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The **Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC)** was formed in 1936 to encourage all aspects of ornithology in Scotland. It has local branches which meet in Aberdeen, Ayr, the Borders, Dumfries, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, New Galloway, Orkney, St Andrews, Stirling, Stranraer and Thurso, each with its own programme of field meetings and winter lectures. The George Waterston Library at the Club's headquarters is the most comprehensive ornithological library in Scotland and is available for reference seven days a week. A selection of Scottish local bird reports is held at headquarters and may be purchased by mail order. The Donald Watson Gallery holds exhibitions of artwork for sale. Check out our website for more information about the SOC: ***www.the-soc.org.uk***

Scottish Birds, the official publication of the SOC, comprises four sections: original papers relating to ornithology in Scotland, short notes on bird observations, topical articles and Club-related news (*Scottish Bird News*) and reports of rare and scarce bird sightings and birding sites (*Birding in Scotland*).

Four issues of *Scottish Birds* are published each year, in March, June, September and December. The SOC also publishes an annual *Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme* Report, which is produced on behalf of the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Group with grant aid from Scottish Natural Heritage. It is sent to all members.

Copies of these reports may be purchased by non-members on application to the SOC. Membership details as well as news and information can be found on the Club's website www.the-soc.org.uk.

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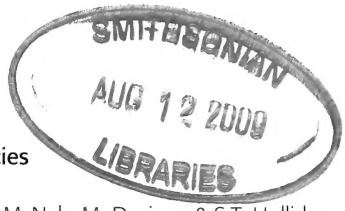

Editorial

This issue of volume 29 of *Scottish Birds* sees the beginning of a new phase in the evolution of SOC publications, with a major redesign in layout, larger paper size and the wider use of colour. Not only have peer-reviewed papers and *Scottish Bird News* been brought together, but with the incorporation of *Birding Scotland* material, *Scottish Birds* becomes a truly all-encompassing magazine.

Scottish Birds first appeared in 1958. Previously Scottish ornithologists had published their observations in the *Scottish Naturalist*. This appeared increasingly irregularly and to fill the gap (at least locally) the *Edinburgh Bird Bulletin* had been started by SOC members as a cyclostyled sheet in 1950. Writing the foreword to the new quarterly SOC journal the then president Charles Connell said it would 'maintain a high scientific standard... but also provide general interest for members whose outlook is not wholly scientific.'

For some years *Scottish Birds* published everything pertaining to the club from original papers to details of events and outings, and from site guides to bird sightings. Past editors were Maury Meiklejohn, Andrew Macmillan, Tom Delaney, Sqdn. Leader Greig, David Bates, Valerie Thom, Nick Picozzi and Anne-Marie Smout; before Stan da Prato took on the job in 1995.

Increased ornithological activity in Scotland led to an increase in records and pressure on the *Scottish Bird Report,* which had been an integral part of *Scottish Birds,* to become a linked, annual publication. Local bird reports have taken this to a new level of detail, now with complete coverage. The next phase in the history of the *Scottish Bird Report* is in the final stages of agreement and will involve enhanced use of the SOC website.

In the club's 50th year, 1986, *Scottish Bird News* was launched to appear quarterly and deal with topical features, club news and activities – it is now edited by Jimmy Maxwell and Ian Francis; *Scottish Birds* continued to publish original peer-reviewed material twice a year and the *Scottish Bird Report* progressed to become not only a major publication but also a major undertaking by Ray Murray. Further diversification saw the club publish the *Raptor Round Up* on behalf of the Scottish raptor study groups.

One niche opened and remained unfilled; that providing the birder - a term not used when *Scottish Birds* started - and those not within the SOC membership with a publication detailing sightings of rare and scarce birds and other related topics. Recognising this gap, *Birding Scotland* began publication in 1998 under the leadership of Harry Scott, assisted by Ian Phillips then Paul Baxter and currently Stuart Rivers. Making full use of advances in digital photography, *Birding Scotland* developed into a highly regarded, well-produced publication. Following the completion of *The Birds of Scotland*, its editors saw a natural progression to combine with SOC publications and this was agreed in 2008.

The format of this relaunched *Scottish Birds* is not cast in stone and members' comments are welcomed. The changes have been made in the spirit of Charles Connell's comments in the first issue of *Scottish Birds* and we look forward to providing both a visually and scientifically interesting journal that meets the approval of as many Scottish birdwatchers as possible.

Building on the success of *The Birds of Scotland*, we hope this new *Scottish Birds* will enjoy similar acclaim.

Chris Waltho, President

Plate 1. *Barrow's Goldeneye, Callander, Forth, February 2007 © Paul Hackett.*

Amendments to the Scottish List: species and subspecies

THE SCOTTISH BIRDS RECORDS COMMITTEE

SOC Council has delegated to SBRC responsibility for maintaining the *Scottish List* and SBRC has appointed a subcommittee to carry out this function. The current subcommittee consists of Dave Clugston, Dougie Dickson, Ron Forrester, Angus Hogg, Bob McGowan and Roger Riddington.

The *Scottish List* was last published in full in 2001 (Clugston *et al.* 2001), since when there have been three sets of amendments (Forrester 2003, 2004, 2007). This is therefore the fourth update. A full explanation of the procedure for maintaining the list is given in *Scottish Birds* 22: 33–35.

The *Scottish List* provided both a foundation and a structure for *The Birds of Scotland* (Forrester *et al.* 2007), published by the SOC in December 2007.

Since the third update, the taxonomic subcommittee of The British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) has made recommendations all of which have been adopted by BOURC for the *British List* (Sangster *et al.* 2007, Knox *et al.* 2008). Resulting changes to the *Scottish List* are:

The position of grebes in systematic order

Phylogenetic analyses based on DNA-DNA hybridisation data and other studies suggest that the grebes are incorrectly placed with the divers and are in fact closer to flamingos. It is recommended that they be placed between Ciconiiformes and Falconiformes. Grebes should therefore be moved from their previous position on the list and placed between Eurasian Spoonbill and European Honey-buzzard.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*
Molecular phylogenetic analysis suggests that it should be placed in the genus *Tringa*.
Change scientific name to *Tringa brevipes*.

Generic limits of shanks

Phylogenetic analyses of mitochondrial and nuclear DNA sequences and morphology have clarified the evolutionary relationships among the shanks. The species in the genera *Xenus*, *Actitis* and *Tringa* should be listed in the following sequence:

Terek Sandpiper	*Xenus cinereus*
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*
Spotted Sandpiper	*Actitis macularius*
Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*
Solitary Sandpiper	*Tringa solitaria*
Grey-tailed Tattler	*Tringa brevipes*
Spotted Redshank	*Tringa erythropus*
Greater Yellowlegs	*Tringa melanoleuca*
Common Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*
Lesser Yellowlegs	*Tringa flavipes*
Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*
Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*
Common Redshank	*Tringa totanus*

Gull taxonomy

The following taxonomy is now proposed for the large white-headed gull complex:
Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* (monotypic).
Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* (polytypic, including subspecies *fuscus, intermedius, graellsii, heuglini, barabensis*).
American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* (polytypic including subspecies *smithsonianus, vegae, mongolicus*).
Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* (polytypic, including subspecies *michahellis, atlantis*)
Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus* (monotypic)
Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* (polytypic, including subspecies *argentatus, argenteus*)

Add American Herring Gull to Category A. The status code SV is applicable. It is the nominate subspecies that has been recorded in Scotland.

Plate 2. *Caspian Gull (1st-winter), Dunbar Harbour, Lothian, January 2007 © Kris Gibb.*

Armenian Gull has not been recorded in Scotland. See below for details of the first Caspian Gull record for Scotland.

As a result of DNA sequencing studies, new scientific names have been accepted for Sabine's, Bonaparte's, Black-headed and Little Gulls and the relationship between gull species has also been altered. The resulting changes to the *Scottish List* are:

Ivory Gull	*Pagophila eburnea*
Sabine's Gull	*Xema sabini*
Black-legged Kittiwake	*Rissa tridactyla*
Bonaparte's Gull	*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*
Black-headed Gull	*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
Little Gull	*Hydrocoloeus minutus*
Ross's Gull	*Rhodostethia rosea*
Laughing Gull	*Larus atricilla*
Franklin's Gull	*Larus pipixcan*
Mediterranean Gull	*Larus melanocephalus*
Mew Gull	*Larus canus*
Ring-billed Gull	*Larus delawarensis*
Lesser Black-backed Gull	*Larus fuscus*
Herring Gull	*Larus argentatus*
Yellow-legged Gull	*Larus michahellis*
Caspian Gull	*Larus cachinnans*
American Herring Gull	*Larus smithsonianus*
Iceland Gull	*Larus glaucoides*
Glaucous Gull	*Larus hyperboreus*
Great Black-backed Gull	*Larus marinus*

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscata*
The gender of the name *Onychoprion* is masculine and the scientific name should be changed to *Onychoprion fuscatus*.

Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*
The spelling of the scientific name should be changed to *Coccyzus erythropthalmus*.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*
The author of the scientific name for the subspecies *rufula*, previously Temminck, should be changed to Laxmann.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*
There are two subspecies recorded in Scotland, the eastern-most, referred to as Eastern Nightingale, having been called *hafizi*. It has now been determined that *golzii* Cabanis 1873 has priority over *hafizi* and should therefore be used.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*
The Himalayan breeding taxa *rufilatus* and '*pallidior*' are now treated as a separate species Himalayan Bluetail *Tarsiger rufilatus*. Red-flanked Bluetail therefore becomes a monotypic species *Tarsiger cyanurus*. All Scottish records are of the taxon *cyanurus*.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*
It was previously considered that there were two subspecies, *naumanni* and *eunomus* of a single species *Turdus naumanni*. It has been determined that the taxa should now be treated as separate

monotypic species:
Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus*
Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni*
Only Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus* has been recorded in Scotland.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*
It was previously considered that there were two subspecies, *ruficollis* and *atrogularis* of a single species *Turdus ruficollis*. It has been determined that the taxa should now be treated as separate monotypic species:
Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*
Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*
Only Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis* has been recorded in Scotland.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*
Previously considered monotypic, now considered polytypic with one North American subspecies *olivaceus* and up to nine South American subspecies. Records of birds in Scotland have not been assigned to any subspecies but most likely refer to *olivaceus*.

BOURC has also published its 34th, 35th, 36th and 37th Reports. Recommendations by BOURC automatically apply to the *Scottish List* and those applicable are:

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanicus oceanicus*
It was previously indicated that the subspecies recorded in Scotland was '*exasperatus* (presumed)', on the basis of two specimens of this taxon from Ireland. This should be changed to 'race undetermined'. (36th report).

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*
The race of the only Scottish record was previously shown as nominate *mongolus*. BOURC considers that the five races are best divided into two groups, and that no British record can be attributed beyond the 'group' level. The Scottish record should now be treated as belonging to the '*mongolus* group (*mongolus*, *stegmanni*)'. (36th report)

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*
Records have previously been attributed to the nominate subspecies, but all should now be considered to be 'race undetermined'. (34th report)

Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum* (Strickland)
2006 Shetland Boddam, 16 August; sight record, photographed (P.M. Ellis, H.R. Harrop, R.A. Mavor *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 738–739, 101: 82–88; *Birding World* 19: 378–387; *Birding Scotland* 9: 134–137). 1st Scottish and British record. (36th report)
Monotypic; status code SV. Place between Sykes's Warbler and Icterine Warbler. **Add to Category A.**

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus* (Linnaeus)
2000 Outer Hebrides Oban Trumisgarry, North Uist, immature or female, 23 October–1 November; sight record, photographed (G. Evans, B. Rabbitts, A. Stevenson *et al.*) (*British Birds* 95: 524–525, 101: 525; *British Birds* 102: 122–129; *Birding Scotland* 4: 17–18; Forrester *et al.* 2007).
2006 Shetland Haroldswick and Burrafirth, Unst, adult male, 15 April–2 May; photographed. (W. Dickson *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 752, 101: 525; *Birding Scotland* 9: 85–88).
Previously placed in Category D following a review of the emerging pattern of vagrancy to the Western Palearctic this species is now moved to Category A. These are the 1st and 2nd Scottish records. The North Uist record has been accepted as the 1st British Category A record (*Ibis* 151: 224–230).

Monotypic; status code SV. Place between Smew and Red-breasted Merganser **Move from Category D to Category A.**

The following changes result from the British Birds Rarities Committee's (BBRC) 2006 (*British Birds* 100: 694–754) and 2007 (*British Birds* 101: 516–577) reports:

White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* (Lichtenstein)
2007 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock WWT reserve, adult, 6–8 June, photo (R. Hesketh *et al.* per P. Collin) (*British Birds* 100: plates 187 and 267; 101: 537). 1st Scottish record, see article on p83–85 of this journal.
Monotypic; status code SV. Place between Sociable Lapwing and Northern Lapwing. **Add to Category A.**

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
The only Scottish record of the eastern subspecies *P. p. samamisicus,* known as Ehrenberg's Redstart, was a bird at Fife Ness on 23 September 1976 (Forrester *et al.* 2007). This record has now been found to be unacceptable (*British Birds* 100: 754), therefore the race is removed from the *Scottish List.*

Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*
Caspian Sea race *S. t. variegatus* **'Caspian Stonechat'**
2006 Shetland Virkie, Mainland, male, 7 May, photo (P.V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 731; *Birding Scotland* 9: 112–115).
1st Scottish record of this subspecies.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* Ticehurst
2006 Lothian Pitcox, adult, 5 May photo (D.J. Bates, M.W. Fraser *et al.*); presumed same, Pressmennan Lake, 6–13 May, photo (*British Birds* 100: 743; *Birding Scotland* 9: 53–57; Forrester *et al.* 2007). 1st Scottish record.
Monotypic; status SV. Place between Common Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. **Add to Category A.**

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Linnaeus
2006 Moray & Nairn Findhorn Bay, Moray, 17–19 September (A. Lawrence, I. Phillips, R. Proctor *et al.*) This bird was seen in The Netherlands and Germany during May to July, then in England before it reached Moray and was back in England in October. (*British Birds* 101: 575–576). Although previously recorded in Scotland, this is the 1st substantiated record to enable admission to Category D.
Monotypic; status SV. Place between Baikal Teal and Greater Flamingo. **Add to Category D.**

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea*
The species was previously placed on Category D of the *Scottish List* on the basis of three records (Forrester *et al.* 2007 p 1591). Following a review it was established that other than a poorly documented record from Gloucestershire there have been no other accepted Western Palearctic records. The Scottish records do not fit readily with natural vagrancy therefore the species is moved to Category E (*Ibis* 151: 224–230).

The following record has been accepted by the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC):

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* Pallas
2006 Lothian Belhaven Bay and Dunbar Harbour, 1st-winter, 28 December to 13 February 2007 (C.N. Davison *et al.*) (*Birding Scotland* 9: 180–182; Forrester *et al.* 2007). 1st Scottish record.
Monotypic; status SV. Place between Yellow-legged Gull and American Herring Gull. **Add to Category A.**

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

Category A	502
Category B	7
Category C	6
TOTAL	515
Category D	12

The current total of 515 includes all of the 509 species given 'main text' treatment in *The Birds of Scotland*, Hooded Merganser is moved from Category D to A and White-tailed Lapwing, Caspian Gull, Belted Kingfisher, Olive-tree Warbler and Iberian Chiffchaff have all been added to Category A.

Categories

White-tailed Eagle
'Category A' should now read 'Category A,C'.

Status Codes

Ringed Plover
Change status code for *tundrae* from PV WV to PV

Pectoral Sandpiper
Change status code from PV to CB PV

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

A list of all records of species and subspecies recorded in Scotland on up to 20 occasions was published on behalf of SBRC (Andrews & Naylor 2002) since when there have been two updates (Forrester 2004, Forrester 2007). This is the third update and includes records from the 2006 (*British Birds* 100: 694–754) and 2007 (*British Birds* 101: 516–577) BBRC Reports. An opportunity was taken in *The Birds of Scotland* to evaluate the validity of several old records and to revise the numbering of records up to the end of 2004 for several species.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*
2002 Perth & Kinross Powmill, adult, 16–18 February (J.S. Nadin *et al.*); presumed same as at Findatie, Loch Leven (*British Birds* 101: 520).
2007 Upper Forth Haugh of Blackgrange, adult, 3–12 February, photo (J.B. Bell, R. Dawson *et al.*); presumed same 15 April (per C. Henty) (*British Birds* 101: 520).
2007 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock WWT Reserve, adult, 13–25 November (B. Morrell *et al.* per P.N. Collin); presumed same Cummertrees and Caerlaverock WWT Reserve, 23 December (per www.birdguides.com) and Caerlaverock WWT Reserve 26 December to 6 February 2008, photo (A.W. Reid *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 520).
15th and 16th Scottish records.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*
2006 Fair Isle male, 1–5 November, photo (P.A.A. Baxter, M.D. Warren *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 697).
2007 Highland Loch Sunart, adult male, 16–17 June, photo (D. & J. Wozencroft) (*British Birds* 101: 520).
11th and 12th Scottish records.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*
2005 Perth & Kinross Vane Farm, Loch Leven, 6–7 September (T.P. Drew, D. Jones, K.D. Shaw *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 574).
2007 Fife Lochgelly Loch, 16 July to 16 August. - accepted by SBRC.
15th and 16th Scottish records of 17 birds.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*
2007 Outer Hebrides St Kilda, adult male, 18 June, photo (W.T.S. Miles, S. Money, I. Win) (*British Birds* 101: 523, plates 257 and 258).
10th Scottish record of 12 birds.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*
2006 Shetland Loch of Snarravoe, Unst, adult male, 12 November to 20 January 2007, photo (M.G. Pennington *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 700, 101: 524, 100: plate 335).
2007 Highland Glenbeg, Ardnamurchan, 7 June, photo (M. Hows, A. Jenkins; presumed same **Outer Hebrides** Loch na Muilne, Isle of Lewis, 8–9 June, photo (M.S. Scott, J. Walsh) (*Birding Scotland* 9: 171–173).
3rd and 4th Scottish records.

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*
2006 Forth Callander, adult male, intermittently from 19 November to 24 March 2007; same, Loch Venachar, intermittently from 20 December to 27 April 2007, photo (N. Bielby *et al.*) possibly same as North East Scotland 2005 (*British Birds* 100: 701, 101: 525, 100: plates 52 and 336).
3rd Scottish record.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*
2006 Outer Hebrides Sula Sgeir, adult, 23 May–1 July, photo (per B. Rabbitts) (*British Birds* 100: 702), same Sula Sgeir 8–10 May 2007, photo, (M.S. Scott *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 527), presumed returning bird of 2005.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*
2005 Outer Hebrides Labost, Lewis, 3 August (T. ap Rheinallt, A. Robinson, M.S. Scott) (*British Birds* 100: 703).
5th Scottish record.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
2007 Outer Hebrides Steinish and Laxdale, Isle of Lewis, 13–14 August, photo (T. ap Rheinallt, M.S. Scott, R.D. Wemyss) (*British Birds* 101: 529).
2007 Caithness Scrabster Mains, 22 September to 3 October, photo (S. Laybourne *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 528).
2007 Dumfries & Galloway Cardoness, 24 December to 11 January 2008, photo (P.N. Collin, M. Hannay, F. Simpson) (*British Birds* 101: 529, plate 62).
4th–6th Scottish records.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*
2006 Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 10 May (P.J. Donelly *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 706).
2006 Highland Wester Clunes, The Aird, adult, 9 May (C. Leslie); presumed same **Moray & Nairn** Tomfarclas, 13 May (D.A. Gibson) (*British Birds* 100: 706).
2006 Borders Houndwood, 1st-summer, 7–23 July, photo (D. Graham *et al.*), presumed same as bird in Northumberland from 17–31 May and again on 23 July (*British Birds* 100: 706; *Birding Scotland* 9: 109–111) and either that in Highland and Noray & Nairn or Orkney.
two records added for 2006, being 16th and 17th Scottish records of 18 birds.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*
2007 Shetland Loch of Spiggie, Mainland, juvenile, 23 August to 8 September, photo (R.M. Mellor *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 534, plates 288 and 289).
11th Scottish record.

Little Crake *Porzana parva*
2007 Shetland Burrafirth, Unst, male, 29 May to 19 June, photo (A.I. & S.J. McElwee *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 536, plate 265; Forrester *et al.* 2007 see page 523). See article on p79–82 of this journal.
6th Scottish record.

American Coot *Fulica americana*
2005 Outer Hebrides, Coot Loch, Benbecula, 25 February to 6 April (S.E. Duffield *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 709).
4th Scottish record.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*
2006 Argyll Oronsay, 18 October (M. Sur) (*British Birds* 100: 710).
2007 Shetland Bannamin, West Burra, 1st-summer female, 6 April to 5 May, photo (R.A. Haywood *et al.*); presumed same Exnaboe and Virkie, Mainland, 14 May to 19 November, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 536, 100: plate 142, 101: plate 266). See article on p75–78 of this journal.
12th and 13th Scottish records.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*
2006 Argyll Bailevullin, Tiree, 1st-summer, 29 August to 2 September, photo (J. Bowler, K. Gillon) (*British Birds* 100: 711).
18th Scottish record.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*
2007 Outer Hebrides Butt of Lewis, Isle of Lewis, juvenile, 12 October, photo (A. & J. Drake) (*British Birds* 101: 538, plate 268).
4th Scottish record.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
North American race *N. p. hudsonicus,* **'Hudsonian Whimbrel'**
2007 Fair Isle Buness, adult, 29–31 August, photo (D.N. Shaw *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 541, 100: plates 292 and 293).
3rd Scottish record of subspecies.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*
2005 Outer Hebrides Liniclate, Benbecula, 3–6 October (S.E. Duffield *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 715; *Birding Scotland* 8: 175–176).
2006 Shetland Norwick, Unst, juvenile, 6 October, photo, (P.V. Harvey, M.A. Maher, S. Mitchell *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 715; *Birding Scotland* 9: 100–101).
8th and 9th Scottish records.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*
2007 Fair Isle South Harbour, 13 June, photo (P.A.A. Baxter, P.J. Marsh, D.N. Shaw *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 542).
11th Scottish record.

Plate 3. *Terek Sandpiper, Fair Isle, June 2007 © Deryk Shaw.*

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*
2007 Shetland Lamba Ness, Unst, juvenile, 21 September to 4 October, photo (H. Moncrieff, M.G. Pennington, K.D. Shaw *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 542).
2007 Shetland Burravoe, Yell, juvenile, 25 September to 11 October, photo (D. Preston *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 542).
2007 Outer Hebrides Loch Ordais and Bragar, Isle of Lewis, 1st-winter, 27 September, photo (M.S. Scott) (*British Birds* 101: 542).
2007 Upper Forth Kinneil Lagoon, adult, 24 December to 14 April 2008, photo (G. Owens, R. Shand *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 542).
15th to 18th Scottish records of 19 birds.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*
2007 Outer Hebrides St Kilda, 27–31 August, photo (S.E. Duffield *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 542).
5th Scottish record.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*
2007 Shetland Foula, juvenile, 11 October, photo (E.J. Mackrill, J.P. Shaughnessy, K.M. Wilson *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 543).
8th Scottish record.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*
2006 North East Scotland Ythan Estuary, adult, 21–26 August, photo (R.C. Broadbent, S. Nuttall, M.P. Radford *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 717; *Birding Scotland* 9: 130–133).
10th Scottish record.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*
2007 Lothian Tyninghame, 1st-winter, 14 October - accepted by SBRC.
2008 Clyde Strathclyde Country Park, 1st-winter, 9–14 February - accepted by SBRC.
2nd and 3rd Scottish records following the bird at Belhaven Bay and Dunbar Harbour in 2006 (above).

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*
2004 Outer Hebrides Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, juvenile, 6 March to 17 April, photo (M.S. Scott) (*British Birds* 101: 547).
2007 Argyll Gott, Isle of Tiree, 1st-winter, 20 March, photo (J. Bowler); presumed same Loch Bhasapol, Isle of Tiree 25 May and 7 June, photo (J. Bowler) (*British Birds* 101: 547).
2007 Outer Hebrides Stinky Bay, Benbecula, 1st-summer, 19 June, photo (J.B. Kemp) (*British Birds* 101: 547).
3rd–5th Scottish records.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*
2006 North East Scotland Loch of Skene, adult, 5 June (I. Broadbent, D. Dunstan, I. Moig) (*British Birds* 100: 720).
2007 Argyll Machrihanish, 9 July (E. Maguire, J. McGlynn) (*British Birds* 101: 549).
3rd and 4th Scottish records.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*
2007 Outer Hebrides Carnach, North Uist, 1st-winter, 29 October to 7 November, photo (A. & A. MacDonald, B. Rabbitts *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 550).
2nd Scottish record.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*
2006 Isle of May 12–17 May, photo (M.A. Newell *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 727; *Birding Scotland* 9: 61–65).
2007 Shetland Baltasound, Unst, 12 May, photo (B.H. Thomason *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 552, 100: plates 189 and 190, 101: plate 278).
6th and 7th Scottish records.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*
2006 Shetland Sumburgh, Mainland, 1st-winter, 12 October, photo (J.J. Gilroy, A.C. Lees *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 727).
2007 Fair Isle Boini Mire, 1st-winter female, 27 October, trapped, photo, died later (M.T. Breaks, D.N. Shaw *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 553). Specimen at NMS (NMS.Z 2008.115).
3rd and 4th Scottish records.

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*
2007 Sea area Hebrides 200+ km NW of Outer Hebrides, 19–20 September, died on board ship (in Scottish waters), photo (S. Cook) (*British Birds* 101: 555).
2007 Fair Isle Sukka Mire, 1st-winter, 23–25 September, photo (A.L. Cooper, M.A. Ward *et al.*); presumed same Vaasetter, 1–7 October, photo (D.N. Shaw *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 555).
2007 Outer Hebrides Borve, Benbecula, 18 October, photo (S.E. Duffield *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 555).
3rd–5th Scottish records after a gap of 54 years since the 2nd.

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*
2007 Shetland Foula, male, 5 October, photo (R.G. Hook, K.B. Shepherd, N.D. Wright *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 557).
5th Scottish record.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*
2006 Shetland Westing, Unst, 1st-winter, 13–16 October, photo (D.M. Foster *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 731, 99: plate 367).

2006 Shetland Skaw, Whalsay, female or 1st-winter, 21–24 October, trapped, photo (J. Dunn, B. Marshall *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 731).
2006 Shetland Brae, female or 1st-winter, 23 October (G.H. & W.F. Peplow *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 731).
2007 Shetland Out Skerries, 1st-winter, 2–3 April, photo (K. & P. Flint *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 557).
2007 Shetland Scatness, Mainland, 13–14 October, photo (J.J. Gilroy *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 557).
16th–20th Scottish records.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*
2005 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 23–29 October, photo (A.E. Duncan *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 732).
6th Scottish record.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*
2006 North East Scotland Meikle Loch, Slains, female or 1st-winter, race undetermined, 21 October (P.S. Crockett *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 733).
18th Scottish record, only three of which have been assigned to a specific race.

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*
2007 Shetland Hametoun, Foula, 1st-winter male, 28 September, photo (P.R. Gordon *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 560, 100: plate 326, 101: plate 285).
4th Scottish record.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*
2007 Shetland Houbie, Fetlar, 28 September to 4 October, photo (I. Robinson, B.H. Thomason, M.D. Warren *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 561).
8th Scottish record.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*
2006 Highland Glenmore Forest Park, 4 May, photo, (G. Lewis); presumed same, Boat of Garten, 6 May, photo (M. Butters) (*British Birds* 100: 735; *Birding Scotland* 9: 106–108).
8th Scottish record.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*
2006 Fair Isle 15 June, sound recorded (E.A. & N.J. Riddiford) (*British Birds* 100: 736).
2006 Shetland Foula, 3–4 October, photo (J.M. & T.P. Drew, K.D. Shaw, M.A. Wilkinson *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 736).
2007 Fair Isle Observatory, 11 June, trapped, photo (M.T. Breaks *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 563, 100: plate 223, 101: plate 288).
17th–19th Scottish records.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*
2006 Shetland Skaw, Unst, 28 May to 3 June, photo (M.A. Maher, S.J. & A.I. McElwee *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 736, plate 356).
9th Scottish record of ten birds.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*
South-east European race *S. c. albistriata* **'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'**
2007 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 1st-summer male, 30 April to 11 May, trapped, photo (P.A. Brown *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 566).
20th Scottish record of subspecies.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*
2007 Shetland Spiggie, Mainland, female, 26–30 September, photo (N. Alford, N. Stocks *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 566).
13th Scottish record.

Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*
2006 Lothian Skateraw 25–27 October, photo (D. Allan, C.N. Davison *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 742).
2006 North East Scotland Donmouth, Aberdeen, 13–30 December, photo, sound recording (M. Lewis *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 742; *Birding Scotland* 9: 174–176).
11th and 12th Scottish records.

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*
2006 Borders St Abb's Head, 1st-winter, 24–26 September (D. Graham, K. Rideout *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 742).
2007 Argyll Balephuil, Tiree, 8 September, photo (J. Bowler) (*British Birds* 101: 566).
12th and 13th Scottish record.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*
2006 Shetland Brow Marsh, adult male, 9–10 May, photo (R.H. Johnston, R. Riddington *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 744, plates 164 and 360).
17th Scottish record.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*
2006 Orkney Carpaquoy, Eday, 1st-winter, 20 September to 10 October, photo (M.G. Cockram, E.J. & S.J. Williams) (*British Birds* 100: 744).
2006 Outer Hebrides Bru, Lewis, 1st-winter, 22–29 September, photo (M.S. Scott *et al.*); presumed same, Breibhig, Barra, 30 September to 1 October, photo (K. Gillon *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 744, 99: plate 374; *Birding Scotland* 9: 177–179).
18th and 19th Scottish records.

Plate 4. *Isabelline Shrike, Barra, Outer Hebrides, September 2007 © Keith Gillon.*

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*
2005 Outer Hebrides Liniclate, Benbecula, 30 September (S.E. Duffield, A. Stevenson) (*British Birds* 100: 747).
8th Scottish record.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*
2004 Shetland Foula, 1 July, photo (G. Atherton) (*Brtish Birds* 100: 748).
2006 Shetland Sumburgh Farm, 13 May, photo; presumed same Quendale, 14 May (P.V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*) (*British Birds* 100: 748, 99: plate 193).
16th and 17th Scottish records.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*
2007 Outer Hebrides St Kilda, 30 May, male in song, photo (S. Dennis, W.T.S. Miles, S. Money *et al.*) (*British Birds* 101: 570).
2007 Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult male, 19 June (R.J. Simpson) (*British Birds* 101: 570).
2007 Highland Unapool, age uncertain, 23 June, photo (H.M. & J.A. MacDonald) (*British Birds* 101: 570).
9th–11th Scottish records.

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*
2007 Caithness John O'Groats, male, 24–27 May, photo (J. Logue, A. & Y. McLean) (*British Birds* 101: 572, 100: plate 192, 101: plate 296).
4th Scottish record.

Errata

***Scottish Birds* 27: 7** - The Lesser Scaup record at Blair Drummond in March and April 2005 is from Upper Forth, not Perth & Kinross.
***Scottish Birds* 27: 12** - Incorrect spelling of observer's name for Blackpoll Warbler at Glasnakille, Skye. 'R. Macmillan' should read 'R. McMillan'.

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Plate 1. Young long-eared Owls © Mary Scobie

Long-eared Owls on Colonsay, Argyll

D.C. JARDINE, E.M. McNAB, M. DAVISON & S.T. HOLLIDAY

A small breeding population of Long-eared Owls on Colonsay, Argyll was studied between 1984 and 2007. A total of six sites were found, with a maximum of three pairs breeding in any year. The mean brood size of successful nests was 2.14. Wood Mice, Brown Rats and birds comprised the main prey items.

Introduction

The status of the Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* is poorly known in Scotland (Forrester *et al.*, 2007) with relatively few published studies. It is described as a 'scarce, little-known breeding species' for which 'numbers appear to fluctuate from year to year' in Argyll (ap Rheinallt *et al.*, 2007). This short paper summarises information gathered on the small breeding population on the island of Colonsay, Argyll.

Historical records of Long-eared Owl on Colonsay

The early history of owls on Colonsay is obscure as early authors do not use familiar species names. Gathorne-Hardy (1914), who visited the island in 1898–99, described a 'Wood Owl' whose

banshee notes were heard every night. McNeill (1910) writing in 1909, stated that an owl bred less frequently at Kiloran. He used the gaelic name *Cailleach oidhche* (Old woman of the night), so it is not clear to which owl he was referring as *Comhachag-dhonn* (Brown Owl) and *Comhachag-adharcach* (Horned Owl) are the currently accepted gaelic names for Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* and Long-eared Owl respectively (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Some authors have used *Cailleach oidhche* for Tawny Owl (see Appendix) and Wood Owl may have been used for Tawny Owl, so it is possible that these early records do not refer to Long-eared Owl.

By 1935, the status of Long-eared Owl on Colonsay was described as 'resident, probably breeds' (Loder 1935), but it appears that breeding was not proven until 1939 when a deserted nest and eggs were found by the late G.L. Sandeman at Kiloran. He also noted House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* as one of the prey items (Jardine *et al.* 1986). Possible breeding was reported during *Breeding Atlas I* (1968–72) and again confirmed in 1984 by R.A. Broad. Since then breeding has been found regularly.

Methods

In the early years of this study, breeding sites were usually found in June, occasionally in late May, during crepuscular circuits of the island to record a range of species including Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Corn Crake *Crex crex* and Common Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella naevia*. The 'squeaky gate' call of the fledged chicks was used to locate sites. Thus, only successful nests were located. Latterly some known breeding sites were searched for signs of occupation (fresh droppings, pellets and moulted feathers). However, it should be noted that this account is based on a relatively low intensity survey in the early years. During 2001–2007, pellets were collected during six visits to known breeding sites during May and June. Pellets were dissected and mammal remains identified using keys in Yalden & Morris (1993) and Lawrence & Brown (1974). Birds were identified from feathers and skeletal remains using reference collections. As the number of pellets varied considerably between months, years and sites it was not possible to test for differences in diet between these variables and details from all pellet samples are aggregated.

Results

Site occupation

During 1984–2007, occupied sites were found in 19 (of 24) breeding seasons at five different nesting sites (Table 1). Evidence of Long-eared Owl was also found at an additional remote woodland (site F) that was not easily visited after dark. Three of the sites are in small Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis* plantations established in the 1960s, two are in mixed policy woodlands dating from the 19th century and one site in a semi-natural oakwood *Quercus* sp.

The distance between occupied sites varied between 1.1–1.8 km, although sites B, C and D were within 400 m of one another. However, as these sites were never occupied in the same year, they may represent alternative nesting sites in the same territory. Site F is around 1 km from the nearest occupied site.

Sites A, B and E are also nesting territories of Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*, where Long-eared Owls use old Sparrowhawk nests.

Breeding performance

In recent years three occupied sites have been found annually due to an increased search effort. Prior to this, one occupied site was found in each of 12 years and two occupied sites in four years.

A total of 21 large broods were found (Table 1). A minimum of 45 young were heard or seen. This represents a minimum mean successful brood size of 2.14 (se+ 0.17) young.

Table 1. Known occupation and breeding performance of five Long-eared Owl sites, Colonsay, Argyll (Occ - Occupied site, B/*n* - fledged brood with *n* young).

Year	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D	Site E
1984			B/2+		
1985				B/3	
1986	Occ				
1987					
1988	Occ	B/2			
1989	B/3				
1990					
1991	B/1				
1992					
1993					
1994	B/1				
1995	B/2				
1996					B/1
1997					B/2
1998	B/3				B/3
1999	Occ				
2000					B/2
2001			B/3		B/2
2002					
2003		B/1			
2004		Occ			B/3
2005	Occ	Occ			Occ
2006	B/2+	B/3			Occ
2007	B/1	B/2			B/3

Table 2. Composition of prey found in 147 Long-eared Owl pellets, Colonsay, Argyll.

Prey item	Number	% of prey by item	Estimated Ave mass*	Total weight	% of prey by weight
Wood Mouse	99	47.8	20g	1980g	35.1
Brown Rat	37	17.9	60g	4255g	39.3
Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*	2	1.0	200g	400g	7.1
Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus*	16	7.7	5g	80g	1.4
Birds	48	23.2	20g	960g	17.0
Beetle	4	1.9	1g	4g	0.1
Other	1	0.5			-
Total	**207**	**100.0**		**5644g**	**100.0**

*adult weights used for Wood Mouse and Pygmy Shrew, immature weights estimated for Rabbit (Corbet & Southern 1964) and for Rat (Hillis *et al.* 1988). Bird weight calculated for weights of birds found - Table 3 (Hickling 1983).

Table 3. Identified birds found in 147 Long-eared Owl pellets, Colonsay, Argyll.

Species	Number (total 20)	Ave weight (g) (Hickling 1983)
Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*	5	26
Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*	5	20
Phylloscopus warbler	5	8.6
Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*	2	22
Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*	1	5.7
Spotted Flycatcher *Musciapa striata*	1	15
Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*	1	76

Plate 6. *Long-eared Owl habitat on Colonsay © David Jardine.*

Prey analysis

A total of 147 pellets were collected, mainly during May and June from sites B and E. The mean dimensions of pellets were 40.0 (se+ 8.8) x 22.1 (se+ 3.4) mm (n = 107). Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus* was the most common identified prey item, followed by birds and Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus* (Table 2). Twenty of the birds were identified from feather or skull remains (Table 3) and these were used to estimate the average weight of bird prey. While only comprising around 18% of prey items, Brown Rat, on account of its large size, provided almost 40% of the prey biomass.

The beetles were of the genus *Geotrupes* (Dung beetles), possibly *G. stercorarius,* and the other item was a piece of eggshell, which possibly could have been contained in one of the bird prey.

Discussion

There were only five years in this study when occupation was not confirmed and this is believed to be a consequence of observer effort, perhaps exacerbated by the lack of noisy young after breeding failure. This suggests a continuous presence of Long-eared Owls on Colonsay for over two decades during the late 20th century, and probably considerably longer as they were found in the same area as early as the 1930s (Loder 1935) and in our opinion the records at the turn of the 20th century most probably refer to Long-eared Owls, given that Tawny Owls were much less common at that time, and, being more sedentary, were far less likely to reach Colonsay.

Despite the small size of Colonsay (c. 50 km^2) continuous occupancy during our study is notable; the small number of birds on the island is likely to be too small to support a self-sustaining population. Specialist vole-eaters, such as Long-eared Owl, can travel big distances during both natal and breeding disperal (Wernham *et al.* 2002) and it may be that the island provides conditions that continue to attract dispersing birds from other islands or mainland populations.

The mean brood size for successful nests on Colonsay (2.14) is similar to the average reported in Scottish Bird Reports (2.2) (Forrester *et al.* 2007). It is possible that not every chick was found, although the number missed is believed to be small. The mean brood size is slightly lower than an analysis of 89 nest record cards from throughout Britain (2.39) (Glue 1977) and significantly lower than that reported in young conifer plantations (3.2 ± 0.2) during optimal during Field Vole *Microtus agrestis* population peaks (Village 1981).

The diet of Long-eared Owls on Colonsay is more restricted than reported elsewhere in Britain (Glue & Hammond 1974). Notably it lacks Field Voles which are absent from the island (Warwick 1939). In this respect the available prey and diet is similar to that of Long-eared Owls in Ireland (Hillis *et al.* 1988), although the contribution of Brown Rats to prey biomass on Colonsay is significantly higher and Wood Mouse correspondingly lower.

The composition of the avian element of the diet of Long-eared owls on Colonsay is similar to that reported in other studies (e.g. Glue 1977) and of the songbird population on the island (Jardine 2002). The most surprising prey item is Spotted Flycatcher *Musciapa striata*, which has not been reported in other studies, and only occurs in small numbers on the island.

Although House Mouse *Mus musculus* was recorded on Colonsay by Warwick (1939) no evidence for its continuing presence on the island has been found in this study. However, it is clear that Wood Mouse and Pygmy Shrew are still present.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix

Gaelic names for woodland owls

Forrester *et al.* (2007) provide a 'definitive list' of Gaelic names for birds in Scotland. Their list, which in a scientific approach seeks to provide one gaelic name for each species, does not recognise that gaelic is largely a spoken language and not a written one. Therefore it is not surprising that different authorities provide a whole range of names which exist for woodland owls.

Tawny Owl

Gaelic name	Translation	Reference
Comhachag-dhonn	Brown Owl	Forrester *et al.* (2007)
Comhachag-dhonn	Brown Owl	Argyll Bird Report 2002–2003
Comhachag dhonn	Brown Owl	Cunningham (1983)
Comhachag dhonn	Brown Owl	McMillan 2005 (after Garvie 1999)
Cailleach-oidhche	Old woman of the night	Cunningham (1983)
Bodach-oidhche	Old man of the night	McMillan 2005 (after Garvie 1999)

Long-eared Owl

Gaelic name	Translation	Reference
Comhachag-adharcaiche	Horned Owl	Forrester *et al.* (2007)
Comhachag-adharcaiche	Horned Owl	Argyll Bird Report 2002–2003
Comhachag adharcaiche	Horned Owl	Cunningham (1983)
Comhachag adharcaiche	Horned Owl	McMillan 2005 (after Garvie 1999)
Mulchan	Long-eared Owl	McMillan 2005 (after Garvie 1999), Dwelly (1973)

Eilidh M. McNab, 7 Avontoun Park, Linlithgow, West Lothian, EH49 6QG

Martin Davison, 37 Beech Grove, Blackhall Mill, Tyne & Wear, NE17 7TD

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Revised ms accepted September 2008

Plate 7. Ruddy Turnstone © Colin Corse.

Numbers of coastal birds on the Orkney Islands during winter 2006/07

C.J. CORSE & R.W. SUMMERS

During winter 2006/07, birds were counted along 732 km of the Orkney coast and adjacent fields. The total number of waders (shore plus adjacent fields) was 66,000, of which the Eurasian Curlew (21,000), European Golden Plover (10,000), Northern Lapwing (7,600), Ruddy Turnstone (6,800) and Common Redshank (5,900) were the most abundant. A total of 40,000 ducks was counted. The most numerous were Eurasian Wigeon (30,000), Eurasian Teal (3,200) and Mallard (2,700). A total of 18,000 gulls was counted, with Mew Gulls by far the most numerous (11,000). Other bird totals included 83 Great Northern Divers, 160 Grey Herons, 1,800 Rock Pipits and 12,000 Common Starlings.

A comparison with a similar survey in the early 1980s showed that the total number of waders on the shores had changed little. However, there were more European Golden Plover, Northern Lapwing and Common Snipe. Notable declines occurred in Ringed Plover, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin and Common Redshank. However, the extent to which the weather affected the size of these changes is not known because most species use nearby fields as well as the shore and the weather may have affected the differential use of these habitats. Among the ducks, there was a huge increase in Eurasian Wigeon, and lesser increases in Mallard, Eurasian Teal and Red-breasted Merganser. Other fish-eating birds also increased (divers, European Shag, Great Cormorant and Grey Heron). The only duck that declined substantially was the Common Goldeneye. Black-headed Gulls declined and fewer Arctic gulls were seen.

The Orkney Islands continue to hold internationally important numbers of Ringed Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Purple Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Eurasian Wigeon and Great Northern Diver.

Introduction

Surveys of shorebirds in winter along the coasts of Scotland during the 1970s and 1980s revealed the importance of rocky shores and sandy beaches as a habitat for many coastal birds, and waders in particular (Summers *et al.* 1975, da Prato & da Prato 1979a b, Buxton *et al.* 1981). The densities of waders regularly exceeded those found on estuaries, which are the main wintering areas for waders (Prater 1981). A survey of the Orkney Islands in winters 1982/83 and 1983/84 gave further evidence of the importance of this habitat. A total of 51,000 waders was counted, showing that the Orkney Islands were as important as some of the main estuaries in Britain (Tay & Orkney Ringing Groups 1984, Summers *et al.* 1991). Only the estuaries of Morecambe Bay, the Wash, Ribble, Solway, Dee and Severn have more wintering waders in Britain. The most numerous waders in Orkney were Eurasian Curlew (18,000), Common Redshank (6,900), Ruddy Turnstone (6,000) and Purple Sandpiper (5,700) (scientific names are given in Table 5). For all these species, the Orkney Islands are of international importance. As a result, a Special Protection Area (SPA) was designated on Sanday.

The reason why Orkney is so good for waders is that the rocky shores tend to be shallow shelving so that there is a wide inter-tidal zone, providing a large area of habitat for birds. The shallow-sloping shore extends into the sublittoral zone, so the beds of kelp *Laminaria* spp are also large. The kelp beds are important to birds because broken kelp is washed up on the high tide line and the flies (e.g. the Kelp Fly *Coelopa frigida*) and shrimps that live in the stranded kelp banks provide an additional food source for coastal birds (Summers *et al.* 1990). Finally, the adjacent grass fields provide feeding opportunities, particularly at high tide when the inter-tidal area is not available (Heppleston 1982).

The data from the 1982/83 and 1983/84 survey of Orkney were subsumed into the 1984/85 Winter Shorebird Count, which provided the first estimate of the total numbers of waders around the coasts of Britain and Northern Ireland (Moser & Summers 1987). This national survey was repeated in winter 1997/98 (the Non-estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey or UK-NEWS) (Rehfisch *et al.* 2003a), though extrapolations had to be made for key areas where there were only partial surveys; e.g. half of Orkney was not surveyed (Rehfisch *et al.* 2003b).

There is concern that several waders on non-estuarine coasts are declining. The UK-NEWS revealed declines in Ruddy Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper and Ringed Plover numbers, all common species of rocky shores or sandy beaches (Rehfisch *et al.* 2003a). Localised counts confirmed this decline for Purple Sandpipers. For example, there was an 88% decline on the Lothian coast between the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Dott 1997) and a 55% decline in the Moray Firth between the five winter periods 1986/87–1990/91 and 1996/97–2000/01 (Summers *et al.* 2005).

Given the concern over declines in waders on rocky shores and sandy beaches, a repeat survey of the Orkney Islands was carried out in winter 2006/07 to establish if declines were also noticeable in this prime area for wintering waders in Scotland. The results of this survey also formed part of the latest estimate of the numbers of waders on the non estuarine coasts of the UK (NEWS 2006/07), organised by the British Trust for Ornithology.

Study area

The Orkney Islands comprise an archipelago of relatively low lying islands off the north coast of mainland Scotland. There are 16 large islands and scores of smaller ones (Figure 1). The coastal configuration of sounds and inlets suggests they represent hills between drowned valleys of an ancient river system (Wilson *et al.* 1935).

The islands are almost entirely composed of Old Red Sandstone (ORS), a sedimentary rock laid down in a large shallow lake during the Devonian period, 350–400 million years ago (Bailey

Figure 1. The Orkney Islands which were surveyed. Thick black lines indicate cliffs and stipple indicates sandy shores. Sections not surveyed are shown as a double line. These were mainly high cliffs.

1971). As a result, the rock is layered, and splits into large flat slabs, which form shallow sloping rocky shores in many places. Old Red Sandstones are divided into three groups according to their age: Lower (the oldest), Middle and Upper (the youngest). Mainland and the northern islands are composed of Middle ORS whereas Hoy is Upper ORS. The latter is redder and harder, so is more resistant to erosion, resulting in the highest hills in Orkney.

As well as the outcrops of rock forming the rocky shore, there are numerous bays where either mud (in gentler waters) or sand (on more exposed coasts) form beaches. These are unevenly distributed around the archipelago, being particularly common on Sanday, Stronsay and Shapinsay.

The beaches are important for many coastal birds because they trap washed up kelp and other seaweeds. These form banks on the high tide line and can be hundreds of metres in length and a metre deep. Large numbers of crustaceans, flies and worms live in the rotting mulch of these beds, and when they are turned over by waves, the invertebrate food is exposed and eaten by waders, ducks, gulls and passerines.

Methods

The Orkney Islands were surveyed between 28 November 2006 and 3 March 2007, but most of the counts were carried out between 28 November and 3 December 2006. All the main islands were surveyed, along with some smaller ones (Figure 1). An attempt was made to survey all the low-lying shores: flat bedrock, boulder and gravel shores, sandy beaches and muddy bays. Only high cliffs were avoided because they have a small inter-tidal area and are generally avoided by waders (Summers *et al.* 2002) (Figure 1). Thus, virtually all sections that were surveyed in the 1980s were surveyed again in 2006/07. Only Auskerry was omitted in this survey.

To ensure comparability of the data, the same methods were used as in the 1980s survey, and some of the same personnel were also involved. The coastline was divided into count sections based on breaks in habitat (e.g. where a sandy beach changed to rocky shore). Each surveyor walked about 5–10 km per day. Contiguous sections were walked by a group of observers on the same day to minimise the effect of birds moving between sections. To count the numbers of shore birds (waders, ducks, gulls and passerines) inhabiting the inter-tidal zone, counts were carried out across low tide (half ebb to half flood) and the observer walked close to the water's edge where waders are concentrated. Birds were counted once the observer had walked past them, or when the birds flew behind the observer, out to sea or inland. Birds on the sea and in fields adjacent to the shore were also counted. The survey was primarily designed to count waders. However, other birds that occurred on the shore or sea (e.g. gulls and dabbling ducks) were also counted, although it is likely that their numbers would fluctuate more than waders in the extent to which they utilised other habitats. Species that occurred high on the shore (e.g. Rock Pipit) or further out to sea (sea ducks and divers) will have been poorly surveyed and the counts are only indicative of the numbers present.

Numbers in the text are presented to two significant figures. Population limits for qualification as internationally important (i.e. over 1% of the West European population) were obtained from Musgrove *et al.* (2007).

Results

The survey took 21 days to cover 732 km of rocky shores, sandy beaches and muddy bays. About 140 km of cliffs were not surveyed.

The weather during the main part of the survey was stormy. Also, because some days coincided with a period of neap tides, many waders and ducks were feeding in grass fields next to the shore. The only waders restricted to the inter-tidal zone were Grey Plover and Purple Sandpiper.

The total number of waders counted on the shore was 47,000. The numbers on each island are shown in Table 1. The most abundant species were Eurasian Curlew (14,000), European Golden Plover (6,100), Ruddy Turnstone (5,700) and Common Redshank (5,100). Mainland had the most waders but there were more Sanderlings on several northern isles, and more Purple Sandpipers, Dunlins and Bar-tailed Godwits on Sanday. The total number of waders counted on the shores plus adjacent fields was 66,000 (Table 5). Including both habitats, the most abundant species were the Eurasian Curlew (21,000), European Golden Plover (10,000), Northern Lapwing (7,600), Ruddy Turnstone (6,800) and Common Redshank (5,900).

The numbers of ducks counted on the shores and adjacent sea for each island are shown in Table 2. There were 32,000 on the shores and sea, and 40,000 on the shores, sea and adjacent fields (Table 5). Mainland had the most ducks for all the common species. The most numerous were Eurasian Wigeon (30,000), Eurasian Teal (3,200) and Mallard (2,700).

The numbers of gulls counted on the shores of each island are shown in Table 3. Mainland had the most gulls, but South Ronaldsay had more Black-headed Gulls, and Sanday had more Herring

Table 1. Numbers of waders on the shores of different islands of Orkney during winter 2006/07.

	Mainland	Lamb Holm	Glims Holm	Burray	South Ronaldsay	Hoy	Westray	Sanday	Shapinsay	Papa Westray	Rousay	Wyre	Egilsay	North Ronaldsay	Graemsay	Flotta	Stronsay	Eday	Total
Eurasian Oystercatcher	688	2	5	77	103	868	118	235	40	45	305	36	83	101	24	158	183	46	3117
Ringed Plover	342	0	2	12	96	33	104	153	33	108	56	2	8	51	0	31	164	52	1247
European Golden Plover	3325	0	1	0	770	0	56	842	700	70	0	0	0	302	0	0	0	0	6066
Grey Plover	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	49
Northern Lapwing	2451	0	0	189	921	411	22	74	0	55	0	0	111	0	3	1	5	17	4260
Sanderling	11	0	0	0	0	0	66	272	0	16	0	0	0	134	2	0	155	29	685
Red Knot	1	0	0	0	9	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Purple Sandpiper	813	2	10	94	90	2	545	920	44	419	158	6	239	122	8	6	517	159	4154
Dunlin	295	0	0	2	77	0	9	372	151	33	0	0	0	11	0	0	257	0	1207
Common Snipe	260	0	3	54	80	11	261	192	13	11	15	18	5	40	0	1	316	36	1316
Jack Snipe	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	5
Eurasian Woodcock	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	7
Bar-tailed Godwit	136	0	0	0	70	72	33	453	11	4	1	0	0	49	0	0	4	0	833
Eurasian Curlew	8080	0	0	370	2445	803	33	208	930	129	11	154	2	87	51	83	226	18	13630
Common Redshank	1797	1	1	186	581	257	259	356	238	57	128	32	101	151	46	48	695	169	5103
Ruddy Turnstone	1593	5	13	152	260	88	448	1238	97	307	257	55	300	261	47	56	403	99	5679
Total	19818	10	35	1136	5503	2545	1955	5338	2259	1257	931	303	850	1309	181	384	2930	625	47369

Table 2. Numbers of ducks on the shores and adjacent sea at different islands of Orkney during winter 2006/07.

	Mainland	Lamb Holm	Glims Holm	Burray	South Ronaldsay	Hoy	Westray	Sanday	Shapinsay	Papa Westray	Rousay	Wyre	Egilsay	North Ronaldsay	Graemsay	Flotta	Stronsay	Eday	Total
Mallard	848	0	2	89	367	112	134	182	2	44	88	34	131	25	25	72	135	84	2374
Eurasian Teal	1020	0	0	104	106	4	96	488	7	0	38	0	192	23	0	25	207	26	2336
Eurasian Wigeon	10949	8	0	496	3294	377	825	2874	603	96	623	224	572	157	140	169	2504	386	24297
Common Eider	462	10	14	82	222	241	49	70	48	69	68	50	36	184	18	48	94	38	1803
Long-tailed Duck	409	14	13	49	60	59	17	44	3	8	0	18	24	11	0	0	13	14	756
Velvet Scoter	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Common Goldeneye	14	0	0	16	18	10	3	12	3	0	8	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	89
Red-breasted Merganser	147	3	11	88	57	32	3	19	36	15	17	13	2	0	4	11	16	13	487
Common Shelduck	0	0	0	0	2	3	3	9	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	20
Total	13867	35	40	924	4126	838	1130	3698	702	232	842	343	959	401	187	325	2969	562	32180

Table 3. Numbers of gulls on the shores of different islands of Orkney during winter 2006/07.

	Mainland	Lamb Holm	Glims Holm	Burray	South Ronaldsay	Hoy	Westray	Sanday	Shapinsay	Papa Westray	Rousay	Wyre	Egilsay	North Ronaldsay	Graemsay	Flotta	Stronsay	Eday	Total
Black-headed Gull	61	0	0	7	162	14	1	3	2	0	5	7	21	0	0	1	5	0	289
Mew Gull	5565	10	0	65	368	654	306	90	329	105	74	41	323	181	13	13	62	33	8232
Herring Gull	825	2	14	58	62	284	147	1097	488	2	178	17	93	48	2	45	177	31	3570
Great Black-backed Gull	511	2	0	47	102	188	149	975	142	86	48	20	60	25	23	28	153	109	2668
Iceland Gull	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	7
Glaucous Gull	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
Black-legged Kittiwake	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	13	26
Total	6968	14	14	177	694	1140	606	2165	964	193	305	85	497	255	38	87	409	186	14797

Table 4. Numbers of some other shorebirds on the shores and adjacent sea at different islands of Orkney during winter 2006/07.

	Mainland	Lamb Holm	Glims Holm	Burray	South Ronaldsay	Hoy	Westray	Sanday	Shapinsay	Papa Westray	Rousay	Wyre	Egilsay	North Ronaldsay	Graemsay	Flotta	Stronsay	Eday	Total
Great Northern Diver	29	2	6	5	8	4	2	1	5	1	3	4	7	0	4	0	2	0	83
Red-throated Diver	1	3	0	4	0	3	9	0	8	1	0	3	0	2	0	1	1	0	36
European Shag	2102	23	18	107	367	59	202	223	484	76	111	20	49	90	53	63	269	383	4699
Great Cormorant	1173	0	0	0	2	1	76	201	5	1	3	2	160	31	1	0	115	81	1852
Grey Heron	37	0	0	11	27	17	3	10	2	2	2	7	5	2	4	1	1	6	137
Rock Pigeon	462	0	0	0	30	24	23	117	130	0	7	0	0	0	0	27	131	88	1039
Rock Pipit	402	4	3	23	82	54	139	180	71	13	27	8	21	22	18	24	227	76	1394
Common Starling	1989	0	2	0	88	120	251	1798	41	488	11	80	0	372	0	67	1032	150	6489
Common Raven	28	0	0	0	0	4	3	45	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	3	28	115
Hooded Crow	70	0	0	0	3	22	24	5	1	2	9	8	0	0	7	14	17	6	188
Rook	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Total	6309	32	29	150	607	308	732	2580	747	584	173	132	242	521	87	199	1798	818	16048

Table 5. Totals for the shore surveys of the Orkney Islands in winters 1982/83 plus 1983/84 (Summers *et al.* 1991), 1997/98 (Rehfisch *et al.* 2003a), and the current survey in 2006/07. Percentage changes are given between the surveys in the 1980s and 2006/07. Percentage changes are not shown where numbers were less than 50. Numbers for Auskerry in the 1980s were removed so that totals are comparable to the current study.

WADERS	1980s	1997/98	2006/07 Shore	2006/07 Shore + field	% change shore	% change Shore + field
Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*	2770	3893	3117	3912	13	41
Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*	1615	3424	1247	1290	-23	-20
European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*	2541		6066	10358	139	308
Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*	30		49	49		
Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*	3703		4260	7575	15	105
Sanderling *Calidris alba*	858	1071	685	805	-20	-6
Red Knot *Calidris canutus*	18		11	12		
Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*	5603	4630	4154	4156	-26	-26
Dunlin *Calidris alpina*	2055		1207	1241	-41	-40
Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*	607		1316	1516	117	150
Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minimus*	1		5	6		
Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*	1		7	15		
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*	769		833	897	8	17
Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*	17729	28877	13630	21334	-23	20
Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*	6938	10639	5103	5924	-26	-15
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*	5961	10392	5679	6768	-5	14
Total	**51199**		**47369**	**65858**	**-7**	**29**

DUCKS	1980s	1997/98	2006/07 Shore	2006/07 Shore + field	% change shore	% change Shore + field
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*	2058		2374	2702	15	31
Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*	1594		2336	3201	47	101
Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*	23		0	91	-100	296
Eurasian *Wigeon Anas penelope*	4846		24297	30410	401	528
Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*	1851		1803	1808	-3	-2
Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*	652		756	756	16	16
Velvet Scoter *Melamitta fusca*	13		18	18		
Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*	382		89	99	-77	-74
Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*	254		487	487	92	92
Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*	0		20	30		
Total	**11673**		**32180**	**39602**	**176**	**239**

GULLS	1980s	1997/98	2006/07 Shore	2006/07 Shore + field	% change shore	% change Shore + field
Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*	723		289	296	-60	-59
Mew Gull *Larus canus*	8938		8232	11215	-8	25
Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*	2774		3570	3822	29	38
Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*	2447		2668	2947	9	20
Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*	14		7	7		
Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*	22		5	5		
Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*	114		26	30	-77	-74
Total	**15032**		**14797**	**18322**	**-2**	**22**

OTHERS	1980s	1997/98	2006/07 Shore	2006/07 Shore + field	% change shore	% change Shore + field
Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*	31		83	83	168	168
Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*	7		36	36		
European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*	1318		4699	4699	257	257
Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*	433		1852	1852	328	328
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*	94		137	158	46	68
Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*	1230		1039	2187	-16	78
Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*	1438		1394	1785	-3	24
Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*	11710		6489	12069	-45	3
Common Raven *Corvus corax*	170		115	198	-32	16
Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*	742		188	341	-75	-54
Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*	152		39	65	-74	-57
Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*	7		3	3		
Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*	3		0	2		
Merlin *Falco columbarius*	5		3	4		

Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls. A total of 18,000 gulls was counted on the shores plus fields, with the Mew Gull by far the most numerous (11,000). Herring Gull (3,800) and Great Black-backed Gull (2,900) were next most abundant (Table 5).

There were several other species that occurred on the shore or offshore waters. Totals for sea, shores and fields included 83 Great Northern Divers, 4,700 European Shags, 1,900 Great Cormorants, 160 Grey Herons, 2,200 Rock Pigeons (including feral doves), 1,800 Rock Pipits, 12,000 Common Starlings, 200 Common Ravens and 340 Hooded Crows (Tables 4 and 5). Common Starlings were mostly associated with the kelp banks when on the shore. Few raptors were seen (Table 5).

Comparison with earlier surveys

The first survey in 1982/3–1983/4 described only the numbers present on the shore. Therefore, excluding those sections that were not surveyed in both surveys, and examining only the shore counts, the percentage change is shown in Table 5 for each species. For the waders, there were increases in Eurasian Oystercatcher, European Golden Plover, Northern Lapwing, Common Snipe and Bar-tailed Godwit. By contrast, Ringed Plover, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Eurasian Curlew and Common Redshank apparently declined. Some of these declines probably reflect greater use of fields during the current survey. If we, therefore, make the comparison between the counts for shore plus field and the 1980s shore survey, to allow for the possibility that a higher proportion of the population was inland in 2006/07, then it appears that only Ringed Plover, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin and Common Redshank have definitely declined since the 1980s (Table 5).

Among the ducks, the huge increase in the numbers of Eurasian Wigeon is remarkable, making it the most abundant coastal bird in Orkney in winter (Table 5). Mallard and Eurasian Teal also increased, though Mallard increased by only a small amount, as did Long-tailed Duck. Common Eider numbers were unchanged. Red-breasted Merganser numbers almost doubled, and other fish-eating birds, such as the divers, European Shag, Great Cormorant and Grey Heron increased substantially. Perhaps the winter fish supply was particularly good in 2006/07.

Apart from the decline in Black-headed Gull numbers, the changes observed in the other common gulls were relatively small and could be accounted for by the counting methods (Table 5). Numbers of birds of prey had changed little between the two surveys.

The 1997/98 NEWS also provided data where comparisons could be made for waders (Table 5). Unfortunately, this survey was not as comprehensive as the other two (only half the shore was surveyed), so that extrapolations were made to account for regions that were not surveyed. The assumption was made that the surveyed sections were representative of the whole coastline. However, given the high estimates for some species compared to the other surveys (e.g. Ringed Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank and Ruddy Turnstone; Table 5), we suspect that the surveyed sections were some of the better areas for these species, leading to an upward bias on the overall estimates.

Discussion

The survey has shown that the inter-tidal shores and adjacent fields of the Orkney Islands continue to hold large numbers of shorebirds in winter. It is probably the combination of these two habitats that provide such good feeding conditions. Thus, the grass fields provide roosting and feeding opportunities for many species, particularly at high tide, and when the weather is stormy. The fields in winter are wet, so are relatively easy for waders to forage in for worms *etc*. They are particularly important for Eurasian Curlew, European Golden Plover, Northern Lapwing and Mew Gull.

The comparison between the two surveys has to be treated with caution. The weather conditions during the recent survey were stormy on some days and, on exposed shores, there seemed to be few waders. They probably sought shelter on fields. Therefore, we expected that there would be lower numbers of the waders that readily use fields (Eurasian Curlew, Eurasian Oystercatcher and Common Redshank). However, even accounting for the possibility that waders were using fields more in 2006/07, there has been a decline in Ringed Plover, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin and Common Redshank since the 1980s. The declines in Ringed Plover, Dunlin and Purple Sandpiper reflect national declines as described by the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). Redshank numbers are stable (Musgrove *et al.* 2007).

The WeBS data indicate that national duck numbers are either unchanged since the 1980s (Red-breasted Merganser and Common Eider) or increasing (Eurasian Wigeon and Eurasian Teal). Only the Mallard is declining (Musgrove *et al.* 2007). Therefore, the Orkney survey reflects these national changes for some of the species (Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal and Common Eider).

Some of the changes in numbers suggest that the weather in 2006/07 was milder than the mid-1980s, because there were greater numbers of species that respond quickly to cold weather. For example, there were greater numbers of European Golden Plover and Northern Lapwing. There were also more Eurasian Oystercatcher and Common Shelduck, most of which generally migrate south for the winter. The huge numbers of Eurasian Wigeon may also be due to late depletion of autumn food stocks in Orkney. By contrast, there were fewer of the Arctic gulls (Iceland Gull and Glaucous Gull), suggesting mild weather to the north.

The shores of the Orkney Islands continue to be internationally important (i.e. have over 1% of the West European population) for several species: Ringed Plover, Eurasian Curlew, Common Redshank, Purple Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Eurasian Wigeon and Great Northern Diver. It is concerning that three of these species (Ringed Plover, Common Redshank and Purple Sandpiper) have declined since the 1980s. The Eurasian Wigeon has joined the list of birds with internationally important populations since the first survey (Summers *et al.* 1991), so there may be other sites that qualify for protection as SPAs. Currently, there is only one SPA (east Sanday), though there are Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance: North Ronaldsay, south Westray, south Stronsay and north Mainland. However, the latter have no regulatory status.

Plate 8. *Purple Sandpiper © Colin Corse.*

Acknowledgements

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Notes

Grey Heron attracted to injured Rabbit

On 21 June 2008, at 03:30hrs, whilst driving south on the A7 near Gorebridge, Midlothian, I was surprised to see a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* land in the gutter of the northbound carriageway, about a metre from a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*. I pulled in to a nearby layby, to see what was happening. There was already another Carrion Crow and a Magpie *Pica pica* feeding on a dead Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* lying in the middle of the road.

The crow beside the heron - which appeared to be a juvenile - was in the process of dispatching an injured, medium-sized rabbit in the gutter, by pecking it on the head. It is possible that the heron was attracted by the rabbit's squeals and its white ventral fur as it twisted and turned. The heron sidled alongside the crow, which withdrew. The heron stood over the rabbit, by this time twitching in short grass in the verge, and examined it closely with head tilted, as if about to peck it. At this point approaching traffic caused all the birds present to fly off.

Although I did not see the heron eat any of the rabbit, it seems likely that, if left undisturbed, it might have done so. This is the first time I have witnessed a heron behaving in this way. *Concise BWP* cites food of the Grey Heron as chiefly fish, amphibians, small mammals, insects and reptiles; occasionally crustaceans, molluscs, worms, birds, and plant material are taken. Marquiss 2007 (*The Birds of Scotland* Forrester *et al.*, SOC Aberlady) adds that the species hunts small mammals in rank grassland, and that diet varies with elevation, with fewer species and smaller fish taken at higher sites. Of more relevance to the current observation are reports (Marquiss (1993) *Herons*, Colin Baxter Photography; and M. Marquiss *in litt*) of a heron foraging on a wide motorway verge presumably for voles in autumn, and of an adult heron feeding off a roadkill rabbit on a minor road in NE Scotland in late winter.

I am grateful to Dr M. Marquiss for assistance with this note.

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Revised ms accepted July 2008

In September 2008 the Sun *and* Daily Mail *printed photographs of a Grey Heron taking a young rabbit in Holland. (Ed.)*
(www.dailymail.co.uk)

Some observations on the behaviour of a male Icelandic Merlin in Galloway

On 11 December 2007 I watched a male Icelandic Merlin *Falco columbarius subaesalon* on an upland moor in Galloway. He was perched on top of a passing place sign overlooking a large tract of moor.

He was noticeably larger by around ten percent and darker than the resident males *F. c. aesalon*; his mantle and upper wings were very dark blue. He flew along the road for about 600 m and landed on top of another sign. Five minutes later the Merlin was disturbed by a passing vehicle and flew low over the moor out of sight. On 6 January 2008, a sunny day with clear skies, I again watched the same male Icelandic Merlin perched on a post on the lee side of a small hill on moorland. He was preening and had a broad black subterminal band on his tail which appeared longer than the resident males *aesalon*. The Merlin stopped preening and looked up at a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* and a Common Raven *Corvus corax* which flew across the moor just above the Merlin. After shaking his feathers the Merlin

sat facing the sun with its right wing partly extended in a loose spread wing posture, sun basking for two minutes similar to that recorded in winter by a Merlin in Galloway (Dickson 1998, *Scottish Birds* 19: 176). Twenty minutes later a male Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* approached the Merlin and knocked the Merlin from its perch. The Merlin flew out of sight behind a small hill; the harrier turned and flew in the opposite direction. There are apparently no confirmed records of Icelandic Merlins in west Galloway (Dickson 1992, *The Birds in Wigtownshire*, Wigtown and Forrester *et al.* 2007, *The Birds of Scotland*, SOC, Aberlady).

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Whether a hen Snow Bunting pairs with the same cock for a second nest

A hen Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* in a given summer usually lays one clutch in the high Arctic, but often two in Scotland (S. Cramp & K.E.L. Simmons 1994, *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*, 9). When making a second attempt, she might pair with the cock of her first brood, or with a new cock. Here we give our data on this, from studies in the Cairngorms region, showing that within summers, most hens remain paired to the same cocks for successive attempts.

Published observations to date have emphasised instances where a hen was thought to pair with a new cock for a second clutch. One case was noted in Greenland (N. Tinbergen 1939, *Trans. Linnean Soc. New York* 5: 1–94), four in Scotland (reported by D. Nethersole-Thompson 1966, p 47, *The Snow Bunting*, to which he added 'There were also others') and two others in Scotland (reported by T.P. Milsom & A. Watson 1984, *Scottish Birds* 13: 19–23, both noted by Milsom).

The above cases are open to doubt. No birds were ringed, so individuals may have been misidentified. Most statements were so brief that misinterpretation of behaviour cannot be excluded. Bias in reporting has occurred because observers omitted to state the number of second pairs that did not switch mates (though Nethersole-Thompson (1966) did mention a few pairs staying for a second nest). Another snag was that he reported many first and repeat clutches robbed by egg collectors, with hens laying up to four repeat clutches, and mate switching in one such case. Hence, unnatural disruption confounded the issue and might have caused switching.

In a later study, one of us (AW) sketched distinctive plumage to help distinguish different birds within summers (1996, *Ornis Fennica* 73: 137–140). In each of ten closely watched pairs in 1975–83, he decided that the same two birds paired for a second nest after rearing a first brood. In three pairs he saw the hen display to the cock of her first nest before coition with him, between bouts when they fed fledglings of the first brood. Coition was inferred because in each case the hen crouched, raised her tail to allow cloacal contact, and shook herself in post copulatory display. The chicks had stub tails about a third grown, and were 11 days from hatching (which in AW's experience was when hens became receptive to coition before a second nesting). One of the three hens picked up dead grass in her bill and left it in two spots among boulders. In each of the three pairs, an adjacent territorial cock sang frequently and displayed vigorously near the hen, but she ignored him, as did her original cock, which sang only twice or thrice in an hour. In three other pairs, a hen incubating a second clutch flew to sit 5–10 m from her first cock while he gathered food near her second nest. Then when he flew out of sight to feed fledglings of the first brood, up to 1 km away, she took wing back to her second nest. These observations were suggestive, but still remained open to doubt because birds were not ringed.

In 1988–93, RS and MM caught many adults (Smith & Marquiss 1994, *Scottish Birds* 17:

223–234). Of 43 colour-ringed hens that nested with colour-ringed cocks and attempted second nests (41 after successful first broods, and two after first clutches had failed in snowstorms), all renested with the same cocks. The two failed hens reared replacement broods, and then second broods, with the same original cocks.

Only one change of mate was found. One of the 41 hens deserted on 17 July while incubating her second clutch. She moved 2 km to nest with another cock that had already reared a first brood with a different hen, but this nest failed on 7 August during hatching. Her original mate, however, was not seen after their attempt at a second clutch had failed, and may have died. Hence, in all cases where both members of a pair were colour-ringed and observed to be still present, the hen stayed with the original cock for a second breeding attempt.

On several occasions while hens prospected for second nest sites, one to three single cocks attended, singing and displaying vigorously. These included single unmated cocks, and ringed cocks known to be paired elsewhere. The paired cocks attended prospecting hens even when their own paired hens came nearby while foraging for chicks. In one case, two neighbouring cocks (one with a nest of small young), attended a cock and hen that were feeding large nestlings, and persistently displayed to her. One of these cocks attempted an unsolicited coition while the hen's mate evicted the second intruder, but the attempt at coition was unsuccessful.

In short, where both members of a pair were known to be present after a first brood, every hen nesting for a second time in a summer again with the cock of her first nest and brood. This occurred despite opportunities in each case to pair with new cocks.

A hen would have been able to test the ability of the cock of her first nest and brood, whereas a new cock would be an unknown to her. This may explain why hens in our observations continued with the same cocks.

We might expect occasional exceptions. A bigamous hen might be more willing than a monogamous hen to pair with a new cock for a second clutch, because she would not have received undivided attention from her first cock. Interestingly, one of Milsom's cases of apparent mate switching involved a bigamous hen, but in our observations of bigamy this did not occur. In all six cases of bigamous cocks where a hen laid a second clutch after rearing a first brood (two seen by AW and four by RS and MM), no hen was known to have switched to an alternative cock for a second clutch.

We thank T.P. Milsom, K. Norris and an anonymous referee for comments.

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Unusual Common Tern colony

Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* most frequently nest on coastal sand or shingle but also on rocky islands and sometimes moorland (Thom 1986, *Birds of Scotland*, Poyser) and rough pasture (Bullock & Gomersall 1981, in *BWP* vol IV). Between 1987 and 2000 numbers decreased in Scotland by 29%, significantly inland where many colonies have been abandoned. Only ten breeding pairs were located in Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey during the Seabird 2000 census (Forrester *et al.*, 2007 *The Birds of Scotland*, SOC Aberlady).

On 8 June 2008 whilst ringing wader chicks near Grantown on Spey we noticed several Common Terns carrying fish. The birds appeared to land in an adjacent field so we drove around to get better views. Watching from the car we were surprised to find an adult feeding chicks with several other adults apparently sitting on nests. The field consisted of very flat short grassland used for grazing sheep and cattle approximately 200 m from the River Spey at an altitude of 170 m asl.

Plate 9. *Common Tern © John Anderson.*

Common Tern is a scarce localised breeder in Strathspey (Roy Dennis pers comm), traditionally selecting islands and shingle banks for nest sites. When we got out of the car and checked the area carefully we were amazed to find six nests containing nine eggs and four chicks. The site offered no protection from ground predators or from trampling by domestic stock other than small nettle beds where chicks could hide so we were concerned about the safety of the colony.

On 20 June sheep and cattle were grazing in the field and several Mew Gulls *Larus canus* were in the area but despite the level of disturbance we only found one crushed egg and managed to locate a seventh nest containing two small chicks. Ten chicks were ringed from four clutches of three eggs and three clutches of two eggs.

On our final visit on 8 July at least five juveniles were flying with the adults and we found two large chicks that had almost fledged. Other chicks may have remained unseen. We were surprised by both the size and location of the site and encouraged by the level of productivity. We wondered if other observers had found similar sites.

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Red Kites hunting moths

Although Red Kites *Milvus milvus* (hereafter kites) are primarily known as carrion feeders they are recorded taking a variety of invertebrates among their diverse diet. The commonly taken invertebrates are earthworms and beetles but grasshoppers, ants and craneflies have also been recorded (Carter 2001, *The Red Kite*, Arlequin, Chelmsford: p78–81). In June 2005, while carrying out studies on the species in relation to the construction of the Braes of Doune Wind Farm, I witnessed kites taking Oak (or Northern) Eggar Moths *Lasiocampa quercus*. The study area where this work is carried out is on Doune Estate near Doune, Perthshire.

Kites had been seen stooping at prey on the ground in heathery areas high on the Braes of Doune during late June 2005. The birds were thought to be hunting invertebrates and this eventually proved to be the case. On 30 June four kites were seen hawking for moths near Uamh Mhor. Initially it was not clear what the birds were trying to catch, but subsequently the prey was identified when a large moth was seen being pursued by one of the kites. Later on the same day a kite was seen flying low over the ground, at a height of less than 2 m, over a heathery area one kilometre east of Uamh Mhor. Its behaviour was reminiscent of that of a Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*. Four other kites, two of which were behaving in the same manner, then joined it. At least two of these birds landed on a large rock around 3 m long. After the birds were gone, the rock was inspected and it was found to be covered in raptor faeces and also the wings of Oak Eggar Moths. Another similar sized rock 70 m away was similarly littered with moth wings. Live Oak Eggar Moths were present at both locations where the above behaviour occurred. The moth-hunting was observed between 13:00hrs and 14:30hrs.

These large day-flying moths had been very evident in the area for several days. Other raptors are known to take moths, including Eurasian Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*, (e.g.

Village 1982, *Bird Study* 29: 131) and a kestrel was seen close to the kites on both of the occasions mentioned above. One was seen feeding on one of the large rocks covered with moth wings. The wings had presumably been removed by either kestrels, kites or both.

Interestingly, the birds were hunting these moths in poor visibility. A westerly breeze was moving mist over the area and the maximum distance I could see varied from 50–400 m. While I watched the kites hunting from a distance of 300 m they were frequently lost from view when mist surrounded them. It may be that the moths are easier to catch in cooler damper conditions and several were found on misty days perched on top of vegetation as if torpid. This behaviour has not been observed in subsequent years, but 2005 seemed to be an especially good year for Oak Eggar Moths on the Braes of Doune with few seen in the following summers.

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Roosting terns in the 1950s in East Lothian

Much excellent historical information is included in *The Birds of Scotland* (Forrester *et al.* 2007, SOC, Aberlady) and is based on published material. For some extraordinary reason the huge numbers of roosting terns at Aberlady, East Lothian, in 1954 to 1957 were never mentioned in the *Edinburgh Bird Bulletin* in the articles written at the time by F.D. Hamilton and K.S. Macgregor, hence the reason they were not in *The Birds of Scotland*. One reference was made in 1956 to the effect that "two more years work was needed before it could be written up" There were no further counts after 1957 as I left Scotland. This note is, therefore, to put it on record albeit 50 years late.

Table 1 summarises the counts, but some background is helpful. It was noted on 19 August 1954 that tern numbers in the afternoon were unusually large and an attempt was made to estimate these. Six days later the numbers were even larger. It was seen that terns were entering the Bay in a steady flow by flying past Gullane Point in the early evening. It was decided to sit in the evening at the Point with one observer counting and another keeping a check on the time and taking down the number at the end of each two minute interval. The terns were usually close and low over the water, though this varied, and in a steady stream and so we were able to count them comparatively easily.

It was not possible in the time available to differentiate between Common *Sterna hirundo* and Arctic *S. paradisaea* Terns and, for convenience, all reference in this note to Common Terns implies that Arctic Terns could also be involved. Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* were also counted though generally in much smaller numbers.

The totals in Table 1 include terns already roosting in the Bay when counting started. On 18 and 19 September 1954, during a visit to the Isle of May, I looked carefully for Common Terns and up to 1000 were seen off the north end moving westwards in the general direction of Aberlady Bay in the evening. Then on 1 September the following year I checked from a spot overlooking Eyebroughty Island from where I could see both Gullane Point and the Isle of May. By looking towards the May specks could be made out heading in a westerly direction and these terns, nearly all Common, came close to Eyebroughty and onto Gullane Point.

We were aware that terns could be coming from the west to roost and, in 1956, an attempt was made to count them coming past Craigielaw Point. In 1957 these counts were better organised and again were based on two minute intervals. Interestingly Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* were noted coming into roost with the Common Terns, there being three on 29 August 1954 and five on 6 September 1955.

Table 1.

Year	Date	Common/Arctic Terns	Sandwich Terns	Total	Comments
1954	19 August	c.3500	c.1500	c.5000	
	25 August	c.7500	c.2500	c.10000	
	29 August	5047	187	5234	Counts started
	5 September	10418	155	10573	
1955	6 September	6422	0	6422	
	11 September	3019	68	3087	
1956	30 August	2282	57	2339	
	4 September	4922	29	4951	Counts started at Kilspindie Point.
1957	9 August	3588	585	4173	
	10 September	5782	1321	7103	

Acknowledgements
Several people helped with these counts which were usually cold and uncomfortable sitting immobile for over two hours. The main observers were Keith Macgregor and Kathleen Hamilton. Others also helped occasionally such as Guy MacCaskie, the late Bill Birrell and a Mr Hay: there were others but their names were not recorded in my notes.

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The decline of the Whinchat as a breeding bird in mainland Fife

Since the 1960s and 1970s the Whinchat has declined as a breeding species throughout Scotland, particularly in the east (Shaw K.D. 2007 in *The Birds of Scotland,* Forrester *et al.*, SOC Aberlady) Over the last 15 years many observers have commented that this species has disappeared from its former breeding grounds in Fife. The Fife Bird Atlas (Elkins, N, Reid, J.B., Brown, A.W., Robertson, D.G. & Smout, A.-M. 2003. *The Fife Bird Atlas,* Woodland Studios, Dunfermline) estimated only five to ten pairs for the whole of mainland Fife although Whinchats were seen in 29 tetrads, two-thirds of these being noted as probable or possible breeding.

During the period 2002 to 2007 I and other observers checked traditional Whinchat sites annually, recording presence or absence, breeding success and any significant habitat change.

In the winter of 2007/08 we received a small grant from the Fife Atlas fund to help monitor all potential Whinchat sites in Fife during the 2008 breeding season to establish the total breeding population for the county.

This work was tied in with the first year of the BTO/SOC/IWRC Breeding Bird Atlas so that there was good coverage of all potential Whinchat breeding sites. Using Fife Bird Reports, Smout A.-M. 1986 (*The Birds of Fife: an outline of their status and distribution.* John Donald, Edinburgh) and the Fife Bird Atlas I mapped all known Whinchat sites from the last 20 years. I also arranged with both the county recorder and Atlas coordinator to be informed of all breeding Whinchats as they were reported during the breeding season of 2008 so I could follow up every sighting. Key observers visited all historic Whinchat sites in their local areas.

A total of six territories were found at two sites. The two breeding areas were Glen Vale where three pairs bred, and a site near Rathillet where two singing males were recorded during Atlas work. In 2008, four male Whinchats took up territory in Glen Vale and three pairs bred but no birds were seen at any other site in the Lomond hills. At the Rathillet site two singing males were recorded early on 12 June 2008. This is an area of extensive gorse and it is possible that further pairs were present.

In the early 1980s Smout (1986) described the Whinchat as a local breeder in the west of the county. She went on to say there had been reports of breeding, all from central and west Fife and quoted 30+ pairs from the Lomond Hills in 1984 and 20 pairs from Glen Vale in 1983. She mentioned Loch Ore Meadows, Pitcairn, Kirkforthar and Loch Glow as breeding areas. All these areas were checked during the breeding season of 2008 but no birds were found.

So why is Glen Vale still suitable for Whinchats to some extent and other sites unsuitable? The Whinchat is a bird of open habitats breeding in grassland, bracken, mixed low vegetation, gorse, heather and young conifer plantations. Suitable perches for singing and hunting are essential and young conifer plantations particularly in the upland are significant (Gray D.B. 1973, Whinchats on a disused railway, *Bird Study* 20: 81–82).

Glen Vale provides the open habitat Whinchats require to breed. It is a mixture of heather, bracken and young trees. Fence posts and the taller young trees provide the essential singing and hunting posts.

In the 1990s Whinchats utilized young forestry plantations as breeding habitat in upland Fife. However, when the trees reached the thicket stage the Whinchats were lost. Thus Whinchats were lost from other sites in the Lomond Hills in 2005 and from breeding sites in the Cleish Hills around the turn of the century. Ironically the last Cleish birds were recorded on exactly the same site as the last Fife Black Grouse in 1996.

In conclusion there has been a severe decline in breeding Whinchats in mainland Fife since 1980. Young conifer plantations helped the species survive into this century but as the plantations reached thicket stage the Whinchats were lost. The Whinchat's future in Fife as a breeding species is on a knife edge and for it to survive the mixed open areas where the last few pairs breed must be maintained.

I thank Norman Elkins, Dougie Dickson and Jeremy Squire who helped at all stages of the project. Rab Shand was, as always, very helpful in providing information. Dougie Dickson, Terry Mann, Tom and Bryan Moodie and John Nadin assisted with fieldwork. Norman Elkins kindly commented on the draft. Thanks also to the Fife Atlas fund who assisted with travel.

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Revised ms accepted January 2009

Plate 10. *Whinchat © John Anderson.*

Arctic Skuas breeding in Wester Ross

The Birds of Scotland (Forrester *et al.* 2007, SOC Aberlady) does not record Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus* breeding in Wester Ross. I personally confirmed breeding in Wester Ross in the years 1989, 1991, 1993 and 1994. The general locality was the large peninsula of Rubha Mòr lying between Ullapool and Lochinver, the specific sites being immediately north-west of Loch na Totaig and, secondly, close to Loch na Ploytach at the north end of the promontory. Breeding records were:

13 June 1989 at the Loch na Totaig site. A single pair, dark and light phases, with two eggs.

9 June 1991 single pair, light and dark phases, with two eggs at Loch na Totaig 10 June 1991 single pair light and dark phases, with two eggs at Loch na Ploytach.

25 May 1993 a single pair, again dark and light phases, with one egg at Loch na Totaig. Loch na Ploytach not visited in 1993.

23 May 1994 single eggs found at both Loch na Totaig and Loch na Ploytach sites, with single pairs of birds (dark and light phases) at each site.

A reliable colleague following my directions informed me that two pairs of Arctic Skuas were breeding at the Loch na Totaig site in May 2002. Loch na Ploytach was not visited on that occasion.

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The maps and tables in The Birds of Scotland *used data from JNCC and there were no records from Wester Ross. Confirmed breeding was recorded in grid square NB91 [Rubha Mòr] during the 1988–91 Breeding Atlas - Editor*

First breeding of Eurasian Spoonbills in Scotland

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, has become an almost annual visitor to Dumfries and Galloway since 1995. Most records involve single birds with three immatures together at Caelarverock Wildfowl and Wetland Trust on 10 May 1998 being the largest group seen.

Colonisation of the UK by spoonbills has long been expected. East Anglia would have been the obvious location, where groups of multiple birds are now frequent. It was therefore intriguing that in 2000 a single bird was present from 21–25 June at Mersehead RSPB reserve and was followed by a pair which arrived on 4 July (Fairlamb, D. 2000 Spoonbills create a stir *SBN* 59: 1). Shortly after arriving they began displaying and built four nesting platforms in rushy grassland. Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* became rather aggressive towards the spoonbills and there was no evidence of egg laying. Both birds were absent from 15–17 July and left the area by 16 August. One of the adults wore a Dutch leg ring.

Records of spoonbills in Dumfries and Galloway since 2000 are as follows:

2000 Single adult Mersehead 21–25 June, then a pair from 4 July–16 Aug
2001 Two Mersehead on 4, 6 and 10 June. Single Caerlaverock WWT 23–27 July
2002 Single at Caerlaverock WWT 29 May and reported from Kippford in June
2003 Single River Luce 11 Sept
2004 no records
2005 Single Kirkconnell merse (Nith estuary) 20–27 August
2006 No records
2007 Two Mersehead 18 May, then single, 25, 31 May, with another single at Loch Ryan 2 June. Two again Mersehead 18–19 June and a single again on the 25 June.

In 2008 two spoonbills first arrived at Mersehead on the 26 May and were not seen at that site subsequently. Presumably the same pair was then recorded at Balcary some 12.5 km to the west on 8 June. A single bird was reported three weeks later in Kirkcudbright Bay on 27 June and no further reports were

received until 24 July. There then continued a number of sightings in the area, all of single birds, until two were again reported on 18 August. I began to wonder if something had indeed been going on. Remarkably on 23 August Keith Kirk reported a family group of two adults and three young, feeding out on the mudflats of Kirkcudbright Bay. The young were begging and being fed by the adults, and had obviously fledged from not far away. Keith was alerted to their presence by Gary McKie, who takes boat trips out into Kirkcudbright Bay on wildlife watching tours. Gary had seen a single bird in the immediate area throughout June and July, but these sighting went unreported. The family group stayed together throughout September and were regularly reported from a number of locations in the vicinity, via Birdguides and a local birding web site. The family party was last seen on 20 September. The last reported sighting in the region was of three on 1 October. The birds spent a large part of their time feeding out on the intertidal creeks of the Solway. The nest location was not known but a wide variety of habitats from dense scrubby woodland, *Phalaris* and *Phragmites* stands and rank grassland was available in the immediate area.

This is only the third known (or reported) breeding of Eurasian Spoonbills in the UK in recent times, the first successful attempt being on the Ribble Estuary, Lancashire, in 1999, which was the first successful breeding in 330 years. In 1998 a clutch of two eggs was laid but predated in Suffolk.

Breeding in 2008 went undetected during the early stages in a rather remote and inaccessible location. It is remarkable how such large white birds were not seen for much of the summer. I personally made three trips to the area and failed to see the birds. No attempt was made to look for the nest in case of disturbance.

Acknowledgement
I thank Keith Kirk for commenting on the draft.

Paul N. Collin, Gairland, Old Edinburgh Road, Newton Stewart, DG8 6PL

Revised ms accepted April 2009

Plate 11. *Spoonbill feeding young in Kirkcudbright Bay, August 2008 © B. & D. Henderson.*

Plate 12. *Lord Wemyss cutting the first sod for Waterston House with Mark Holling (left) and Bill Gardner (right) © SOC.*

OBITUARIES

The Earl of Wemyss and March

The 12th Earl of Wemyss and March who died on 12 December 2008, at the age of 96, was a man whose appreciation of all things beautiful, in nature, architecture and the arts led him to dedicate much of his life to their preservation and, where possible, enhancement.

After some years in the Colonial Service in Basutoland and then service in the Middle East in World War II, Lord Wemyss returned to live in Gosford House in East Lothian. Not content with living in the fine Adam Mansion and enjoying its great collection of art over six decades Lord Wemyss oversaw a steady restoration of the house which had suffered from military occupation during the War and a subsequent fire. His commitment to Scotland's wider architectural heritage saw him serve as Chairman and then President of the National Trust for Scotland for 45 years from 1946–1991. During this time the Trust's portfolio increased enormously and its facilities and service to its thousands of visitors were improved imaginatively but always sensitively.

A man who believed in the traditional concept of public service Lord Wemyss held many public and charitable offices serving amongst other things as Chairman of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments for Scotland for 35 years, Vice-President Marie Curie Foundation, President Scottish Bible Society, Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland three times, a Lieutenant of The Queen's Bodyguard in Scotland (the Royal Company of Archers), Lord Lieutenant of East Lothian from1967 to 1987, and Lord Clerk Register of Scotland and Keeper of the Signet from 1974. This last office made him the titular head of the Writers to the Signet and ever seeking to bring a human face to even the most formal of tasks he personally regularly welcomed the new Writers on their admission. Lord Wemyss was appointed a Knight of the Thistle in 1966.

Lord Wemyss never allowed these high offices to detract from his commitments to the working of his estates in Peeblesshire, Gloucestershire and of course Gosford. A well kent figure around the policies of Gosford Lord Wemyss was a hands-on landowner who was never happier than when engaged in the practical work of the estate, being found at different times cutting timber, clearing ditches and even climbing scaffolding when into his eighties to inspect some building work. An elder in Aberlady Kirk, largely built by his ancestors, Lord Wemyss knew and was known by many in the village and took an active interest in all aspects of village life.

One of Lord Wemyss great delights was to walk round the ponds at Gosford and watch the swans and other bird life. Always appreciating the fascination and importance of Aberlady Bay and its nature reserve, it seemed a natural thing to Lord Wemyss to provide the uniquely appropriate site for Waterston House, the SOC Headquarters. From the time he cut the first sod to begin the work of construction of the building to the time of his death, Lord Wemyss had a personal interest and pride in the development and the services offered there. It would be of huge satisfaction to him that just as the migrating geese return to the bay year by year so many people now come there to learn about and enjoy the bird life that was so close to his heart.

John Cairns

Television and Mr Trump

Plate 13. *Menie Estate, Foveran Links SSSI © Ian Francis.*

This article (originally written for the March *SBN*) is based on the premise that the most influential reason for the current high level of interest in wildlife and its conservation in this country has been television programmes. Millions watch these films and though some may get further involved though joining clubs, volunteering for practical tasks etc a great many do not but do maintain their relatively lightweight interest through the screens in their living rooms. This has led to public support for conservation which in turn has influenced decision makers - remember Margaret Thatcher putting on a green outfit and naming a railway engine the Avocet after learning that RSPB had more members than all the political parties.

Early standards

Wildlife TV was early on the scene as naturalists realised how well their interests could come over on film. Series such as "Look" with Peter Scott and "Survival" Anglia became highpoints of the week for many armchair enthusiasts. These early programmes were characterised by a wish to inform the viewers about the animals - they were usually animals - that were on view. There was an educational quality to the

Plate 14. *Bloody Cranesbill © Stan da Prato.*

programmes - the presenters felt they had a duty to put over interesting information about their subjects and there was usually a strong conservation message.

Not all early programmes were on mammals. I can still recall being invited to a school friend's house to watch Heinz Sielmann's classic film showing the inside of a woodpecker's nest hole in the 1950s. Oxford Scientific Films pioneered more technical innovations with startling use of close-up, high speed and time lapse to reveal the extraordinary lives of insects. Improving technology brought colour and further insights into the lives of wild creatures for example by filming migrating geese from the air.

Inform but do not intrude

The worthy if somewhat didactic approach was particularly associated with David Attenborough's many series. The repeat of the "Life of Mammals" over Christmas was instructive and one reason why you are reading this. It struck me as better made than so much of what we now receive. The commentary was informative and never obtrusive. The viewer is in no doubt that it is the animals that matter. Some of these films had end pieces which described how the films were made - these brought in the cameramen - and some women - who after the wildlife, are the real stars of these shows.

The "Life on Earth" series attempted to answer legitimate criticism that wildlife TV was dominated by spectacular, large animals. Despite the concern that birds are given too much conservation attention in the UK as their lobby is so big, programmes often ignore them; one striking example was a film on wildlife in Israel which showed spectacular raptor migration but did not name any of the species shown.

What technology can now achieve has been demonstrated by amazingly lifelike computer-generated series showing extinct creatures; first dinosaurs, then early mammals, then early hominids. However some of the wildlife TV shown recently suggests that technical progress has not always been accompanied by improved programme quality - some might even argue for a deterioration.

Wildlife soap operas

BBC's flagship "Big Cat Diary" revisits one area of East Africa repeatedly to look at the same limited range of large carnivores. I did not think I would ever tire of seeing African wildlife until these recent editions. Part of the problem is the cult of the presenter. Viewers are encouraged to look on wildlife celebrities as conduits for the African experience. Their views and prejudices now come over rather than the animals - the big cats are given human names. East Enders has come to East Africa. The presenter has his or her favourites with whom they identify. When the cat attacks an antelope it is encouraged, but when a prey species turns the tables as with buffalo trampling lion cubs, this is described as though it were a human tragedy. Virtually all objectivity has gone. The vast majority of the plants and other animals that live on the plains are ignored.

Personality presenters

The Spring and Autumn Watch series have two commendable features. They look at British wildlife, some of it on people's doorsteps, and they don't just look at spectacular or cuddly animals. However the programmes also seem to me to suffer from the modern day curse of the imposing presenter; we have to watch them chattering and joking with each other before seeing the wildlife and listening to their interpretation of it. Why not talk to the people who have actually studied the creatures? Further evidence of the way the media has built up presenters as wildlife gurus is the number of adverts for expensive products in which they now appear. Am I the only person who deliberately avoids buying equipment endorsed by TV types?

Environmentalists

The notion that we need a select group to tell us about wildlife continued in the "Life in the Oceans" series also shown last autumn. Looking forward to what modern technology could show of life under water, I was irritated to find a select group of yet more wildlife celebs on a boat sailing round the world pontificating on marine life. The group included an environmentalist - who was regularly introduced as a descendant of Jacques Cousteau - and thus clearly an important person, whose words must be treasured by lesser mortals. I have decided I do not know what an environmentalist really is. Someone who talks about things they have not properly studied?

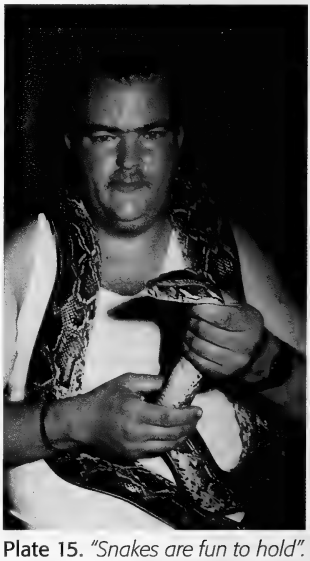

Plate 15. *"Snakes are fun to hold". Courtesy of Rodney Service.*

Grab a gecko

There has also been a move towards more sensational reporting. Early explorers came back with tales of bloodthirsty creatures, death at whose hands, or paws, they had narrowly avoided. One of the great benefits of TV was to show that gorillas and even predators spend most of their lives quite peacefully. Several recent series have featured individuals grabbing hold of things - reptiles are a favourite - and although they may be enthusiastic, what is the message - snakes are fun to hold?

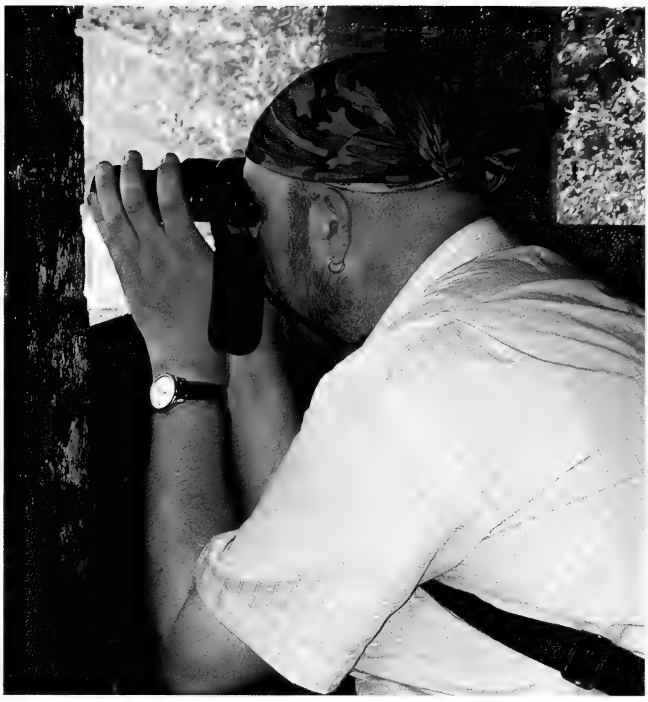

Plate 16. *The 'Snake-man' from above - now in birding mode © Jimmy Maxwell.*

On the ground in Scotland

What has all this to do with the recent controversy over a sand dune system in NE Scotland? I suggest that the move towards sensational presentation has prevented the technology now available from showing how even relatively inconspicuous things can be interesting and how eco systems work. I cannot claim to have seen all the coverage of the application to build a golf course - and lots of expensive houses - but any onsite filming I saw was almost guaranteed to make the public wonder what all the fuss was about. Typically an 'environment correspondent' would stand in front of some green, grassy lumps to say that 'conservationists want to preserve the dunes which they say are very important'. This was then contrasted with the many jobs etc that the developers said they would create. I know that there were attempts to raise the level of debate. RSPB offered a plan to allow a golf course without damaging the SSI but it attracted little media attention. I saw no serious attempt by TV to explain why the dunes are important or what lives among them. An excellent film could be made of a sand dune system looking at the shifting pattern of the dunes over time, the stages of colonisation by plants, the variety of flowering and non-flowering plants that can live in such a series of specialised micro habitats as well as the invertebrates. The general viewing public, which currently knows more about the Maasai Mara than their own coastline, would have realised that there is much more to the green lumps than first meets the eye. It may not have changed the outcome if more people had better understood the issue, but it could have pushed the developers into a compromise. I suggest that the conservation bodies rely rather too heavily on designations created by fellow conservationists and need to realise the importance of public opinion in a democracy - and that opinions are heavily influenced by what is seen on TV screens.

How it can be done

Just as these thoughts were going into the computer, an example of how to do a good wildlife film hit the screen. In January BBC showed a film on Cuckoos. It summarised studies by a field ornithologist, Nick Davies, who was actually allowed to speak for himself. The camerawork was of the customary high standard. What differentiated it from so much of the current output was the information that came across. Cuckoo behaviour was interpreted in the light of current thinking on evolution but without all the technical detail that goes into scientific papers. It was fun to watch but not dumbed down, and at the end you felt you knew a bit more about Cuckoos and the reasons for their behaviour. Heinz Sielmann would have been proud of it.

Stan da Prato

Feedback - what do SBN *readers think of these thoughts? If the response justifies it, we could forward a summary to the BBC.*

News and Notices

New SOC Members

We welcome the following new members to the club: Central Scotland Mr D. Perry, **Clyde** Mr F.C. Gibbons & Ms D. McWilliams, Mr G. Mochan, Mr J.G. Monaghan, **Dumfries** Ms L. Creamer, Mr C. Murray, **England, Wales & NI** Mr & Mrs C. Bushell, **Fife** Mrs J. Burkinshaw, Mr C. McNeill, Mr & Mrs T.H. Mitchell, **Grampian** Mr C.M. Wolfe-Murray, **Highland** Mr A. Williams, **Lothian** Dr M. Barber, Mrs K. Bidgood, Mr & Mrs S. Corbett, Mr R. Davidson, Ms M. Duguid, Mr R. Flavell, Mr J. Johnston, Mr H.D. MacKenzie, Mr B. Riddoch, Mr A. Strock, **Stewartry** Mr & Mrs A. Sidaway, **West Galloway** Mr T. Greenaway.

SOC 200 Club

The latest prize-winners are: **February: 1st** £50 Mrs V. McLellan; **2nd** £30 A. Duncan; **3rd** £20 Miss R. Davidson; **4th** £10 Mrs L. Waterston. **March: 1st** £30 Mrs D. Melrose; **2nd** £20 R.S. Craig; **3rd** £10 Mrs P.M. Millar. **April: 1st** £30 D. Boomer; **2nd** £20 R.G. Vernon; **3rd** £10 Mrs J. Jacobs.

New members are always welcome. They must be over 18 and SOC members. Please contact: **Daphne Peirse-Duncombe, Rosebank, Gattonside, Melrose, Roxburghshire TD6 9NH.**

SBRC Membership

In November this year Angus Murray will leave the Scottish Birds Records Committee, having completed his term of office. Angus has offered the committee invaluable service, providing a direct link with most Scottish birders through Birdline Scotland, and a very high level of expertise gained through many years of birdwatching within the country. We wish him well and offer our thanks as he "retires" to continue with his work on Birdline Scotland.

SBRC's nominee for membership this autumn is an equally highly skilled birder. John Sweeney is well known among the generation of birders who cut their birding teeth during the 1980s and who regularly travelled the length and breadth of Britain in search of rare birds. The valuable experience gained during this period and subsequent birding trips to Europe, the Middle-East and North America, includes every species on the SBRC list. He has found many rare and scarce birds around Scotland, mainly in the Northern Isles and in his home area of the West Central Belt. John brings to SBRC a great deal of experience in assessing rare and scarce birds at both the national and local levels, gained through seven years on BBRC and ten years on the Clyde Birds Records Panel. He will certainly add a very high level of enthusiasm and expertise to SBRC.

Angus Hogg

Nomination of new SBRC members is always welcome, and SOC members are encouraged to propose the names of experienced observers they feel suitable to fill the single vacancy which occurs each year, before the end of October.

John Busby receives prestigious award

The Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum has named Scottish painter John Busby as its 2009 Master Wildlife Artist. He will receive the award during the preview opening of *Birds in Art* on 11 September.

As the Woodson's 31st Master Artist, Busby will be represented in *Birds in Art* by more than a dozen watercolors and drawings that exemplify what he calls his "lighter touch" in depicting birds in real-life action with other species and their surroundings. He will speak about his life as a birder, educator, and artist on 12 September, during the traditional *Birds in Art* opening day Meet the Artists event.

Many congratulations John from everyone at the SOC.

Do you want to help the SOC?

The SOC is your club; its success depends on the contribution from members. This short feature will, over successive issues, highlight some of the ways you can help. If you wish any further information please contact: Wendy Hicks at Waterston House.

- Gift Aid
- Remember the SOC in your Will
- Gifting old bird books
- Attracting/inviting new members to join
- Getting involved in surveys
- Assisting in branch activities
- Contributing articles for publication - do you have any interesting sightings, photographs or studies which should really become part of the record of birds in Scotland? Please write them up; the editors will really welcome your contributions.

The Birds of Scotland Fund

Two applications have been received by The Birds of Scotland Fund. These applications have been considered by the Fund Committee and in principle agreement has been given to fund the publication of an Atlas of Birds on Arran around 2011/12. Further applications are welcome. Notification of this fund, which is used to further ornithology in Scotland (an in particular publications), was given in *SBN* 90, and the details are available now on the Club Website.

Youngsters, wildlife, and some hope for the future

'Starling Learning' is a small organisation based in the village of Lochwinnoch and has been in operation since 1996 carrying out a wide variety of work including ecological surveying and wildlife gardening. One of the wings of this company is environmental education, working with schools, nurseries and colleges and a variety of other groups. Often contact with people such as countryside rangers and field teachers can inspire young people to show an interest in wildlife and the environment, so as well as helping teachers to fulfil the needs of the curriculum, it is hoped that our work with children will help nurture a love of wildlife. This article outlines a few of the projects currently being carried out by "Starling Learning".

One of our contracts involves us running the environmental education programme for the *Royal Society for the Protection of Birds* at the Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve. For many years children from Renfrewshire, Ayrshire, Glasgow and far beyond have visited to take part in a busy programme. There are education programmes taking place at many RSPB reserves now including Mersehead, Vane Farm and Strathbeg. Being the RSPB, many schools come to study birds, however there are many options ranging from minibeasts, mapping habitats and woodland studies. Secondary classes even get to do a Common Bird Census as part of their Standard Grade biology. Often they are surprised by how much they enjoy the visit and we are commonly told 'we thought this was going to be boring'. Letters received from pupils most often describe their favourite gory things such as Great Diving Beetle larvae sucking the insides out of tadpoles and Grey Herons swallowing newly hatched Mallard chicks. One of the current highlights is the smell of the dead Otter and dead Badger both rotting nicely in the wormery (both road casualties). Just getting the children outside is so important; many of them have never even seen a jaggy nettle before! So a view of the Great Spotted Woodpecker at the feeders is very exciting for them. We also teach slug appreciation.

Plate 17. *Some busy raft-building © Liz Parsons.*

Plate 18. *Birth of a wildlife pond © Liz Parsons.*

For the last few years "Starling Learning" has been working with Renfrewshire schools assisting with their ecoschool programme. This project is being carried out in schools in many countries now and it encourages schools to green themselves up, to recycle and avoid wasting energy. One of the most interesting aspects of this is the improving the biodiversity of the school grounds. There are some fantastic projects in schools these days. Gone are the wall to wall tarmac playgrounds and in their place, trees and hedges to attract wildlife, ponds, nestboxes and teasels and sunflowers galore. There are also dreadful looking bird feeders hanging all around many playgrounds made by the pupils out of plastic milk cartons. However the birds don't care what they look like, nor do these feeders get stolen. School grounds can now be used to take part in the RSPB Big School Birdwatch, the playgrounds now attracting a huge range of species. Howwood Primary can now even boast Kingfisher and many are doing their bit to help species such as Swift and House Sparrows.

Other ecoschool projects have included making a raft for birds to loaf and nest on at the Lochwinnoch RSPB reserve. The local Lochwinnoch Primary gathered many milk cartons and tied them on to poles and covered the whole lot in turf and other

vegetation. This was then floated out on to the Aird Meadow loch. More recycling took place when trees had to be removed from the Local Nature Reserve, Paisley Moss. The small wetland reserve beside Glasgow airport is being swamped by willow and birch and the aim is to restore this marsh. Trees were dug out and then given to many Renfrewshire schools to grow in their playgrounds, benefiting the Jack Snipe at the moss and the Chaffinches of school grounds. Schools have their own eco-committees made up of pupils, teachers, the janitor and members of the community. They are always looking for parents and grandparents or just interested individuals, so if you feel you could help in any way with advice on attracting birds or beasties, give your local school a phone.

One of our other current projects is the Glasgow Farmland Birds Project. This is funded by the Landfill Communities Fund and is part of the Glasgow Local Biodiversity Action Plan This is an agri-environment scheme with many improvements being made to the farmland in an area of south Glasgow and two farms in north Glasgow. Bird cover crops are grown, supplementary feeding put out, hedgerows improved, ponds dug and monitoring carried out. Local schools in Carmunnock and Castlemilk have joined in, donning many layers of clothing to visit the sites in winter to put out food and record the birds, the favourite being the 80 Yellowhammers visiting the feeding station at Windlaw Farm. This project has also benefited other farmland species including Tree Sparrows at Millichen, Linnets and Skylarks.

The work is very varied, never two days the same and very rewarding. Small things make it worthwhile such as the boy who promised to never knock down the House Martin nests on his house again after a visit from one of our staff to talk about migration, and one teacher has promised to stop spraying wasps that come into her house with hairspray! The new curriculum now present in schools is helping to ensure that children do get a lot of outside learning. If there is anything you as an SOC member could do to help your local school and perhaps inspire a few children, please do so. After all, they are the next generation of SOC members.

Liz Parsons

Plate 19. *Nesting Herons © Malcolm Muir.*

From Ash to Yew - the changing profile of a heronry

One of the largest heronries in Scotland is found on the Clyde floodplain near to Hamilton. It is located in a 300 year old plantation, reputedly laid out by the Duke of Hamilton around 1720. This is a mixed plantation mainly of deciduous trees - Beech, Ash, Sycamore, Wych Elm, Common Lime, Horse Chestnut, Oak and Poplar. The main route through the plantation (a former driveway to Hamilton Palace) was underplanted on both sides with some Yew c. 1840.

The heronry, dating back to around 1800, is first described in the New Statistical Account of 1835.

A large heronry may now be seen in Hamilton haughs. There were about thirty nests this season. The heron seems to prefer the loftiest trees for building on, especially those a little elevated above the rest, by the nature of the ground on which they stand. These birds are frequently attacked by the carrion-crow on their return from their fishing expeditions, and the prey snatched from them.

In 1899 Hugh Boyd Watt wrote: *The only other Heronry I know of on the Clyde was at Hamilton, where up to about fifteen or twenty years ago nests were very numerous, both in the Heron Hill and Barmichael Woods (near Bothwell Bridge). They are believed to have been introduced by Alexander, the 10th Duke of Hamilton (1767–1852), who had them fed for many years in the Basket Hill Wood until they got attached to the place. His Grace seems himself to have been attached to these birds, for between 1800 and 1810, when he*

lived at Ashton Hall, Lancashire, he "brought some Herons from Hamilton Palace and had them in the paddocks."

The heronry was in existence from c1800 to c1880. In the 1954 National Census of Heronries, this site held 34 nests and was the largest in Scotland. However, by 1973, there were only eleven occupied nests and down to 8 in 1975. At the time there was thought to be some adverse impact of the M74 construction and the creation of Strathclyde Loch. Since 1975 this heronry has been monitored annually by rangers from Strathclyde Park and since 1996, by South Lanarkshire Council. In 1982 there were 23 nests, 40 in 1983, increasing to 44 in 1989.

The last 10 years: From 2000 the heronry has been counted each year by Chris Waltho and Tom McGregor as part of the BTO Heronries Census. In addition to counting occupied and unoccupied nests, we have noted the number of nests recorded in each tree species. The heronry has been largely stable over the last decade, at around 50 nests per year (range from 43–54).

One veteran Beech tree has held up to 15 nests in some years and another Beech up to 12 nests. In some years these two trees have accounted for more than half of the entire heronry. Indeed, each tree has supported more nests than most of Scotland's heronries.

Plate 20. *Young Herons well camouflaged in a Yew tree top © Jimmy Maxwell.*

Plate 21. *The previous traditional nest site © Malcolm Muir.*

In 2000, the heronry was spread across 14 trees, the most numerous tree species being Ash, with 14 nests in six trees. By 2006 they were no longer nesting in any Ash trees. Also in 2000, we were surprised to find four nests in three Yew trees. Each year since, we have recorded more and more nests in Yews. This year, 2009, we have almost half of all nests (23 out of 51 = 45%) now in Yews. Two thirds of all nesting trees are now Yew (in 2009, 16 out of 24). We are not currently aware that Yew trees are used in any other heronry.

Year on year, the massive, but aging, veteran deciduous trees are suffering from decay and gales, with many of these giant trees now blown over. As a result, the understorey Yews are now becoming the mainstay of the heronry. The immediate future of the heronry appears to lie in the Yews, but even these are beginning to blow over. The future composition of this 200+ year old heronry is one that we will continue to monitor annually.

Chris Waltho & Tom McGregor

The 2010 Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowships

Applications are now open for Travelling Fellowships from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for 2010. Each year, the Trust awards some 100 Travelling Fellowships to UK citizens to travel overseas to undertake study projects related to their profession, trade or particular interest. The ten categories for 2010 include 'Adventure, Exploration & Leaders of Expeditions', 'Environment, Food & Rural Affairs', 'The Arts & Older People', 'Young People' and 'Science Engineering & Enterprise'. For further details, including a full list of the eligible categories, examples of previous projects, and information on how to apply online, visit www.wcmt.org.uk

- The Trust was established on Sir Winston Churchill's death in 1965 as a national memorial to perpetuate his memory
- Over 4,530 people from throughout the UK have benefited from these Fellowships since 1966
- These Fellowships allow individuals a unique opportunity for personal development, overseas travel and above all the chance to make a difference to their lives by setting themselves a challenge and achieving it for the benefit of others in the UK.
- They are available to applicants of any age and from all walks of life, irrespective of academic or professional qualifications.
- 95 Fellowships were awarded in 2009, with Fellows ages between 17 and 79.
- Grants average over £5,000, covering all travel and living expenses for an overseas visit of 4–8 weeks.

Please support this excellent scheme by passing details on to anyone you know that may benefit from this opportunity.

Plate 22. *Barony College entrance © Jimmy Maxwell.*

This year's SOC/BTO One-day Conference took place in the Barony Centre, Parkgate, Dumfries, a spacious parkland setting rich with a huge variety of trees. Early visitors were thrilled to be welcomed by the ringing cry of a Nuthatch above the mist-shrouded carpark - apparently there are three pairs now breeding on the property and delegates enjoyed watching them later at the many feeders during the Conference breaks. Brian Smith headed the three-way hosting of the event by Dumfries, Stewartry and West Galloway SOC groups on the theme "From Burns to Barnacles". Chris Waltho, SOC President, welcomed everyone and outlined the main SOC/BTO ventures which are at present underway. Looking forward to the day's content, he reminded us that all the speakers were "home-grown" - i.e. from Dumfries and Galloway. The first lectures then proceeded...

Chris Rollie - An Overview

Chris suggested that the bird life of Dumfries and Galloway was one of the most diverse among the British regions because of the wide variety of habitats, from the 'soft' rounded hills of Moffatdale to the rugged granite terrain of Galloway, the extensive and varied coastline and offshore islands. In between is a large extent of farmland and woodland, especially coniferous plantations.

He started by singling out the Willow Tit, for which the region is the main stronghold in Scotland - indeed the Atlas survey is revealing unexpectedly high numbers in some places. The spectacular aerial display of Starlings arriving to roost near Gretna is justifiably famous, while flocks of Barnacle Geese on the Solway coast are a local speciality. The Short-eared Owl, once a bird that one could expect to see in Dumfries & Galloway, is now exceedingly rare, due to the passing of the expansionist phase of afforestation. Unfortunately these owls are not making much use of the restock areas in our maturing plantations. Black Grouse is also in decline but there is more hope that habitat improvements can be made to favour this species. Inland, but not on the coast, numbers of Peregrine are currently falling, probably due to illegal persecution. One increasing raptor is Red Kite, following its reintroduction to the Loch Ken area. The 'Red Kite trail'is a great success with visitors as well as helping the local economy. A recent novelty is the first breeding of Spoonbill. Among a number of apposite quotations from Robert Burns during his talk, Chris referred to the Skylark or 'Laverock' as still a common species especially in the western lowlands.

Plate 23. *John Young with Chris Rollie © Lang Stewart.*

Chris was not sanguine about the level of habitat improvement in the region during the current financial constraints but one bright spot is at Wood of Cree where this important native broadleaved wood is being enlarged. Finally, and looking forward to the continuing Atlas survey, Chris hoped that last year's breeding of Dotterel would be repeated and that there would be more sightings of White-tailed Eagles.

Graham Pyatt

John Young - 100 years of Dumfriesshire Rookeries

In keeping with the theme of the Conference, our second main speaker of the day was another Burns enthusiast. However, John Young exceeded his brief by taking us right back to the 15th century when "craws" were regarded as a pest species and heavily persecuted. In 1424, James I decreed that trees used by nesting Rooks should be cut down; and 33 years later James II brought in an Act requiring each parish to appoint a Rook catcher. In 1796, a very poor oats harvest led to rioting in the streets of Dumfries and shoots were organised in grain fields to protect the harvested sheaves from Rooks and Red Grouse. The tradition of culling the

birds still survives in some estates, leading to the killing of about 7500 each year in Dumfriesshire, though Rook pies and stews are not such a feature of country fare nowadays.

Dumfriesshire Rooks show a distinct preference for nesting in Scots Pine (47%) and Beech (28.4%). Over the period since 1908, the average number of nests per rookery has declined steadily from 115 to 36. Despite some fluctuations, the overall numbers of nests remained fairly constant until recent years. However since the 1980s, the population has declined seriously, and continues to do so. John put this process down mainly to changes in agriculture, with massive reductions in the areas of turnips, potatoes and cereals grown in the county since the 1970s, resulting in a halving of the total crop area. Grassland now accounts for 94% of agricultural land, including many fields that receive heavy nitrogen inputs for silage production. Such fields probably provide poorer feeding for Rooks. Against the background of this continuing decline, the annual cull in some estates needs to be stopped, though John thought that persuasion might be better than "naming and shaming" as suggested by one questioner.

Roger Hissett

Barbara Mearns - Time Travel Birding *(own summary)*

Barbara Mearns (co-author of *Biographies for Birdwatchers* and *John Kirk Townsend* see www.mearnsbooks.com) described some of the delights of birdwatching with a historical perspective. She suggested four approaches:

1. *Start close to home - with someone who knew your parish or county*. Barbara explained how the journals of the great Scottish naturalist, William MacGillivray, can help us realise how dramatically the British have changed their attitudes to wildlife during the last 200 years - giving us hope that attitudes may yet change in other places, like Malta.

2. *Find out about the history of one particular species that interests you.* Who first discovered it? And where? Barbara recounted the excitement of seeing her first Eleonora's Falcons in Sardinia exactly where they were first collected by Alberto della Marmora.

3. *Before you go on holiday, read the accounts of a pioneering ornithologist in the region.* When Barbara and her husband, Richard, backpacked around Israel in the 1980s they carried photocopies of H.B.Tristram's 19th century papers from *The Ibis* to assess how much the bird populations and habitats had changed since his expeditions.

4. *Do some original research - find out about an interesting, but not well-known ornithologist.* Barbara explained how they researched their latest book on John Kirk Townsend, one of the first American naturalists to cross the Rocky Mountains, discovering new birds and mammals that were painted by JJ Audubon. They visited museums and libraries on both sides of the Atlantic, met Townsend relatives, and followed in his footsteps. This enabled them to add an up-to-date zoological commentary to Townsend's own account of his journey.

Plate 24. *Barbara Mearns © Jimmy Maxwell.*

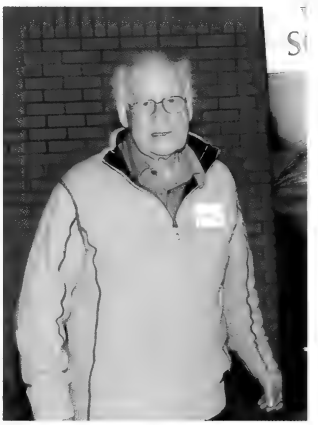

Plate 25. *Bobby Smith © Lang Stewart.*

Bobby Smith - Sand Martin Summers

Bobby was immediately into full flow on his favourite topic - the long-established homebuilt Sand Martin colony in his Applegarth sanctuary near Lockerbie. The building has an extremely natural looking façade of concrete nest holes which are accessed easily from behind in the working interior. Fitments are designed to last, with galvanised screws and car-seatbelt hinged nesting boxes, and every facility there for immediate monitoring of the breeding Martins. The building is directly over a pond and this with the surrounding vegetation and nearby tree cover ensures a plentiful supply of insects for the birds, especially mayflies, one of their main foods.

A total of 8,721 Sand Martins have now been ringed at the site. The average clutch is five eggs but the upper limit has reached seven on 14 occasions. The weather affects each breeding season with temperature and rainfall fluctuations, but the sanctuary Sand Martins of course are not affected

by the usual constant threat of river erosion of nest sites when water levels rise.

Bobby listed all the predators which affect his birds. Sparrowhawk is the main culprit with more than one waiting at the holes for a quick snatch; then Mink, Heron, Carrion Crows, Black-headed Gulls and even House Sparrows. He had hoped that the Sparrowhawk might prey on the visiting gulls but this never happened! One Black-headed Gull which had a broken wing fed almost entirely on young martins, the action seemingly ignored by their parents. Many young became infested with ticks, and while surviving this, they would always need increased feeding.

The colony is well worth a visit for all its wildlife, including the families of Swallows which nest inside. Bobby finished with some lovely shots of their young birds vying for perches while being encouraged out by the fluttering parents.

Jimmy Maxwell

The excellent buffet lunch was served in two phases allowing everyone plenty space and the time to walk around the Centre parkland at leisure. The usual stalls were set out round the auditorium, an arrangement that made it much easier for people to contact each other. Then the afternoon's lectures continued...

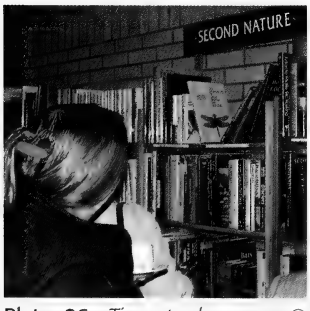

Plate 26. *Time to browse... © Jimmy Maxwell.*

Plate 27. *Chris with Edmund Fellowes and Graham Pyatt © Jimmy Maxwell.*

Edmund Fellowes - Atlassing Goosanders *(own summary)*

Speaking as Atlas organiser for Dumfriesshire, Edmund gave details of the progress during the first two winters and one breeding season. He asked for contributions to the Atlas from everyone present. Records of suspected or proven breeding are very few so far, and are particularly wanted. He then summarised his recent Atlas records of Goosanders which are widely distributed in the county, but are at low densities and extremely shy and mobile.

There followed an illustrated account of the flock of Goosanders around the weir in Dumfries. These birds have become used to people and have to compete with many other fish-eating birds, and with Otters, for the fish. This makes for very interesting and easy birdwatching. There are seats beside the river and car parking is immediately adjacent. The birds are taking a variety of fish, but the main attraction is the River Lampreys held up at the weir as they move upstream, as Salmon do, to spawn. When one of these is caught, hectic action follows until the Lamprey has been swallowed. Edmund hopes that any visiting birdwatchers will have time to enjoy this spectacle. (his Goosander photographs used to illustrate this talk were quite superb and a sheer delight for the audience. Ed)

Geoff Sheppard - Hunters by night and day

Secretary of the SOC's West Galloway Branch since it was formed in 1976, Geoff has been studying and ringing Barn Owls in the region for 30 years. The study began in the early 80s, but it was in the 90s that the project was pushed forward with the erection of a good number of nest boxes. In the early days, there were lots of derelict farm cottages, but latterly, anything close to a road has been converted, or a kit house has been built on the site, but some old buildings remain.

In the old cottages, the typical nest site would be an empty water tank, or milk churn, or inside old, roofed-over chimneys, but especially successful sites were between ceiling boards and the floor above.

Horizontal boxes devised were simple and cheap to make, easy to slide up between the rafters, 3' long x 16" wide x 14" high, cut from 8'x 4' board. This design follows from observation of owl preference for 'tunnel' sites with one end open to defend by lying back with talons extended - giving the birds a sense of security.

These boxes last very well, but must be cleaned every two years as debris can halve the capacity. In recent years, the boxes have been installed in modern farm buildings, preferable to a cottage which may soon be converted.

The focus now is upon studying adult birds, the majority of breeding birds are under seven years old, the bulk are two or three. The emerging pattern of birds moving into 'better' properties with better territories is fascinating but the true value is in the length of the study period of a species in one area.

As for Hen Harriers, 100 years ago, there were only stuffed specimens in glass cases inside big houses. In the 1960s, Donald Watson and others found Hen Harriers returning to newly forested upland sites, as the plantations matured the sites were lost. The birds on the remaining moors are declining, even in Special Protected Areas. Males appear in spring, but the females don't seem to settle down to breed, maybe a food shortage, but this is uncertain, persecution does continue to skew field studies but the team perseveres.

Plate 28. *Geoff Sheppard © Jimmy Maxwell.*

The richness of such research as this is, to my mind, the very spine of the SOC's raison d'etre. We don't just 'like birds', we need to know more, and that takes the time and dedication of men and women who invest their lives in true ornithology.

Duncan Watt

Rebecca Johnson - Nightjar tracking

Rebecca, an RSPB Species Officer gave us an enthusiastic account of her work - locating, tracking and counting Nightjars in south-west

Plate 29. *Rebecca Johnson © Lang Stewart.*

Scotland. Listening to this expert describing the species, its lifestyle and particular habitat preference etc rekindled some of my own very limited memories - first my sole Scottish happening several years ago when I found a single bird at midday asleep in its conventional pose, longitudinally perched on an oak branch with heavy bracken understory on Loch Lomondside. More conventionally and just as long ago, I have happy recollections of pitching my little Vango tent among the whin bushes on Kelling Heath in north Norfolk and listening to the 'churr' of the birds all night through canvas. But apologies and excuses! I digress. Rebecca's Project was to count and track the species in clear fell areas of the forestry and to study feeding, migration and the breeding take up on these felled areas. Mist-netting, tagging and sound-tracking were all used. In light of her estimate of the total UK population being 4000, the numbers quoted for Scotland were not impressive and deriving statistics was decidedly difficult. Some comparison between maps showed just how Scottish distribution has changed over the years. The species has been considered unique since very early times with all sorts of unlikely myths abounding. Even now, most birdwatchers will relate their contact with the bird with some excitement and not a little wonder. Commendably when the credits were rolled out at the end of the talk the number of people Rebecca had recruited into this project was remarkable. I got the impression that in time much more data will be revealed. With the northward influx of Little Egrets and Nuthatches, rapid changes in demographics are flavour of the month - so watch this space.

Campbell McLellan

Richard Hesketh - Satellite tracking geese and swans

Britain is vitally important for wintering flocks of Whooper Swans, Greenland White-fronts, Barnacle and Brent geese. Richard (WWT Caerlaverock) described what happens when they all leave our shores, where they go, how they get there and how they still manage to be back in the UK for the following winter.

He began by describing the two study areas for Whooper Swans in Iceland - a fertile lowland valley, and wetlands within higher altitude gravel deserts. The birds, in full moult, are rounded up by small inflatable boat or using volunteers wading through the marshes. Various biometrics and blood samples are taken and their unique bill patterns photographed with each ring number. Solar-powered satellite transmitters are also fitted on their backs to track the flight routes.

Plate 30. *Richard Hesketh © Jimmy Maxwell.*

We then viewed maps which tracked the birds migrating between Scotland and Iceland. Some birds encountered severe cross winds that forced them to deviate off-course, spending many days at sea, then regaining their original route once the weather improved. However, there was at least one swan which was blown so far off that it continued westward towards the south coast of Greenland. This bird was possibly sitting on an ice flow and probably perished. A flock of about 30 swans, presumed to be Whoopers, was observed by an airline pilot in December 1967 at an altitude of 8,200m off the Outer Hebrides and tracked by radar descending towards the coast of Northern Ireland. Current tracking work reveals that most of these birds do in fact fly at sea level. Was this a regular occurrence or just a one off?

The birds make their journey to the WWT Caerlaverock Reserve in family groups, some of the swans being caught in the swan decoy pipe where, if necessary, their transmitters can be removed.

Barnacle Geese follow the coast of Norway northwards to Svalbard. They often encounter sea mist which they navigate either around or over, but, with a following wind, can travel at speeds of up to 110 k/hr, making this crossing in under two days. The maps tracked both the Greenland White-fronts from Loch Ken to Greenland and the light-bellied Brent that winters near Stranraer and in Ireland, and flies the 4,500 km north to breed above the North West Passage in Canada.

All of these fantastic journeys are now slightly more understood, but are no less marvellous for that.

Jimmy Maxwell

Chris Waltho then summoned Dick Vernon from the audience to receive a very hearty vote of thanks for all his lengthy time as SOC Treasurer - a period of difficult decisions through some fairly eventful times for the Club. A bottle of Black Grouse sealed the ceremony effectively. Alan Fox will be the new Treasurer.

Plate 31. *Chris Waltho thanking Dick Vernon © Lang Stewart.*

The Raffle raised £326 for Club funds, Chris Wenham rounded the day off by thanking everyone who had worked so hard to make the Conference a success, the speakers, the prize donors and as usual Stephen Hunter, our a/v genius in the background. The day by now was sunny and a pleasant journey through beautiful country lay ahead for the 180 delegates.

Jimmy Maxwell

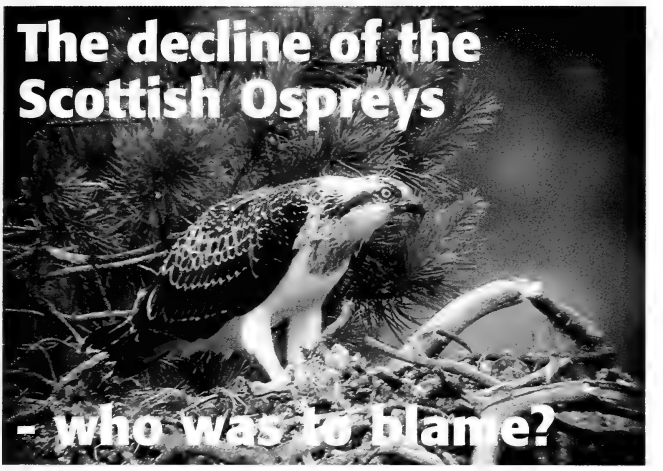

Plate 32. *Osprey success today © Lang Stewart.*

In 'Osprey anniversary' (*SBN* 91), Frank Hamilton drew attention to the 50th anniversary of Ospreys breeding at Loch Garten. His otherwise celebratory note started: 'By the early 1900s, breeding Ospreys were hounded to extinction in Scotland by egg and skin collectors' - a statement that I feel to be a little controversial.

Whilst I do not dispute that persecution in its broadest sense over a long period had a critical effect on the historical status of Osprey in Scotland, I feel I must take issue with the contention that the responsibility for the species' demise should be laid so squarely and uncritically at the door of egg and skin collectors. In this article I shall attempt to put Osprey egg-collecting in context and touch on other relevant factors affecting the population over the period of decline.

It is clear that Ospreys, like other species of hawks, falcons and owls, were routinely hunted, trapped and shot over an extended period of time in Scotland (Gray 1871, Baxter & Rintoul 1953, Newton 1972, Dennis 2008). As well as specific examples of egg thefts, Baxter & Rintoul note instances of adult birds being shot, for example at Loch Lomond, Loch Ordie and Loch Insh. With reference to the egg thefts at some nests, it is at least possible, or indeed likely, that these were incidental to the shooting of adults, rather than the primary aim. Such practice would have been similar to the current persecution of species like Hen Harrier, where birds are shot or poisoned and the eggs destroyed. Just as the primary aim of today's persecutor is destruction of the local breeding population, this may equally have been the main motive of persecutors of most Ospreys in the latter half of the 19th century; the selling of any eggs to a dealer was simply a financial bonus.

Eggs

There is no dispute that a few well-known egg collectors were active in Scotland, but this period was actually relatively rather brief. John Wolley (1823–1859) was active during 1847–50, Charles St John (1809–1856) was active in the 1840s and Roualyen G. Gordon-Cumming (1820–1866) was active in the 1850s. St John and Wolley were often assisted by Lewis and William Dunbar in the same period. The first named individuals died in the 1850s and Gordon-Cumming in the mid-1860s so it is stretching credulity to suggest that they should be held responsible for the Osprey's decline in the succeeding *half century*.

As a corollary, one might consider the activity of a number of egg collectors in the 1960s–90s (and the RSPB has claimed there are up to 100 active collectors in the UK). They apparently had no significant negative impact on the recovering Scottish population other than lessening the *rate* of population recovery. Why then might it be supposed that egg collectors had such a deleterious impact on the Osprey population from 1860–1916, a period of more than 50 years? Surely 'persecution' in its more general sense (shooting and trapping) must have played a more significant part.

In fact, there is another more fundamental reason to believe that specimen collectors (rather than 'trophy collectors') had little impact on Scottish Ospreys. If the former were genuinely a factor, one would expect to find evidence of this in egg collections, many of which are now deposited in museums. For example, National Museums Scotland (NMS), Edinburgh, holds numerous pre-1916 Scottish eggs from species that were prized by collectors; for example there are 35 clutches of Golden Eagle from Scotland, compared with just three clutches from other European countries. In contrast, from a total of 19 Osprey clutches collected pre-1916, only three (possibly four) are Scottish.

Plate 33. *Osprey eggs, Loch Maree, Osgood Mackenzie © NMS.*

At Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, the W. Stirling egg collection holds only two Osprey clutches (dated 1896 and 1897), but 15 clutches of Golden Eagle

(C. Niven, pers. com.). Glasgow's Kelvingrove Museum holds only one Osprey egg of unknown origin from the period (R. Sutcliffe, pers.com.). The Natural History Museum (Tring) holds 70 pre-1916 clutches of Golden Eagle from Scotland, but only seven pre-1916 clutches of Osprey (D. Russell, pers. com.). In one private historical collection, not one from a total of 30 is from Scotland.

It is worth stressing that Osprey clutches collected 'pre-extinction' are more likely to survive in collections than other historical egg material. Even if the eggs were damaged, sets taken from a former breeding population would be treasured items and, as such, well looked after by the possessor. Scottish Osprey clutches in collections, therefore, are not likely to be 'under-represented'. The principal collections of Osprey eggs were at Cambridge University (Wolley) and the Hancock Museum, Newcastle (Dunbar/St John/Hancock); this material is largely representative of collecting in the mid-19th century period, not subsequent years.

A more comprehensive analysis of material in museums would be worthwhile, but these data are broadly indicative of UK museum holdings. What is most striking is not so much the fact that Scottish Osprey clutches are surprisingly few in UK collections, but that by comparison clutches from other European countries and North America are so common. Since, if egg collecting had been rife, Scottish clutches would have been readily available in the trade in the latter half of the 19th century and therefore they would be expected to be less under-represented by comparison with clutches of exotic origin. Thus non-Scottish clutches can not simply be seen as 'filling a gap in the market' following the subsequent decline of the Scottish population.

It is perhaps worthwhile to consider the possible impact on the breeding population. From the literature and perusal of collections it appears that about 22 clutches were taken in the 1850s (apparently the 'peak' decade for egg collecting). Even assuming that this is a conservative estimate which underestimates the actual numbers collected and the real number is as much as twice as many it still only equates to a loss of 4.4 clutches per year. Data for 2006 in Scotland show that 143 Osprey pairs laid eggs with 111 pairs raising young, a nest failure rate of 22% (Etheridge *et al.* 2008). Assuming the existence of 20 or so pairs in the 1850s, then (moral arguments aside) theft of four clutches may not have been any more significant than natural nest failure. Certainly, these effects were additive, but we should also acknowledge reported instances of repeat clutches after egg removal (Box 16, Natural History by Species, Harvie-Brown collection, NMS Library). Persistent shooting of adults, of which there is abundant evidence, must have had more immediate consequences.

Skins and mounts

If specimens (skins) were obtained for collections (rather than as trophies or birds killed for vermin control) then one would expect to see evidence of this in museums. NMS holds one only Scottish pre-1916 Osprey skin (1892), but three specimens collected in Spain and Tunisia. On the other hand, references to birds being shot (for trophies or otherwise) are not uncommon. During the period 1854–1904, the Edinburgh taxidermists Small & Son recorded the receipt of only four Ospreys (1883, 1887, 1889 and 1892) in their books. This remarkably low number is in sharp contrast with the figures for Golden Eagles (10), Rough-legged Buzzards (38), European Honey-buzzards (11) and Snowy Owls (9) (Extracts from Small and Son's books, Harvie-Brown collection, NMS Library). There is little here to support the theory that Ospreys were a particularly prized item for natural history dealers. The overwhelming majority of specimens went to private purchasers.

Other than that undertaken by John Hancock in the 1840s–50s, I am not aware of any systematic collecting of Ospreys (and none prompted by the species' scarcity). An 'extensive series of Ospreys from various parts of the world' was held at Norwich Castle Museum (Gurney 1867, Gray 1871). However, of the 74 skins there, seven were from Norfolk and a single bird was from Shetland (October 1866), the latter perhaps not even a shot bird, as it was found injured (T. Irwin, pers. com.). On the other hand the practice of killing Ospreys by estate interests and as trophies in their own right was long established in Scotland (Baxter & Rintoul 1953, Newton 1972). Preparation of trophy specimens of birds of prey helped to sustain two taxidermy firms in Inverness (Macleay's and

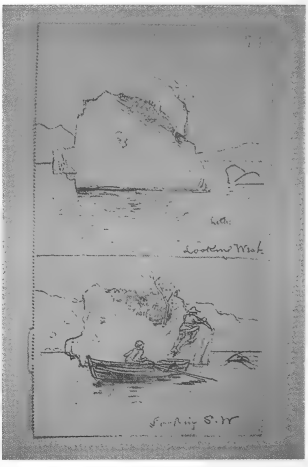

Plate 34. *Osprey site at Loch na Claise Carnaich, Sutherland as sketched in Oct. 1903 by John Pedder from Fauna of the North West Highlands and Skye © from original in Harvie-Brown archive, NMS.*

Macpherson & Son) for a period approaching 100 years, with most specimens supplied through persecution by estate interests (McGhie 1999). Harvie-Brown & Buckley (1895) noted that Macleay's ledgers listed Ospreys from c. 1856 that had been taken 'very often at breeding sites'.

It is worth noting a comment made by John Wolley on the larger birds of prey in Sutherland and Caithness; he remarked that the 'combined efforts of sheep-farmers, game-preservers, and so-called natural history collectors' were pushing these birds towards extinction in the district (Newton 1860). If we focus only on the latter factor, we are in danger of losing sight of the effects of the former. Nor should other influences on breeding performance be ignored, for example disturbance at nest sites. Such effects, at a time when the population was at low ebb, would have a disproportionate effect. Four examples are: (a) at Loch an Eilean around 1849–52, the birds deserted because of the rafts of old timber floating on the loch cut from the slopes; (b) in 1890 at the same site, not only were eggs stolen, but the birds were disturbed by tourists 'pelting the echo' (sic); (c) at Loch Luichart 'not many years before 1902' the birds deserted either following egg theft or on 'account of the whole of the heather on the face of the loch being set on fire'; (d) the disintegration or collapse of old trees that held nests (Harvie-Brown & Buckley 1895; Box 16, Natural History by Species, Harvie-Brown collection, NMS Library).

Unfortunately, the true record has also become blurred by misquotation and muddled chronology in otherwise worthy published accounts. Here is an example from Poole (1989): 'It is not clear whether sportsmen like St John or the local highland gamekeepers that he blames did the most harm to Scottish Ospreys. Undoubtedly both were to blame. The last pair known to breed in Great Britain (until re-colonisation) was found on an island in Loch Loyne in 1916. As William Dunbar wrote to his fellow egg raider John Wolley: 'I am afraid that Mr St John, yourself, and your humble servant, have finally done for the Ospreys.'

Written as such (as the final sentence in Poole's sub-chapter on the decline and extinction in the British Isles), it sounds like an admission of culpability for the species' demise in Scotland. However, Dunbar wrote this in June 1850, at least 60 years before the birds became extinct (Harvie-Brown & Macpherson 1904). Both Wolley and St John were dead within a few years and Ospreys continued to breed in Scotland for a lengthy period. Dunbar was clearly mistaken.

Through misrepresentations such as this, it is easier to see how culpability shifted away from general persecution to 'collectors'. If Poole's 'sportsmen like St John' cannot be blamed for harming the species in the latter half of the century (at least to the extent implied), presumably estate interests played a significant role. Osprey, Hen Harrier and Red Kite were among the species subject to stringent predator control by gamekeepers from the time that Victorians built their hunting lodges and shooting boxes. As predator destruction worked well (generating large bags of grouse), moor owners tended to oppose parliamentary bird preservation acts (Tapper 1992). Furthermore, during this period management practices for grouse moors probably increased disturbance at some Osprey nest sites, for example through muirburn, as noted above.

Egg sales

Egg sale catalogues can often reveal useful information about the numbers of clutches being traded by dealers and collectors. The sale of Leopold Field's collection in April 1895 included seven lots of Osprey eggs, only one of which - a single egg - was Scottish (ex Gordon-Cumming). The sale of one 'N. Troughton, Esq. of Coventry' in April 1869 had six lots of Osprey (fetching between 6/6 and 8/-), though none was specifically listed as Scottish (and other clutches in the sale included Griffon Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Spotted Eagle and Iceland Falcon so we cannot assume that the Osprey eggs were Scottish).

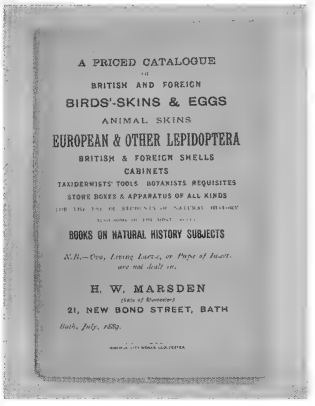
A PRICED CATALOGUE
OF
BRITISH AND FOREIGN
BIRDS'-SKINS & EGGS
ANIMAL SKINS
EUROPEAN & OTHER LEPIDOPTERA
BRITISH & FOREIGN SHELLS
CABINETS
TAXIDERMISTS' TOOLS BOTANISTS REQUISITES
STORE BOXES & APPARATUS OF ALL KINDS
BOOKS ON NATURAL HISTORY SUBJECTS
H. W. MARSDEN
21, NEW BOND STREET, BATH

Plate 35. *Marsden Catalogue © NMS.*

The priced catalogue of the firm H. W. Marsden (Bath) for July 1889 lists Osprey skins at 8/6 to 10/6 and eggs at 4 shillings. To supply material at these prices, one can see how it might have been more immediately lucrative for a gamekeeper to shoot and sell birds to a dealer than wait for the potential appearance of eggs.

Nonetheless, information from sale catalogues is difficult to interpret unless one knows the source (country) of the eggs, associated data and comparative prices of other species. From the above, Osprey eggs appear cheaper in 1889 than they had been in 1869. It was certainly easier for NMS to procure Osprey eggs from Denmark, Sweden and North American in the 19th century than

from Scotland, and I doubt there was any selective preference for 'foreign' eggs. There is little reason to believe this would be otherwise for other purchasers.

None of the argument of this article is novel. Almost 100 years ago F. C. R. Jourdain, in correspondence to *The Zoologist*, conceded the earlier impact of egg collecting (and shooting) by St John and his contemporaries, but drew attention to the numbers of Ospreys shot in Ireland in spring which he believed were 'Scotch-reared birds' (Jourdain 1912). He noted that Scottish eyries were deserted serially 'because either a single bird returns alone and fails to find a mate or both birds fail to put in an appearance'. Harvie-Brown (1912) supported this view, pointing out that for 25 years he had collected every item relating to rare Scottish birds, particularly Osprey, Red Kite and White-tailed Eagle. After acknowledging egg collecting as an ongoing activity, he wrote 'But I agree with Mr Jourdain that taking eggs alone would not have reduced our Ospreys to the verge of extinction; but it is the killing of the young migrants in autumn and also the birds returning in spring, which I believe - along with Mr Jourdain, and, I may add, with the late Prof. A Newton who has always maintained the same - has correctly caused the decrease'. These comments have some resonance with the fate of the Loch Arkaig Ospreys as described by Cameron of Lochiel (Cameron 1943): after 1908, only a single bird returned to the site, searching for a mate annually until 1913; a few years later Cameron of Lochiel saw a mounted Osprey specimen in Ireland, shot there in 1913, and this he suspected was the Loch Arkaig bird.

With reference to the tailing-off of breeding at Loch an Eilean in the 1890s (which confounds Dunbar's dramatic claim of extinction 40 years earlier), Cash (1914) reported egg theft in 1891 followed by young raised in 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897 and the eggs and nest damaged by adult birds in 1899; after single birds only were seen at the site in 1901 and 1902, records stopped. The reoccupation of this traditional site and its pedigree of productivity demonstrate that it was a high quality site. The pattern of decline described here appears to be more representative of attrition of locally-breeding adults than a symptom of egg theft. For Loch an Eilean, the consequence of killing adults was probably more acute than for other sites.

A comprehensive analysis of museum specimens, taxidermy ledgers, estate books and dealers' price lists would be a worthwhile exercise particularly if this was accompanied by population modelling that considered the appropriate variables. I doubt though that the outcome would show that egg collecting or systematic collecting of skins were a more significant factor than general persecution - specifically the *ad hoc* killing by estates and shooting for trophy specimens. In all probability the views of the leading naturalists of the day, given their close proximity to the subject, were broadly accurate.

In conclusion, evidence that the activities of egg and skin collectors *per se* were the critical factor for Scottish Ospreys is weak. It seems likely that the reputation of egg collecting has allowed this to become an easy target in the more complex issue of population decline. Perhaps the effects of 'sheep farmers and game-preservers' (as noted by Wolley) and the effect of the shooting of migrants (as noted by Jourdain and Harvie-Brown) need to be given due prominence.

I thank various colleagues for help with information and comments.

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The following is just a taster from these "Tales" by Keith Martin, who accompanied his father Henry Martin on a trip organised by Tony and Gerda Scott and led by Angus Hogg (all of Ayr SOC branch). (Ed)

Tales from the United Arab Emirates (8th–16th November 2008)

Inspired by Arabic phrases from **Unload your own donkey** *(P. Arander and A. Skipwith, Tien Wah Press 2002)*

On our way out of Dubai airport I picked up a copy of a small book of cartoons featuring Arabic phrases and their translations. It is always amusing to see how clumsily wisdom from one culture translates to another. Yet it is also intriguing how the truths behind them can be so starkly stated when the subtlety of language is stripped in the conversion process.

Rather than present a diary of our time in Dubai, I have used some of my favourite phrases from this book as triggers for memories of the visit. The links may be tenuous at times, but... well, who cares? If you don't spot the connection immediately then read the story and try again.

Khalli azzayt fi ajaru, lamman tiji as aru ***(Keep oil in its containers until the price is right)***

It is probably fair to say that my ignorant preconceptions of the Gulf States were very much based on wisdom of this type. Thus when Tony proposed a birding trip to the region, it was almost a sense of curiosity rather than desire which directed our decision to sign up. The scattering of exotic bird names amongst the highly familiar on the bird list was certainly an incentive, but the opportunity to bust the myth of dusty barren badlands and oil refineries was probably my main motivation.

Illi biddu yi mal jammal lazim yi alli bab daru ***(He who wants to be a camel driver must raise the door of his house)***

At the Ras Al-Khor Dubai Wildlife Sanctuary, the cityscape of Dubai provides a backdrop to thousands of migrating waders, roosting on mudflats by the edge of a major highway. A flock of Flamingos tread elegantly through the saline pools, watched by a million panes of glass. The birds do not realise however that the city is creeping up behind them. To the south the lagoon is boarded off. The Flamingo View Lagoon Development is coming soon.

Dubai is living a dream. The project seems a massive gamble. It relies on people with money choosing Dubai as a future destination. To

Plate 36. *Khor Dubai reserve, so close to the city © Tony Scott.*

live, to do business, to shop. Probably not to watch birds. Giant billboards promote the vision in emotive ways (it's the last one that worries me the most):

Live the possibilities

Be unlimited

It's kind of fun
to do the impossible

Ishtahayna addajaja akalnaha birishha ***(We so desired the chicken we ate it with its feathers)***

We are on a *mission* to see Crab Plovers. We all *want to see* Crab Plovers. Tony put a tantalising photo of one on the front of his last letter to us, but that's not the reason we are all *desperate to see* Crab Plovers. It's because Crab Plovers are one of *these birds that you just have to see*. They are white and black and biggish with stout bills. They're Crab Plovers. They're *unmissable*. Surely?

"Is it quite *distinctive* this Crab Plover?" pipes up Mike in his querulous Dundee accent. "What do they *eat*?"

Angus *assures us* that the Crab Plovers will be there. They are *always there*. The *only problem*, and it really is a problem of *inconvenience* rather than of dashed dreams, is that they might be rather *far away*. Last time Angus was here he drove right down onto the beach. Now there are some *access problems* and so we will be searching for them from the hill above. We'll *look down* on our Crab Plovers. We'll *need telescopes*.

The warnings are all there. We hear them, but we don't. Angus, after all, has been on the beach with Crab Plovers. He has *walked amongst* Crab Plovers. We will be *above* the Crab Plovers. They will be *small*. But they will *definitely* still be Crab Plovers.

Plate 37. *Scoping the distance © Henry Martin.*

We get off the bus. Game on! There is a short scramble to the top of the dune. "Look out for Menetries Warbler and Desert Lesser Whitethroat in the bushes", suggests Angus, but we only partly listen because there are *Crab Plovers* to gaze upon from the top. We each take our own route to the summit, leaving temporary punctures in the shifting sand. *Driven* by Crab Plovers. We reach the top in a *long eager line* and gaze out and *down*...

Well, it's certainly a *view*. Ahead and *very down* is a breakwater leading to a narrow spit of sand. To the right and *very far away* is a lagoon spattered by low islands. It is an *aerial view* of somewhere where Crab Plovers *might* live. *Do* live, allegedly. They *will be here*. Angus says that we should *search the spit*. The *very, very far away spit* that shimmers in the heat haze. The *very, very far away* spit that shimmers in the heat haze and has a woman in a bikini walking towards a car that is parked half way along it. At least it is *probably* a woman in a bikini, although it is *definitely* a car. Maybe she will *flush* a Crab Plover?

A dozen telescopes scan *left*, scan *right*. We scan the islands. *White things* are reported, but they are probably terns. Angus gets excited by a Terek Sandpiper close to the shore. This is *not a good sign* because we are *not here* to see Terek Sandpipers. Andrew thinks he *might have seen* a Crab Plover but then it might also have been a plastic bottle. Fraser has started looking for the Desert Whitethroats in the bushes. This is *not good* at all. This is *not going to plan*.

Angus suggests that we walk *a bit closer.* But walking *a bit closer* towards something that is *very, very far away* does not stop that thing being very, very far away. It just makes it *less very, very far away than it was*, but still *very, very far away*. We see some Arabian Babblers babbling in the only tree between the dune and the lagoon that is *very, very far away* (although less than it was by just a little bit). Tom watches the babblers through my telescope and says that *they are marvellous*. That might be true, but Arabian Babblers *are not* Crab Plovers.

Angus pitches his tripod in the sand as if he is making a last stand. "We'll probably *not see them at any other site*" he states, rather nonchalantly in my opinion. *Not see them at any other site*? The point is that Angus *has seen Crab Plovers before*. It is all very well for him to say such things, but what is abundantly clear is that at *this time*, on *this dune*, looking *down* on something *very, very far away*, Angus *has seen a Crab Plover* and *we have not*. And if we don't see one now, then we might *never see a Crab Plover*. Never *ever*. It is *far from clear* that Angus understands this. Well, maybe he does and thinks that there is nothing he can do about it. But there *is* something he can do about it. He can *find a Crab Plover for us*. Even one that is *very, very far away*.

"There's a couple of Crab Plovers on the left hand island, off to the far right", announces Andrew. Now Andrew is someone to listen to because Andrew, unlike Angus, *has never seen a Crab Plover before*. To Andrew, *it matters* that we see a Crab Plover. "You can definitely see the black wings, nothing quite like it." Andrew seems very calm, but deep down he is probably *in Crab Plover heaven*. I scan through my telescope, following the snatches of instruction. Scan *left* from the end of the distant harbour (*very, very distant* harbour), follow to the *end of the second island*, pull back to the right and *search the roosting curlews*.

I stare and I stare. At things that are *very, very far away*. Could the grey smudge really be a group of *roosting curlews*? And then I can see it! *Something white*! "There are six of them, no eight of them, *running up and down the sand bar*", says Andrew. "Aye", says Fraser, "*quite distinctive*". Running? Quite distinctive? The white thing that I can see is *not distinctive* and *not running*. Have I just seen a Crab Plover? "Is the Crab Plover sitting out on its own to the left of the curlews?", I ask, as if the right answer to that question will decide whether I have seen a Crab Plover or not. "There are *quite a few* out there, Keith", states Angus who *has seen Crab Plovers before*. "You *can't mistake them*" claims Andrew, who *had never seen a Crab Plover before* and apparently seems quite convinced *that he now has*.

At this point I am gently nudged from my telescope by Eleanora, who *has never seen a Crab Plover* and is utterly determined that she *now will*. In a panic I turn to try Fraser's telescope, the greater magnitude of which will surely deliver a Crab Plover. But in fact all I see is a haze. Fraser is now using my telescope and claims "they are *much clearer* through yours". *Much clearer*? What is he talking about? What are all these people talking about *who had never seen a Crab Plover* before and now claim that they *just have*? Where are these *distinctive* and *running about* birds?

"They've got to be kidding", jokes Mike. It seems *unbelievable* that Mike, who *has never seen a Crab Plover*, just *doesn't care*. He would apparently rather *still not see a Crab Plover* than see one *very, very far away*! "Tony says we should be heading back", says Angus who *has seen Crab Plovers before*. Tony has already gone back. Tony *barely even looked* for the Crab Plover! But we've come all this way...

I look through the eyepiece one more time. *And there is a Crab Plover*. It is almost *distinctive* although it isn't *running about*. But it is *very, very, very far away*. There is a sense of relief, but not one of triumph. This is not the view of a Crab Plover that we saw on the photo in Tony's letter. This is not the view of a Crab Plover that Angus had when he *walked amongst Crab Plovers*.

Plate 38. *Keith gets his bird © Henry Martin.*

Nonetheless this *is a Crab Plover*. Or, rather, *was a Crab Plover*, because it is already lost in the heat haze.

I pack the telescope and walk back with Andrew and Fraser. *We have all seen a Crab Plover*. Not like Mike and Tony. But not like Angus either, because he once *walked amongst Crab Plovers*.

"Could it not have been an *albino curlew*" quips Mike when we get back onto the bus. There is much hilarity, but it's a *bigger question* than anyone dares to answer.

After lunch we stop the minibus at a different path up the dune, which we hope will provide a lagoon view that is *less very, very far away*. From the top we see Crab Plovers. *We all see Crab Plovers*. There are *dozens* of them. They are *distinctive*. They *run about*. They *fly closer*. They *eat crabs*. Even Angus, who *walked amongst Crab Plovers*, seems pleased with the view. We all join the *Crab Plover Club* and any doubts and guilt are blown aside.

Keith Martin

We hope you enjoyed this taster of a "birding holiday with a difference". SBN may perhaps include further excerpts in the future. (Ed)

Plate 39. *Golden Eagle hunting Ptarmigan. With many thanks to Mrs. Wolfe Murray.*

Fish-Hawk (David Wolfe Murray)

Our grateful thanks are due to SOC members Peter Holt from Switzerland who initially requested information on D.K. Wolfe Murray in SBN *90, and Bill Bourne in* SBN *91 who responded, leading us on to the following account of Fish Hawk by his son. (Ed)*

My father, Fish-Hawk, was born in 1897 and died in London in 1970. Having served in the army in World War I in what was then Mesopotamia and subsequently in India, he resigned his regular commission. Soon after this he was taken on by the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen and sent on an intensive two-year medical course which included six months in the theatre. He was then put in charge of a small hospital set up on a partially converted trawler operating with the long since defunct North Sea Steam Trawler Fleet. This meant being at sea in eight-week spells for nine months of the year, sailing mainly out of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth.

So far as hospital care was concerned, his most graphic episode was of a man being transferred to his trawler totally unconscious for no known reason, having been found lying on the deck. A very thorough check found a hollow in the top of his head. My father opened up his scalp to find his skull looking like the top of a boiled egg that had been hit with a spoon. He took out the central piece, prised up the remainder with a sterile teaspoon handle, put the main piece back and stitched up the scalp. Having been originally hit on the head with a falling block and tackle, the man then recovered and lived to be 85.

At some time his trawler and another were riding out a full North Atlantic gale, and out of the gloom ahead appeared a gigantic wave. My father was up on the bridge and seeing this wave, knew they were in trouble. The wave hit them and all he could see in the darkness was water, with the ship shuddering and groaning under the weight. Eventually they surfaced, but never saw their sister ship or any trace of it again.

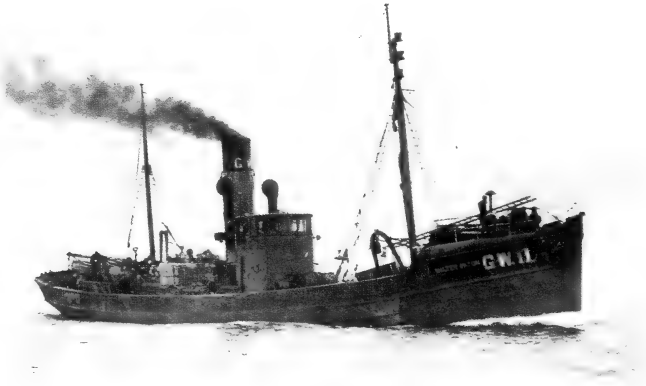


Plate 40. *North Sea Steam Trawler "Walter Paton". With thanks to the Fisheries Museum Anstruther .*

Plate 41. *Fish-Hawk (left) at the BBC with Percy Edwards © BBC archive.*

Having spent from 1923 to 1935 working mainly at sea, and lecturing about it all when ashore to help raise money for the work of the Mission, he then left to join BBC Television. He was the first Public Relations Officer that BBC TV had, and we had a TV in our house in 1938 so that he could entertain people and demonstrate that a TV set did actually work in a private house!

In 1936 he had his first art exhibition in London which was well-reviewed in the Country Life of that time. Over the next three years he illustrated various articles, keeping his pseudonym of "Fish-Hawk" which he had taken up as a cover, because the Mission had not wanted him to do anything other than their work. After returning from the war, he did the illustrations for the Penguin Series by James Fisher entitled "Bird Recognition". This series was really his first in the modern style of bird books, but sadly it was almost immediately superseded by the Collins book in colour, so the fourth volume was never published and the illustrations for it, so far as I am concerned, have disappeared.

After his retirement from the BBC, Fish-Hawk did a great deal of illustrated lecturing as well as drawing and painting. Gradually as he grew older he gave up the travelling and confined himself to painting. The highlight of his year was always the Game Fair, for which he built up a considerable portfolio. In 1970, in early July, he handed this over to me as he did not think he was well enough to cope. So it proved to be, for he died a week later.

Soon after his death, my mother was contacted concerning the whereabouts of his diary that he had kept when he was at sea. Sadly I had had no knowledge of it as I would dearly have loved to discuss it with him. It has since been put on record and I have it in my possession.

Plate 42. *Red Grouse.*

The main area for the ship to operate in was the Dogger Bank, so it was seldom less than 240 km from land and sometimes over 320. He notes that he saw migrants in every month of the year, but it was not until March that birds were seen every day, and in January and February, sightings were almost entirely of Fieldfares, Starlings and Skylarks. Records were in greater numbers in the autumn than in the spring and some species almost entirely confined themselves to one or the other. It was noticeable, apparently, that large numbers of Greenland Wheatears were seen in the autumn, but never in the spring, and with Redstarts it was the other way round. He notes that one of the stranger cases was of a Wren coming on board 320 km from land, in good heart, having a drink from a pannikin of water in the fo'castle before feeding on minute marine creatures on the trawl ropes and in the scuppers. Goldcrests too were regularly seen on their amazing 645 km crossing.

Small birds driven down near to sea level had to run the gauntlet of constant harassing by gulls, in particular Herring and Black-backed. Being a falconer, he often kept the hawks that he caught as they rested on the ship, finding that they did well on raw fish. He also knew from their behaviour when they were seeing birds overhead, but even with good binoculars, he could never spot what they were seeing, except once. He had a Sparrowhawk, and on one occasion she became extremely agitated. Scanning as a result of this, he picked out with binoculars a very large hawk far above them and presumed it was a Goshawk. The number of birds of prey seen on passage varied greatly - the commonest were Kestrels, often in parties of up to a dozen. All the others travelled singly and only once did he see either a Peregrine or a Golden Eagle.

Plate 43. *Moorland bird of prey. With thanks to David Hunter for permission.*

Woodcock cross the sea in thousands every year, yet he saw this species just once and then within 48 km of the Yorkshire coast. Wood Pigeons too come to this country in hundreds of thousands, or did, but were seldom seen. The oddest entry for him was a Bar-headed Goose seen near the Horn Reef Lightship. He presumed it was an escape from a Danish Zoo.

I have selected some of the more interesting diary details and comments as follows:

1927

May 5th Pied Flycatcher, Redstart, Garden Warbler, Ring Ouzel, 6 Lesser Whitethroat, Peregrine, Meadow Pipit (Lat 55 Long 7, light NNE).

Oct. 9th 50–60 Chaffinches, 30–40 Bramblings, 10–20 Goldcrests around all night (Lat 55 Long 4 mod NNW). (This year he kept a special record of the Crossbill "invasion", seeing them on 12 days in July, two in August and one in September. He caught several, but most died from lack of suitable food. He released eight in Great Yarmouth which may well have been the founders of the colony recorded there in 1928).

1928

May 17th Alpine Accentor (Lat 57 Long 4 wind light).

June 17th Nightjar (Lat 56 Long 3 wind SW).

August 4th Corncrake (Lat 55 Long 4 no wind) (Total absence of Goldcrests noted).

1929 *the year I was born!*

Sept. 16th Water Rail (Lat 55 Long 4 wind light) (This bird was skinned and sent to the S. Kengsington Museum).

Oct. 16th 5 Tree Sparrows.

1930

Sept. 14th Golden Eagle - flying south at about 1,000 ft (Lat 54 Long 3 wind light). (About this time he was in touch with TA Coward who he regarded as probably the greatest bird artist. Sadly none of the correspondence survives that I can find).

Sept. 23rd 8 Lapwing (Lat 54 long 4 wind moderate). Note; TA Coward reported vast numbers arriving from the east on the Norfolk coast on this date.

1932

Aug. 30th 3 Wheatears (amongst other species). One Wheatear was approaching the ship low over the water, and was taken in full flight by a Tunny fish.

Oct. 10th Shot a very dark thrush, possibly Hebridean. Note; southward migration started a full three weeks early, but the winter was not severe until late January 1933.

1933

May 7th and **8th** (The former date was the best day since he had kept a diary, but this was then exceeded on the 8 with the same species, but now including) - 3 Red-spotted Bluethroats and Siberian Chiffchaff. (Lat 58 Long 1 light).

8th The numbers were spectacular: 60–100 Willow Warblers, 20–30 Redstarts. Note - 1933 was the most wonderful year with unparalleled numbers and four new species including Black Redstart and Grasshopper Warbler.

Aug. 28th (Really his last voyage in the trawler which had almost been his mobile home in the North Sea.) White Wagtail, House Martin, Swift, Dunlin, Greenland and Common Wheatear, Meadow Pipit, Willow Warbler, Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Turnstone, Heron, Redstart and Garden Warbler. (The month before this he also commented that the Tunny arrived on July 13th and a Lesser Rorqual was seen close to the ship.)

Plate 44. *Woodcock sketches.*

In closing, I count myself so lucky to have had such a father and only wish I had appreciated him even more when he was alive. He taught me to fish, as he was an expert, and to shoot; to love the countryside, and most important of all, not only to look but to see. If the almighty were to grant me a wish to see any person I have known in my varied life of 80 years, my choice would be that of my father, Fish-Hawk.

Michael Wolfe Murray

Notes and Comment

Hooded Crow's reaction to Sparrowhawk kill

While out walking, I had been watching a Robin at the roadside ahead, feeding on insects in the grass verge. As I walked on past, it flew up and sang in the woods behind me. However its soft fluent warble stopped abruptly in an ominous silence - then a number of loud, high pitched cries of fear - then again silence.

Looking back, I could just see a male Sparrowhawk mantled over his tiny meal in the long grass at the woodland edge. The event however was not yet over. A Hooded Crow that had obviously witnessed the kill, burst from the dense vegetation nearby and lunged at the startled raptor. After a few seconds of thrashing wings and squawking, the Sparrowhawk flew off and the Crow retired to the branch of a nearby tree where it cawed defiantly at the retreating hawk. The smaller and lighter Sparrowhawk had managed to hang on to its prey though, leaving an agitated corvid to vent its frustration by pecking and snapping off some small twigs from its treetop perch.

In winter Sparrowhawks are solitary birds, hunting from concealed perches and roosting alone in dense conifers or thick hedges. They normally catch and kill their prey on the wing by exploiting cover and gliding silently close to the ground, along a hedgerow or down a woodland path. One hunting adaptation that has been highlighted recently is a report from England concerning four cases of Sparrowhawks drowning their victims. Interestingly, in two of the incidents, the birds that were drowned were a Jay and a Magpie, both members of the Crow family. Initially I thought the Sparrowhawk was lucky to avoid the Hooded Crow's powerful bill but after this latest revelation, perhaps it was the Crow that had escaped being carried to the closest bay or river and drowned - if the Sparrowhawk had been female this may well have been a possibility.

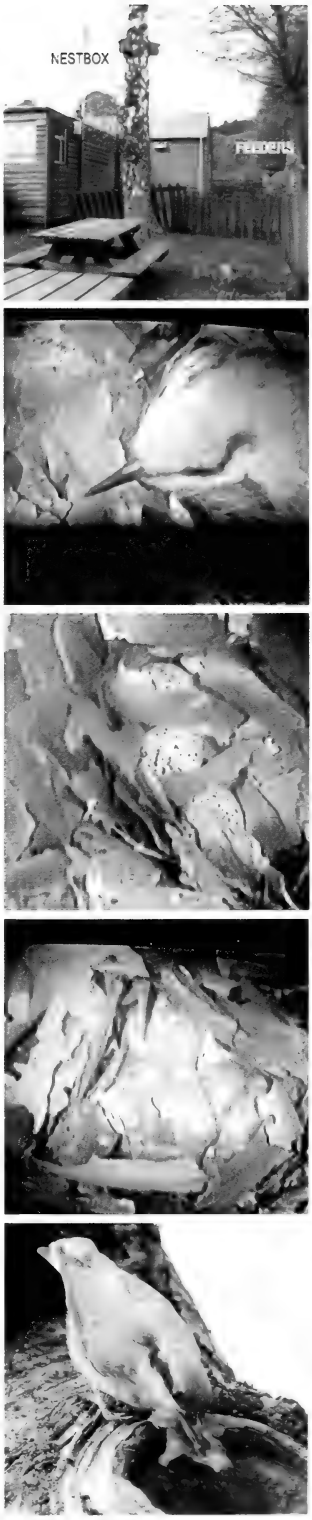
Frank Stark

Nestbox Nuthatch

In a conventional Blue Tit nestbox, camera-equipped and sited at about 12' high, right next to the Osprey-viewing hut at Kailzie, nr Peebles - a Nuthatch has moved in. The birds had been using the nut-feeder adjacent to the hut (Plate 45) and were then observed partially filling the tree-mounted box with pine bark flakes. With no actual formed nest made, the female then proceeded to lay her clutch which she later brooded by shuffling round and round, presumably to establish a hollow and position her brood patch on the eggs (Plate 46, I photographed from the TV screen). Each time the bird left the nest, the eggs were covered with the bark flakes, making counting the number of eggs difficult (Plate 47). They hatched on May 9 and we now see that the nest contained six young (Plate 48) which were looked after solely by the female. The brood was ringed on May 25. It will be interesting to see whether the young remain in the area or appear elsewhere next year.

Campbell and Vicky McLellan

(*The Nuthatches at Dalzell Estate, Motherwell also used Scots Pine bark flakes and this nest-site is 12 feet high in a Birch (Plate 49)*).



Plates 45–48. *Selected TV photos © C. & V. McLellan,* **Plate 49** *© Lang Stewart.*

Plate 50. *Eiders displaying to a female © Phil Kirkham.*

How well do you know your local birds?

Since 2009 will be characterised by all-round belt tightening, most of us may have to curtail our travel plans a tad. Perhaps this *really* is the year to get to know old friends much better.

These thoughts have been stimulated by Lars Jonsson, now I think Europe's foremost bird artist. His new book, *BIRDS* [London: Christopher Helm] is replete with beautiful paintings, and pages from his sketchbooks, as well as his personal notes and commentaries. A linking theme throughout is the joy of staying in one place observing individual birds for long periods.

The Eider is one of his favourite birds - he lives on an island in the Swedish Baltic, and it is also one of mine - I live on the Isle of Bute. He reports that he never tires of watching them as individuals.

I quote: "the Common Eider has always fascinated me as a subject... the male is faceless as his eye disappears in a black crown, his shape and plumage create different abstract patterns depending on the angle of observation and what he is up to. The unusual greenish hue in his flow of 'hair' has a mystical quality... it has the quality of marzipan which is caused by both feather structure and colour... The female, on the other hand, has eyes resembling currants, which radiate good-naturedness, like a fairy godmother.. Her facial expression reinforces the picture."

My Bute Eiders also show another subtle colour, the salmon pink that suffuses the breast of the males. It is not always obvious, as much depends on the angle of the light falling on it. I understand that the colour is food-dependent, deriving from the *carotenoids* present in their diet. Mussels, the principal food of the Eider may carry trace *carotenoids*. Eiders also scavenge around salmon farms, of which there are several in Loch Striven, taking the pellets that have missed the cages. These pellets contain *carotenoids* to improve the colour of salmon flesh. I also note this colour on the breasts of some Herring Gulls, and Bob Furness, ever helpful on the food of the Eider, tells me that Kittiwakes in Shetland may also show pink on their breasts.

While you are closely watching the next group of Eiders that you come across, not only will you feast on the range of newly discovered colour, but you will, at least in spring and autumn, be serenaded by the cooing of the males whilst they are *a-wooing* the females - *A-hOOO, A-hOOO*, carrying over the waves.

So, instead of "EIDER 6, [4 male, 2 female]" appearing in your notebook, stay for longer, enjoy the marzipan and the salmon pink, and the currants, and the fairy godmother.

Michael Thomas

More reflective behaviour

In *SBN* 90 we witnessed the interest of a Dipper in its own reflection. The two photos here, show a similar reaction, this time with a cock Chaffinch and a Peugeot car mirror. The sender, Jack Arrundale, informs us that it worked itself into a frenzy on the Volvo next door as well!

Plates 51–52 (top). *Interest aroused...* (bottom) *...the reaction! © Jack Arrundale.*

Reviews

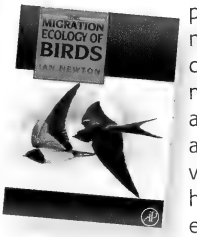
The Birds of Turkey. **Guy M. Kirwan *et al.*, 2008. Helm 978-1-4081-0475-0 hbk £40.00**

This book, which has the imprimatur of the OSME, has taken the best part of 20 years to put together. Turkey is a large country, a good deal of it quite remote, with very few birdwatchers. Hence information is not easy to gather and a lot remains uncertain. Given these inherent difficulties there is a lot in the book.

There are introductory chapters on modern ornithology in Turkey, gaps in knowledge and a description of the eco-regions of the country (with a set of colour photographs of birds in typical habitats). These lead into brief accounts (each around a page) of the 463 species accepted onto the Turkish list with a shorter mention of some species claimed to have occurred but not as yet accepted. Each account covers the relevant subspecies, distribution (with a small map) and breeding where relevant. The maps would not be much help in finding birds (this is definitely not a "Where to Watch" type book) but are none the less useful - it is possible, for example, to confirm that it would be reasonable to see Great Bustards over breakfast on the Istanbul-Ankara sleeper, or that huge flocks of Calandra Lark are to be expected in winter/spring in central Anatolia. There are indications where data are particularly deficient and an extensive bibliography is included.

This is clearly a useful book for anyone with an interest in Turkey and the birds to be found there and given the difficulties inherent in its production, it is likely to remain the standard work for many years. It is not the sort of book to carry around in the field but is undoubtedly worth a look (in the SOC library?) for anyone proposing to visit, even on a trip that is not primarily a bird watching one.

John Davies



The Migration Ecology of Birds. **by Ian Newton, 2008. Academic Press, London. ISBN 978-0-1251-7367-4. 976 pages. Illustrated by Keith Brockie. Hardback, £60.99**

As each book on migration is published (and there have been many over the years), it is clear that research on this important subject goes from strength to strength. This latest review is produced by one of the all time greats in British ornithology who always writes in an exceptionally readable style. To describe this massive book as brilliant is almost an understatement, with the 111 pages of references testimony to the depth to which the author has researched his subject. The content is truly global, with an abundance of examples from all parts of the world.

After two introductory chapters, the book is divided into five parts: The Migratory Process, The Timing and Control of Migration, Large-scale Movement Patterns, Evolution of Movement Patterns and Migration Systems and Population Limitations. Each part has several chapters, 28 in all, each with concluding remarks plus a summary.

The first part consists of chapters on migratory flight, weather effects, fuel, incredible journeys, soaring migrants, speed and duration, navigation and vagrancy. The next comprises annual cycles and control mechanisms followed by geographical patterns, breeding seasons, sex and age differences, variations in migration, dispersal and irruptions. The final two parts include evolution, recent and past changes, distribution patterns, global migration systems, population limitations and mass mortality. All are illustrated with copious clear diagrams, tables and maps and some very evocative artwork by Keith Brockie. With such a wide-ranging subject, there is a very necessary, useful and comprehensive glossary. The whole is entered into at an extraordinary depth and, despite great advances in technology, the author frequently highlights poorly understood aspects of the subject.

If I chose personal highlights, the first would be the author's explanation of the variety of techniques used to study migration, especially progress in the latest scientific methods. Another very intriguing chapter is that on fuelling migratory flights. An individual seems to be able to regulate its feeding habits and food according to the duration of its migration, route and the terrain over which it flies by adjusting the food intake, this also varying across populations within a species and between seasons. The author describes how the evolution of vagrancy has led to new wintering and breeding areas, some of which we are seeing first hand in Britain, while development of migration routes in the distant past has led to inordinately protracted journeys. These last are described in a chapter which portrays the incredible flights undertaken by some migrants. Explanations of weather effects and climate change bring home the survival problems faced by the majority of migrants and the continual adjustments they make to migration timing and routes.

The very few minor errors that I found (for example, winds blow anticlockwise round North Atlantic hurricanes, not clockwise) do not detract from this masterful work, which every migration enthusiast should read, despite the author's claim that it is intended primarily for research students. Although expensive, it is certainly value for money and will stand pride of place on my bookshelf. It is likely to remain the seminal work on the subject for many years.

Norman Elkins

Raffles' Ark Redrawn. **H.J. Noltie (2009) The British Library and the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh ISBN 978-07123-5084-6 Natural History Drawings from the collection of Sir Thomas Stanford Raffles, Paperback, 180 pages, price £20.00**

This beautifully illustrated catalogue tells the story of 123 natural history drawings of the Raffles Family Collection acquired by the British Library in 2007. Sir Stamford Raffles and his wife set sail for Britain in 1824 on the ill-fated Fame with his collection of drawings made during his six year stay on the Indonesian Island of Sumatra. The drawings numbered into the thousands together with Malaysian manuscripts and living animals including a tamed Tiger. A veritable Noah's ark (hence the title)! Tragically the Fame caught fire with the loss of all the collection. During the next ten weeks until the next boat sailed, a Chinese and a French artist managed to replace some 80 of the drawings, including some made earlier on the island of Penang and these form the core of the collection. Henry Nolte, a taxonomist at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh, used the extensive Library at the SOC, Aberlady, to help indentify the birds for this book. I am sure the reader will enjoy this well-written informative book not only for its beautiful illustrations but also for his knowledgeable writings of the birds and plants.

D.H. Mason

Birdwatcher: The Life of Roger Tory Peterson. **Elizabeth J. Rosenthal 2008 The Lyons Press, Guilford, Connecticut 437 pages ISBN 978-1-59921-294-4 (hardback) £19.99**

The American Roger Tory Peterson (1908–1996) was one of the truly great ornithologists and conservationists of the 20th century, who probably did more than anyone else to promote the popularity of birdwatching worldwide. With the 1934 publication of his ground-breaking *Field Guide to the Birds* (of eastern USA), in which he pioneered the Peterson System of using pointers to indicate distinguishing features on his illustrations of related species, he effectively invented the field guide in its modern form. Peterson, Mountfort and Hollom's *Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* (1954), using this same system of identification, was the first of its kind in Europe and has only recently been bettered.

Gifted and obsessive, Peterson was a complex character whose interests extended to all forms of wildlife, and who cared passionately about the environment. His first two marriages ended in divorce, yet he attracted a loyal band of close friends which included Britain's James Fisher, and together they collaborated on two books. He was a prolific writer, illustrator and photographer, who was also much in demand as a lecturer and travelling expert on *Lindblad Explorer* trips. His skill as an illustrator is evident in his many field guides, but it was the constant revision of these guides over decades that limited his output of more "painterly" art.

This new comprehensive biography by Elizabeth Rosenthal is in fact the third to be written about Peterson, and the second since his death. I have a copy of the first of these, which is good, and the other one also received favourable reviews. So, despite it being Rosenthal's stated aim to write the "definitive" biography, I cannot say more than that her book undoubtedly contains new information and new photographs, which should be of interest to Peterson fans, and that it is an enjoyable read. Based extensively on material gathered from interviews with an amazing 112 of his friends, colleagues and protégés, it is sometimes disjointed, repetitive and eulogistic, and, disappointingly, it shows very little of his excellent artwork.

John Savory

A Field Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent. **Krys Kazmierczak (Illustrated by Ber van Perlo); 2008; Christopher Helm; 978-1-4081-0978-6; Soft Back; £17.99**

Birds of Pakistan. **Richard Grimmett, Tom Roberts and Tim Inskipp; 2008; Christopher Helm; 978-07136-8800-9; Soft Back; £23.74**

The Indian subcontinent has a rich diversity of habitats ranging from the sub-tropical and moist temperate forests to the dry alpine regions of the

western Himalayas. These habitats support an equally rich avifauna with some particularly exotic families such as pittas, minivets, drongos and trogons. These two Helm field guides provide an invaluable aid to their identification.

A Field Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent includes over 1,300 species and covers Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and is good value for money. This is a reprint of the field guide published in 2000 with 96 colour plates illustrating every species, distinct subspecies, female plumages, as well as some juvenile plumages. The text is opposite the colour plates for ease of use, and provides concise information on field identification (including voice) with details on habitat, altitudinal range, status and abundance. Over 1,300 colour maps illustrate species distribution. When dealing with such a confusing range of different families, I felt that the quick index to plates by family was particularly useful.

The **Birds of Pakistan** covers over 670 species, approximately half the species covered in the previous guide, and includes all the breeding species, regular visitors and vagrants. This guide contains 93 excellent colour plates, illustrating every distinct plumage for each species, with text easily referenced on the facing page. Six hundred distribution maps in colour accompany the text. Like the previous field guide, the inclusion of a quick reference section to families before the main plates makes this field guide easy to use. Both these handy field guides have been well produced and would make welcome companions to birding in this part of Asia.

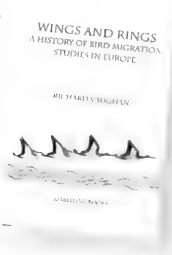
Mike Thornton

Wings and Rings - A history of bird migration studies in Europe. **Richard Vaughan. Isabelline ISBN 978-0-9552787-4-7. Softcover. 228 pages. (mikann@beakbook.demon.uk) £19.95 (incl UK postage)**

The contributions of the pioneers of scientific bird migration study are illustrated here in fascinating accounts of their lives, richly supplemented by quotes from contemporary accounts.

In his 60 years on tiny Helgoland, Heinrich Gätke documented the huge flows of migrants over that island, together with incredible rarities from both east and west. There are fascinating insights into the ingenious methods of capture adopted, on land and sea. One of many small birds routinely brought down in flight with a pebble was retrospectively identified as Germany's first Pallas's Warbler.

Immediately following Gätke's death in 1899, Danish school teacher Hans Christian Mortensen commenced his bird ringing studies which provided a much more quantitative approach. He soon had success, with 38% recovery rate for Grey Heron and 20% for Teal and Pintail - one of the latter being recovered dead on Lough Neagh on 15 April 1909, constituting the first record of the BTO ringing scheme.



Visible migration was advanced by Johannes Thienemann, who established the first true "bird observatory" at Rossitten on the Baltic coast. Insights were gained via experimental ringing, e.g. with captured White Storks, release dates being broadcast on the newly available radio. It was not long before a ring was returned, from Rhodesia, with stork still attached!

The industry and adventure of William Eagle Clarke in documenting the sometimes "unbelievable numbers" of birds attracted to lighthouses is described, featuring various Scottish sites. Many birds were caught, e.g. on one occasion 15,000 Sky Larks on Helgoland, including 440 taken with the bare hands by Gätke himself.

The book concludes with brief accounts of the further development of bird observatories, specifically Heligoland and Rybachy Biological Station at Rossitten. It is noted that the "quite remarkable assemblage of exact data in bird migration" - for example over 50 years of detailed records from the Danish lights - "has lain virtually unused for more than a century" - how could this now be exploited? A challenge for the future remains.

Stephen Welch

BirdSpot - Oh no, it's a Commic Tern!

When I first mooted the idea of doing a BirdSpot item for *SBN*, Jimmy Maxwell immediately suggested the subject of separating Common and Arctic Terns - so here goes. The task is made easier by the superb photos taken by Bob Furness in Shetland.

The return of the "sea swallows" to our coastlines means spring is really here. Their elegant flight and loud calls brighten up any day. But sometimes the doubt over knowing which species you're actually looking at can take the edge off the enjoyment of watching these wonderful, far-travelled creatures.

The secret to successful ID

How best to tell them apart? I'll let you into the secret at the end. But first, it is essential to arm yourself with one of the "new" generation of Bird ID books - these will provide just about all the information you need. The two that I use most are Lars Jonsson's *Birds of Europe*, and the *Collins Bird Guide* by Mullarney *et al.* The latter is light years ahead of the field guides many of us were brought up on. What a great start the youngsters of today have! I prefer the large A4 format version, which although too large to take out in the field, does provide (almost) enough space to do justice to the wonderful illustrations - which in the pocket version are so crammed together as to be almost confusing. Or is it just that my eyes need all the help they can get these days?

Next do a bit of revision BEFORE you go out in the field. Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted! Try to remember the key features that you should be looking for: **Common Tern** - dark wedge on the upper side of the primaries, shorter tail and longer legs when perched; **Arctic Tern** - Translucent primaries with no dark wedge (but with a dark line along the trailing edge), longer tail and short legs, often with a greyish wash on breast and belly.

Then find a place to watch your terns. It's best not to go to a colony where the melee of twisting and chasing birds makes identification difficult. Better to park yourself on a headland some way from a colony and pick them off one by one as they come and go. Common Terns generally fish closer inshore than Arctics, and so are often the easier of the two to get prolonged views of. To see Arctics you may need to visit a more exposed headland close to tidal rips.

One of the problems with "commic tern" ID is that the brightness and angle of light can make the plumage features described in the field guides either glaringly obvious or impossible to see! So it is best to concentrate on structure and shape, particularly that of the head and neck and the shape of the wings.

Common Tern

Slightly longer head and neck than Arctic, flatter crown and longer bill give a slightly "mean" appearance. A useful plumage feature that is only mentioned in passing in the field guides is the more extensive wedge of white on the lores (between the bill gape and the eye) of Common Tern, which further emphasises the long-headed/long-billed appearance (to my eyes reminiscent of a miniature Caspian Tern!).

The head end thus projects well forward of the leading edge of the wings - which in combination with the shorter tail gives the wings a more central position on the body. Primaries tend to have a more convex trailing edge, giving the wings a fuller appearance. Flight a little stronger and more stable than Arctic, and when fishing, hovers and dives directly into the water.

Arctic Tern

Shorter bill and shorter and more rounded head appears sunk in to the shoulders. In combination with the long tail, this takes the birds centre of gravity further forward than on Common. Trailing edge of primaries tends towards a concave outline, giving the wings a sharp appearance, especially at distance. Flight generally dancing, bouncy and erratic, perhaps the most graceful of any British bird. However, beware of the Common Tern's display flight (with exaggerated deep wing-beats) which is extraordinarily elegant. Finally, the *Collins Guide* describes their distinctive fishing behaviour well: "often dives with 'stepped hover', dropping a short distance and hovering again before final plunge".

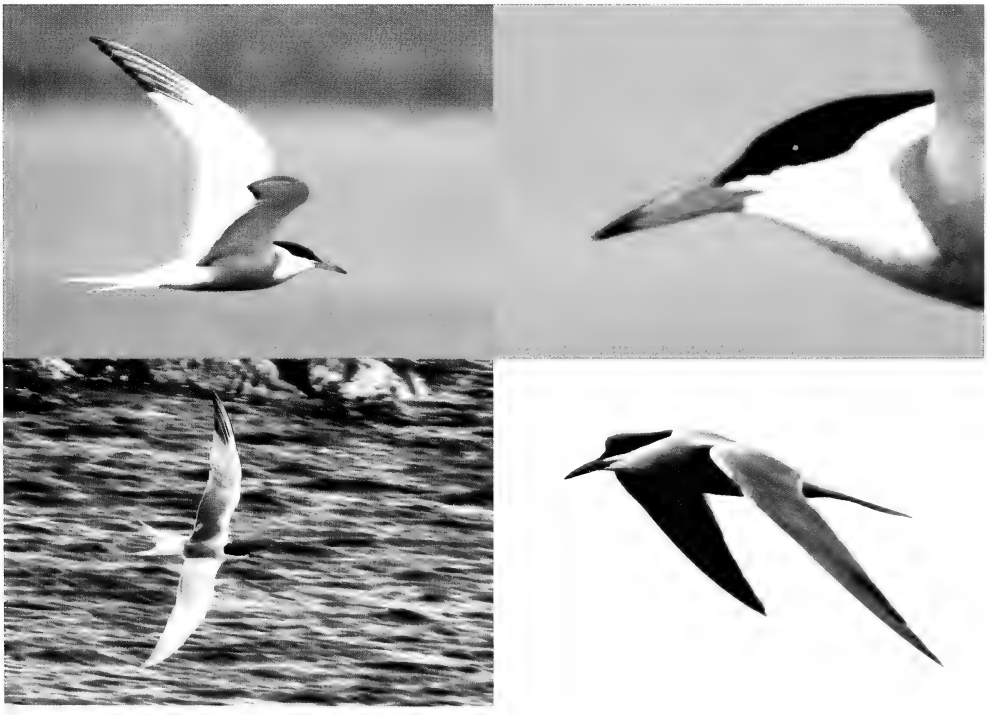
Hopefully you'll be able to see most of these features in the photos. If not, the illustrations of Common and Arctic Terns in flight in the *Collins Guide* show all these features well.

And finally the secret - practice, practice and more practice.

Clive McKay

Plates 53–56 (above). *Arctic Tern © Bob Furness & Clive McKay.*

Plates 57–60 (below). *Common Tern © Bob Furness & Clive McKay.*



Black-throated Thrush, Isle of Bute, February 2007 © Phil Kirkham.

Black-throated Thrush, Isle of Bute, January–March 2007

R. FORRESTER

Ina McMillan who lives at Elmlea, Minister's Brae, Rothesay on the Isle of Bute feeds birds in her garden each day. She knows the regular species, but does not claim in any way to have any expert knowledge of birds. On 18 January 2007 she saw an unfamiliar bird in her garden that she could not name, although she believed it to be a species of thrush. As she could not find it in her book of garden birds, she visited the local library, which by chance had a copy of Simms' *Thrushes*, from which she identified the bird as a Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*.

There was some disbelief of her claim by the initial persons she contacted, but fortunately her insistence and persistence paid off. It was not until the evening of 23 January that she contacted a local birdwatcher, Ian Hopkins, and he visited her house early the next day. Seeing the bird briefly and believing that the identification was correct, he telephoned me and asked if I would check it out to confirm identification. I arrived at her house and saw the bird for 2–3 minutes at 10:15hrs at a distance of 10m when it was perched in a *Eucryphia* tree. Identification was straightforward and easily confirmed as a 1st-winter male Black-throated Thrush. I saw the bird again on 25 and 26 January at distances down to 25ft (8 m), although it proved elusive and was only visible for 2–3 minutes on each occasion.

Up to that time the bird had only been seen in the small garden of Elmlea, a mid-terraced house and it had only been viewed from Ina

McMillan's kitchen window, although it often disappeared for long periods of time. Although I was keen to release the news, there were obvious access difficulties, as the garden could not be viewed from a public right of way and Ina McMillan did not want a continual string of birders in her kitchen. I discussed the situation with Angus Murray of Birdline Scotland and it was agreed that information could be released late on Sunday 28 January, thus avoiding a possible large influx of birders over the weekend. There was public access to an open area of ground 40m to the rear of Elmlea and the initial announcement on Birdline Scotland advised that the bird might possibly be viewable from there, but Elmlea was not publicised as the exact location where the bird had been seen. The bird was seen on the Monday by visiting birders and over the next two months at least 200–300 birders visited the island and saw the bird, which continued to frequent Elmlea, but probably spent more time in a large garden to the rear and which was partly visible from the public right of way. Visiting birders all behaved very well and none of the residents voiced any complaints. In fact it proved an excellent public relations exercise, with Ina McMillan very generously inviting many birders to view from her kitchen window. The bird was last seen on 26 March.

Description

The bird was similar in size and structure to Common Blackbird, a species often nearby for direct comparison. It was fairly uniform grey-brown above, with light edging to tertials and coverts. The underparts had a light grey wash with dark flecking, particularly on flanks. The throat and upper breast feathers were black with pale edging, giving a 'scalloped' appearance. There was a yellow base to the lower mandible, with the rest of the bill blackish. Dark legs. Dark eye.

Ron Forrester, The Gables, Eastlands Road, Rothesay, Isle of Bute PA20 9JZ.

Plate 62. *Black-throated Thrush, Isle of Bute, February 2007 © Tom Marshall.*

Black-throated Thrush - its status in Scotland

At the time this individual was found this species was still considered to be one of two distinct races of Dark-throated Thrush (Turdus ruficollis), *with the nominate form having a red-throat* (T. r. ruficollis) *and the other, western form a black-throat* (T. r. atrogularis). *Intergrades between the two were known to occur, but despite this several authorities considered these to be separate species, and this position has very recently been adopted by the British Ornithologists Union (37th BOURC Report, 2009), in the light of recent studies from the hybrid zone.*

Black-throated Thrush breeds in Russia from the northern Ural Mountains eastwards through western Siberia and northern-most Kazakhstan towards Lake Baikal and NW Mongolia. A few birds remain in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, but the majority of these birds winter from southern Iraq eastwards through Iran and Pakistan to northern India and from southern Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to western China and the Himalayas.

There is only one accepted record of Red-throated Thrush in Britain - a 1st-winter male at Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, present from 29 September to 7 October 1994. All of the 65 other records in Britain to the end of 2007 relate to Black-throated Thrush, with the Bute individual being the 28th bird recorded in Scotland (It was followed by a 1st-winter female on Fair Isle on 23 April 2007).

The first Scottish record (2nd British) was an immature male, shot near Perth, Perth & Kinross, in February 1879 and the second was not discovered until nearly 80 years later when a male was present on Fair Isle from 8 December 1957 to about 22 January 1958 - encouraged to remain on the island with a daily offering of food from the Observatory. The Northern Isles have had a virtual monopoly on Scottish records since then, accounting for just over 89% of sightings to the end of 2007 (14 on Shetland, eight on Fair Isle, three on Orkney), with the only records elsewhere being the Perth bird, the Isle of Bute individual above, and an adult male found along the coast near Prestongrange, Lothian on Christmas Day 1989. The distribution of records elsewhere in Britain is notably widespread, with most found in the well watched counties of Yorkshire, Norfolk and Scilly/Cornwall, but with single records from at least a dozen other counties.

There has been a notable rise in the number of birds being found in Scotland, from three in the 1970s, five in 1980s, 11 in 1990s and eight already from 2000 to the end of 2007. This may simply be the result of the greater number of observers searching for migrants and vagrants on the Northern Isles in recent years rather than any increase in vagrancy. The most seen in a year is two, a total achieved on seven occasions: 1987, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 2003 and 2007. All records refer to single birds except in 1994, when two 1st-winter males were present on Fair Isle at the same time - the only multiple occurrence in Britain. The Isle of Bute bird is the longest-staying individual recorded in Scotland - present for at least 68 days, followed by the 1957/58 Fair Isle bird (45 days), with others remaining for 10 days (Foula, Shetland 2003) and nine days (Loch of Hillwell, Shetland 1977) but none of the others has stayed for more than four days.

All Scottish records have been between 23 September and 27 April, and the pattern of British records overall fits with birds arriving on the east coast in autumn among flocks of Redwings and Fieldfares, then moving further south and inland to over-winter, and with records the subsequent spring along the coast again - presumably relating to birds heading back NW towards the normal breeding areas.

In the mid to late 1990s several birds were found over-wintering in suburban areas in central England, which raised hopes that a bird might similarly be found somewhere in central Scotland, but this series of events did not continue, hopes faded, and it increasingly looked like mainland-based Scottish birders would have to travel to the Northern Isles if they ever wanted to see one in Scotland. This made the Isle of Bute individual all the more welcome!

Plate 63. Killdeer, Banna Minn, Shetland, April 2007 [illegible].com

The Killdeer on Shetland 2007/08

R. HAYWOOD

On Friday 6 April I decided on impulse to go birding after work, as the weather was fairly calm for a change. I headed for the island of Burra which lies to the west of south Mainland and which is my winter 'patch'. The area has a network of small lochs and sheltered voes that hold small numbers of wildfowl and gulls. I birded my way south down the island and made my way across Banna Minn beach and then onto the isolated headland of Kettla Ness. This is a spring staging area for Great Northern Divers, and I saw a summer-plumaged White-billed Diver off here in April 2006, so I had been visiting the area regularly since mid-February hoping for a repeat performance. However, only a few Great Northerns were offshore and as it was getting late now, and a band of snow was approaching from the south-west, I started the long walk back to the car.

As I got back to Banna Minn beach I suddenly heard a loud, ringing *'kii-deee'* call from somewhere overhead that, thanks to several Nearctic trips, I immediately knew could only be a Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*! Looking round frantically I saw three birds land on the beach in front of me - two Ringed Plovers and a stunning Killdeer! The Ringed Plovers appeared to be a territorial pair and seemed mightily agitated by the interloper.

Surely I must be hallucinating? I checked and re-checked but there was no doubting the bird's identity. I hurriedly grabbed my camera and took a few record shots, then reached for my video camera and recorded a short sequence, which on reviewing later turned out to be useless as the bird was back-on throughout and the image significantly blurred as I had been shaking so much with adrenaline! I then left the bird and ran up the hill to get a mobile signal and put out the news of the bird. My message urging local birders to hurry now seems ironic since the bird turned out to be Europe's longest-staying Killdeer ever by some distance!

A few birders duly arrived and got good views of the bird though I was anxious some south Mainland birders would not arrive in time as the light was starting to fade now and I knew Killdeer would be a county-tick for many Shetland birders. At around 18:45hrs the bird flew north onto a hillside and we followed its movement until it was out of sight. More birders now arrived and a subsequent search of the hillside relocated the bird, which was sitting in a short grassy area. As dusk fell the bird was lost again and could not be found, despite a very thorough search by many birders the next day.

I made almost daily visits to the area through early April to search through the various divers offshore, though by now I was convinced the Killdeer had moved on. However on 15 April, while on Kettla Ness, the Killdeer flew over my head calling as it headed-off south down the headland. I put the news out but, frustratingly, and despite many observers searching, the bird was not seen again that day. However next morning the Killdeer was found in the area north of Banna Minn beach and showed well to most who made the effort to see it. Most birders connected with it easily enough, although I know of some who were unlucky and had to make half a dozen visits before connecting! Although it could be very elusive and mobile, the Killdeer was faithful to the same area for the next few weeks and was last seen definitely there on 4 May.

Remarkably, on 14 May the Killdeer was relocated at the small valley of Clevigarth, which is about 19 kilometres SSE of Kettla Ness and lies just to the north of Exnaboe. The bird commuted between Clevigarth and the nearby Pool of Virkie until it was last seen on 19 November, allowing many holidaying birders to add it to their lists.

Due to the presence of 1st-winter feathers the Killdeer was aged as a second calendar-year bird, and since it was paired with a (the same?) male Ringed Plover at both Banna Minn and Clevigarth it was tentatively sexed as a female. Interestingly, it was also seen engaging in territorial distraction display at both Banna Minn and at Clevigarth - surely a unique sight on this side of the Atlantic?

This bird's stay of over seven months was unprecedented and this is the first Killdeer to summer in Britain (Europe?). This individual was only the second to be found on Shetland, the previous record being a bird at Hillwell, South Mainland on 13 to 20 March 1993.

The bird made a return appearance in spring 2008. It was seen, again with Ringed Plovers, at Virkie on 6 and 7 March but then became much more erratic, being seen on Mousa on 2 April and on Noss on 11 April - though it was not seen thereafter.

Description

Like a Ringed Plover on steroids! Larger, longer-legged and longer-tailed than Ringed Plover. V-shaped orange rump very obvious in flight. Tail blackish with white outer feathers also two or three blackish traverse bars across outer tail feathers. Upperparts a shade darker brown than Ringed Plover. All mantle and scapular feathers were neatly edged buffish which probably indicates a 1st-winter bird. Underparts very clean white. Double breast bar utterly distinctive though I thought the upper bar was a little bit more distinct than the lower. The head pattern was quite like a winter-plumaged Ringed Plover, but with a noticeable white crescent below the eye. The bird had an orangey-red eye-ring but this was very difficult to see in the field, and is not visible in all photos of the bird. Like Ringed

Plover it had a full white collar and chin area. Bill longer than Ringed Plover with a fairly deep base tapering to a finer tip and blackish in colour. Legs long and pinkish-brown. At rest it looked long-winged, but the primary tips still fell well short of the tail tip. In flight it showed a broad white wing bar across primaries and secondaries. Primaries and primary coverts otherwise blackish. Call was a loud ringing '*kii-deee*' rising on the second syllable (I am very familiar with this call from several Nearctic trips) although during its stay the bird was heard to give a variety of calls on that theme including a quite buzzing, almost Twite-like, '*du-weeez*' and other calls reminiscent of both Green and Common Sandpipers.

Russ Haywood, 'Lamnaberg', Wester Quarff, Shetland ZE2 9EZ.

Killdeer – its status in Scotland

This is an American species with three subspecies. The nominate form occupies a huge breeding range from the Pacific to Atlantic coasts, from southern Alaska and the central latitudes of Canada throughout the USA to Central Mexico. The other races are resident in the West Indies and the coasts of Peru and northern Chile. The northern elements of the North American population undertake broad-front overland migrations in spring and autumn, and winters from southern British Columbia and western USA, and across southern USA south from New York to Florida and Mexico.

Though generally scarce on coasts during migration, this species is prone to northward displacement up the Atlantic seaboard by

Plate 64. *Killdeer, Pool of Virkie, Shetland, October 2007 © hughharrop.com.*

storms and hurricanes in late autumn and winter and it seems likely that most, if not all, of the birds encountered in NW Europe have resulted from these events.

The first British record was of one near Christchurch, Hampshire in April 1859, and there have now been 50 birds recorded in Britain to the end of 2007, nine of these in Scotland, with at least 16 more in Ireland. The first Scottish bird (2nd British) was shot near Peterhead, NE Scotland in 1867, but it was another 116 years until the second: the long-staying Bo'ness bird which was the subject of a Birding Scotland *'Blast from the Past' article in 2002 (Shand, 2002). The Scottish records prior to the 2007-08 Shetland bird are as follows:*

1867 *NE Scotland: one shot, Peterhead, (no month or date)*
1983 *Upper Forth: one, Bo'ness, 16 January–20 March.*
1983/4 *Outer Hebrides: 1st-winter, Askernish, South Uist, 30 December–7 January 1984, and at Kilvaley, South Uist, 22 January 1984.*
1984 *Argyll: one, Colonsay, 7–8 January.*
1984 *Ayrshire: one, Portencross, 21 January.*
1990 *Outer Hebrides: one, Eoligarry, Barra, 10 October.*
1991 *Outer Hebrides: one, Balranald, North Uist, 5 May.*
1993 *Shetland: one, Loch of Hillwell and Brake area, 13–20 March.*
1995 *NE Scotland: one, Loch of Strathbeg, 13–15 April.*
2004–05 *Outer Hebrides: 1st-winter, Knockintorran, North Uist, 25 December to 8 January 2005.*
2005 *Lothian: one, Musselburgh Lagoons, 22 January.*
2006 *Outer Hebrides: one, Clachan Sands, North Uist, 16 October.*
2006 *Argyll: one, Oronsay, 18 October.*

The Scottish records occur between 10 October and 5 May, while British records overall fall between 28 September and 5 May with slight peaks in late autumn/early winter and early spring. Despite several one-day birds the average stay for birds in Scotland is 11 days, and the Bo'ness individual remained for 64 days - which up until the 2007-08 Shetland bird was the longest stay of any of the British records. Individuals on the Isles of Scilly in 1963/64 and 1979/80 each remained for 58 days, though the average stay for birds in Britain overall is also 11 days. The recorded duration of the 2007-08 Shetland bird's stay - 227 days in 2007 from 6 April to 17 November, and a further 37 in 2008 from 6 March to 11 April (a potential total of a year and five days if the bird over-wintered undetected on Shetland) is quite astounding by comparison.

Plate 65. *Killdeer, Clevigarth, Shetland, May 2007 © Rob Fray.*

The Isles of Scilly have proven the most productive area for this species in Britain, with 12 individuals, though the remaining records have a wide geographical spread indicating earlier arrival and wandering of birds prior to discovery. By contrast, most Scottish records have been from the west and north as would be expected for a trans-Atlantic vagrant.

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Plate 66. *Little Crake, Burrafirth, Unst, June 2007 © hughharrop.com*

Little Crake, Burrafirth, Unst, Shetland, May–June 2007 - the sixth Scottish record

A.I. McELWEE

My brother Stefan and I were taking our annual spring trip to Unst on Shetland with high hopes. As we are both teachers we have no choice but to go in the May half-term holiday but the weather charts looked good for later in the week and the hoped for south-easterlies were due around Wednesday.

The first full day on Monday 28 May was spent looking around the usual haunts in a cold northerly and unsurprisingly only a single migrant Chiffchaff was found. Although the wind moved to the north-east on the Tuesday it still felt very cold and no new migrants were seen.

To try something different on the 29th we decided to go to Burrafirth in the afternoon where we had never seen much but I remember our friend Micky Maher saying the burn there could be very good. With very little obvious cover I thought I would go and investigate where the best places would be for later in the week when the birds might be more plentiful. My brother lacked my enthusiasm and he decided to have a sleep in the car and gave instructions for me to shout to him if I found anything unusual.

A walk down to the beach alongside the cliffs revealed some bracken-covered, sheltered inlets which I thought looked good, and then a walk back along the burn, which on one side was quite well vegetated in places, took me back in the direction of the car. My concentration had started to wane and I was imagining flushing a Bluethroat or Thrush Nightingale from my feet when just a couple of metres away I heard a splash in the burn and I glimpsed a wing of a bird. I was very intrigued as neither Moorhen nor Water Rail was to my knowledge expected on Unst. I could not view the bank from my side of the burn so I sat on the bank above where the bird was and gently slid my foot along the water's edge. Almost immediately a small rail or crake flew from beside me to a few metres up the burn!

The bird showed stripey upperparts and for the next few adrenaline-fueled moments I did not have a clue what species I was about to see. All I knew was that it was no Moorhen or Water Rail! My heart was starting to pound and it increased further when I saw the bird had bright bluish-grey underparts, and a smallish lemon-green bill with a reddish patch at the base of the bill. I watched the bird for a few seconds walking quickly along the bank until it disappeared into a small hole in the vegetation. I knew I was looking at either a male Little Crake or Baillon's Crake, but I couldn't remember which one had the red bill base. So I extracted myself from the scene and ran back to the car to wake my brother up. He had seen me running and hoped I had found a Marsh Warbler or something to kick start the holiday. In the time it took me to tease him with the statement "I've got a Little or a B" he had answered crake and was running back down the road with his heavy duty camera tied to his back! He reminded me it was a Little Crake *Porzana parva* with the red bill base and plainer underparts than the Baillon's.

Although I knew this was a very rare bird, Stefan suspected this was almost unheard of in terms of Shetland and Scottish birding. A phone call to Roger Riddington confirmed as much, and several Shetland birders were soon catching ferries on their way up to Unst.

Plate 67. *Little Crake, Burrafirth, Unst, June 2007 © Tim Loseby.*

Plate 68. *Little Crake, Burrafirth, Unst, May 2007 © Stef McElwee.*

Unfortunately the bird was not seen for quite some time and it was much to my relief when local birder, Mike Pennington, refound the bird close to where I had seen it three or so hours earlier. A small friendly crowd of twelve or so people watched it until dusk including a grateful Dennis Coutts - it was a new Shetland bird even for him.

The bird continued to show well for the remainder of our trip and well into June. The hoped for south-easterlies came as well, giving us Blyth's Reed, Icterine and Marsh Warblers plus Common Rosefinch and Red-backed Shrike, making it my favourite week birding I've ever had.

Identification

This was relatively straightforward given my brief but good views. My initial impression as I flushed the bird was of a smallish crake with brown wings (a little smaller than a Water Rail), but unlike that bird it had a thick blackish stripe down the back with two thickish beige stripes alongside. On alighting I saw a small crake with plain bluish-grey underparts right down to the area level with the legs and up to the crown which was brown. Also the smallish, straight bill stood out as it was a bright yellowy-green with an obvious red patch at the base of the bill. The red iris was of a similar colour to the bill base. The long primary projection was also noted, giving the bird a longer slightly rectangular shape compared to the squarer more 'wren-like' shape of a Baillon's.

The upperparts gave a striped effect but white flecking was noted in lines down the mantle, along the tertials, and sparingly on some of the coverts. The tertials and coverts had black centres with thick brown edges. The rump and uppertail coverts were brown. White flecks on a grey background started to be visible behind the legs on the flanks, and onto the vent, but these were not obvious, particularly when viewed from side-on. The striking undertail coverts were black with heavy white flecking. The legs were green with large green feet.

This bird stayed until 19 June, proving popular with both resident and visiting birders despite its remote location. Remarkably it was the second record for Unst.

Ashley McElwee

Little Crake - its status in Scotland

This species breeds patchily through Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Holland, and northern Italy, and then more extensively eastwards from Germany and Austria throughout Eastern Europe, north to the south-east Baltic and Finland, and south to Turkey and across the Caucasus to the Caspian sea, and across Russia and Kazakhstan into Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and north-west China. Its wintering areas are poorly known, with most records indicating areas from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and north-west India and western-most China. Most European breeders probably winter around the Mediterranean and south through Egypt into East Africa, and into the Arabian Peninsula, with occasional individuals found further north into the Low Countries and even Britain.

The first British record was of a female/immature bird obtained at Catsfield, near Battle in East Sussex on 29 March 1791, although the true identity of the record did not come to light until one hundred years later (Palmer 2000). Around 63 individuals were recorded in Britain prior to 1950, but only three of these occurred in Scotland. The first Scottish record (about 29th individual in Britain) was of an adult male picked up dead beside the River Isla at Thornton, Banffshire (Moray & Nairn) on 12 March 1852. The second was not until 1909 when one was caught exhausted on a boat in Girvan Harbour, Ayrshire on 29 March, and the third was of one caught, and later released near Loch Scammdale, a few kilometres south of Oban, Argyll on 29 September 1911.

From 1950 to the end of 2007 there have been a further 37 birds recorded in Britain with just three of these in Scotland including the Burrafirth individual above. There was a gap of nearly 50 years before the fourth Scottish record - a male picked up dead on the shore at Uyeasound, Unst, (Shetland) on 10 April 1959, while the fifth was a male trapped on Fair Isle on 11 May 1970, but found dead the following day. Given the marked rise in observer numbers since the early 1960s the lack of an equivalent rise in Little Crake records is notable, and presumably reflects the decline of the species throughout Europe in this period. Records in Britain had actually been showing a drop from 11 in the 1970s to six in the 1980s and just two in the 1990s, but with six already from 2000 to the end of 2007 there has been something of a reversal of this trend.

The Burrafirth bird continues the bias for spring records in Scotland (83.5%) whereas elsewhere in Britain there is a fairly even split between spring and autumn find dates and birds have been recorded in all months. The three records from the Northern Isles are particularly notable given that the great majority of records come from the southern counties of England, and only seven have been found in Wales. The Burrafirth bird is the only long-staying individual in Scotland (21 days), and one of the longest in Britain, exceeded only by an adult male at Oughtonhead Common, near Hitchin, Hertfordshire in 1953 which stayed 66 days from 23 January, a male present at Brinton, Norfolk for 61 days from 15 November 1959 into 1960, one at Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire from 7 November to 12 December 1974 (36 days), and one seen at Lodmoor, Dorset on four days over a 31 day period from 8 November 1975. Virtually all other records are of one-day birds, many of the earlier occurrences falling victim to a collector's gun.

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Plate 69. ***White-tailed Lapwing, Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway, June 2007 © Harry Scott.***

White-tailed Lapwing, Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway, 6 June 2007 – the first Scottish record

R. HESKETH

Following a long dry spell of weather, WWT Caerlaverock was experiencing a drought. The wet meadows were drying out and low water levels were causing some concern, as the breeding birds there were becoming vulnerable. Waders nesting on the islands in the flashes were in danger of losing their moat-like protection, for which the solution was to divert some water from the nearby Lochar Water, the small river which runs through WWT's holdings. To achieve this, on Wednesday 6 June I fired up our trusty Lister 3-inch diesel pump and the water level in 'The Flood Ground' (also known lovingly by its compartment code 'OW39') was soon rising back to what was desired.

With the water levels restored I then casually looked over 'The Flood Ground' to check the Lapwings, Oystercatchers and ducks, but whilst viewing the expected birds, my gaze lit upon an unusual one. It was obviously a large pale plover, and my first thought was Sociable Lapwing. Having done some birding in Oman, where my father had worked in the past, I knew enough to quickly dismiss this option, as the bird obviously had bright yellow legs, and I wondered if Oriental Plover might be the answer...

Plainly I needed to sort it out in a hurry, so I dashed back to the centre, grabbed a 'scope and belted back to Avenue Tower for better views. It didn't take long to relocate the bird,

still among the Lapwings, and to get it in the 'scope. My initial thoughts were that it may be an Oriental Plover, but something wasn't right about the bird in the scope for that species. I was now able to examine the bird's features through the scope; long yellow legs, whitish belly mixed with buffier elements, and merging into a darker brown and well-demarcated lower breast that continued over the neck and mantle. The head showed whitish markings, particularly around the chin and ear coverts, and the tips of the tertials appeared whitish, as did the outer part of the folded wing. The most striking features of the plover were the leg length and coloration.

I then contacted Brian Morrell (WWT's Learning Manager), who promptly materialised with a camera and subsequently managed to secure a few useful shots. At this stage we didn't know the identity of the bird but realised the potential significance of what we were watching and so phoned Birdline Scotland and got the photographs to them. The identification was quickly established as White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* and an enormous sense of excitement ensued.

The bird was next seen by one of our volunteer reserve workers, Jess Florey, and a call was put out to Dr Larry Griffin (WWT Caerlaverock Research Officer) who arrived shortly after. The bird was still on show, and it did not take long to confirm its identity as a White-tailed Lapwing. We broadcast the news immediately, and very soon after birders began to arrive; the first of some 1,600 destined to visit the reserve during that and the next few days. The twitch went very smoothly, and we were pleasantly surprised to see how many birders were fully paid-up WWT members! Our regal guest remained on site for three days, and was still present late on the Friday night, but Saturday 9 June dawned to dense fog. As the mists eventually cleared, it became obvious that the bird had departed, unfortunately for the weekend birders. A subsequent sighting of the White-tailed Lapwing in Lancashire (at Leighton Moss RSPB, to the south-west of Caerlaverock) on 10–17 June, albeit often elusive, at least gave these birders some hope that they may yet catch up with this handsome bird.

Plate 70. *White-tailed Lapwing, Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway, June 2007 © Darren Robson.*

Previous British records

White-tailed Lapwing breeds in Iraq, Iran, southern Russia and Kazakhstan, and sporadically in Turkey. There are two main wintering areas - in northern India, and in the Sudan region of East Africa, with smaller numbers also found in the Middle East. In Europe it has appeared as a vagrant in Sweden, Finland, Poland, Romania, Austria, The Netherlands, Italy, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, France and Britain. Prior to the Caerlaverock WWT individual there had only been three others recorded in Britain, with the last of these also seen at two different sites during its stay. The first British record was at Packington Gravel Pits, Warwickshire, from 12–18 July 1975, and was seen by several hundred birders; the second was at Chesil Bank, Dorset, on 3 July 1979, the bird being filmed briefly as it circled and settled adjacent to the reeds toward the Abbotsbury end of the Fleet; the third was initially found at Cleadon, County Durham, on 21 May 1984, but received considerable harassment from a local Lapwing and only remained for just over an hour. What is presumed to be the same bird was then refound just north-west of Telford, Shropshire, where it was present from 24 May to 3 June, though it was on private land and news of the bird could not be released at the time.

With 28 years since the only widely available chance to see this species in Britain, there is little surprise that the Caerlaverock bird attracted such huge interest.

Richard Hesketh, Caerlaverock WWT Reserve, Eastpark Farm, Caerlaverock, Dumfries DG1 4RS.

Plates 71–72. *White-tailed Lapwing in flight, Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway, June 2007 © David H Hatton (www.kowapower.com).*
Plates 73–74. *White-tailed Lapwing on ground, Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway, June 2007 © Darren Robson and Phil Jones.*

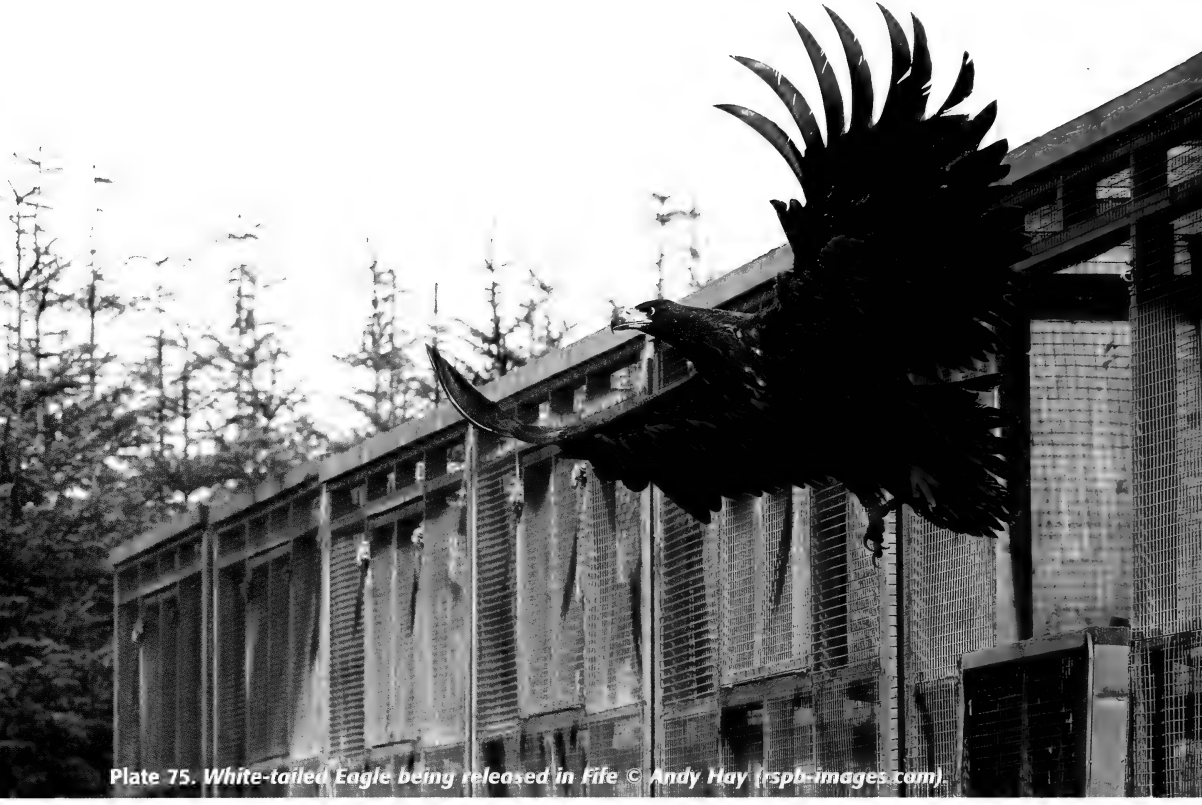

Plate 75. *White-tailed Eagle being released in Fife © Andy Hay (rspb-images.com).*

East Scotland Sea Eagles

C. SMITH

East Scotland Sea Eagles is a five-year project with the aim of returning White-tailed Eagles to East Scotland. In a partnership project between RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland, the first 15 birds were released from a site in Fife in August 2007.

Plate 76. *Taking blood samples from newly arrived chicks © Andy Hay (rspb-images.com).*

For the third phase of the White-tailed Eagle re-introduction in Scotland, birds are collected as chicks aged five to eight weeks old, by members of the Norwegian Ornithological Society (NOF, a BirdLife partner) from an area stretching 200 km from Bergen to Alesund, over 500 km south of Bødo where west coast birds originate from.

The birds are flown to Scotland in late June and undergo extensive health and pollutant screening in conjunction with Edinburgh University and Natural Research, before being held in large aviaries for two months. During this time, they have minimum human contact and are fed a mixed diet of fresh and frozen fish, venison and rabbit, through a small hatch and using a fabric sleeve. Prior to release all birds are fitted with radio backpacks with five-year battery lives, which should allow tracking up until birds settle on home ranges, signals can be picked up 40 km away. In 2007 birds were fitted with wing tags and in 2008 colour-rings.

The birds aged three and a half months and weighing 4–6 kg are released in mid-August. A food dump is maintained on the aviary roof for them (to mimic the dropping off of food by adults) and the birds can take anything from a week to three months to disperse from the release site.

Now that we have released two batches of birds, it has been interesting to see the similarities between the areas they are seeking out. Birds released in 2007 formed communal roosts in Strath Braan (five birds for six weeks) and four females and a male roosted on the south side of Loch Tay between February and September. On one occasion three of these birds were observed engaging in an aerial fight with two juvenile Golden Eagles. The 2008 birds started to form a roost in the Carse of Gowrie in September, which built up to hold eight birds in January and was still being used by three birds in May 2009. Birds from both cohorts showed a tendency to move south-west into the Forth Valley, Strath Earn and Strath Allan in February each year, showing great interest in ducks and geese. Released White-tailed Eagles have shared roosts and carrion with Red Kites throughout the year in central Scotland with five different birds being recorded at Argaty Red Kite Centre, the first in February 2008, a year after a wandering juvenile White-tailed Eagle visited from the west coast. In February 2009, one female did not stop at Stirling but kept heading south-west as far down as the Solway, and even popped into England for a few hours at Bowness-on-Solway before returning to the Kirkcudbright area.

Plate 77. *A released bird returning to the food dump area in Fife © Andy Hay (rspb-images.com).*

Two birds have visited the Isle of May: the first of these was a 2007 male which lingered for six weeks in winter 2007/08, a period coinciding with the end of seal-pupping and Rabbit die-off, while the second was a 2008 male which arrived there 10 days after release in August 2008, and was seen taking some late fledging Fulmar chicks and young gulls. In October this bird then moved up the coast to St Fergus and Loch of Strathbeg, enjoying the abundant Rabbits and wildfowl at the latter site - as a 2007 male had done the previous autumn. Four birds have gone west to Mull, Skye and Ardnamurchan, but have been returning east every few months.

Four birds from the 2007 release are known to have died. Two of these were electrocuted, one was allegedly persecuted, and there was one where the cause of death was unknown.

Plates 78–79. *Newly released White-tailed Eagles, Fife © Andy Hay (rspb-images.com).*

2008 chicks

In 2008 a further 15 chicks (eight males and seven females) were imported, fitted with colour-rings and radio backpacks and released between 10 and 18 August. The release of four birds on the 14 August was broadcast live on the BBC Breakfast programme and the BBC radio network. In March, birds were still being seen throughout Fife and into Lothian.

The first observed encounters between birds from the releases in 2007 and 2008 occurred when three females from the 2007 cohort mixed with birds from 2008 near the release site, over Milnathort and at Loch of the Lowes, in August and September 2008.

The first casualty of the 2008 release was found in recent weeks, a large female weighing 6 kg, was hit by a train near Carsebreck lochs where she had spent the past few months. She was in good physical condition, flying over Tentsmuir forest over 72 km away only a couple of days before death and had reached a year old. Sea Eagles are train casualties in Norway and Germany and it is a fate that befalls other carrion feeders such as Red Kites in Scotland.

Plate 80. *Ring 94 (Ralf) photographed at RSPB Loch of Strathbeg Reserve, NE Scotland © Duncan Goulder.*

On the 11 April, tag 7, a female, from the 2007 release was spotted flying over North Ronaldsay and then Shetland. She took 35 minutes to get between North Ronaldsay and Fair Isle and then only another 35 minutes to reach mainland Shetland, slightly faster than the last Sea Eagle to visit the islands! She had been on Mull since December, but had popped into the communal roost on the 29 March before heading north. At the time of writing in mid-May she was still island hopping, visiting Foula.

On 21 April a three year old west coast bird was spotted over Loch Leven, identified by its yellow tags, three weeks later a three year old male, fledged from the Loch Frisa pair on Mull in 2006, yellow 'O', was seen over Loch Davan near Dinnet, NE Scotland. It is unclear whether these were the same individual as the tags were not read on the first bird, but it is great to see birds moving in both directions, a step closer to restoring a Scotland wide population.

East Scotland Sea Eagles is a partnership project between RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland who host the release site. We would like to thank the Hutchison Family, Mrs Thomas and Ardmore Highland Single Malt for their kind support of the project.

Many thanks to everybody who has submitted sightings - these help us considerably to build up a picture of the birds' movements and survival.

Sightings can be reported to Claire Smith at eastscotlandseaeagles@rspb.org.uk or phone 01738 630783.

Updates

You can keep up to date with the project's progress on the blog:
http://blogs.rspb.org.uk/eastscotlandeagles/default.aspx

Claire Smith, East Scotland Sea Eagle Officer, RSPB Scotland.

Birdline Scotland

REVIEW

compiled by
Angus Murray & Stuart Rivers

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All records refer to the period 1 January–31 July 2007 unless otherwise stated.

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January to June 2007

The long list of rare and scarce wildfowl that had graced Scotland at the end of 2006 were all present into 2007. The start of the year also proved a good period for rare and scarce gulls, with a notable influx of Iceland and Glaucous Gulls around 21 January. The usual early migrants in spring were on the whole around two weeks later than normal arriving, and only low numbers were seen by the end of March. Migration remained slow from March into April, but all common migrants bar Spotted Flycatcher had been reported before the end of April with some early dates for most of the later moving species. Grasshopper Warblers and Lesser Whitethroats were again noted in especially good numbers. By contrast not many new scarce and rare wildfowl were discovered during the usual spring movements in April. May was largely disappointing for rare birds, except for a purple patch on Unst, Shetland, and the totals for scarce passage migrants were similarly poor for most areas. An impressive range of rare and scarce waders occurred during June, with pride of place going to Scotland's first White-tailed Lapwing.

Taiga Bean Goose: away from the Central Scotland flock a single bird was again in the Bavelaw area (Lothian) on 2–14 January at least. **Tundra Bean Goose:** four birds were seen in February - two on East Mainland, Orkney from 24, with single birds seen with Pink-feet in NE Scotland and in Angus. **Snow Goose:** five were noted in January - two white morphs still in Orkney, white morphs in Argyll and Moray & Nairn, and a blue morph near Beauly (Highland) on at least 13. Five were also reported in February, with the birds remaining in Argyll and on Orkney, and two birds noted in Dumfries & Galloway. During March single white morph birds were in Argyll still and near Burghead (Moray & Nairn) on 27. Four white morph birds flew past Balranald, North Uist (Outer Hebrides) in June, adding themselves to a long intriguing line of midsummer records of flocks of this species. **Canada Goose**: presumed vagrants included the Taverner's Canada Goose in the WWT Caerlaverock area (Dumfries & Galloway) from 2006 throughout January, a Todd's type, form *interior*, was at Montrose Basin (Angus) on 6–7 January and five birds were reported from Islay during the month. The Taverner's Canada Goose remained in the WWT Caerlaverock area (Dumfries & Galloway) throughout February, with a Richardson's noted there as well on many dates. Eight presumed vagrant birds were reported in March - six in Argyll, including five on Islay, and two still with the Barnacles in the WWT Caerlaverock area (Dumfries & Galloway). **Red-breasted Goose:** an adult was with Pink-footed Geese at Haugh of Blackgrange (Upper Forth) on 3–12 February, and again on 15 April - it is interesting to speculate as to whether it could possibly be the same bird later seen amongst Pink-feet in eastern Iceland on 7 May. One was at Balnakeil Farm, Sutherland (Highland) on at least 24–25 May. **American Wigeon:** single drakes remained at Alness (Highland), Wick (Caithness) and Loch Bee, South Uist (Outer Hebrides) throughout January, and one was on Tiree (Argyll) on 18 January. In February the adult drakes were still present on the Outer Hebrides, Caithness and Highland, while a 1st-winter drake was noted at Campbeltown Loch (Argyll) from 6. Four drakes were seen in March - in Argyll, Caithness and the Outer Hebrides still, plus one on Hoy (Orkney) on 1. **Black Duck:** one was seen at Loch Sunart, Highland on 16–17 June. **Green-winged Teal:** six

drakes were reported in January, seven in February, and six in March. Seven were noted in April, including three on Orkney. **Garganey:** a drake was at Hirsel CP (Borders) from 12 March, and 11 were noted in the last fortnight of April. Good numbers were seen during May with 45+ widely scattered reports. **Lesser Scaup:** at least three different 1st-winter drakes were on Benbecula and North Uist (Outer Hebrides) during January, and a female at Caerlaverock WWT Reserve (Dumfries & Galloway) lingered from 2006. Seven were noted in February, with four different drakes on the Outer Hebrides (all on North Uist and Benbecula), plus the female at WWT Caerlaverock (Dumfries & Galloway) present throughout the month and two different drakes on Loch Leven (Perth & Kinross) from 14 and 25. Remarkably eight birds were seen during March - three different drakes on the Outer Hebrides still, two drakes at Loch Leven (Perth and Kinross), two different at WWT Caerlaverock (Dumfries & Galloway), the female still up to 13 with an adult drake also present on 12, and a 1st-winter drake was at St Margaret's Loch, Holyrood Park, Edinburgh from 30 - the first record for Lothian. At least four drakes were seen in April - singles in Holyrood Park, Lothian (to 16) and Loch Leven (Perth & Kinross) and at least two on the Outer Hebrides up to 19. A drake was at Loch of Toftingall (Caithness) on 12–13 May. Two drakes were reported in June - one at Hogganfield Loch, Glasgow (Clyde) on 2 and another at Stoneybridge, South Uist (Outer Hebrides) on 24. **Ring-necked Duck:** a female was present at Drimsdale, South Uist (Outer Hebrides) throughout January, and the drake still remained at Loch of Tingwall (Shetland), whilst two drakes were at Loch Riaghain, Tiree (Argyll) on 5–8, with one bird still present there on 10 January and presumably one of the same then nearby on Coll on 19–22 January. In February six were reported including two different drakes seen in both Caithness and on Tiree (Argyll). Four drakes were noted during March - from Caithness, Shetland and two on Tiree (Argyll). Four birds were seen in April - including a female at Loch Melldalloch (Argyll) on 17–24. A drake at Loch of Lintrathen on 10–13 May was only the second record for Angus. **King Eider:** the drake was again off Peterhead (NE Scotland) from 2006 to at least 6 January whilst two drakes were seen on Shetland - off Whalsay on 1 and Mousa Sound on 2–16 January. The latter was presumably the bird seen in Mousa Sound (Shetland) on 25 February at least; more unusual was a drake at Clachtoll (Highland) on 7–12 February. The only bird reported in March was a drake off Whalsay (Shetland) on 17. No fewer than seven drakes were reported in April - single 1st-winter drakes at Burghead (Moray & Nairn) from 7 and on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 3–14, three on Shetland, one again at Peterhead (NE Scotland) which stayed to 22, and one at Ormsary (Argyll) on 1 April. The 1st-summer drake was still at Burghead (Moray & Nairn) up to 23 May at least, with an adult drake off Machrihanish, Kintyre (Argyll) on 12 May, which remained up to 12 June at least. **Harlequin Duck:** a true highlight was the drake seen off St Kilda (Outer Hebrides) on 18 June - the first adult male seen in Britain for over 40 years. **Surf Scoter:** only two drakes were reported during January - in Largo Bay (Fife) and at Tankerness (Orkney), both remaining throughout, whilst in February the drake remained in Largo Bay (Fife) throughout and four (two drakes) were seen in the Sound of Taransay (Outer Hebrides) on 18. Three drakes were seen in March - in Fife, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides. Six birds were reported in April - from Moray, Fife, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides (3). Eight were reported during May including a female at Ronachan Point (Argyll) on 3, and a female on Fair Isle on 21–25 - the first record for the island. Six birds were reported in June - drakes in Angus and the Outer Hebrides and at least three drakes and one female at Blackdog-Murcar (NE Scotland). **Bufflehead:** the drake remained on Unst (Shetland) from 2006 to 20 January. A 1st-summer male was at Ardnamurchan (Highland) on 7 June, and amazingly was then relocated at Loch na Muilne, Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 8–9 June. The Unst bird was only the

Plate 81. *Surf Scoter, Fair Isle, May 2007 © Mark Breaks.*

Plate 82. *Black-browed Albatross © Dods Macfarlane. This bird was still present among the Gannets on the remote island of Sula Sgeir, (part of the Outer Hebrides) for at least its third year in 2007. Despite its remote location, over 65 km north of the Isle of Lewis, it was successfully twitched by three boatloads of birders on 8–10 May. Sadly there were no sightings in 2008. Given that albatrosses can live for over 50 years it is just conceivable that this is the same individual which took up residence on the Bass Rock (Lothian) in 1968–69, and that seen at Hermaness, Unst (Shetland) from 1972–1995, or even the bird seen on St Kilda (Outer Hebrides) in 2002. The more likely possibility would seem to be that several birds have been involved in the sightings around Britain, and that seabird colonies on the islands around Scotland, and NW Ireland and Scandinavia, are playing host to albatrosses on a fairly regular basis.*

third record for Scotland, so another so soon after is remarkable - these constitute only the 12th and 13th birds found in Britain. **Barrow's Goldeneye:** the drake at Callander/Loch Venachar (Upper Forth) was present from 2006 throughout the first few months of 2007 and was last reported on 27 April - only the third individual seen in Britain. **Smew:** only 11 were reported in January, at least 4 of them on Loch Leven (Perth & Kinross), while 12 were noted in February including at least three on Loch Leven (Perth & Kinross).

White-billed Diver: one was seen off Kirkabister (Shetland) from 21 January with two present there on 31 January. Two were again seen on Shetland in February - an adult still off Kirkabister and a juvenile off Unst on 18–25, while on Lewis (Outer Hebrides) at least two, and up to four, were found at the end of the month with two off Skigersta on 24 and then two off Tiumpan Head on 25. Two were still off Lewis from 3 March, with two different birds on Shetland from 17, and one at Sound of Arisaig (Highland) on 22 March. The relatively calm weather conditions in April probably contributed to the high count of birds seen in spring. At least 18 different birds were noted from 6 April to 6 May, again mainly off Lewis (Outer Hebrides), where at least five were noted, and Shetland, where at least nine different birds were recorded. Also in the last week of April two birds were seen off North Ronaldsay (Orkney) and an adult was seen between Mull and Staffa (Argyll) on 3 May, with one on 6 May past Aird an Runair, Balranald, North Uist (Outer Hebrides). Most of the birds seen were adults, many in full summer plumage and mirrors a similar passage off SW Norway that peaks at the end of April/beginning of May. As yet the wintering grounds of these birds are unknown but somewhere off SW Britain and SW Ireland seems likely. **Black-browed Albatross:** the adult returned to the Gannetry on Sula Sgeir (Outer Hebrides) and was successfully twitched there on 8, 9 and 10 May, with a further report from 3 June. **Balearic Shearwater:** one flew past Barns Ness (Lothian) on 27 May. **Leach's Storm-petrel:** seven flew past Uisaed Point (Argyll) on 18 March, and one was also seen off Stonehaven (NE Scotland). Five were seen off Aird an Runair, South Uist (Outer Hebrides) on 19 May, with one the next day.

Eurasian Bittern: one was at Sullom Voe, Shetland on 23 April. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** an adult, of unknown origin, was reported at Bavelaw (Lothian) on 14 February. **Little Egret:** two

were reported in January and February - one at Vane Farm RSPB, Loch Leven (Perth & Kinross) throughout, and one at Glenluce (Dumfries & Galloway) on 17–26 January and then Loch Kindar (Dumfries & Galloway) on 24 February. The Loch Leven bird remained throughout March. During April one was at Brae, then Laxo (Shetland) on 21–24, with further singles at Tyninghame (Lothian) on 17 and RSPB Gruinart, Islay (Argyll) on 26. At least one was seen on Shetland during May with further birds in Caithness and NE Scotland. Four were reported in June - with birds in Angus, Caithness and two in Moray & Nairn. **Great White Egret:** one was at Loch of Banks (Orkney) on 28–1 Apr - only the 3rd Orkney record and the fourth year running that one has been seen in Scotland in early spring/late winter. One was at Brow Marsh (Shetland) on 8 May then seen over North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 14 before being seen again at Brow Marsh on 15–26 May. At least one individual was involved in sightings in Highland on the 25–26 with then in the first week of July two different adult summer birds were found at Loch Doon (Ayrshire) and Wards Pond (West Dunbartonshire). On plumage features these two birds in July appeared to be the same two adults present in NE England in June: at Tophill Low (East Yorkshire) and on Tees-side. **Eurasian Spoonbill:** one was discovered at Whalsay (Shetland) on 21 February following a spell of south-easterly winds, and then moved to the Sullom Voe area where it remained to 6 March - only the 6 record for Shetland. Three were seen in May - one commuting between RSPB Loch of Strathbeg and the Ythan Estuary (NE Scotland) on 19–21, and singles at Aberlady Bay (Lothian) on 22–24 and at RSPB Mersehead (Dumfries & Galloway) on 31. All reports in June came from Dumfries & Galloway with one at Loch Ryan on 2 and then two birds at RSPB Mersehead on 18–25.

European Honey Buzzard: one flew over WWT Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway on 1 June. **White-tailed Eagle:** an untagged immature was present at RSPB Loch of Strathbeg (NE Scotland) from 21 February until 25 March. Presumably the bird was of Scandinavian origin as were the last two White-tailed Eagles that were seen on the reserve, including a Finnish ringed immature in 2004. **Marsh Harrier:** one was seen at Scoughall (Lothian) on 11 March. **Rough-legged Hawk:** the released dark morph bird was again at Channerwick, Shetland on 24–26 January. **Osprey:** very early returning birds were seen in Lothian and Highland on 4 March, but birds were not noted back on nest sites until the last few days of the month, much later than has been the norm in the last few years. **Red-footed Falcon:** a male was seen briefly at Drums (NE Scotland) on 3. **Hobby:** seven were reported in June from 14. **Gyrfalcon:** an elusive white morph bird was on Fetlar, Shetland up to 21 January at least though it was only reported on three occasions. A white morph bird was seen on St Kilda (Outer Hebrides) on 17 February and one was found dead there on 20 May. **Common Quail:** about 20 singing birds were reported in June, with nine from the Borders including five at Newmains, Reston on 18. **Little Crake:** a male was present near Burrafirth, Unst, (Shetland) from 29 May to at least 19 June - the sixth record for Scotland though the first since 1970. **Common Crane:** one flew over heading south near Lochgilphead (Argyll) on 23 February. Up to six birds were reported in April, including three on Shetland. At least 10 birds were reported during May with birds noted in Shetland, Orkney, NE Scotland and Angus.

Avocet: one was on the Eden Estuary (Fife) on 15–17 February, with then possibly the same bird at Tankerness (Orkney) from 24 February to at least 19 March (seventh record for Orkney). Two birds spent the day on the wader scrapes at Musselburgh Lagoons (Lothian) on 19 April. **Stone Curlew:** one was seen briefly at Ardnave Point, Islay on 6 June (the 2 record for Islay and Argyll if accepted). **Killdeer:** a major highlight of the spring wader influx was the individual present on West Burra (Shetland) from 6 April onwards, then moving to the Virkie/Exnaboe area in May where it lingered through into November - only the second record for Shetland. At the time of discovery few would have predicted that the bird would become the longest staying individual ever found in Britain & Ireland. **Dotterel:** the first trips were noted in Lanarkshire and Highland on 28 April. **White-tailed Lapwing:** an adult at WWT Caerlaverock on 6–8 June was the first record of this species for Scotland, and only the fifth ever for Britain. The bird was relocated at Leighton Moss, Lancashire from 10–17 June. **Temminck's Stint:** one was at RSPB Loch of Strathbeg (NE Scotland) on 22–24 May, and two at Tyninghame (Lothian) on 27, with one remaining until 30 May. Tthe only bird reported in June was at Murton Gravel Pits (Angus) on 9–13. **Baird's Sandpiper:** unusually there were two spring records - singles at Haroldswick, Unst (Shetland) on 20 May, and at Loch a' Phuill, Tiree (Argyll) on 30–31 May. **Curlew Sandpiper:** there was a good showing in May with 26+ reported from 12. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** two were seen displaying at Rattray Head (NE Scotland) on 1 June. **Pectoral Sandpiper:** an early bird was reported at RSPB Loch of

Strathbeg (NE Scotland) on 26 April. Singles were at WWT Caerlaverock (Dumfries & Galloway) on 4 and 25–26 May and at Balranald, North Uist (Outer Hebrides) and on Tiree (Argyll) on 31 May. Four were reported on the 1–17 June, with birds on the Outer Hebrides, Shetland, in Angus and in Argyll. **Black-tailed Godwit:** very high numbers of *islandica* race birds were noted on passage around 19–25 April including counts of over 600 at Skinflats (Upper Forth) and the Eden Estuary (Fife). **Whimbrel:** a very early migrant was at Ruddons Point (Fife) on 18 March. **Spotted Redshank:** nine birds reported in April represented a good Scottish showing by recent standards. **Terek Sandpiper:** one was seen on Fair Isle on 13 June - the first record for Fair Isle and the fourth for Shetland. **Lesser Yellowlegs:** one was at RSPB Gruinart, Islay (Argyll) on 6–14 May. **Wood Sandpiper:** around 20 birds were reported during May. **Red-necked Phalarope:** one was on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 27 June. **Grey Phalarope:** one flew past Hopeman (Moray & Nairn) on 4 January, while another was present briefly off Barassie (Ayrshire) on 8 January. A summer plumaged bird flew over Aird an Runair, South Uist (Outer Hebrides) on 23 May.

Pomarine Skua: small numbers were noted from 6 April onwards mainly off Aird an Runair, North Uist (Outer Hebrides) with a peak count of 59 off there on 25. Large numbers were displaced by strong westerlies on 18–19 May, and an Ayrshire record count of 93 birds was seen at Saltcoats on 19. The largest counts from the Outer Hebrides were of 167 at Aird an Runair, South Uist on both 6 and 19 May, with 175 birds noted nearby at Ardvule Point on 19. **Long-tailed Skua:** the first birds seen were 19 past Aird an Runair, Balranald, North Uist (Outer Hebrides) on 6 May with the main passage concentrated in the period from 16–25 May and with a peak day count of 336 birds past there on 18. Only small numbers were noted elsewhere, though 30+ passed Newbie (Dumfries & Galloway) on 18 May, while Saltcoats Harbour (Ayrshire) again showed that in the right conditions birds will pass overland there with 18 birds logged between 18–25 May following strong westerlies. **Mediterranean Gull:** In an excellent winter for this species at least 32 were reported in January, mainly from Angus, Lothian and Ayrshire, though four 1st-winters remained at Fraserburgh (NE Scotland), while 33 were noted in February. **Laughing Gull:** a 2nd-summer bird was at Coot Loch, Benbecula (Outer Hebrides) on 7 May. **Ring-billed Gull:** only two were reported during January - the adult at Stromness (Orkney) on 3, and the returning bird, now a 3rd-winter, at Oban (Argyll), which remained throughout February. Four birds in March included three new finds, 1st-winters at RSPB Loch of Strathbeg (NE Scotland) from 16 and on Islay on 21, plus a 2nd-winter at Loch Barvas, Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 29–30 whilst the long staying 3rd-winter was still at Oban (Argyll). During April an adult was at Balranald, North Uist (Outer Hebrides) on 19, with elsewhere an adult bird still at Oban (Argyll) and the 1st-winter still at RSPB Loch of Strathbeg (NE Scotland) during the month. **Yellow-legged Gull**: the only reports during January were from Lothian and Borders with at least four, all adults, reported. **Caspian Gull:** the 1st-winter discovered at Dunbar (Lothian) in December 2006 remained to 13 February. **American Herring Gull:** two 1st-winter birds were seen in March - one at Stornoway, Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 17–30 and the other on Tiree (Argyll) on 20. There are currently only two accepted records of American Herring Gull from Scotland though there were several well photographed and well watched 1st-winters on the Outer Hebrides in 2002 and 2004. The 1st-winter bird remained at Stornoway Harbour (Outer Hebrides) throughout April. Unusually for this time of year three 1st-winter birds were reported in May - the long-staying bird at Stornoway (Outer Hebrides) up to 22 at least, then one on Tiree (Argyll) on 25, and one at Loch Ryan (Dumfries & Galloway) on 27. A 1st-summer bird was again on Tiree (Argyll) on 7 June, and another at Stinky Bay, Benbecula (Outer Hebrides) on 19 June. **Iceland Gull:** around 145 were reported in January, though in contrast to Glaucous Gull most were on the Northern Isles, with four at Westing, Unst (Shetland) on the 9, then a definite influx which saw seven at the Butt of Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 21, 14 at Scalloway (Shetland) on 22, eight at Scrabster (Caithness) on 28, six at Stornoway (Outer Hebrides) on 23, 4+ at Peterhead (NE Scotland) on 21 and 28. At least 150 were noted in February, with the higher counts including 15 at Loch Roag, Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 3, nine at Scrabster (Caithness) on 4, eight at Scalloway (Shetland) on 25, at least six at Kirkwall (Orkney) on 1–5, counts of six in Stornoway harbour (Outer Hebrides) on several dates and four at Strathclyde Loch (Lanarkshire) on 11. Around 155 birds were reported in March, with higher counts including nine at Stornoway (Outer Hebrides) on 30, nine at Scalloway (Shetland) on 17, seven on Islay (Argyll) on 21, six at Mallaig (Highland) on 15 and six at Butt of Lewis on 25. At least 14 birds were noted in June, mostly from the Outer Hebrides. **Kumlien's Gull:** several were noted with the January influx of Iceland Gulls, with reports from Shetland (at least two), Orkney and Peterhead (NES). Several birds continued to be reported amongst

the Icelands into March, including an adult at Butt of Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 22–30. **Glaucous Gull:** at least 102 were reported in January, with the largest numbers on the Outer Hebrides and Argyll, including six at the Butt of Lewis (OH) on 21, and at least 26 on Lewis on the 29 including nine at Uig and 15+ between Shawbost and Ness. At least 82 were reported during February, again mostly from the Outer Hebrides and Argyll. Around 65 were reported in March. At least 12 birds were reported in June, from the Outer Hebrides. **Ross's Gull:** the extremely confiding and very popular 1st-winter bird at Ormsary (Argyll) was last seen on 15 January, with presumably the same bird relocated nearby at Portavadie (Argyll) on 13–25 February. **Bonaparte's Gull:** the adult remained at Ferryden (Angus) from 2006 throughout January and February to 3 March. An adult bird was seen at Col, Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 8 April. A 1st-summer bird was found on South Uist, Outer Hebrides in June. Initially at Ardivachar Point on 19, it was then at Howmore from 20 June to September. **Ivory Gull:** the sickly juvenile found in December 2006 was present near Irvine, Ayrshire to 4 January, when it was taken into care but died. **Sandwich Tern:** early birds were noted at Evie (Orkney) on 10 March and Machrihanish (Argyll) on 15 March. **White-winged Black Tern:** one was at RSPB Loch of Kinnordy (Angus) on 29 May. **Black Tern:** the only report of the spring was of one off Ardvule Point, South Uist (Outer Hebrides) on 20 May.

Brunnich's Guillemot: one was found dead on the beach at Scousburgh (Shetland) on 25 March. **Little Auk:** only around 13 were reported during January - mainly from Shetland. Small numbers were seen in March including 33 past the Butt of Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 18.

Plate 83. *European Bee-eater, Fair Isle, June 2007 © Deryk Shaw.*

European Turtle Dove: one on South Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 29–31 March was a most unusual record. Nine birds were reported in June, including three in Highland and at least one in Argyll. **Snowy Owl:** one again graced Brue, west Lewis (Outer Hebrides) on 1 and was then present there again on 10–13 January. A male was then seen regularly in west Lewis throughout February and a carload of birders twitching it found a second male there between Borve and South Galson on 20 (present until the 24 at least). They had spotted the original bird by the roadside, and whilst watching it, the "new" male flew over the top of them! Both males lingered into March with at least one present to 27. In April at least three were seen between North Uist, Lewis and St Kilda (all Outer Hebrides) including a "new" female on St Kilda from 5. More intriguingly two different birds were seen on Highland mountain tops in April - on the Angels Peak, Cairngorms (Highland) on 5 and Aonach Beag near Fort William (Argyll) on 26. At least two were seen in May - a male again on North Uist from 12 and a female on St Kilda on 8–24 (both Outer Hebrides). At least three different birds remained on the Outer Hebrides in June, with a male still at Grenitote, North Uist on 3 at least, and a male and a female were noted on St Kilda. **European Bee-eater:** one was seen near Applecross (Highland) on 4 May with presumably the same bird then near Forsinard RSPB (Highland) on 7–10 May. One was seen on Fair Isle on 4–6 June, with another at Tarbet (Highland) on 13–16 June. **Hoopoe:** two birds were reported in April - one at Inverewe (Highland) on 18 and one at Lossiemouth (Moray & Nairn) on 24. **Wryneck:** only six were reported in May - all on the Northern Isles apart from one on the Isle of May on 15.

Calandra Lark: one was seen at Baltasound, Unst, Shetland on 12 May. **Greater Short-toed Lark:** two different birds were seen on Fair Isle in June, - singles on 5 and 13. **Shore Lark:** four birds at the Sands of Forvie NNR, by the Ythan Estuary (NE Scotland) lingered from 2006 up to 12 March at least. One was seen at Collieston (NE Scotland) on 15 April, and one was present on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 1–7 May. **Sand Martin:** a very early bird was at Blairbowie (Ayrshire) on 8 March, but was not the precursor to a major influx with 35 at Martnaham Loch (Ayrshire) on 29 the largest

number seen by the end of the month. **Barn Swallow:** two very early birds were reported on Rum (Highland) on 14 March, with others noted in Argyll on 17 March. **Red-rumped Swallow:** one flew over Collieston (NE Scotland) on 16 April. Single birds were reported at Gairloch (Highland) on 11 May and Baron's Haugh RSPB (Clyde) on 28 May. **Water Pipit**: birds from 2006 remained into March at Musselburgh (Lothian) and Maidens (Ayrshire), with another discovered at Cardross, Dunbartonshire (Clyde) on 7 February. **Yellow Wagtail:** a singing male, apparently of the Ashy-headed form, was at Torlum, Benbecula (Outer Hebrides) on 1–28 June. **Citrine Wagtail:** a 1st-summer male was at the Loch of Boardhouse, Birsay (Orkney) on 15–16 June. **Waxwing:** birds were reported from throughout Scotland in small numbers during January with 210+ seen. The largest flocks were c.50 in Aberdeen on the 4, up to 45 at Longforgan (Perth & Kinross) from the 21 and 32 in Dundee on the 10. About 165 were seen in February, with 50 in Glasgow on 21 and 40 in Blairgowrie (Perth & Kinross) on 8 the best counts. Around 85 were reported during March, including up to 37 at Longforgan (Perth & Kinross).

Thrush Nightingale: the only bird of the spring was on Fair Isle on 13 May. **Common Nightingale:** the only report was of one singing at Garthdee, Aberdeen (NE Scotland) on 7 May. **Black Redstart:** singles were present on North Ronaldsay, in NE Scotland and in Dumfries & Galloway in January. Seven were seen from 24 March. **Bluethroat:** a singing male of the white-spotted form was at the Tay Reedbeds (Perth & Kinross) on 2–5 May, while seven of the red-spotted form were seen from 21 May including two on the Isle of May. Only four birds were noted in June - all on Shetland on 1–6. **Red-flanked Bluetail:** a 1st-winter male on Out Skerries (Shetland) on 2–3 April was a remarkable record - only the second spring record in Scotland (4 in Britain), but follows on from three autumn records on Shetland in October 2006. **Northern Wheatear:** despite an early bird on Arran (Clyde Islands) on 14 March, only low numbers were reported by the end of the month and none of these had reached Shetland. **Black-throated Thrush:** a 1st-winter male was present at Rothesay, Isle of Bute (Clyde Islands) from 18 January to at least 26 March - only the third Scottish record away from Orkney and Shetland after singles at Perth in 1879 and in Lothian in 1989. A female was on Fair Isle on 23 April. **River Warbler:** one was trapped on Fair Isle on 11 June. **Paddyfield Warbler:** one was trapped on Fair Isle on 9 June. **Blyth's Reed Warbler:** one was at Skaw, Unst, Shetland on 31 May, with presumably the same individual then seen at Burrafirth, Unst on 1 June, and another was trapped at Skaw, Whalsay (Shetland) on 3–8 June. **Marsh Warbler:** one was on Fair Isle on 31 May. At least 20 birds were reported in June, including singles on Tiree (Argyll), on the Isle of May, at Applecross (Highland) and a probable at East Barns (Lothian) on 18–27. **Great Reed Warbler:** a singing male was at Virkie (Shetland) on 14–15 June. **Icterine Warbler:** at least five different birds were on Fair Isle from 12 May, while one was at Rattray Head (NE Scotland) and at least four on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 31 May. At least 32 birds were seen in June - all on the Northern Isles and included several singing birds. **Subalpine Warbler:** a 1st-summer male of the eastern form *albistriata* was on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) from 30 April until 11 May, with three birds of the western form also seen during May - males on Vatersay (Outer Hebrides) on 3 and Wick (Caithness) on 5, and one on Fair Isle on 23–24. A female found on the Isle of May on 21 June remained into July, so mirroring a previous over summering bird there in 1985. **Barred Warbler:** a rare spring bird was at Scatness (Shetland) on 1 June. **Common Chiffchaff:** reported in good numbers from 13 March.

Red-breasted Flycatcher: two different birds were seen on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) between 13–30 May with another on Unst at Burrafirth (Shetland) on 27 May.

Plate 84. *Lesser Grey Shrike, Fair Isle, June 2007 © Paul Baxter.*

Five birds were seen from 1–11 June, with three on Shetland and singles in NE Scotland and on the Isle of May. **Golden Oriole:** one was on Fair Isle on 31 May, and two birds were noted on Shetland on 1–4 June. **Red-backed Shrike:** just five birds were reported - three on Fair Isle, and one on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) from 22 May, and a male at St Fergus (NE Scotland) on 31 May. At least 73 birds were noted in June, mostly on Orkney and Shetland including six on Fair Isle on the 5, with five on Fetlar the same day. **Lesser Grey Shrike:** one was found on Fair Isle on 27 May and remained there into August. **Great Grey Shrike:** there were two records in January - one at Kingussie (Highland) on 7 and one at Dumbrock Muir (Clyde) noted all month and through February, with another present near Edderton (Highland) from 20 February. In March two birds were seen in the Clyde area, and the bird remained near Edderton, Highland throughout the month. **Rosy Starling:** singles were on South Uist (Outer Hebrides) on 16–29 May nearby at Lochmaddy, North Uist on 21 May and on Fair Isle on 28 May. At least one adult was on South Uist during June with another adult on Rousay (Orkney) on 24 June.

Hawfinch: birds were again present in good numbers over the winter at Scone Palace (Perth & Kinross), with peak counts of 30 on 25 February and 35 on 17 March. **Common Redpoll:** a spell of south-easterlies in late February brought an influx of Mealy Redpolls to the Northern Isles, including 40+ on Fair Isle on 25 and 30 on South Ronaldsay (Orkney) the same day. "Mealies" were still present in good numbers on the Northern Isles at the start of March especially on Fair Isle with a total of 84 birds ringed on there during the month. **Common Rosefinch:** seven were reported from 24 May. Seventeen birds were seen in June, including singles on the Isle of May and on Lewis, Outer Hebrides. **Dark-eyed Junco:** a belated report was received of one found at Unapool, Highland on 23 June. **Lapland Bunting:** nine birds were reported from 9 March with individuals noted on the Outer Hebrides, Argyll, Fair Isle and North Ronaldsay. **Rustic Bunting:** a male was seen on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 18 May, with singles on Fair Isle and Grutness (Shetland) on 31 May. One was still present on Fair Isle up until 4 June, while a female was seen briefly at the Foveran Bushes (NE Scotland) on 2 June. **Little Bunting:** one was on Fair Isle on 30 April. **Black-headed** or **Red-headed Bunting:** a female of this species pair was present on Fair Isle on 1–7 June. **Baltimore Oriole:** a major highlight of the spring was an adult male at Huna, near John O'Groats (Caithness) on at least 24–27 May. Unfortunately news only emerged on it after it had gone when photos showing it visiting garden peanut feeders at Huna were sent to the RSPB North Scotland office. The three previous records of this species in Scotland have all been in September, though there have been two previous May records elsewhere in the UK.

Plate 85. *Rustic Bunting, Fair Isle, June 2007 © Mark Breaks.*

Plate 86. *Baltimore Oriole © Alex Maclean. Found in a garden near John O' Groats (Caithness) from 24–27 May, this spectacular male bird was only the fourth individual of this species to be recorded in Scotland. Given that the previous three Scottish records had all come from Scottish islands in September few would have predicted that the next would be found in summer and coming to bird feeders on the mainland, albeit at the extreme northern edge. This was the 23rd individual to be recorded in Britain, but only the third found in spring following males in Cornwall in May 1968, and in Pembrokeshire in May 1970. Where, and at what time of year, the next Scottish record will be now seems a lot less certain.*

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Authors should bear in mind that only a small proportion of the *Scottish Birds* readership are scientists and should aim to present their material concisely, interestingly and clearly. Unfamiliar technical terms and symbols should be avoided wherever possible and, if deemed essential, should be explained. Supporting statistics should be kept to a minimum. All papers and short notes are accepted on the understanding that they have not been offered for publication elsewhere and that they will be subject to editing. Papers will be acknowledged on receipt and are normally reviewed by at least two members of the editorial panel and, in most cases also by an independent referee. They will normally be published in order of acceptance of fully revised manuscripts. The editor will be happy to advise authors on the preparation of papers.

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Reference should be made to *The Birds of Scotland* (Forrester *et al.* 2007) for guidance on style of presentation, use of capitals, form of references, etc.

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Tables, maps and diagrams should be designed to fit either a single column or the full page width. Tables should be self explanatory and headings should be kept as simple as possible, with footnotes used to provide extra details where necessary. Please insert all tables, graphs and maps with their captions after the text or supply as separate documents. Maps and other graphics should preferably be provided in eps (Encapsulated PostScript) format, or as a high resolution jpg/tiff file, good quality computer print out or drawn in black ink, but suitable for reduction from their original size. Contact the SOC Office Manager on 01875 871330 for further details of how best to lay out tables, graphs, maps etc.

Fair Isle Bird Observatory

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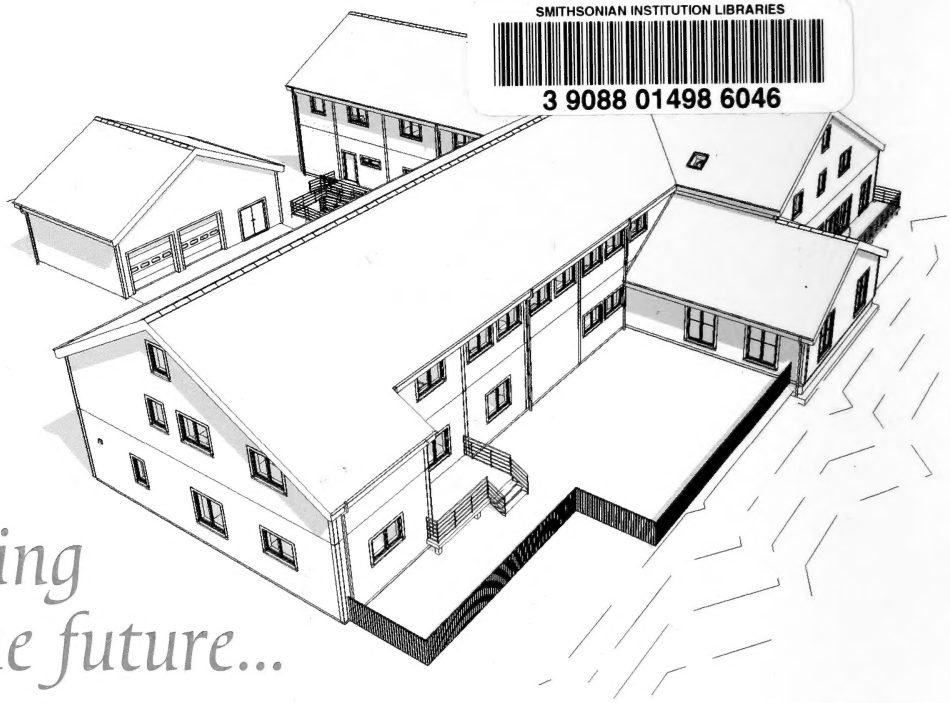

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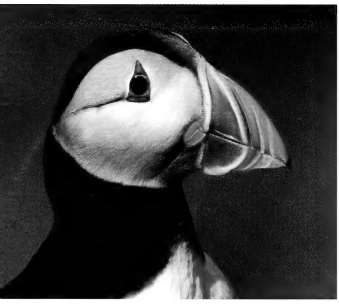

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We need to build a new Observatory, to open in 2010. It will be a modern, eco-friendly place for you to stay and for scientists and students to continue their long-term research on Fair Isle's migratory and resident birds, including the island's precious seabirds. It will cost a total of £4 million, much of which has already been secured but Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust still needs to raise the last £262,000 through individual donations. The Trust is an independent charity, which is totally self-funded and reliant on revenue from visitors. We're appealing for your help.

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