

## ORKNEY BIRD RECORDS

### DECEMBER 2016

Normally a very rare visitor, there was an astonishing count of 13 **White-billed Divers** off the Mull Head of Papay on 5<sup>th</sup>. There was a good count of 41 **Slavonian Grebes** on the Harray Loch on 16<sup>th</sup> while a **Black-necked Grebe** on the Loch of Skaill was presumably last winter's returning bird. A series of **Little Egret** sightings in the northern part of the West Mainland was thought to perhaps involve two individuals while another was at Inganess, St. Ola on 18<sup>th</sup>. The highest count of **Grey Herons** was 15 at Dale Moss, South Ronaldsay on 14<sup>th</sup>. The immature **Night Heron** found on Sanday in November was still present on 3<sup>rd</sup>.

There were no counts of the main wintering flock of **Barnacle Geese** in South Walls but 170 were at Skaill, Sandwick on 16<sup>th</sup> and 68 near Hestily, South Ronaldsay on 18<sup>th</sup>. **Shelducks** continued to return from their moulting grounds with up to 27 at the Oyce of Quindry, South Ronaldsay during the month. A drake **American Wigeon** was seen on Sanday on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> while the bird now considered to be a hybrid **Eurasian x American Wigeon** at the Peedie Sea was seen again on 2<sup>nd</sup>. **Green-winged Teals** were seen at the Bay of Meil, St. Ola on 3<sup>rd</sup>, on North Ronaldsay on 12<sup>th</sup> and at the Loch of Skaill on 16<sup>th</sup>. Two more American ducks, the **Ring-necked Duck** on the Loch of Skaill and the **Lesser Scaup** on the Boardhouse Loch both remained until at least 18<sup>th</sup>. The only **Common Scoter** reported was one off North Ronaldsay on 10<sup>th</sup> but up to three of the much rarer **Surf Scoter** were present in Kirkwall Bay during the month. Two drake **Goosanders** were on the Harray Loch on 16<sup>th</sup> with perhaps the same birds on the Loch of Bosquoy on 27<sup>th</sup>. A drake **Smew** on Sanday's North Loch on 19<sup>th</sup> was a good find.

A **Water Rail** fed at a site in Rendall almost every day while another was seen on North Ronaldsay on 29<sup>th</sup>. The **Common Crane** in Sandwick was elusive but was noted near the Loch of Clumly on 10<sup>th</sup> and at the Yesnaby X-roads on 27<sup>th</sup>.

The **Northern Harrier** was seen once again on North Ronaldsay on 30<sup>th</sup> while a spectacular white **Gyr Falcon**, probably emanating from Greenland, was seen at Frustigarth, Shapinsay on 17<sup>th</sup>.

The largest **Woodcock** count was of nine in Rendall on 7<sup>th</sup> while four were at Hestily on 4<sup>th</sup> and singles in three other localities. Single **Jack Snipes** were on Burray on 19<sup>th</sup> and in Stromness on 27<sup>th</sup>. Two **Iceland Gulls** were on North Ronaldsay on 27<sup>th</sup> while singles were seen in four West Mainland localities. A **Glaucous Gull** was on North Ronaldsay on 24<sup>th</sup> with two there on 30<sup>th</sup> and another at Burwick on 27<sup>th</sup>.

A **Barn Owl** was reported from Bossack, Tankerness on 8<sup>th</sup>. A **Rock Pipit** was on Hammars Hill, Evie, a mile from the sea, on 15<sup>th</sup> while there was a **Grey Wagtail** at the Peedie Sea on 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The only **Fieldfares** reported were one-two on North Ronaldsay; up to four **Redwings** were also seen there with 12 on the Lyde Road on 3<sup>rd</sup>. A male **Blackcap** was in Stenness from 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> while an incredibly late **Garden Warbler** was in a Finstown garden on 1<sup>st</sup>. The **Blue Tit**

remained at Hestily until at least 21<sup>st</sup> while a **Long-tailed Tit** was at Berstane, St. Ola on 3<sup>rd</sup> with a 'tribe' of 12 at Longhope on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Bramblings** were few with 10 in Rendall on 15<sup>th</sup> and eight there on 28<sup>th</sup>; the only other was one at Dale, Costa on 6<sup>th</sup>. The largest **Goldfinch** flock was 20 at Skaill, Sandwick on 16<sup>th</sup> and, of **Twite**, 60 at Dale on 6<sup>th</sup>. The cock **Bullfinch** remained in Rendall until at least 12<sup>th</sup>. The only **Snow Bunting** reported was one near Stromness Reservoir on 20<sup>th</sup> and the largest **Reed Bunting** count was 20 at Dale on 6<sup>th</sup>.

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