

ORKNEY BIRD RECORDS

NOVEMBER 2016

Great Northern Diver numbers began to build up with 28 off Papay on 1st and 17 off North Ronaldsay on 19th. However, much more unusual were the numbers of **White-billed Divers** with a peak of six off Papay on 10th and another off North Ronaldsay on 6th. 16 **Slavonian Grebes** was a good count for the Loch of Boardhouse on 10th but even better was the fact that they were accompanied by a **Red-necked Grebe**, a most unusual inland record.

Large numbers of **Fulmars** were on the move early in the month with, off North Ronaldsay, peaks of 4028 on 1st and 3390 on 3rd. '**Blue**' **Fulmars**, probably of Arctic origin, were noted there on 4th (two), 7th (eight) and 17th (one) while three were also seen from Northside, Birsay on 6th. **Sooty Shearwaters** were also on the move at the same time with North Ronaldsay peaks of 235 on 1st, 113 on 2nd and 114 on 3rd; smaller numbers continued to be seen there until 17th (four) with additional records from Papay and Northside. **Manx Shearwaters** occurred in small numbers with up to six per day off North Ronaldsay until 7th and one off Papay on 1st.

The largest count of **Grey Herons** was of 16 at Dale Moss, South Ronaldsay on 15th. Between 7th–27th a **Little Egret** was reported from Loch of Banks, Loch of Sabiston, Loch of Swannay and Quoyloo but much rarer was the immature **Night Heron** that was found on Sanday on 24th, the first Orkney record for over 20 years. The **Glossy Ibis** was seen again on North Ronaldsay on 13th and 15th.

Only small numbers of **Whooper Swans** were reported, the largest gathering being of 28 on the Loch of Brockan, Rendall on 10th. The **Greenland White-fronted Goose** flock returned to The Loons area, peaking at 68 on 20th. Towards the end of the month a **European White-fronted Goose** was recorded near Holland, Firth while a colour-ringed **Lesser White-fronted Goose** from a Scandinavian re-introduction scheme was seen in the same area on 26th. A **Canada Goose x Greylag Goose** hybrid was in Harray on 20th. The wintering flock of **Barnacle Geese** at Skaill, Sandwick held 92 on 20th the only other record being of one at the Loch of Tankerness on 10th. Single **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** were seen at Burwick on 1st and on North Ronaldsay on 14th.

Seven **Shelducks** had returned to the Oyce of Quindry, South Ronaldsay from their north German moulting grounds by 9th. A drake **American Wigeon** was at the Swartmill Loch, Westray on 26th while the bird at the Peedie Sea, also seen on 26th, is now considered to be a hybrid with **Eurasian Wigeon**. The North Ronaldsay **Green-winged Teal** was seen on eight dates while another was at Graemeshall Loch on 1st. 20 **Pintails** were at the Loch of Brockan on 16th, 29 **Shovelers** were on the Stenness Loch on 12th and 51 **Gadwalls** were at Voy (also on the Stenness Loch) on 7th. The Loch of

Stenness **Scaup** flock peaked at 94 on 7th while nearby at Voy, there were up to nine **Common Scoters**. The only **Velvet Scoter** reported was one in Water Sound from 15th-21st. Two 'red-head' **Smews** on Bewan Loch, North Ronaldsay were unusual.

A **Crane** was present in Sandwick from 15th-19th and what was presumably the same bird, at Eastabist, Birsay on 19th and 23rd.

The peak count of **Golden Plovers** on North Ronaldsay was 431 on 21st while 350 were near the Deerness shop on 21st. One-two **Grey Plovers** occurred on North Ronaldsay up to 20th and another was at Newark Bay, Deerness on 7th. North Ronaldsay logged the month's only **Knot** on 1st/2nd while good wader counts there included 687 **Sanderlings** on 15th and 143 **Purple Sandpipers** on 17th.

Two **Ruff** were seen by the Harray Loch on 10th and single **Jack Snipes** were logged on North Ronaldsay on 15th and 20th. One-two **Woodcocks** were also seen there between 5th-11th, the only others being in Rendall where a maximum of five was reported on 21st. A **Black-tailed Godwit** was on North Ronaldsay on 13th and the wintering **Whimbrel** was seen on Burray on 21st.

Sea-watches from North Ronaldsay produced 12 **Pomarine Skuas** on 1st with a further 11 on 3rd, one on 4th and one on 10th; another was off Papay on 1st. **Bonxies** seem to linger later each year and the last was one off North Ronaldsay on 17th. **Iceland Gulls** were seen on North Ronaldsay on 15th and at Burwick on 19th while **Glaucous Gulls** were slightly more numerous with singles on North Ronaldsay on three dates and others on Papay on 1st and at Northside on 5th. **Little Auks** were on the move early in the month with peaks off North Ronaldsay of 26 on 1st and 13 on 3rd but with up to seven on four other dates and others reported from Papay on 1st (five) and Northside on 5th (one).

Excellent photos confirmed the presence of a spectacular **Snowy Owl** at Netherbrough, Westray on 18th while a **Long-eared Owl** was logged on North Ronaldsay on 10th and 12th.

The **Waxwing** irruption brought 35 to Finstown (20th), 27 to Stromness (9th) and 20 to Rendall (20th) with up to 10 in four other localities. The only **Grey Wagtails** of the month were one in Kirkwall on 11th and one in Finstown on 20th.

The outstanding bird of November was undoubtedly the **Black-throated Thrush** which was seen briefly in Rendall on the morning of 9th. What was then presumably the same bird relocated to Dale, Costa and remained until 15th. Thought to be an immature male, there are only a tiny handful of records of this Siberian species for Orkney.

Wintering thrushes appear to have moved quickly on south and the peak count of **Fieldfares** was only 25 in Rendall on 3rd and, of **Redwings**, 41 on North Ronaldsay on 1st/2nd.

The long-staying **Barred Warbler** in a Deerness garden was last seen on 11th as was the **Lesser Whitethroat** there. One-two **Blackcaps** were recorded from seven sites throughout the month and there were very similar numbers of **Chiffchaffs** although the peak for this species was five on North Ronaldsay on 1st/2nd; two of the Chiffchaffs (in Sandwick on 20th and Kirkwall on 21st) were thought to belong to the Siberian subspecies *tristis*.

A **Great Grey Shrike** passed through Papay on 22nd while a **Long-tailed Tit** was at Berstane between 12th-19th.

The only **Brambling** was one on Papay on 10th. Six **Goldfinches** were on Burray on 21st. Small numbers of redpolls were reported from Papay, North Ronaldsay, Burray and Rendall; most were **Mealy Redpolls** (peak of 10 in Rendall on 7th) but **Lesser Redpolls** were noted in Rendall on 7th and 20th with two on North Ronaldsay on 1st. Just to confuse the picture even more, a **Coues' Arctic Redpoll** was in Rendall on 19th/20th. The only records of **Crossbill** came from Springfield, Stromness (one found dead on 7th) and Rendall (singles on 8th and 11th and two on 13th) and of a **Bullfinch** (with a male remaining from 9th-19th). The only **Snow Buntings** reported were on North Ronaldsay where there was a peak of 21 on 1st/2nd while the largest **Reed Bunting** flock was one of at least 51 birds in Sandwick on 20th.

Eric Meek