

## ORKNEY BIRD RECORDS

### AUGUST 2016

An immature **Black-throated Diver** was off Wester Sand, Holm on 26<sup>th</sup> while the only **Great Northern Divers** were three singles off North Ronaldsay after 22<sup>nd</sup>.

It was a fantastic month for seabird passage and especially for rare and unusual species.

**Fulmars** were passing the Brough of Birsay at up to 6300 per hour on 8<sup>th</sup>. 42 **Manx Shearwaters** were also counted there on that date, North Ronaldsay having logged 43 the previous day. **Sooty Shearwaters** were noted throughout the month off North Ronaldsay with peaks of 28 – 39 on 14<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> then 81 on 31<sup>st</sup>; elsewhere the peaks were eight off the Brough of Birsay on 8<sup>th</sup> and six off Papay on 13<sup>th</sup>. North Ronaldsay had a wonderful run of rare species with a **Fea's Petrel** on 1<sup>st</sup>, a **Cory's Shearwater** on 25<sup>th</sup>, single **Great Shearwaters** on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> and a **Balearic Shearwater** also on 31<sup>st</sup>. **Storm Petrels** were also on the move, North Ronaldsay logging 28 on 7<sup>th</sup> and 14 on 14<sup>th</sup>; two were also off the Brough of Birsay on 8<sup>th</sup>. The peak **Gannet** count was 3002 off North Ronaldsay on 30<sup>th</sup>.

The drake Ring-necked Duck was seen again on the Loch of Bosquoy after 14<sup>th</sup> while an escaped **Bar-headed Goose** created some interest in Eastside, South Ronaldsay on 17<sup>th</sup>.

The only unusual raptor record was of a **Buzzard** on North Ronaldsay on 29<sup>th</sup>. **Water Rails** were noted there on three dates and at The Loons on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Golden Plover** numbers peaked on North Ronaldsay on 16<sup>th</sup> when 1117 were counted. A single **Grey Plover** was there on 28<sup>th</sup>. A most unusual autumn record was of a female **Dotterel** at Skelwick, Westray on 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup>.

North Ronaldsay's maximum of 173 **Knots** on 20<sup>th</sup> dwarfed other counts as did that of 90 **Sanderlings** on 18<sup>th</sup> although 23 coming in off the sea at Honeysgeo on 21<sup>st</sup> were of note. A peak of 13 **Little Stints** was recorded on North Ronaldsay on 21<sup>st</sup>; elsewhere one – three were noted at three sites in South Ronaldsay and Deerness. **Curlew Sandpipers** are often the stints' fellow-travellers and one-two were seen at four sites in Westray, North Ronaldsay, Deerness and Holm. The only **Purple Sandpipers** were on North Ronaldsay with a peak of 33 on 17<sup>th</sup>. **Dunlin** numbers peaked at 226 on North Ronaldsay while a count of 95 at Aikerness, Westray on 26<sup>th</sup> was the best of the rest. However, by far the rarest of the small waders was a **Baird's Sandpiper**, a Canadian Arctic breeder, which appeared briefly at Eve's Loch, Deerness on 17<sup>th</sup>.

There was a good passage of **Ruffs** with 35 at Graemeshall on 20<sup>th</sup>, up to 20 on North Ronaldsay and up to 11 at eight other sites. Early influxes of **Snipe** to North Ronaldsay brought 130 on 18<sup>th</sup> and 182 on 28<sup>th</sup>. **Black-tailed Godwits** were much in evidence with a peak of 61 at Eve's Loch on 17<sup>th</sup>, up to 40 on North Ronaldsay, 30 at East Denwick, Deerness on 23<sup>rd</sup>, 23 at Graemeston Loch, South Ronaldsay on 20<sup>th</sup> and seven other reports of up to 18. The best count of **Bar-tailed Godwits** was of 64 on Papay on 1<sup>st</sup>. **Whimbrels** continued to pass through in small numbers with up to 14 per day on North Ronaldsay; the regular wintering bird returned to Burray on 27<sup>th</sup>.

One-three **Greenshanks** were reported from five sites while, more unusual, was a **Spotted Redshank** at Eve's Loch on 29<sup>th</sup>. One-two **Green Sandpipers** were noted at six sites with four at the Bay of Suckquoy, Holm on 2<sup>nd</sup> but the only **Wood Sandpipers** were one – two on North Ronaldsay after 21<sup>st</sup>. One – three migrant **Common Sandpipers** were seen at three sites. **Turnstones** peaked on North Ronaldsay at 351 on 11<sup>th</sup> and 320 on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Arctic Skuas** continued to be reported in good numbers especially early in the month but much more unusual were the **Long-tailed Skua** seen off Point of Ayre on 14<sup>th</sup> and the **Pomarine Skua** off Burwick on 14<sup>th</sup>.

Unusual gulls included a **Little Gull** at the Hope on 22<sup>nd</sup>, a **Mediterranean Gull** in Birsay Bay on 7<sup>th</sup> and a **Glaucous Gull** at the Peedie Sea on 22<sup>nd</sup>. Our breeding **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** leave early and few were logged on North Ronaldsay, for example, after 6<sup>th</sup> although there was an influx of ten there on 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Swifts** were reported from North Ronaldsay with four on 27<sup>th</sup>, five on 30<sup>th</sup> and 12 on 31<sup>st</sup>; the only other was one in St. Ola on 27<sup>th</sup>. A juvenile **Cuckoo** was at The Shunan, Harray on 16<sup>th</sup>. An influx of Continental migrants from 19<sup>th</sup> brought sightings of **Wrynecks** on six dates on North Ronaldsay and another at Ness, Burray.

A census of breeding **House Martins** located 45 pairs east and south of Kirkwall while 100 had congregated over Hatston and Muddisdale on 27<sup>th</sup>. A hybrid **Swallow x House Martin** was seen on North Ronaldsay on 17<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Tree Pipits** were characteristically seen only on North Ronaldsay with two on each of 20<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. **Meadow Pipit** movements resulted in a peak of 310 on North Ronaldsay on 27<sup>th</sup>. A migrant **Grey Wagtail** was on North Ronaldsay on 18<sup>th</sup> while single **Yellow Wagtails** were on Sanday on 26<sup>th</sup> and North Ronaldsay on 28<sup>th</sup>; up to eight **White Wagtails** were logged on North Ronaldsay after 14<sup>th</sup>.

A **Black Redstart** was on North Ronaldsay from 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> while one –two **Common Redstarts** were there in the same period with another on South Ronaldsay on 20<sup>th</sup>. Up to five **Whinchats** were also there with one – two were noted at five other sites. **Wheatears** were passing through the islands all month but with peaks in the last few days, for example 138 on North Ronaldsay on 28<sup>th</sup>.

The influx of passerine migrants late in the month saw North Ronaldsay record a **Grasshopper Warbler** on 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup>, a **Marsh Warbler** on 25<sup>th</sup> and one-two **Reed Warblers** after 20<sup>th</sup>; another Reed Warbler was on Papay on 27<sup>th</sup>. One-two **Icterine Warblers** were on North Ronaldsay after 20<sup>th</sup>. However, a strong contender for bird of the month was the **Sykes's Warbler** that was found and trapped on North Ronaldsay on 28<sup>th</sup>; only the 13<sup>th</sup> British record, this tiny warbler breeds in Central Asia.

**Barred Warblers**, breeding in eastern Europe are another typical migrant of late August and up to three occurred on North Ronaldsay after 20<sup>th</sup> with another at East Denwick and a similar pattern was seen with **Lesser Whitethroats**, **Common Whitethroats** and **Garden Warblers**. A single **Blackcap** was on North Ronaldsay on 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Willow Warblers** do breed in Orkney but the birds seen in the latter part of the month will have originated from the near-Continent; a peak of 73 occurred on North Ronaldsay on 28<sup>th</sup> with up to 10 elsewhere. **Chiffchaffs** are mainly later migrants so the North Ronaldsay peak was just five (on 28<sup>th</sup>) and only two were seen elsewhere. A single **Wood Warbler** was on North Ronaldsay on 28<sup>th</sup> but the rarest of the leaf warblers that occurred was **Greenish Warbler** with singles on Papay, North Ronaldsay, Evie and South Ronaldsay, all between 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>. **Goldcrests** were proved to have bred at Happy Valley, a fledged chick being found as a cat victim on 6<sup>th</sup>.

As many as 27 **Pied Flycatchers** were logged on North Ronaldsay (peak on 20<sup>th</sup>); one – two were noted at six other sites. **Spotted Flycatchers** are usually less numerous with just one – three at three sites. **Red-backed Shrikes** are another typical bird of this time of year and one – two appeared on cue on North Ronaldsay between 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>.

A **Tree Sparrow** was in Deerness on 2<sup>nd</sup> while **Greenfinches** peaked at 50 in the Muddisdale area early in the month. **Goldfinches** continue to colonise; all records this month came from the St. Ola – Firth – Orphir area and included three lots of juveniles. Similarly, **Redpolls** look as though they are becoming truly established with up to 20 at Longhouse, St. Ola, 'good numbers' at Muddisdale and 14 in the Scorradales/Linnadale area of Orphir; North Ronaldsay also noted up to four.

Single **Scarlet Rosefinches**, another typical scarce migrant of late August, occurred on North Ronaldsay on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> and on Papay on 28<sup>th</sup>. Rather earlier than usual, however, were two **Lapland Buntings** on Papay's North Hill on 31<sup>st</sup>.

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