

ORKNEY BIRD RECORDS

MAY 2016

The largest concentration of **Great Northern Divers** was 18 from the Houton-Lyness ferry on 6th although 11 were off North Ronaldsay on 22nd. The regular **White-billed Diver** was last seen off the Burray Pier on 2nd but singles were also seen off North Ronaldsay on 18th and 28th. A **Black-throated Diver** was off Sanday on 23rd while one-two were noted off North Ronaldsay from 25th. The **Great Crested Grebe** that had been frequenting the Loch of Skail was at the Loch of Bosquoy on 3rd, back at Skail on 4th then at the Loch of Tankerness from 6th to the end of the month.

Manx Shearwaters were noted off North Ronaldsay on four dates with a maximum of five on 19th. A large concentration of 81 **Cormorants** was on the Loch of Stenness at Voy on 14th and 46, presumably part of the same flock, flew east over Finstown later that day.

Late **Pink-footed Geese** were seen in Deerness (12 on 3rd), Sandwick (one on 8th) and Tankerness (three from 21st-27th). One-three **Barnacle Geese** were seen on North Ronaldsay, Papay and in Rendall on 11th/12th while there was an influx of 79 into North Ronaldsay on 29th. Four **Pale-breasted Brent Geese** were at Palace, Birsay on 21st.

At least nine **Garganeys** were reported in localities scattered from North Ronaldsay to Brough Ness, South Ronaldsay. Two **Common Scoters** were off North Ronaldsay on 19th while 40 **Long-tailed Ducks** were on Papay's Loch of St. Tredwell on 12th. The only other duck of note was a drake **Goosander** on Graemeshall Loch on 21st.

Ospreys were seen at Brodgar on 10th, on North Ronaldsay on 21st/22nd and over Birsay and Papay on 28th while **Marsh Harriers** were reported from South Ronaldsay on 2nd, Rendall on 3rd, Sandwick on 4th and Sanday on 21st. A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was a rare spring visitor to North Ronaldsay on 2nd/3rd while, also early in the month, a **Golden Eagle** was reported from Hoy and Rousay.

A **Red-legged Partridge** was seen near the Hope on 8th, suggesting that birds may have been released there by shooting interests. A **Crane** was at The Loons on 9th while it or another remained in South Ronaldsay from 14th to 19th.

The only **Grey Plovers** were single birds on Sanday on 1st and 6th. **Ringed Plover** passage appeared to peak on 9th/10th when 204 were on North Ronaldsay and 52 at the Bay of Skaill although 70 were at Palace on 21st. The highest count of **Knots** was 134 on North Ronaldsay on 26th. **Sanderlings** also peaked there about this time with 228 although an earlier peak had brought 204 on 10th.

The only **Woodcock** was one seen in Rendall on 4th and the only **Jack Snipe**, one on North Ronaldsay on 1st. **Black-tailed Godwits** were reported from five sites including a maximum of 13 on North Ronaldsay on 29th and seven at Burray Cemetery on 2nd. The largest count of **Bar-tailed Godwits** was 67 on North Ronaldsay on 30th. The strong passage of **Whimbrels** continued with, between 2nd and 9th, 42 near Yesnaby, 55 moving NNW over Voy, 38 at the Loch of Skaill, 20 on North Ronaldsay and 15 over Eynhallow Sound with up to six elsewhere.

One-two **Greenshanks** were noted at The Shunan, Eve's Loch and North Ronaldsay during the month while **Wood Sandpipers** were logged on North Ronaldsay on 9th and 30th and on Sanday on 18th. Our breeding **Common Sandpipers** were displaying at the Loch of Bosquoy by 6th while a passage bird was on North Ronaldsay on 21st. 430 **Turnstones** were on North Ronaldsay on 5th then a second wave of migration brought 474 on 19th; 175 were at Palace on 7th. A **Red-necked Phalarope** was on Papay on 23rd while what was probably the bird of the month was a **Stone Curlew** on North Ronaldsay on 30th; although breeding in small numbers in the south of England, this species is incredibly rare this far north.

A **Pomarine Skua** was watched off North Ronaldsay on 11th. There were three records of one-two **Little Gulls** between 17th–30th and four records of **Iceland Gulls** between 6th–22nd. A **Glaucous Gull** was at Quanterness on 8th with two on North Ronaldsay on 20th. Both **Common Terns** and **Arctic Terns** arrived during the first week of the month. Up to six **Little Terns** were noted at four localities, three

of which were potential breeding sites. A **Black Tern** was a decidedly rare visitor to North Ronaldsay on 31st.

Migrating **Wood Pigeons** passed through North Ronaldsay with maxima of five on 5th and 22nd. Similarly, a peak of five **Collared Doves** was on North Ronaldsay on 21st. There was a very good showing of **Cuckoos** with one-two noted in a dozen localities. Single **Long-eared Owls** were on North Ronaldsay on 2nd and on Sanday on 22nd while **Swifts** were seen on North Ronaldsay and in Deerness on 5th and at Tormiston on 28th.

Sand Martins continue their colonisation of Orkney with colonies located in seven localities; as many as 80 were feeding over the Loch of Skail on 8th. **House Martins** were noted on North Ronaldsay on eleven dates with as peak of nine on 9th.

One-two **Tree Pipits** were noted on North Ronaldsay on four dates; the species is strangely rare away from that island so that two on Wideford Hill on 5th, one on Papay on 6th and another at the Orkney Brewery on 15th were of note. Much rarer was the **Red-throated Pipit** that frequented the East Denwick plantation near The Gloup on 13th.

Two **Blue-headed Wagtails** were on North Ronaldsay on 3rd and a **Grey-headed Wagtail** on Papay on 10th; a female **Yellow Wagtail** of unidentified race was at Palace on 7th. A **Grey Wagtail** was in Rendall on 3rd while migrants visited North Ronaldsay on 20th and 25th. Up to three **White Wagtails** occurred on North Ronaldsay with others on Papay on 1st and at Start Point, Sanday on 6th.

A **Thrush Nightingale** was a very rare visitor to North Ronaldsay on 9th but just as pleasing were the **Bluethroats** there on 9th and 20th with another in Deerness on 12th. Single **Black Redstarts** occurred on North Ronaldsay on 11th/12th and on Stronsay on 17th while one-two **Common Redstarts** were noted in eight localities between 9th-20th. With local **Stonechats** all settled on their breeding sites, one on North Ronaldsay on 10th was probably en route to Norway. All **Whinchat** sightings were on 11th with two in Deerness and three in South Ronaldsay

Up to seven **Fieldfares** were seen on North Ronaldsay with the last on 24th. Similarly, up to five **Redwings** occurred there but with none after 5th; others were on Sanday on 1st and 15th. The only **Ring Ouzel** was one on Papay on 1st.

A **Grasshopper Warbler** sang in Rendall on six dates from 6th while another occurred on North Ronaldsay on 10th/11th. A **Marsh Warbler** was found at Tresness, Sanday on the typical date of 30th. **Sedge Warblers** arrived from 6th and especially from 8th/9th, North Ronaldsay logging maxima of 11 on 23rd and 31st.

One-three **Lesser Whitethroats** were noted at seven sites after 6th and one-four **Common Whitethroats** at five sites after 9th. One-two **Garden Warblers** were on North Ronaldsay on six dates and another in Rendall from 20th-23rd. The overwintering **Blackcap** was still in Finstown on 2nd while one-three migrants were noted at six sites during the month.

On North Ronaldsay, up to six **Chiffchaffs** were noted almost daily with a peak of 16 on 9th; one-two were noted at seven other sites. Up to four **Willow Warblers** were present on North Ronaldsay on eight dates while, elsewhere, birds steadily occupied their breeding sites; a bird showing characteristics of the northern race, *acredula*, was at Orkney Brewery on 23rd. Single **Wood Warblers** were found on North Ronaldsay on 10th and 18th.

One-four **Spotted Flycatchers** were at five sites between 9th-11th while a second influx brought one-two to Westray, Sanday and Deerness on 30th. Single **Pied Flycatchers** occurred on Shapinsay on 18th and on North Ronaldsay on 26th/27th while much rarer was the **Red-breasted Flycatcher** that was found on North Ronaldsay on 24th.

A **Red-backed Shrike** was found at St. Peter's Pool on 14th with two there the following day; others were at Tresness, Sanday on 29th/30th and on North Ronaldsay on 28th and on 30th/31st. A female **Golden Oriole** was a good find at St. Peter's Pool on 19th.

A migrant **Jackdaw** was on North Ronaldsay on 8th. **Carrion Crows** were also on the move being noted on North Ronaldsay on nine dates with peaks of 26 on 5th and 23 on 20th; other records involved two at North Loch, Sanday on 6th, three at

Palace on 22nd and one found dead in St. Ola on 29th. 14 **Tree Sparrows** arrived on North Ronaldsay on 22nd and declined to one by 28th; other records involved up to four at Old Nisthouse, Harray and one-two at another Harray site.

One-three **Bramblings** were noted at three sites between 4th-7th. **Goldfinches** were proved to be breeding on Cairston Road, Stromness while one-two were noted in three other localities. **Siskins** were few with just one-three at six sites. **Redpolls**, however, were well-reported with colonisation of the southern part of the West Mainland apparently well under way with birds found in at least eight sites south of the Stromness-Kirkwall road. The specific identity of the breeders remains in some doubt but birds identified as **Lesser Redpolls** were found in North Ronaldsay, Sandwick, Harray and Burray during the month. A **Hawfinch** frequented a Harray garden on 22nd.

The only **Snow Buntings** were on North Ronaldsay with singles on four dates, the last on 27th.

Eric Meek