

ORKNEY BIRD RECORDS

JANUARY 2017

Up to 33 **Great Northern Divers** were visible in Wide Firth on calm days like 22nd while the regular **White-billed Diver** was seen in the Hope-Water Sound area on several dates and five **Black-throated Divers** were in Echnaloch Bay on 22nd. 24 Slavonian Grebes were also in Echnaloch Bay on 22nd, while the returning **Black-necked Grebe** was on the Loch of Skail until at least 5th. 15 **Little Grebes** was a good count on the Stenness Loch on 15th.

A **Manx Shearwater** passing the Mull Head of Papay was a most unusual January record but not nearly as unusual as that of a sub-adult **Black-browed Albatross** sitting on the sea off Rerwick Head, Tankerness on 2nd! This would be only the third record of this Southern Hemisphere species in Orkney.

The largest count of **Hérons** was 12 on Damsay on 21st while a **Little Egret** frequented The Loons almost all month.

The largest count of **Whooper Swans** was 20 on the Loch of Brockan, Rendall on 20th. Unusual geese included six **Eurasian White-fronted Geese** on North Ronaldsay on 29th/30th, a **Bean Goose** on Sanday on 8th, 20 **Barnacle Geese** at Breck, Rendall on 21st and a **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** in Holm on 14th and 21st.

Shelducks numbered up to 27 at the Oyce of Quindry throughout and 30 at Mill Sand on 21st. Single **Green-winged Teals** were at the Loch of Skail all month, on North Ronaldsay on 18th and 29th and at the Loch of Tankerness on 20th/21st. The highest count of **Pintails** was 17 on North Ronaldsay on 20th.

The usual wintering **Scaup** flock on the Stenness Loch held 175 on 28th while two were at the more unusual locality of Echna Loch on 21st. The **Lesser Scaup** remained on the Loch of Skail until at least 22nd and the **Ring-necked Duck** on the Loch of Clumly until at least 28th.

Up to 29 **Velvet Scoters** were in Wide Firth off Quanterness during the month while four **Common Scoters** were found there on 7th. A drake **Surf Scoter** was also present for most of the month with two there on 16th. A drake **Goosander** was at Loch of Bosquoy on 4th and a drake **Smew** on North Ronaldsay's Bewan Loch on 2nd.

The long-staying **Northern Harrier** was seen on North Ronaldsay on four occasions while another excellent find was a juvenile **Pallid Harrier** at the Mill Dam of Rango from 16th until at least 29th.

The **Common Crane** remained in the Loch of Clumly area of Sandwick until at least 22nd and Water Rails were seen at Dale, Costa on two occasions and on North Ronaldsay on 25th/26th. A **Red-legged Partridge** at Quoyangry, South Ronaldsay was part of a recent release by shooting interests.

There were 86 **Ringed Plovers** on North Ronaldsay on 28th and 76 **Purple Sandpipers** there on 2nd. **Grey Plover** records involved just one at Palace on 14th and two at No.4 Barrier on 22nd. **Knots** were reported only from the Bay of Suckquoy (two on 21st) and nearby St.Peter's Pool (30 on 22nd).

Six **Ruff** were at The Loons on 17th with five still present the following day, an unusual mid-winter record. One-two **Jack Snipe** were on North Ronaldsay from 15th-20th while another was at Firth School on 28th. Two **Woodcocks** were at Hobbister on 23rd with records of singles coming from North Ronaldsay, Dale and Kirkwall. 42 **Bar-tailed Godwits** were counted at Mill Sand on 21st while the regular wintering **Whimbrel** was on Burray on 14th and 21st.

Continuing the run of unusual mid-winter sightings, a **Pomarine Skua** passed North Ronaldsay on 12th. Two **Iceland Gulls** were also there on 2nd with singles on five dates thereafter while singles were also reported from Sandwick, Stromness, Finstown and Burray. There were far more **Glaucous Gulls** with an influx after mid-month bringing six to North Ronaldsay, three to Papay and three to Marwick with singles at several other sites. Single **Little Auks** were seen on North Ronaldsay on 5th, at No.2 Barrier on 17th and No.1 Barrier on 22nd.

Probably the bird of the month was the **Snowy Owl** that was on Eday from 8th until at least 11th and which on one occasion commuted to Westray.

A **Shore Lark** was a rare visitor to Papay on 7th. 40 **Meadow Pipits** in the Firth School bird crop was a very large gathering for the time of year. Seven **Pied Wagtails** were roosting at the Ayre Mills, Kirkwall on 22nd together with a **Grey Wagtail**, perhaps the bird that was being seen almost daily at the Willow Burn.

A **Dunnock** was an unusual visitor to Papay on 1st, none having been recorded there throughout 2016! A cock **Blackbird** decided that spring had come early and was in full song on Hoxa on 17th. Very few Scandinavian thrushes were noted with the largest **Fieldfare** gathering being 15 on the Lyde Road on 26th and that of **Redwings** being 13 on North Ronaldsay on 22nd.

Four **Goldcrests** at Woodwick House, Evie during the Big Garden Birdwatch on 28th was an interesting record while the long-staying **Blue Tit** at Hestily, South Ronaldsay remained until at least 22nd.

Up to 33 **Greenfinches** were at feeders on the Heddle Road, Finstown all month and **Goldfinches** peaked there at 34 on 29th; other Goldfinch records involved up to 22 on Cairston Road, Stromness and a single bird at No.4 Barrier on 12th. A **Common Redpoll** was at Heddle Road on 22nd while the maximum count of **Twite** at Dale was 234 on 29th.

The largest **Snow Bunting** flock was of 22 at Waulkmill Bay on 24th followed by 21 at the Boardhouse Loch on 5th, 15 at Stromness Reservoir on 3rd and up to eight on North Ronaldsay. Up to 40 **Reed Buntings** utilised the bird crops at Dale during the month.

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