *Brian Henderson*

it is recognized. Six were photographed on Islay, one on Kintyre and one in Northumberland. Barnacle Geese are very useful as they are generally very close in size, and demonstrating size is key, but singles do turn up with other species, the bird in Kintyre arrived with a Greenland White-fronted Geese flock.

So, eight different birds are shown, maybe three or four major variations, yet theoretically still one subspecies. All are very small and you can be confident that all eight are true vagrants. They are very different indeed to our Canada Geese and actually a very attractive species. Maybe in 20 years it will be understood that within this race there are several different races, or species, so we would advise saving good images and information on size, border shades, bill structure and neck pattern just in case. However, enjoy it, it is a good bird, whatever the features.

Escape risk: *B. h. minima*?

However, there is one other hurdle that needs clearance. *B. h. minima*, the 'Small Canada Goose' or 'Ridgways Cackling Goose' is the smallest of all forms. It is a breeder from the far corner of Alaska, and not a likely vagrant (though possible), but they are relatively common in British collections and have escaped, being a gorgeous, really dark bird.

See the image and the key features for Plate 208.

B. h. minima is usually pretty distinctive, but it is important to note that some may be less distinctive and some vagrant *B. h. hutchinsii* may be really quite dark, so care is just occasionally required and very occasionally it may be difficult to judge between the darkest *B. h. hutchinsii* and the palest *B. h. minima*.

Canada Geese - migrant big birds

Our 'introduced' population are the big pale ones, *B. c. canadensis*. The same wild version of the population in the east of Canada surely could turn up as vagrants? They could, but the problem is we simply cannot tell if they have hatched there in a marsh in Newfoundland or a pond in Perthshire.

But there are others that look different and are very likely to get here naturally. There is the shot bird originally ringed in Baltimore, further south than *B. c. canadensis* in winter, which was why it was accepted as *B. c. interior/parvipes*.

B. c. interior is the race that should occur as a British vagrant (see *B. c. parvipes* later). However, it is similar in size and structure to our residents and the differences are not always

straightforward. However, some are 'relatively' straightforward in structure and plumage but the variation is very considerable.

American information will suggest a breeding area from less than 50° north to 60° degrees in eastern Canada (mostly Quebec). Those in the south seem to just blend through to our big pale things (the 'British' look) so reach a point where you could not really separate it. Further north though there are smaller birds, and in the far north some birds are quite a lot smaller. However, there is something else that is really important; *B. c. interior* now breed in west Greenland (around 70°N) in very large numbers indeed and far further north than any other Canada Geese. This is much closer to Scotland and a breeding area that supports thousands of birds that winter in Scotland. Tony Fox has huge experience of Greenland geese and is clear that the numbers of *B. c. interior* are high and occur extensively with our Greenland White-fronted Geese. This is of huge relevance for Scottish records yet is rarely discussed. It is highly likely that these are the source of most of our vagrants.

So, do they occur and can we pick them.

Now, look at Plates 209–214 and the comments. They show subtle differences and all three are with a Greenland species (Barnacle or White-fronted Goose).

Plates 209–210. With Barnacle Geese near Southerness Point, Dumfries & Galloway, 10 January 2013. © *Stefan Mcelwee*. **Plates 211–212.** With Barnacle Geese en route to the Solway, Newton Pool, Northumberland, 20 October 2013. © *Gary Woodburn*. **Distinct 'Interior Canada Goose' or 'Todd's' *B. c. interior*.** Both birds have a fairly long neck, a long bill and both have washed strong brown bars on breast, darkish chin tone and dark on the junction between black neck and brown mantle. However, the first bird is a bit smaller than 'local' *B. c. canadensis* the second probably smaller still. Note dark underwings. *B. c. interior* are abundant in Greenland, variable, and some are really quite small, you would need a good reason for any alternative.

The first of the three was photographed on the north side of the Solway with the Svalbard Barnacle population (Plate 209). The second is smaller again, but it looks similar and was with a group of arriving Barnacles on the coast in Northumberland, probably en route for winter with the Solway group (Plate 210). However, look now at the last one (Plate 214). By contrast it is large and has a hugely long neck, and as it appeared fresh in October with a flock of Greenland White-fronted Geese on the west Kintyre coast; it is a migrant.

In the current system, these three are all technically the same race despite the differences in size and appearance. But for now it is a single race. So, if we think we are on a true vagrant what do we need? The following are starting points.

- What is the size? It is not easy but an estimate is useful.
- Distinct dark wash or barring on the breast are really good features.
- The dark mantle will contact the black neck, with no pale loop separating.
- They also look dirty or dark faced in the 'white' facial area of most.
- The upper- and underparts can look dark too, so images help.
- The bill is generally smaller, but that may depend on size.

Plates 213–214. A large example of 'Interior Canada Goose' *B. c. interior*. Technically this a typical *B. c. interior*, a really big skinny bird that arrived with Greenland White-fronted Geese. The back of the neck is very brown and it is a little shaded on the breast, so appropriate, but it is also big and similar to local geese. This particular bird changed appearance in different lighting conditions, in Plate 213 it looked a strong candidate but was less obvious in Plate 214. It could be dismissed if it was in with our Canada Geese. Possibly there are quite a few of these missed because if they drift in with our flocks they may not get checked. With Greenland White-fronted Geese, Kintyre, Argyll, 21 November 2012 and 13 October 2012. © *John Nadin*

With these three examples one can assess them tightly, but if one of them bumped into one of our Canada Geese flocks (which happens) the separation would get very difficult. It is possible that we have more *B. c. interior* race birds in the UK than we realize, mixed in with some of the home flocks of Canada Geese.

There are five other current 'races' in the existing list, but only one other that has been extensively used in relation to UK vagrant birds. The current rather small race of Canada Goose, *B. c. parvipes*, breeds in the subarctic areas of central Canada but itself is hugely variable, distant and relatively far south. Given the numbers and variation from much further east, a *B. c. parvipes* would need to have some specific reason to claim it and it is difficult to see how this is possible.

The final complications

The good news is that most vagrants are quite identifiable, but there are some where judgment is a challenge and these may be impossible to definitively allocate to one group or another. We have certainly encountered such birds.

There are two factors for consideration if you find 'a wild Canada candidate'. The first is that you have to get good views to detail size and plumage. However, getting a good view can be a real problem in distant goose flocks, so anything that is unclear will need to be dropped or pursued! With decent views the true identity may become much clearer.

The second factor is that there are some that are right at the size margin. The little *B. h. hutchinsii* and the biggish *B. c. interior* both occur in the far north of Greenland. Hybridisation between a small *B. c. interior* and a large *B. h. hutchinsii* is at least possible, so for something that does not fit it just may need to be left alone. Most though are very clear indeed as one or other species.

In summary

Two wild species of 'Canada Goose' are now recognized to occur in Scotland, but they are rare and have to be separated from our common resident breeders. The classification variations and races may change, but that will not change what you are actually looking at. Enjoy them and make the effort to define them properly, they are worth the effort of any true rarities.

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The Cackling Goose was formally admitted to the Scottish List by Forrester et al. *(2017, this issue) with just nine accepted Scottish records. It remains a 'description species' on the BBRC list, with 25 Scottish records of 48 birds currently in circulation round the committee (www.bbrc.org.uk, 2 July 2017). Eds.*

Plate 215. Glaucous-winged Gull (circled, with Herring, Great Black-backed, Iceland and Glaucous Gulls), Fair Isle, March 2017. © *David Parnaby*

Glaucous-winged Gull on Fair Isle, 2 March 2017 - first Scottish record

D. PARNABY

Every day during spring and autumn migration, the Fair Isle Bird Observatory wardening team spend four hours on census. This involves covering several miles, counting all the migrants that are seen, to ensure birding coverage of the whole island. Such intensive working of any local patch is sure to turn up results and, when your local patch is Fair Isle (which benefits from geographical isolation, a relatively modest area of just under three square miles and limited cover for migrants to hide in) the results can be spectacular. That said, sometimes good birds don't always need hard work and effort, and finding them can be a bit more fortuitous...

So it was on 2 March, just a few days after returning from a family holiday to Cape Verde, that I was driving back to the Obs after dropping our youngest daughter, Freyja, at nursery. A group of around 100 gulls on Ditfield was worth a scan and produced a Glaucous Gull, always a smart bird even if it had been a good winter for 'white-wingers' (14 on 20th January was the highest count since 1985). A group of Oystercatchers near the road included a ringed bird feeding in short grass and I reckoned I'd have a chance to get the details with a telescope, so I headed back to the Obs to pick mine up. By the time I returned a couple of minutes later the Oystercatcher had moved into longer vegetation and so after about 15 minutes I turned the vehicle around to head back home, having failed to read the ring. I had another quick scan of the gulls before heading back and was surprised to see a grey-mantled gull with grey wing-tips sleeping in the middle of the flock. Through the scope it looked a very interesting bird indeed and seemed a very good candidate for Glaucous-winged Gull, so I popped back to the Obs again, this time to pick up a camera and Susannah.

Glaucous-winged Gull was not a species I was familiar with, and wasn't really one that was on my radar as although white-wingers are a regular feature of the winter, the island isn't renowned for its *larid* list (Fair Isle has yet to record Yellow-legged, Caspian, Ross's, Bonaparte's, Franklin's or American Herring Gull for example). I made a few phone calls to get the news out and try to get a

bit more advice on the identification features, as well as having a check through the 'Gulls' book.

Although the mantle was largely grey, the bird was obviously an advanced immature, the presence of some browner feathering in the wings and darker areas in the bill suggested a fourth-calendar year bird.

The main features we had noted that were particularly relevant to the identification included:

- The large size (although smaller than a Great Black-backed Gull) and unusual shape with a front-heavy and thick-set appearance and short primary projection
- The grey wing-tips that were a similar shade of grey to the mantle, with a thick, white trailing edge to the greater coverts
- A dark eye, set high in the head
- The coarse, brownish blotching across the head, chest and upper belly
- Long, pinkish legs
- Notably broad, rounded wings in flight

Plate 216. Glaucous-winged Gull, Fair Isle, March 2017. © *David Parnaby*

After a while, the bird moved across to Johnny's Peats where it stayed for the rest of the afternoon, it still looked distinctive amongst the gull flock despite the distance. It was seen by a total of seven people (including our seven-year-old daughter Grace who had a look on her way back from school, although Freyja opted not to get out the car to look at it, as it was rather windy and cold) but was not present the next day. If accepted, it will be the 389th species for Fair Isle and the 64th addition to the Scottish List from the isle.

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Plates 217 a–b (below). Glaucous-winged Gull (centre, with Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls), Fair Isle, March 2017. © *David Parnaby*

Plate 218. Cattle Egret, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, March 2017. © *Brian Henderson*

Cattle Egret, Stranraer, January–March 2017 - third record for Dumfries & Galloway

B.D. HENDERSON

Birding in West Galloway and in particular on the promontories known as the Rhins of Galloway can be exacting and demanding at times, but the rewards in terms of seeing scarce or even rare birds can be gratifying and fulfilling if constant and persistent time and effort are put in. The Rhins of Galloway, a hammerhead peninsula stretching nearly 45 km from Milleur Point in the north to the southernmost point on mainland Scotland at the Mull of Galloway in the south, dominate the general physical features of western Wigtownshire and its seasonal birdlife. The Rhins of Galloway are joined by a narrow low-lying isthmus in the east between Loch Ryan and Luce Bay - the largest bay in Scotland. The general area around the North Rhins is dominated by an indented coastline on the western side and by Loch Ryan on its eastern seaboard with its softer landscapes comprising a wide range of habitats including both sandy and shingle beaches, mudflats and low rocky coasts.

Plate 219. Cattle Egret, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, March 2017. © *Brian Henderson*

Plate 220. Cattle Egret, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, March 2017. © *Peter Garrity*

Loch Ryan is a large, shallow, natural anchorage approximately 13 km long and 5 km wide at its broadest and is orientated on a north-south axis with its mouth looking northward into the North Channel. It is undoubtedly one of the premiere birding sites in Dumfries & Galloway and holds nationally important numbers of several species plus internationally important numbers of Slavonian Grebes in recent years.

Situated predominately on its south-western and southern shores nestles the town of Stranraer. Inland and around Stranraer the rolling countryside comprises rich farmland, mainly managed for beef and dairy cattle and sheep farming, interspaced with a patchwork of fields, hedges, copses, a few inland water bodies and a general mix of other habitat types. Egrets, mainly Little Egrets, are found on the North Rhins around Loch Ryan and Stranraer but not in any great numbers compared to that of other areas of Dumfries & Galloway particularly along the Rivers Nith and Cree estuaries notably at Caerlaverock WWT and Wigtown Bay LNR.

Since locating to Stranraer, I have had the luxury of being able to bird Loch Ryan and the surrounding area almost on a daily basis. On the 29 January 2017, conditions were favourable for viewing Loch Ryan and the target species for the day were Long-tailed Ducks. With a good count of Long-tailed Ducks recorded at Marian Port and Soleburn Bridge along the western shore, I then opted to try further down the loch. The lay-by on the A718 at Braefield offers a good viewpoint to observe parts of the loch where access is somewhat limited. But, with no further Long-tailed Ducks to add to my tally, I scanned the adjacent kale field which held a sizable herd of beef cattle.

Almost immediately my attention was drawn to two egrets foraging around a silage feeder some 550 m from the lay-by. I frequently see one or two Little Egrets around the shores of Loch Ryan but to see two egrets in this heavily poached field warranted a closer look. Straight away, it was obvious that one was a Little Egret and the other was indeed a Cattle Egret.

Descriptively, it was a small white stocky egret with short legs and a short stout yellow bill and compact body whose jizz was noticeably different to that of the Little Egret. In detail, the bill was short and yellow with the innermost basal area being much paler than the outermost tip portion. The head was distinctly rounded giving a genteel look; occasionally the crown and nape feathers were raised. The forehead was steep and it had an obvious feathered chin. The eyes were yellow with dark pupils. The short neck was white as was the body and wings. The legs were greyish-green. Overall the bird was very active and mobile at times often taking short dashing flights, which were fast with distinct quick wing beats. The neck was fully retracted at all times during flight. It foraged almost exclusively amongst the cattle and at the edges of the kale crop, occasionally perching on the silage feeder.

During the ensuing days both the Cattle and Little Egret remained faithful to the same field. Always shy and very flighty at first, gradually the Cattle Egret became more accustomed to the daily agricultural routines of the stockmen as it foraged for earthworms, grubs and invertebrates. It often spent long periods perched on top of the silage feeder preening and maintaining its plumage, and was occasionally seen on the backs of some of the cattle especially early mornings. As the stockmen moved the electric

Plate 221. Cattle Egret, Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, March 2017. © *Brian Henderson*

fence further into the kale crop, views of the Cattle Egret became more unobtrusive, and it was often obscured from view for long periods at a time. The Little Egret was present for most days accompanying the Cattle Egret, but as time passed, it would often disappear for days at a time and was last seen on 8 March.

For the duration of its stay, I saw the Cattle Egret on a daily basis (bar one). When I last saw it on 16 March 2017, it had been on-site for a minimum of 47 days. Personally, I found it an absolute surreal experience watching the Cattle Egret so many times so close to my home. During its stay many people viewed it and I had the pleasure of meeting many birders from various parts of Scotland, some who had travelled some distance to observe it.

This was the third Cattle Egret for Dumfries & Galloway following the first, coincidently nearby, at Black Park Farm, Stranraer and at Soulseat Loch from 15 October to 20 November 1986 and presumably the same individual at Milton Loch near Crocketford from 6 to 14 December 1986 and the second at Cardoness near Gatehouse of Fleet from 24 December 2007 to 11 January 2008.

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This record is subject to acceptance by the Scottish Birds Records Committee.

Allen's Gallinule, St Kilda, 26 March 2017 – first Scottish record

W.T.S. MILES, J.G. PILKINGTON, R. RIDDINGTON & J.M. COLLINSON

On 26 March 2017, Jill Pilkington, fieldwork leader for the St Kilda Soay Sheep Project, found the corpse of a gallinule in Village Bay on Hirta, St Kilda. JP sent an email with photos to WM, saying that she knew it would be of interest and could it be identified. WM and RR looked at the photos, which showed the corpse of an Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*. The bird was not freshly dead but the wings were still in good condition. Since it would be only the third British record, and the first for Scotland, it was felt the corpse should be examined and measured; JP posted it to WM and it arrived on 6 April. WM and RR examined the remaining intact features and took a range of biometric measurements, these fitted well with Allen's Gallinule (Cramp & Simmons 1980, Taylor & van Perlo 1998, Cook 2009, van Duivendijk 2010). The corpse was sent on to the National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh, where it was preserved and added to the national bird skins archive by Bob McGowan (accession numbers: NMS.Z 2017.116.1 wings; NMS.Z 2017.116.2 skeleton). The bird's gender was determined by DNA analysis of a small tissue sample, carried out by JMC at the University of Aberdeen.

Description

Size and structure. A small and petite gallinule, slightly smaller than a Moorhen but with the same basic structure: small, oval body (though much flesh and plumage missing), short wings, relatively long legs and large gangly feet, short neck, small head (detached from the body, and with most feathering missing), and short, rather slim, triangular bill with prominent shield. The tail was entirely missing.

Plate 222. Allen's Gallinule remains, found on Hirta, St Kilda, 26 March 2017. © *Will Miles*

Plate 223. Allen's Gallinule remains, found on Hirta, St Kilda, 26 March 2017. © *Will Miles*

Plumage. Forehead, lore, supercilium and upper ear coverts dark brown finely streaked buff-brown, lower ear coverts buff (left side only, all feathering missing on right side); chin and throat creamy-white (all other head plumage missing); neck dark grey fringed creamy-buff. Mantle bright green fringed pale yellow-green or (on upper mantle) fringed buff (mantle incomplete, many feathers missing). Chest creamy-white with some buff fringes (many feathers missing). Lesser coverts along leading edge of wing bright blue, edged white; lesser coverts otherwise bright turquoise at front of wing grading to bright green further back, all narrowly fringed buff. Median and outer greater coverts bright green, fringed buff; inner greater coverts and tertials dull sap green tinged brown, all fringed buff (fringes broader than elsewhere). Alula inner webs dark grey tinted blue, outer webs deep turquoise. Primary covert inner webs dark grey, outer webs dark blue. Primaries dark grey-brown on inner webs, outer webs turquoise grading through bright green to yellow-green from base to tip, each feather with a very narrow yellow edging at tip. Secondaries dark grey-brown on inner webs, outer webs dark grey-brown at centre grading to bright green at edge. Underside of wing entirely dark silvery grey, tinted green. Intact downy plumage at base of tibia dark grey. All other plumage missing.

Bare parts. Upper mandible and shield dark purple; lower mandible dark magenta-red with bright orange along lower edge. Legs dark red; feet dark red with slight yellow tinge to underside of toes.

Biometric measurements. See Appendix 1. Bill depth was difficult to measure because the bill sheath was slightly soft and loose and the lower mandible was only very loosely attached to the skull, so it was difficult to align the mandibles.

Identification, age and gender

A combination of the bird's small size and its ornate green and blue wings pointed to either Allen's Gallinule or American Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica*. The latter was ruled out on both leg colour (American Purple Gallinule has yellow legs, whereas the St Kilda bird had dark red legs) and bill colour (American Purple Gallinule has a yellow bill tip but the upper mandible of the

St Kilda bird was entirely dark purple and its lower mandible entirely red/orange). The biometric measurements fitted well with those given for Allen's Gallinule in *BWP* (Cramp & Simmons 1980), and with those of the 2002 Portland Allen's Gallinule (Cook 2009).

Brown feathering on the nape, fore-crown and around the eyes, coupled with pale cream fringes to the tertials and wing coverts, aged the bird as a first-winter (2CY).

Genomic DNA was isolated from a fragment of muscle using the DNA Micro Kit (QIAGEN, UK) and genetic sexing was performed by PCR using primer sets 2550F/2718R and P2/P8 (Fridolfsson & Ellegren 1999). These analyses indicated that the bird was male.

Distribution and vagrancy of Allen's Gallinule

Allen's Gallinule breeds throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa from Senegal and the Gambia to Ethiopia and south-west Somalia, south to Namibia, Botswana and eastern South Africa, but is absent from the south-west and the Horn of Africa. The species is a partial migrant, with most birds migrating north within Africa in the late winter (December to March), the timing governed by the onset of seasonal rains in the northern tropics (Urban *et al*. 1986).

There are two previous British records. The first was found on a boat off the East Anglian coast, near Hopton-on-Sea, on New Year's Day in 1902 (BOU 1974). The bird was exhausted and died soon after discovery. The second, found at Weston, Portland, in Dorset, on 10th February 2002, was moribund when found and like the previous bird died shortly afterwards. Both birds were in their second calendar year. In Europe, there have been a number of other records. Cook (2009) listed 46 Western Palearctic records to the end of 2008, including from other countries in north-west Europe such as Finland, Denmark and Germany. She noted that many of the European records involve birds that turn up in poor condition, while in terms of timing the majority have occurred between December and February, matching the period of seasonal movements within Africa. There have been at least 14 Western Palearctic records since 2008, the majority found in southern Europe between December to February (http://bit.ly/2v929lv). The St Kilda bird, which probably arrived on the island in the first half of March, thus fits the recognised pattern of vagrancy in Europe.

Plate 224. Allen's Gallinule right wing, found on Hirta, St Kilda, 26 March 2017. © *Will Miles*

Appendix 1. Biometric measurements of the 2017 St Kilda Allen's Gallinule, the 2002 Portland Allen's Gallinule (Cook 2009) and Allen's Gallinule in BWP (Cramp & Simmons 1980). All measurements in millimetres; primaries numbered ascendently (outermost primary = P1); all wing measurements for the St Kilda bird taken from the right wing (left wing missing P2)

	St Kilda 2017		Portland 2002		*BWP*	
	WM	**RR**	**Martin Cade**	**Katrina Cook**	**Male (n)**	**Female (n)**
Wing length (maximum chord)	151	151	157	156	146 to 162 (10)	141 to 164 (13)
Total head length (head+bill)	50.6	50.9		52.5		
Length of shield	12.6	12.8			Average of an adult = 15	
Maximum width of shield	9.9	10.1			9 to 14	
Bill length (bill tip to top of shield)	34.3	34.5	36.7	34.5	34 to 45	
Bill length (excluding shield length)	21.7	21.7			23 to 25 (11)	22 to 25 (13)
Bill width at feathering	6.5	6.3	8.7			
Bill width at proximal end of nostril	6.4	7.0	7			
Bill width at anterior tip of nostril	5.1	5.6		3		
Bill depth at feathering	12.1	12.2	12.5		11 to 12	
Bill depth at proximal end of nostril	10.9	11.7	10.5			
Bill depth at anterior tip of nostril	9.0	10.4		9		
Tarsus max	60.0	60.1				
Tarsus min	53.6	53.0	53.2	50	49 to 56 (11)	46 to 54 (13)
Tarsus & longest toe (to toe tip)	119	118				
Tarsus & longest toe (to claw tip)	132	131	120	120		
Hind claw length	17.5	17.1	13.1	13		
Middle toe length (to toe tip)	57.0	57.0				
Middle toe length (to claw tip)	70.0	70.0	66.3		64 to 72 (11)	61 to 72 (11)
Wing point to longest secondary	-46.7	-47.5	50			
Wing point to outermost secondary	-53.0	-52.3	55			
Wing point to longest tertial	-38.5	-39.8	39			
P2 relative position	P2 = P4/5					
Emarginations	P3, P4 and weakly on P5					
Full wing formula:						
P1 (outermost primary)	-25.5	-25.5	-25		-18 to -25	
P2	-5.0	-4.7	-4		-1 to -5	
P3	0.0	0.0	0		0	
P4	-1.0	-1.2	-3		-1 to -5	
P5	-6.5	-6.4	-8		-6 to -11	
P6	-13.8	-13.7	-15		-12 to -17	
P7	-21.7	-22.1	-24		-	
P8	-29.7	-30.1	-33		-	
P9	-38.2	-38.5	-40		-	
P10	-45.5	-46.4	-48		-42 to -49	

Plate 225. Allen's Gallinule skull. Full remains found on Hirta, St Kilda, 26 March 2017. © *Will Miles*

Acknowledgements

Huge thanks go to the field staff of the St Kilda Soay Sheep Project for finding the remaining parts of the bird and facilitating its identification. We also thank Peter Kennerley for his contribution to the section on distribution and vagrancy.

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Scottish Bird Sightings

1 April to 30 June 2017

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 - Ayrs; 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.

With the exception of a Black-browed Albatross, and a late reported Slate-coloured Junco, it was a poor spring for southern Scotland. Though spring skua passage was disappointing, northern Scotland and the Outer Hebrides generally fared better for scarcer species, while rarer highlights included a Collared Pratincole, a White-throated Needletail and a Hermit Thrush. In addition, two Black-headed Buntings within days of one another on Foula was particularly remarkable.

'Tundra Bean Goose': two lingered at Kingussie (High) from March to 4 April; one was at the Ythan Estuary (NES) on 7 April; two at Loch Insh (High) on 12–13th, and one near Dingwall (High) on 27 April. **Cackling Goose:** one was at Balranald RSPB Reserve, North Uist (OH) on 12 April.

American Wigeon: the drake was still at Udale Bay RSPB Reserve (High) to 28 April, and two at Clachan Sands, North Uist (OH) on 16 April. **Green-winged Teal:** 12 were noted in April. In May a drake remained at Port Nis, Lewis (OH) to 8th; one at Exnaboe, Mainland (Shet) to 4th; with others at the Eden Estuary (Fife) on 7th; at Loch an t-Saile, South Uist (OH) on 10th; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 15th, on Sanday (Ork) on 18th, and one at Walls, Mainland (Shet) on 4 June. **Black Duck:** the returning drake (since 2011) was still at Strontian (High) throughout. **Ring-necked Duck:** single drakes remained at Loch Shiel, Acharacle (High) to 15 April; at The Cuilc, Pitlochry (P&K) to 4 April, and at Torphichen (Loth) to 2 April. Others were at Drumpellier CP (Clyde) on 16–17 April; at Balnakeil (High) on 18–21 April; at Ullapool (High) on 10–24 May; at Durness (High) on 12th, and at Loch Finlaggan, near Ballygrant, Islay (Arg) on 16 May to 29 June. **Lesser Scaup:** a drake remained at Loch of Boardhouse, Mainland (Ork) to 23 April, and one was at Loch of Skene (NES) on 23–24 May.

King Eider: a drake was still off Fort George (High) to 5 April, with presumed same nearby at Whiteness Head (High) on 7th and 22 April to 24 May; a drake again on the Ythan Estuary (NES) on 14 April to 10 May and 23 May to 18 June, with presumed same off Blackdog (NES) on 20–25 June, and one flew west past Lossiemouth (M&N) on 19 April. **Surf Scoter:** an adult drake was still off Musselburgh/Joppa (Loth) to 22 April, a drake in Largo Bay (Fife) on 1–17 April; two were off Ferny Ness (Loth) on 17 April; one off North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 25 May; one at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 1–4 June, and one in Lunan Bay (A&D) on 30 June. An immature drake was off Kinshaldy (Fife) on 23 June; a female was off Musselburgh (Loth) on 18–20 April; one off Ruddons Point (Fife) on 26–27 April, and one at Echna Bay, Burray (Ork) on 29 May to 23 June **Smew:** a drake was still at Blair Drummond GPs (UF) to 10 April, one still at Loch of Kinnordy RSPB Reserve (A&D) to 2 April, and a redhead still on the Ythan Estuary (NES) to 7 April.

White-billed Diver: one was off St Margaret's Hope/Water Sound, South Ronaldsay (Ork) still to 7 May; one off Burghead (M&N) still to 5 April; one still off Eoligarry, Barra (OH) to 4 May; at Port Nis, Isle of Lewis (OH) on 1 April, with another on 3 May, and on 19 May; off Portsoy (NES) on 5–17 April, with three on 18th, four on 21st, two on 24th, one still on 27th, three on 28th, and one on 29–30 April; one at North Wick, Papa Westray (Ork) on 6–30 April, with one off the island on 1 June; two off Cullen (NES) on 9 April, and one from 28 April to 6 May; one flew past North Ronaldsay (OH) on 17 April, with two off there on 8–9 May, one on 19 May; singles off Lossiemouth (M&N) on 22 April to 7 May, and past there on 16 May; in Bluemull Sound, Fetlar (Shet) on 26 April; past Flubersgerdie, Unst (Shet) on 28 April, and on 5 May; past Esha Ness, Mainland (Shet) on 3 May; at Kirkabister, Mainland (Shet) on 5–10 May; past Rubha Ardvule, South Uist (OH) on 10 May; at Pierowall Bay, Westray (Ork) on 18–21 May; off Sanday

(Ork) on 25 May, and off Hoxa Head, South Ronaldsay on 27 May. **Pied-billed Grebe:** one was still at Loch Feorlin, near Minard (Arg) throughout and into July. **Black-browed Albatross:** one initially seen the previous day off NE England was tracked flying north past Eyemouth (Bord), Dunbar (Loth) and Seacliff (Loth) on 29 June.

Night Heron: two were at Castlebay, Barra (OH) from 25–27 April, with one still to 13 May roaming to Gleann and Garrygal. **Little Egret:** poorly reported from the usual SW and central Scotland haunts; notable records included singles at Durie Voe, Laxo, Mainland (Shet) on 20 May; one on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 21st, and one at Findhorn Bay (M&N) on 27st. **Great White Egret:** one was still at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) from March into July, with two there on 13 May; one at Broadford Bay, Skye (High) on 16 April; two at Loch Leven (P&K) on 5 May; two at Baron's Haugh RSPB Reserve (Clyde) on 11–14 May, and nearby at Merryton also on 14th; two at Dunoon (Arg) on 15 May, with one still to 18 May; one at Backwater Reservoir (A&D) on 17–18 May; one at Hunterston Sands (Ayrs) on 19–25 May: one in Water Sound, South Ronaldsay (Ork) on 20 May; two briefly in Widewall Bay, South Ronaldsay on 23 May, and two at Endrick Mouth, Loch Lomond (Clyde) on 5 June, with one still to 8 June. **Glossy Ibis:** one was at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 1 May and 14–16 May; one at Beith (Ayrs) on 2–3 May; one at Loch of Kinnordy RSPB Reserve (A&D) on 7–13 May; one at Earlston (Bord) on 24 May, and one near Forfar (A&D) on 25–29 May.

Honey-buzzard: singles were at Skaw, Unst (Shet) on 14–15 May; over Papa Westray (Ork) on 16th; at Lunna, Mainland (Shet) and Clumlie, Mainland (Shet) on 24th; on Sanday (Ork) on 25th; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 26th; over Papa Westray on 28 May; over Scatness, Mainland (Shet) and Loch of Hillwell, Mainland (Shet) on 7 June, and one over Esha Ness, Mainland (Shet) and one over Noness, Mainland (Shet) on 11 June. **Black Kite:** one flew over Bruntsfield, Edinburgh (Loth) on 28 April; one was near Lairg (High) on 23 May, and one flew over Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 25 May. **Northern Harrier:** the returning male was still on North Ronaldsay (Ork) to 16 April. **Red-footed Falcon:** a male flew over Tyninghame (Loth) on 6 May. **Hobby:** individuals were noted on Fair Isle on 12 May, 23rd May and 13 June; at Westshore, Burray (Ork) on 23 May; at Alturlie Point (High) on 28 May, and at Auchmacoy Bridge, Ellon (NES) on 14 June. **Gyrfalcon:** white-morph individuals were at Loch Stiapabhat, Lewis (OH) on 8 April and on Tiree (Arg) on 4 May. **American Coot:** the first-winter bird was still at Loch nam Feithean, Balranald, North Uist (OH) to 16 April. **Crane:** one was at Haroldswick, Unst (Shet) on 1 April; one at Loch of Hillwell, Mainland (Shet) on 15–19 April; two at Loch Fleet (High) on 18 April; one at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 19 April, with three there on 27–30 April,

Plate 226. White-billed Diver, St Margaret's Hope, South Ronaldsay, Orkney – 'skypointing' showing groove along base of lower mandible diagnostic of this species, 12 April 2017. © *Stuart Rivers*

four on 1–2 May; one at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 23–27 April; one at Gilston (M&N) on 24–30 April; one at Ungirsta, Unst (Shet) on 26 April; at Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 3–4 May, with four there on 5 May; three on Papa Westray (Ork) on 4 May; three flew over Noss and Lerwick, Mainland (Shet) on 5 May; one flew over St. Mary's, Mainland (Ork) on 5th; four flew over Channerwick, Mainland (Shet) and three over Scourie (High) on 6th; one was at Mersehead RSPB Reserve (D&G) on 8–9th; singles were at Sand Water, Mainland (Shet) on 8–18th; at Auchinleck (Ayrs) on 11th; two at Gifford (Loth) on 12th; one over Haroldswick, Unst on 17th; four flew over Auchmithie (A&D) on 21st; one flew over near Cupar (Fife) on 24th; one over Sumburgh Head, Mainland (Shet) on 9 June; one flew over Pool of Virkie, Mainland (Shet) on 15 June, and two were at Kelso (Bord) on 24–26 June.

Avocet: three were at Tyninghame (Loth) on 10 May, with at least two still on 12th. **Collared Pratincole:** one was on Fair Isle on 14–18 May. **Killdeer:** a first-winter was still at Sandwick, Mainland (Shet) to 5 April. **Kentish Plover:** a male was at Borve, Berneray (OH) on 15 May. **American Golden Plover:** one was in Luce Bay, near Glenluce (D&G) on 29 April, and at Point of Rag, Monreith (D&G) on 1–6 May. **Pacific Golden Plover**: one was on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 28 June. **Semipalmated Sandpiper:** one was at Balnakeil (High) on 13–14 May, relocated at Haroldswick, Unst (Shet) on 16–19 May. **Temminck's Stint:** one was at Caerlaverock WWT Reserve (D&G) on 14 May; two at Musselburgh Lagoons (Loth) on 15–17 May; one on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 23 May, and one at Bay of Culkein (High) on 26–27 May. **Pectoral Sandpiper:** one was at Fivepenny, Port Nis, Lewis (OH) on 4–7 May, one at Musselburgh Lagoons (Loth) on 15–16 May; one on Papa Westray (Ork) on 31 May, and one at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree (Arg) on 1 June. **Long-billed Dowitcher:** one was at North Via, Papa Westray (Ork) on 19–25 April.

Pomarine Skua: passage noted between 16 April and 22 June, with birds seen from Borders and Dumfries & Galloway north to Shetland. However, very low numbers recorded, with peak counts of only 10 past Aird an Runair, North Uist (OH) on 24 April, 12 past Fife Ness (Fife) on 7 May and 10 past Aird an Runair, North Uist on 16 May. **Long-tailed Skua:** passage noted between 16 May and 9 June, with birds seen from Borders and Argyll north to Orkney, but predominantly from the Outer Hebrides. Very low numbers recorded, with peak counts of only 11 past Aird an Runair, North Uist on 16 May, and 26 off there on 22 May. **Sabine's Gull:** an adult was in Belhaven Bay (Loth) on 29 June. **Bonaparte's Gull:** an adult was at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve/Crimond (NES) on 23–28 April. **Mediterranean Gull:** regular reports from the Firth of Forth and SW Scotland, but no counts of five or more together noted. **Ring-billed Gull:** a second-winter was at Ullapool (High) on 29 April; a first-summer at Loch of Hillwell, Mainland (Shet) on 5–14 May; a first-winter at Ullapool on 8–11 May; a first-summer at Boddam, Mainland (Shet) on 12th; a first-summer at Grutness, Mainland on 22 May, and a first-summer at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 26 May. **Yellow-legged Gull:** an adult was at Barassie Shore (Ayrs) on 5 April, and an adult at Longhaugh Point, Bishopton (Clyde) on 3 June.

Iceland Gull: about 145 reported in April, mostly from the Outer Hebrides and as singles. Higher counts involved: 10 at Port Nis, Lewis (OH) on 2 April, four at Stornoway, Lewis on 9–18th, and six at Rubha Arnal, North Uist (OH) on 28 April. Up to 80 noted in May, virtually all on the Northern and Western Isles, with peak counts of only two, while June had around 30 birds, mostly in the Outer Hebrides, with none south of Argyll or NE Scotland, and all singles except for two at Thurso (Caith) on 12th and two at Ardivachar Point, South Uist (OH) on 19–21st. **'Kumlien's Gull':** one was at Loch of Hillwell, Mainland (Shet) on 22 April, and a juvenile at Rubha Ardvule, South Uist on 12–17 May. **Glaucous Gull:** over 90 noted in April, from Ayrshire and Lothian to Shetland, with almost half on the Outer Hebrides, mostly singles, with higher counts of four on Tiree (Arg) on 5 April, nine at Rubha Arnal, North Uist (OH) on 6 April, and five at Baleshare, North Uist (OH) on 7th. Just over 40 in May, all north of Argyll and Moray & Nairn, the bulk in the Outer Hebrides and Highland, again mostly singles with high counts of three at Rubha Arnal, North Uist on 6th and Papa Westray (Ork) on 7 May. Just over 15 noted in June, with birds from Moray & Nairn to Fair Isle and Argyll and the Outer Hebrides. Peak counts were two at Brora (High) on 5th and two at Lossiemouth (M&N) on 28th June. **Sooty Tern:** one flew past Uisaed Point, Machrahanish (Arg) on 2 June. **Roseate Tern:** individuals were noted on the Isle of May on 15th and 30–31 May, and 11 June ; two off Rubha Mor, North Uist (OH) on 21 May; at Loch of Strathbeg RSPB Reserve (NES) on 4th and 18–19 June, and in the Common Tern colony at Leith Docks, Edinburgh (Loth) on 5–30 June. **Black Tern:** two flew over Paxton House (Bord) on 30 April, and one lingered at Loch Stiapabhat, Lewis (OH) on 17–21 May. **White-winged Black Tern:** an adult was at Loch Fada then Coot Loch, Benbecula (OH) on 19–20 June.

Plate 227. Turtle Dove, Isle of Rum, Highland, 21 April 2017. © *Sean Morris*

Turtle Dove: only about 20 reported between 21 April and 19 June illustrates the severe decline in this species. **Snowy Owl:** a female was still on Eday (Ork) to 1 April, with presumed same then on Papa Westray (Ork) on 16 April, on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 10 May, Papa Westray again on 16 May, and on Gallo Hill, Westray (Ork) on 21 June. **Nightjar:** one was found freshly dead on Fair Isle on 15 May; with live birds on Sanday (Ork) on 17 May; Isle of Bressay (Shet) on 22 May, at Sumburgh, Mainland (Shet) on 27 May; on the Isle of May on 6–7 June, and at Skaw, Whalsay (Shet) on 10 June. **White-throated Needletail:** one was seen over Gleann, Barra (OH) on 22 June. **Hoopoe:** singles were on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 1–4 May; at Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 1–2 May and Scousburgh, Mainland (Shet) on 1–3 May; at Ronas Voe, Mainland (Shet) on 12th, and at Finlaystone (Clyde) on 21 May. **Wryneck:** singles were on Stronsay (Ork) and Scousburgh, Mainland (Shet) on 30 April; on Fair Isle on 1–4 May [when found dead], with two there on 5th, and 12–13th; one on the Isle of Noss (Shet) on 2 May; one at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 2–3rd; two on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 3rd; one at Tresta, Mainland (Shet) on 13th, and one at Skaw, Unst (Shet) on 14 May.

Golden Oriole: singles were on the Isle of May on 2 May; on Canna (High) on 20 May; at Kergord, Mainland (Shet) on 21st; at Perth (P&K) on 23rd; on South Ronaldsay (Ork) on 24 May, and at West Heath, Holm (Ork) on 6 June. **Red-backed Shrike:** one was at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 3 May; a female on Fair Isle on 21–23 May; a female at Halligarth, Unst (Shet) on 21st; a male at Sands of Forvie NNR (NES) on 25th; a male at Coldingham (Bord) on 27 May, a female on Sanday (Ork) and one on Out Skerries (Shet) on 29 May; a male on Fair Isle on 1 June; a female at Baltasound, Unst on 2 June; a male on the Isle of May on 6–7th; singles at Geosetter, Mainland and on Noss (Shet) on 7th; two on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 7–8th, with one still on 9th; two on Sanday (Ork) on 8th; a male at Lunna, Mainland (Shet) on 11th; a male near Lamlash Bay, Arran (Ayrs) on 16 June, and one at Tresta, Fetlar (Shet) on 30 June. **Great Grey Shrike:** singles were at Pool of Virkie, Mainland (Shet) on 1 April; at Loch Scridain, Mull (Arg) on 19 April; at Dunnet Head (Caith) on 3 May, and at Scourie (High) in mid-June. **Woodchat Shrike:** a male was at Mey (High) on 28 May; a first-summer female at Findhorn Bridge (High) on 4–9 June; a first-summer male on Fair Isle and one on Sanday (Ork) on 16 June. **Firecrest:** one was on the Isle of May on 3 April, and one on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 3 June.

Woodlark: one was near Barns Ness (Loth) on 13 May. **Shorelark:** two were at Belhaven Bay, Dunbar (Loth) on 3 April, six at Rattray Head (NES) on 1 May; one at Grutness, Mainland (Shet) on 4 May; one at Haroldswick, Unst (Shet) on 6–15th; four on Fetlar (Shet) on 6th; two at Skaw, Unst (Shet) on 11th; one on Fair Isle on 11th; one at Lamba Ness, Unst (Shet) on 13–14th with two on 15–16th and one again on 26 May. **Short-toed Lark:** singles were at Haroldswick, Unst (Shet) on 6–14 May; at Funzie, Fetlar (Shet) on 23–28 May; on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 1–2 June, and on Foula (Shet) on at least 10 June. **Red-rumped Swallow:** singles were at Kirkwall, Mainland (Ork) on 11–14 May; at Boddam, Mainland (Shet) on 13 May; at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 16 May; on Fair Isle on 23 May, and at Gott Bay, Tiree (Arg) on 24 May.

Greenish Warbler: a male was on Eriskay (OH) on 31 May; one at Lochend, Whalsay (Shet) on 7 June, and a male at Loch Turraman, Colonsay (Arg) on 15 June. **Dusky Warbler:** one was on Fair Isle on 2 May. **Subalpine Warbler:** a female was at Geosetter, Mainland (Shet) on 30 April; a female at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 1–2 May; a male (Eastern) at Scatness, Mainland (Shet) on 2–4 May, with a female (Eastern) there on 10 May; a female at Skibberhoull, Whalsay (Shet) on 3rd; a male (Western) at Carnan Mor, Tiree (Arg) on 7th; a male (Eastern) on the Isle of May on 12th; a male (Western) on Fair Isle on 30–31 May; a male (Eastern) on Sanday (Ork) on 2 June, and a female at Pool of Virkie, Mainland (Shet) on 11 June. **Icterine Warbler:** singles were at Muness, Unst (Shet) on 22 May; on Fair Isle on 22 May; at Loch Insh

(High) on 26th; on Fair Isle on 31 May; at Scatness, Mainland (Shet) on 2 June; two on Fair Isle on 2 June, one still on 4–10th, with three on 11th; one on 12th; two on 13th, and one on 16–18th; singles at Nigg (High) on 2–30th; at Sandwick, Mainland (Shet) on 4th; at Newtonmore (High) on 5 June; at Lochend, Whalsay (Shet) on 7th, and one on Foula (Shet) on 12th. **Paddyfield Warbler:** one was on the Isle of Mousa (Shet) on 25 June. **Blyth's Reed Warbler:** one was at Scatsta, Mainland (Shet) on 3 June, and one on Fair Isle on 9 June. **Marsh Warbler:** singles were at Castlebay, Barra (OH) on 4 June; at Skaw, Unst (Shet) on 7 June; on Noss (Shet) on 7–8th; with three on Fair Isle on 7th, five there on 8th and two still on 9th; one at Pool of Virkie, Mainland (Shet) on 8th; one on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 10–11 June; one on Foula (Shet) on 12th, with two there on 14th; singles again on Fair Isle on 17–18th and 26th; and one on Bressay (Shet) on 28 June.

Waxwing: reported widely in moderate numbers in April from the eastern half of Scotland. Higher counts were: 57 in Elgin (M&N) on 5 April, 30 at Leith, Edinburgh (Loth) on 11th, 30 at Bruntsfield, Edinburgh on 18th, 30 at Nethybridge (High) on 20th; 35 at The Meadows, Edinburgh on 22 April. At least 60 in May, with high counts of: 29 in Aberdeen (NES) on 2nd, seven in Grantown-on-Spey (High) on 8th and eight in Aviemore (High) on 9 May. One was at Fraserburgh (NES) on 10 June. **Rose-coloured Starling:** two [one male] were at Dunoon (Arg) on 25 May, with one again on 30 May; one at The Green, Tiree (Arg) on 3 June; an adult at Eoligarry, Barra (OH) on 22–30 June, and one at Laphroaig, Islay (Arg) on 23–25 June.

Hermit Thrush: one was on the Isle of Noss (Shet) on 19 April. **Thrush Nightingale:** one was at East Hamister, Whalsay (Shet) on 13–14 May, and one on Fair Isle on 16 May. **Nightingale:** one was on Fair Isle on 2 May, and one on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 27 May. **Bluethroat:** about 35 noted, all 12–27 May on the Northern Isles; mostly singles but higher counts of three on the Isle of Noss (Shet) on 13th, three on Fair Isle on 13–15th, and two at Skaw, Unst (Shet) on 21st. **Richard's Pipit:** one was at Rattray Head (NES) on 30 May. **Red-throated Pipit:** one was on Fair Isle on 17–18 May and on 25–26 May. **Water Pipit:** one was at Skateraw (Loth) on 9 April, and one at Dunnet Bay, near Castletown (Caith) on 15 April. **Yellow Wagtail** forms - **Blue-headed:** singles were on Fair Isle on 4th, 7th, 11–12th and 21 May; one at Balnakeil (High) on 5–10 May, with two noted there on 6th and 10 may; one on the Isle of Noss (Shet) on 22 May, and one at Loch of Spiggie, Mainland (Shet) on 27 May; **Grey-headed:** single(s) were on Fair Isle from 10 May to 4 June, with three on 11 May, two on 12–16th, three on 17th; a male was at Balnakeil (High) on 12 May; a male at Skaw, Unst (Shet) on 12 May; a male on the Isle of Noss (Shet) on 13–14 May; one on Sanday (Ork) on 14 May; two at Norwick, Unst (Shet) on 14–15 May; one at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 14 May; a male at Carinish, North Uist (OH) on 22 May.

Arctic Redpoll: one was at South Nesting, Mainland (Shet) on 16–17 April, and one at Quendale, Mainland (Shet) on 18 May. **'Coues's Arctic Redpoll':** one probably of this form was at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 14 April. **Common Rosefinch:** a male was at Uyeasound, Unst (Shet) on 21 May; one on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 22 May; a first-summer male at Nigg Bay (NES) on 27th; three immatures at Sumburgh, Mainland (Shet) on 28th; a first-summer male on the Isle of May on 28–30th; a first-summer male at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) and two on Out Skerries (Shet) on 29 May; one was on Fair Isle on 1–4 June, with a male there on 6–7th; a first-summer male at Scourie (High) on 2–4 June; one on Sanday (Ork) on 5th; one at Quendale, Mainland and one at Sumburgh, Mainland (both Shet) on 7th; a male on North Ronaldsay on 8th; one on Fair Isle on 11–12th, a male at Crinan (Arg) on 15th; two males at Halligarth, Unst (Shet) on 18th, and a first-summer male on Fair Isle on 26–29 June.

Slate-coloured Junco: a male was at Dingleton, near Melrose (Bord) on 31 March to 1 April. **Snow Bunting:** noted to 20 May, all in the Northern and Western Isles except for two in Glen App, near Ballantrae (Ayrs) on 2 April. Low numbers only with higher counts of 15 on Fair Isle on 2 April, with 11 still on 13th, 20 on 24th, 17 on 28th, 14 on 30 April, and 10 on 3 May and 12 on 10 May; six on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 21–24 April, with seven on 27 April, and 14 there on 1 May. **Lapland Bunting:** noted to 9 May, all in the Northern and Western Isles except for one at Slains Pool (NES) on 13 April and six at Sorobaidh Bay, Tiree (Arg) on 17–24 April. Highest counts were 10 at Balranald RSPB Reserve, North Uist (OH) on 6 April, with 12 there on 24th, and 14 on 25th, and 12 at Loch Stiapabhat, Lewis (OH) on 10 April. **Ortolan Bunting:** one was on Noss (Shet) on 14 May, and a male on North Ronaldsay (Ork) on 8–10 June. **Rustic Bunting:** a male was at Baltasound, Unst (Shet) on 21 May; a male on Fair Isle on 26–27 May and another there on 14 June. **Little Bunting:** one was on Fair Isle on 2–14 May. **Black-headed Bunting:** a male was at Burns, Foula (Shet) on 11 June, and a female at Harrier, Foula on 15 June.

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PhotoSPOT

Plate 228. We have a wild garden which borders on moorland and common grazings where it is not unusual to see Cuckoos. This year had been exceptional with up to four adults in the garden in May. I first noticed a youngster on 2 July 2017 but it was strong on the wing and easily spooked. My only chance would be to take images from inside our conservatory, standing on steps and using a lens through the casement window.

On the early morning of 4 July, still in my pyjamas, I saw a Meadow Pipit feeding the Cuckoo along the fence line but at some distance. I took up position and it eventually moved within range and I quickly reeled off about 20 frames before it flew to a more distant perch. Neither the Cuckoo nor its host pipit were seen the following day. I regard myself as an opportunist photographer and this was a classic opportunity.

Equipment: Canon 7D mk2, Canon 100–400 mk2 lens (the only big lens which could fit through the window!), Aperture Priority, ISO 500, shutter 1/400, aperture f10.

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