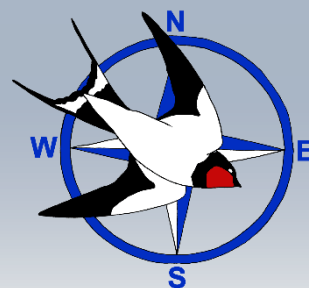


The newsletter of the British Bird Observatories Council



Welcome to the third BOC Newsletter.

In the past two years the Bird Observatories Council produced its first two newsletters – primarily a summary of the year with contributions from each Observatory. The newsletters were full of the excitement of the 2014 and 2015 seasons, with some stunning pictures of the rarities that Observatories so frequently attract! We published the first one online as an E-newsletter, hosting it on the BOC website as a PDF file. Little did we know that the number of hits we would get would take us over our monthly traffic allowance for the website in TWO HOURS!!! We therefore had to rapidly change where the file was hosted and put new links on social media etc. With that in mind we change our approach in 2016 and published the newsletter via Google Drive and as in 2015 links were put out on the BirdGuides and Rare Bird Alert websites as well as on Twitter and individual Observatory web pages.

Based on the success of the first two editions the BOC decided that we should continue the annual production and publish again in early 2017... and here it is, again packed with some fantastic summaries from the Observatories. Great stories of migration, major rarities and non-avian wildlife too.

In this edition of the BOC News we begin with a summary from Alderney Bird Observatory. A complete new venture on the Channel Isles. John Horton, the newly appointed Warden of ABO, joined the BOC meeting at Portland in February 2016 and gave a very interesting slideshow on the setting up of the new Observatory there.

ABO is based in 'The Nunnery', the oldest standing building in the Channel Islands and the best preserved Roman small fort in the British Isles. Being of huge historic importance, the plan is to develop it into a publicly accessible heritage site for the benefit of Alderney, which will also house the ABO and Field Centre.

Once all the necessary permissions have been received, the funds necessary to equip the new Field Centre will have to be raised (please contact ABO if you are interested in sponsoring any part of the project), with plans to open the Centre in March 2017. John Horton will be heading the development of the ABO and Field Centre and generously agreed to undertake the warden's role in a voluntary capacity for the first two years to get the project up and running.



Above -The new Alderney Bird Observatory – The Nunnery seen from across the adjoining Longis Nature Reserve

The Nunnery was refurbished as an 18th century gun battery and then served as barracks, hospital, married quarters and farm. Finally it was converted to Resistance Nest 'Piraten Schloss' by the Germans so there are a network of bunkers and machine gun posts (without guns!) in the Nunnery garden. Until recently it has been let as three residential accommodation units. Work will continue for many years into the future to better understand the nearly 2,000 years of occupation, with plans for the hostel to accommodate archaeologists on summer digs, as well as ABO members visiting the island.

It is hoped after ABO has operated for the required length of time and has fulfilled all the criteria needed that it will receive full accreditation from the BOC.

Finally I would like to thank all the contributors to this newsletter and all the supporters of Bird Observatories throughout the UK, Ireland, Isle of Man and now the Channel Islands!

Steve Stansfield – BOC Chairman



Introducing Alderney Bird Observatory -Paul K Veron

Alderney has for many years been regarded as one of the best of all the Channel Islands both for the wide variety of birds seen on the island and for its internationally important and easily accessible seabird colonies. Despite this it has also been one of the least well studied of these islands from an ornithological perspective, never having had a resident ringer or more than a tiny handful of birdwatchers on island at any time.

That all changed in 2016 with the creation of the Alderney Bird Observatory, which aspires to become a fully accredited Observatory and an active member of the

British Bird Observatory Council. It is currently well on course to achieve this status, when it will become the British Isles' newest and most southerly Observatory. Having said this we do not under-estimate how much remains to be done next year as we run up to assessment for accreditation.

Conceived over supper one night in October 2015 in the lighthouse cottage at the easternmost end of Alderney, it was nothing short of remarkable that the Alderney Bird Observatory was up and running by the start of March when its first full time voluntary Warden, John Horton arrived on island with his partner Cathy.

Those of us involved from the outset genuinely had little idea what we would experience on the birding front over the course of the year. Despite having personally visited Alderney almost every year since my first visit in 1973 (on a school Biology field trip), even I was ill prepared for the deluge of birds that we would witness as the year unfolded!

At the end of our first year we can say with confidence that Alderney is sitting on several major avian flyways involving large numbers of birds from a wide range of populations in both the British Isles and Continental Europe. Being at the southern edge of the British Isles Alderney also sees very long migration seasons with some of the earliest records for returning summer migrants and latest departures for birds in the autumn.

For many birders there is an understandable tendency to focus on scarce and rare birds and Alderney has certainly had its fair share of such avian gems in 2016, but for me personally it is the sheer scale of "falls" of some of the common migrants that has been most impressive. To see clouds of Willow Warblers and Common Chiffchaffs erupting from the tiny sewage treatment works adjacent to the Observatory buildings is truly impressive. At the other end of the season the autumn thrush migration has been nothing short of phenomenal with massive numbers of birds passing across Alderney on a virtually daily basis from mid-September until the end of November.

As we approach the year end it is also looking very likely that the Observatory will find a permanent home in absolutely superb accommodation, which will be undergoing a complete re-fit and upgrade in 2017. The accommodation is provided in spacious housing within the walls of one of the best preserved Roman Small Forts in the whole of Europe, which also just happens to be in one of the island's prime locations for observing bird migration.

It is a difficult job to summarise the highlights from our first year of operating but below is my stab at it (in no particular order):-

- Gaining national and local interest and recognition with the ABO featuring in the Spring

Special programme of BBC Countryfile (when we were fortunate enough to show the presenter Matt Baker both Western Bonelli's Warbler and Western Subalpine Warbler in the hand) and in Channel 4's Little British Islands programme broadcast in October;

- Strong support for the Observatory from a very wide spectrum of the local community on Alderney, including the Island's government, local landowners and local people (four of whom have become trainee ringers);
- By year end we reached just over 100 Full Members of the ABO, with 20 of these being Founder Members who have contributed significant financial support;
- More than 13,000 birds being ringed involving 79 species. The top eleven most ringed species in 2016 were Blackcap (1844), Willow Warbler (1522), Common Chiffchaff (1302), Barn Swallow (892), Redwing (926), European Robin (824), Northern Gannet (777), European Storm Petrel (483), Common Blackbird (479), Winter Wren (406) and Song Thrush (380) Of note for Warbler enthusiasts was the total of 18 different species ringed (including the Blyth's Reed Warbler Below by Keith Dean);



- Ringing proved to be busy throughout the year with no less than 6 months topping 1,000 birds (October 2,980, April 2,544, September 1,613, June 1,116, November 1,065, and July 1,015);
- The Island's seabirds generally had a successful season and both of Alderney's Gannetries, the Storm Petrel Colony and the Gulls on Burhou islet and the Auks on Cocque Lihou were all visited during the summer season resulting in good number of seabirds being ringed (Guillemot chick – top of next page). The long-term colour ringing project on Lesser Black-backed Gulls continued with another 170 chicks being ringed, and long term scientific studies of the movement and

mortality of Gannets also progressed well this season;



- A total of 186 bird species being recorded by the Observatory on Alderney in 2016, which included five species never before recorded on island (Pomarine Skua, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Pallas' Warbler and Penduline Tit);
- Some of the scarcer birds observed at the Alderney Bird Observatory in 2016 were Great Egret, Black Stork (three), White Stork (ten), Red Kite, Black Kite (11), Common Crane (two), European Bee-eater (six+), Tawny Pipit, Water Pipit (two), Red-breasted Flycatcher, Rose-Coloured Starling (two), Golden Oriole, Wryneck (three), Serin (two), and Ortolan Bunting;
- In addition to these birds seen, an impressive array of scarce and rare birds were ringed throughout the year including Long eared Owl, 2 Dartford Warblers, 2 Western Subalpine Warblers including the one below (two), Blyth's Reed Warbler, Melodious Warbler (two), Western Bonelli's Warbler, Pallas's Warbler, Yellow-browed Warbler (18) and Penduline Tit;



- The establishment of a strong working relationship with Naturetrek and other specialist wildlife travel companies, with such companies bringing tour groups to the island, all of whom have identified as one of the key highlights of their visits in 2016 to be sessions at the ABO with our warden John.

There will be little time to reflect on the successes of 2016, as we are all now busy preparing for 2017 wondering what ornithological surprises it will bring. What we do know is that having got off to a flying start in 2016, we will all be working hard throughout 2017 to make sure we achieve our short-term goal of accreditation to the BOC. In this regard we are most grateful for the very valuable help and support that has already been given to the ABO by a number of established BOC Members.



Skokholm – Richard Brown

Skokholm, as many of you will know, was the birthplace of seabird studies in the UK with pioneering research dating back to the 1930's when Ronald Lockley began documenting the breeding biology of the Puffin and Manx Shearwater. Today Skokholm continues to provide a base for exciting developments in seabird monitoring. This season we completed the most accurate whole Island Storm Petrel census to date, playing their song into every single accessible crevice on the Island - and there are a lot of crevices on Skokholm! For completely inaccessible areas we used an infrared camera to observe activity after dark. The final figure, which will be released later this year, confirms Skokholm as the fourth largest British colony and home to around 20% of the British Population. Continuing with the Storm Petrel theme, this year we played host to a British Trust for Ornithology tracking project. Four birds were fitted with tiny geolocator harnesses in an effort to understand where these mysterious seabirds battle out the winter months. Because the devices have to be retrieved in order to view the tracks, we now have our fingers firmly crossed that we can relocate the birds next season. In September we finally finished building a Storm Petrel Study Wall next to the Quarry; several tonnes of sand, cement, water, blood, sweat and volunteers went into the making of the 119-nest terrace. We look to the 2017 season with nervous excitement in the hope that the wall is visited by prospecting breeders.



On the whole Skokholm's seabirds have had a superb season. Manx Shearwater numbers remained stable and a little bit of mathematical tweaking has produced a new whole Island estimate of 51,248 pairs. A Skokholm record 194 pairs of Fulmar were apparently nesting around the cliffs and 57% of pairs fledged a chick. Guillemot numbers

were also up, with 3949 adults on ledges the highest total yet recorded on Skokholm. A count of 2242 Razorbill was the third highest on record, although they had mixed breeding fortunes (74% of birds nesting in the boulders successfully fledged a chick compared to only 3% of birds nesting on the cliffs). The whole Island Puffin count came in at an impressive 6692 rafting individuals (the highest count for over 60 years) and over 70% of pairs fledged a chick.

An adult Spotted Sandpiper in July (a first for Skokholm) was the star of a good birding year which also included the 18th Island record of White-fronted Goose, the 15th post-war Barnacle Goose, the 11th, 12th and 13th post-War records of Brent Goose, a drake Pochard rafting on the sea with Puffins in Crab Bay (an unusual sight and the first Skokholm record since 1991), the same ringed adult female Hen Harrier which arrived in the autumn of 2015, two Red Kite (just the sixth and seventh Skokholm records), a Spotted Redshank (only the second since 1995), the first ever autumn records of Little Ringed Plover, two Pomarine Skua (the first since 2003), four Black Tern, two Hoopoe, a Long-eared Owl (only the seventh to be logged on Skokholm and the first since November 2003), a Richard's Pipit, three Subalpine Warbler (two stunning Eastern males – one pictured below) and a Western-type female), the third Siberian Lesser Whitethroat for Wales (awaiting DNA confirmation), Reed Warblers breeding on the Island for the first time, record numbers of Yellow-browed Warbler and Siberian Chiffchaff, a Red-breasted Flycatcher, two Red-backed Shrike (a spring female and an autumn juvenile), a Golden Oriole, an Ortolan Bunting and 13 Lapland Buntings.



We had some impressive non-avian arrivals too. Prior to 2016 there had only been two records of Convolvulus Hawkmoth on Skokholm but this season a minimum of nine were logged (several of which turned up inside the Heligoland Traps). At sea, a Basking Shark, Risso's and Bottlenose Dolphins and several Sunfish provided a nice bit of summer sea-watching variety.

The Skokholm Bird Log, which dates back to 1927, has now been fully digitised, checked for errors and corrected and is in the capable hands of the BirdTrack scheme.

We again welcomed visiting ringers to the Island who assisted with catching and ringing migrant birds, colour ringing Puffins in Crab Bay (part of our on-going research into adult survival) and nocturnal ringing of Manx Shearwaters and Storm Petrels. The final 2016 total came in at 6044 handled birds. As always, much of what was achieved this year was only possible thanks to the efforts of our brilliant Long-term Volunteers. Each year we invite four people, two from 1st April until 30th June and two from 1st July to 30th September, to live on the Island and learn how to warden a National Nature Reserve. This opportunity is a fantastic step towards a career in conservation and previous participants can now be found working with seabirds all over the world. If you are interested please visit: goo.gl/FPtFGT

Fancy a trip to Skokholm Island? We can accommodate up to 20 guests in comfortable accommodation. There is a well-equipped communal kitchen and dining area, an outdoor BBQ, a well-stocked library and a very comfortable common room with roaring log-burner where bird log is held each evening. Storm Petrels nest in the walls around the accommodation and you're always within a few feet of a Manx Shearwater. You also never know who might be staying. If you would like more information please visit: goo.gl/MQxSJz



Dungeness – David Walker

The year started fairly quietly with very little in the way of cold weather. Brent Geese had already begun moving east before the start of the year and movement continued through January. A few

Great Skuas appeared to be wintering offshore, a Caspian Gull and Glaucous Gull took up residence around the fishing boats. The gulls came regularly to offerings of bread and giving excellent photo-opportunities. High numbers of wintering auks were present and unusually Razorbills outnumbered Guillemots on many days.

Despite the generally mild weather the spring was slow to get underway and overall numbers were low as is the

norm these days. Reflecting national trends only one each of Turtle Doves and Wood Warbler were seen along with only 12 Spotted Flycatchers. Numbers of Willow Warbler were noticeably low. One of the best periods of migration was actually early in the proceedings when exceptional numbers of Firecrests at the end of March peaked at of 120 on 30th. A few "continental" Coal Tits also showed up at this time.

One of the expected highlights of the spring is the eastward passage of birds offshore and this year the movement of Pomarine Skuas was excellent with a total of 241 birds recorded. Little and Black Tern were reasonable and large numbers of Common Terns also passed through but Arctic Skua and Arctic Tern numbers were low. Earlier in the spring, there was an exceptional movement on Mar.9th when 415 Fulmars passed through and notably including 17 "blue" morph individuals.

Other birds of note during the spring included a party of Mandarin Ducks flying east in March (a new species for the Observatory), a White Stork, a Purple Heron, a superb breeding plumage Laughing Gull (below), three Iceland Gulls, a Bee-eater and a red singing Common Rosefinch.



Breeding birds included pairs of Peregrine and Raven and four pairs of Black Redstarts but Wheatear numbers remain low and a cause for concern. Long-tailed Tits increased to four pairs – it was only a few years ago that this species was considered a scarce late autumn migrant.



The numbers of departing summer migrants during the first half of the autumn were small despite seemingly good conditions and the latter part of the autumn was even more disappointing especially given the events in northern England and Scotland. Most species were present in very low numbers but a few did put on a decent showing with Blackcaps and Ring Ouzels doing well.

Rarities during the autumn included a Great Grey Shrike, a Pallas's Warbler (bottom of previous column), several Yellow-browed Warblers, a Melodious Warbler, a Rose-coloured Starling (Below) and a Tawny Pipit. A Dotterel in November was a surprising late visitor to the beach.



Seawatching during the autumn was often disappointing with skua and Little Gull numbers very low but there was a decent spell of Balearic Shearwater passage with a peak of 28 on Aug.20th and some large numbers of Mediterranean Gulls arrived in late October and November.

The back end of the year saw long periods of very mild weather which induced an early onset of up-channel Brent Geese movement commencing in early December.

Other wildlife

Following the discovery, in 2015, of a breeding colony of Tree Crickets and an apparent colony of Sickle-bearing Bush-crickets (Below) in the recording area, a considerable amount of time was spent during the



summer on nocturnal surveys of these species. Visiting the sites earlier in the season produced several nymph Sickle-bearing Bush-crickets and thus proving that they were breeding in the area and accurate emergence dates were achieved for both species. Several mating pairs of Tree Cricket were found (picture below). Many visiting naturalists also came to see them and on a couple of the night-visits a Nightjar was also seen.



No "macro" moths were added to the list this year but there were still a few notable records including Dusky Hook-tip, Scalloped Hook-tip, several Vestals, a few Jersey Tigers, four Convolvulus Hawk-moths, three Delicates and four Scarce Bordered Straws. Work continues on the "micro"-moths and there were a small number of additions to the list among them.

A few Clouded Yellows were recorded and quite a lot of time was spent looking for Small Copper aberrations – a number of which were found. Interestingly, numbers of Small Coppers at Dungeness appear to be bucking the national trend as numbers were very high during the year. Grizzled Skippers and second brood Brown Argus numbers were also encouragingly high.

It was a quiet year for migrant dragonflies but two Lesser Emperors were seen at the Long Pits during the summer and a few Small Red-eyed Damselflies hang on to their status as breeding species in the area.

A concerted effort to record the Shield-bugs was maintained with the Brassica Bug *Eurydema oleraceus* added to the area list.

Porpoises were seen throughout much of the year in good numbers (a peak of 32 on 7th September) and a small pod of White-beaked Dolphins was seen during the spring. All our cetacean sightings go to the Kent Mammal Group and to the Seawatch Foundation.

Other projects

Work continues on our long term goal to get all of our original paper log data computerized. We now have 43 years' worth of bird data entered and various colleagues are working hard to try and complete this project.

Work also continues on a cross-channel collaboration project looking at the differences in migration patterns between the English and French sides of the Channel. We went to a meeting in March where we discussed future ideas with our French counterparts and were also shown a possible site for a new Bird Observatory. We hope that progress can be made on this and we are offering advise and support.

In 2015 we started a new venture for the Observatory with the introduction of a clothing line with very smart fleeces, sweatshirts and polo-shirts and featuring our Pomarine Skua logo. We added cups, a holdall and fridge magnets to our catalogue during 2016.

Dungeness Bird Observatory

£12

£8

We offer Polo Shirts, Sweatshirts and Fleeces and T-shirts in black with the Dungeness Bird Observatory logo in sizes S to XXXL. (Other colours are available on request).

£15

£20

£25

You can also keep yourself warm with our new Woolly Hats or just a nice hot drink from one of our mugs.

£6

£15

Pre-orders would be appreciated as we don't have much storage space.

Staffing

David Campbell was our Assistant Warden from early March to the end of October and we are hoping to employ a new Assistant Warden for the 2017 season. For further details contact the warden as detailed below.

Our original website which we began in 2001 gradually became harder and harder to maintain so we worked on a new site during 2015 and we were able to launch this at the beginning of 2016. We try to update the site daily if possible and it can be found at www.dungenessbirdobs.org.uk.

As you can see from the above the work of Bird Observatory covers much more than just birds and anyone with any interest in wildlife is welcome to stay at the Observatory.

For more details contact David Walker by email at dungenessobs@vfast.co.uk or by post to Dungeness Bird Observatory, 11 RNSSS Cottages, Dungeness, Kent TN299NA.



Sandwich Bay – Ian Hodgson

Winter was largely mild and mostly uninspiring, though January brought good local numbers of Little Gulls, including 31 on the 7th, and wintering species of interest included Siberian Chiffchaff and Red-necked Grebe.

It took a long while to shrug off winter across the whole of Western Europe and spring was unforgivingly cold in a relentless NE airflow. The local Starling roost rose to at least 30,000 on Mar.18th as migrants passed through, while northern Long-tailed Tits were seen on the 8th and 22nd and a Lithuanian-ringed Blue Tit was trapped on the 23rd; apparently the longest-distance British recovery on record.

Summer migrants arrived slowly in April, but only the third Savi's Warbler to have been recorded at the Bay was singing from the reeds in Pegwell on the 15th and an Iceland Gull appeared on the 18th, with a Serin on the 23rd. Passage waders included a Long-billed Dowitcher on the 8th, with a Crane nearby and three Cranes flew across Worth on the 10th, followed by a Purple Heron on the 14th and a Glossy Ibis on the 27th. A Black Kite was seen amid a hefty movement of Buzzards on the 19th and the month ended with a Rough-legged Buzzard and a Honey Buzzard on the 30th.

Passage waders in May included five Wood Sandpipers and a Temminck's Stint and despite continuing cold weather a Black Kite and a Montagu's Harrier were seen on the 14th and 15th and on the 17th at least 12 Red Kites, eight Common Buzzards and a Honey-buzzard flew N. Another Honey-buzzard flew N on the 19th, while the Black Kite continued to be reported for several days. The Montagu's Harrier was seen again on the 24th, followed by two Bee-eaters.

Return warbler passage began slightly early with a Wood Warbler on July 25th, while a Black Stork was seen on the 23rd, later appearing over Ashford and West Kent.

August began with an extraordinary count of 267 mostly adult Mediterranean Gulls, which was put into the shade by a flock of at least 431 on the 4th. Another Wood Warbler was seen on the 1st, an Icterine Warbler was reported on the 15th and a Red-backed Shrike appeared on the 26th. Six Ruddy Shelducks flew south on to Willow Farm on the 6th, two of which remained on New Downs well into the month, a Cattle Egret was chased from Restharrow Scrape by the resident Little Egrets at first light on the 19th and waders included a Kentish Plover in Pegwell on the 10th and a Temminck's Stint and up to 18 Curlew Sandpipers, eight Ruff, 73 Greenshanks and six Little Stints on New Downs during the last week of the month.

For what are often the best months of the year, September and October were really disappointing, particularly in view of events elsewhere in the country. Clear skies by day and night in September ensured few arrivals, though a Red-backed Shrike appeared on the 16th and an Arctic Warbler and a Yellow-browed Warbler were found on the 20th, followed by a Barred Warbler on the 22nd, when a Red-backed Shrike was found on Worth. Almost as rare as the Arctic Warbler, a Nightjar (below by Steve Ray) was found in Stonelees the same day, remaining until the 22nd at least, along with a Wryneck, which was first found on the 15th. Another Yellow-browed Warbler appeared on the 23rd and two Yellow-browed Warblers were present on the 27th. Visibly moving birds were generally few, although 1,260 Meadow Pipits and 12 Grey Wagtails flew N on the 19th.



Yellow-browed Warblers continued to appear throughout October, with an eventual total for the autumn of 19. The onset of easterlies on the 4th precipitated an arrival of at least 120 Robins (one of which had been ringed in the Netherlands), a Shorelark was found on the 5th and in addition to 250 Robins, a Siberian-type Lesser Whitethroat was found on the 8th. Another Siberian Lesser Whitethroat was seen on the 9th and a third was trapped on the 10th (later confirmed by DNA analysis as *S.c.blythi*) and a Richard's Pipit was discovered on the golf course on the

11th. A Dartford Warbler was found on the 14th, with another along the beach from the 22nd, and six Lapland Buntings were found on the beach on the 23rd. Another Dartford Warbler appeared on the 26th and a real local rarity – a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker – was seen on Worth on the 27th. Three Dartford Warblers were seen along the beach on the 30th, when the bird of the day was a Russian-ringed Robin, and no fewer than five Dartford Warblers were confirmed the following day. A NW breeze on the 10th prompted a movement of 1,086 Goldfinches and 396 Meadow Pipits, while 1,135 Goldfinches and 151 Siskins flew N on the 14th, with four Crossbills over Worth on the 20th and the first Snow Bunting of autumn along the beach on the 27th. A Grey Phalarope flew along the beach on the 5th and in an excellent autumn for Jack Snipe at least six were seen on the scrape on the 7th and another was flushed from the golf course on the 19th. Three Bewick's Swans flew S out at sea on the 11th and five *taiga* Bean Geese were present from the 22nd, with 14 Bean Geese over Worth on the 25th.

The first half of November was quite cold, with some much-needed rain. Five *taiga* Bean Geese remained until at least the 19th, a Long-tailed Duck turned up the 10th and two Slavonian Grebes were on the sea off the Estate on the 12th. Teal numbers on Restharrow rose to a remarkable 1,550 on the 23rd, another Slavonian Grebe was seen on the 28th and geese featured strongly in the last few days of the month, with six Pink-feet flying S over Worth and another three S offshore on the 28th, while a party of 27 Barnacle Geese flew N and a Scaup appeared on the 29th. The final day of the month brought a significant influx of diving ducks into Pegwell, with around 20 Scaup among a mixed flock of 100 Scaup and Tufted Ducks on the sea in the Bay. At least 200 Blackbirds were on Worth and the Estate on the 10th, with over 100 along the Green Wall on the 14th and a flock of Waxwings in Stonelees reached 15 on the 22nd. A seawatch in a strong NE wind on the 7th produced five Little Auks, five Goosanders flew past offshore on the 11th and a Great Northern Diver, 15 Mediterranean Gulls, an Iceland Gull and eight Little Gulls were seen on the 20th as Storm Angus rattled through. A drake Velvet Scoter and a distant Manx Shearwater flew S in another spell of gales on the 22nd and a Black-throated Diver was seen offshore on the 23rd and 24th. Up to 140 Common and 16 Velvet Scoter were seen offshore throughout December.



Holme – Sophie Barker

Not a huge amount to say from Holme this year, it was a poor spring overall with early nesters like Long-tailed Tit and Chiffchaff seeming to do best. A terrible cold snap in late May/early June caused nesting failure for many

species and visible habitat damage with north facing bushes and trees burned by the salt and cold. The picture of Little Terns struggling in a downpour which pretty much covers it!



It also produced a massive influx of Diamond-back moths, with over 2000 caught in the light traps in June but many, many more carpeting the general vegetation.

The summer's highlight was a Great Knot just along the beach at Gore Point (photo below by Ephraim Perfect)



A Manx Shearwater found in a garden in Rugby was transported to Holme for release in early September. Good winds in autumn produced a more modest fall of Goldcrests than 2015 and also plenty of Robins. A Pallas' Warbler was caught on the 24th October and a Dusky Warbler on the 25th (below), with another much later ringing record on November 23rd. These were the second and third ringing records for Dusky at HBO, the first being 9th November 1968.



Landguard – Nigel Odin

An ongoing feature of birding in this part of the world is the ever declining numbers of once common species. For those of us who have been studying migration for far too long birding has become hard work this century which has basically gone to pot. Lower numbers of most species in 2016 is apparent when looking at the data with sea watching producing poor totals of ducks, geese and waders but with higher Wigeon figures. It's not all doom and gloom though with good numbers of Red-throated Divers in the first quarter of the year, improved Gannet figures and totally unprecedented Cormorant counts including 3,020 logged on Christmas day. Presumably offshore fish stocks have got better to support all these birds which is a good thing.

Decent sized falls were non-existent with no ringing day exceeding 100 birds all year for the first time in the observatories history (in fact only nine days got over 50 birds ringed!). Only three Pied Flycatcher were recorded all year whereas one was accustomed to seeing up to five a day in autumn in the 'good old days'. Robin did have a slightly better autumn than recent ones but with numbers still pathetic compared with those of twenty to thirty years ago. Depressingly, no Meadow Pipits nested on the nature reserve for the first time in living memory.

Visible migration counts were also on the low side with the ongoing decline of Greenfinch's particularly concerning. On the plus side Yellow Wagtail had a better autumn than for many years and a slight increase in Yellowhammer records from an exceedingly low nadir is encouraging.

So what was good about 2016? Well three long awaited additions to the site list were Black Kite, Blyth's Reed Warbler and Buff-breasted Sandpiper plus a couple of BBRC rarities in the shape of an Arctic Warbler and a Siberian Stonechat proved by DNA to be *Saxicola maurus stejnegeri* (picture below).



It was also a very good year for site scarcities including at least 5 different Serins including a female with a brood

patch trapped in June (picture below), 3 Hawfinch, 2 Roseate Tern, 2 Glaucous Gull, 2 Great Grey Shrike, 2 Pallas's Warbler, 2 Icterine Warbler, Little Grebe (mega rare here), Great White Egret, Kentish Plover, Barred Warbler, Radde's Warbler & Dartford Warbler (now common on the Suffolk coast but not here) just to mention a few from a long list of good Landguard birds.



Three moth traps were run for nine months of the year with seven new species added to the ever expanding site list.



A Camberwell Beauty butterfly was seen briefly in October.

Staffing

In 2017 a seasonal Warden with a bird ringing permit is required from mid-March to mid-November with further information available from landguardbo@yahoo.co.uk

Annual reports and updated species lists will be available early in 2017 on www.lbo.org.uk



Calf of Man - Kevin Scott & Shaun Murphy

The Observatory was opened up on 11th March and thankfully had survived gales and record floods that had devastated the Isle of Man over the winter.

Spring arrived early on the Calf with the earliest ever Wheatear and Willow warbler. A good run of scarcities included multiple Firecrests, Marsh Harriers, Yellow wagtails and Reed Warblers. However the rarities were even better with a Great-grey Shrike (the first since 1981) although sadly predated. A 'western' Subalpine Warbler, two Common Rosefinch, a brief probable Black-headed bunting and two firsts for the Isle of Man in the form of Short-toed Lark and Eastern Bonelli's Warbler (Below) made for one of the best springs for many years. On the downside in terms of migration, numbers were very low with Willow Warblers almost non-existent and no big spring falls of Blackcaps.



A long dry settled spell caused us some slight water level concerns but thankfully careful use of the wells saw us through. The Cough population seemed to fair reasonably well given the dry conditions. Gulls had a reasonable season as did Shags, although the numbers of pairs nesting seems less than recent years. Sedge Warblers bred for the first time since 2007 and numbers of Blackbird and Dunnock have increased as bramble patches are thickening up on the Calf. Unfortunately one accessible Razorbill site had suffered a mini-landslip over the winter leaving it unsuitable.

The Manx Shearwater recovery project with its aims to eradicate rats continues, with efforts now in the monitoring stage. The population of Manx Shearwaters seems to be responding well with birds breeding in new areas across the island and ringing records for both adults and young broken during the year, the latter with 115 ringed. One of this year's young was also recovered in Brazil 51 days after ringing, the first for the Calf.

The autumn began with a big fall of Willow warblers in August but generally numbers of the commoner species were very poor and redpolls almost non-existent. However the incredible run of rarities kept us entertained with the first Manx record of Red-eyed Vireo (below by Jodie Crane), 2nd calf record of Gadwall, 3rd Pallas's Warbler and a supporting cast including Long-tailed Duck (9th record), Ruff (8th record), four Yellow-browed warbler, a Richard's Pipit and a Red-breasted Flycatcher.



Moths received a lot of attention this season with 251 species recorded, 34 of which were new for the Calf including the nationally scarce b *Cochylis pallidana*. Significant other records included the first confirmed Holly Blue and the 4th-8th records of Speckled wood. Risso's Dolphins were seen in record numbers offshore although Basking Sharks had yet another poor season.

Urgent work was carried out on the Millpond during the autumn, digging out encroaching Horsetails and silt (picture on next page) and some new Sitka spruce trees were planted in the plantation to replace storm damaged ones cut down over the last ten years. Some much needed canopy reduction was started behind the observatory to hopefully improve the net rides over the coming years. The observatory ringed its 250,000th bird in

its history in October, had its first two birds confirmed on DNA thanks to Martin Collinson and the daily log was uploaded in digital form straight to Birdtrack.



The Observatory closed for the winter on 15th November.



Spurn – Paul Collins,

2016 was an amazing year for Spurn Bird Observatory.

We bought a new building in late 2015 and we had the grand opening of the new Observatory Easter Sunday by our Patron, the One Show's Mike Dilger.



In August, Andy Roadhouse's book *The Birds of Spurn* was launched and has had some fantastic reviews and has won Bird Book of the Year in Birdwatch Magazine's Choice Awards and all proceeds are going back into Spurn Bird Observatory to help pay off the mortgage for our new observatory.

Also in August, Spurn Bird Observatory had a stand at the Birdfair for the first time, we were kept very busy and now hope to have a stand every year in future.

Spurn Migration Festival 4 (aka MIGFEST) went ahead in early September with our new partners the BTO (pic top of next column by Dave Tucker) and was again very

successful with lots of very happy attendees and volunteers alike.



International Relationships

Spurn Bird Observatory Trust are pleased to announce the formation of a formal Friendship Agreement between ourselves and Cape May and Falsterbo Bird Observatory. This we believe is the first of its kind in the UK where we intend to promote international relationships and share best practice across the globe to further the cause of environmental awareness around the world.

Our respective members will benefit from the arrangement through special discounts to encourage inter observatory visits to raise the awareness of bird migration on an international scale. Please see below our unique and very powerful agreement that will serve to put

Friendship Agreement
between the Bird Observatories of:

Cape May Bird Observatory (New Jersey Audubon), Falsterbo Bird Observatory (Sweden), Spurn (UK)

This Friendship Agreement provides the framework for mutual cooperation between New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory (New Jersey, USA), Falsterbo Bird Observatory (Sweden) and Spurn Bird Observatory (UK).
This document outlines the relationship between the respective bird observatories to further our knowledge and wonder at the birds, wildlife, habitat and people using each site through the seasons and for the mutual benefit of the observatories.

The three bird observatories aim to achieve the following goals:

- To foster, encourage and collaborate on broad comparative studies of selected bird populations and associated conservation priorities.
- To share knowledge, experience and best practices in bird observatory operations and management.
- To increase awareness between members, and among the broader international public, of the mission and accomplishments of our respective bird observatories.

The Friendship Agreement will be supported by regular communications between senior representatives of each observatory.
The Friendship Agreement will be reviewed annually and can also be reviewed at any time at the request of any one of the three observatories.

David La Puma, Director
Cape May Bird Observatory

Björn Malmhagen, Chairman
Falsterbo Bird Observatory

Rob Adams, Chairman
Spurn Bird Observatory

2016

Spurn firmly on the international radar and assist in securing the observatory rating in the premier league.

And then there were the birds – it was a record year for the number of species recorded - 270, six more than the previous best, and in October alone 210 species were logged which is 17 more species than ever recorded in a month at Spurn.

Visible migration was fairly light for most species in both spring and autumn and for Swifts in the summer. However there were good numbers of common migrants, scarce migrants and rarities in both seasons, with several species in record breaking numbers.

There were 3 additional species to the Spurn list taking the Spurn total to 394 and two new races (Stejneger's Siberian Stonechat and Eastern Black Redstart, below by Andy Butler), all were in October which as already mentioned was a spectacular month.



The Siberian Accentor which was found on 13th October became the first for mainland Britain, and only four days after the first for Britain which was found in Shetland. A link below to Alan Shaw's great video on [YouTube](#)



A Pine Bunting and a Brown Shrike were the other additions. These birds were backed up by good numbers of other rarities and vagrants: **13** Richard's Pipits, **5** Olive-

backed Pipits, Citrine Wagtail, **5** Red-flanked Bluetails (including the adult male below by Dave Constantine).



A Isabelline Wheatear (right bird in pic below by Tim Jones) was a bonus for many twitching the Accentor.



A Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler was trapped at Church Field (pic below by Mickey Maher)



Then there was a Blyth's Reed Warbler, 'Desert' Lesser Whitethroat, 2 Greenish Warblers, **137** Yellow-browed Warblers, **11** Pallas's Warblers, **10** Dusky Warblers, 3 Radde's Warblers, Woodchat Shrike, Rose-coloured Starling, Rustic Bunting and **10** Little Buntings.

On the ringing side it was an average year with a week to go the total looks like to be around 10,500 of around 110 species with Greylag Geese being the only new species added this year. Other notable species ringed were the 2nd Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, 8th Woodchat Shrike and four Dusky Warblers along with record numbers of Willow Warblers.

All in all probably the best year for Spurn Bird Observatory Trust Ltd as we strive to move forward and inspire and encourage more people to come and see the work we do and what a fantastic place Spurn is.



Bardsey – Steve Stansfield

2016 - what a cracker it turned out to be!

Spring was a little 'slow-off-the-mark' this year, but as the saying goes – good things come to those who wait! April had a few days of nice passage of common migrants, but nothing in terms of numbers of Blackcaps and Willow Warblers like last year. On 20 April 8 Ring Ouzels were seen, with a Siberian Chiffchaff the following day along with an unseasonal Great-spotted Woodpecker. A good passage of Whimbrels took place this spring and several were trapped and colour marked as part of our on-going project.

May began as quietly as April had finished, but the occasional boost, like a male Blue-headed Wagtail on 5th along with 103 Blackcaps kept hopes alive for something good to happen

Things were soon to hot up, and that was not just on the weather front. A warm blast of southerly air from the Mediterranean helped the second week of May to turned out to be quite a good one in the end.

Sunday 8th saw two Blue-headed Wagtails, a Grey Plover, a Pomarine Skua and a Wood Sandpiper.



Monday 9th started with the year's first Turtle Dove in the morning, and then I went back to preparing the layout of a section of the 2014 bird report. Radio traffic about a mid-afternoon arrival of birds prompted me to head out for an hour. Minutes after leaving my desk, Steve Hinde radioed out news of a male Eastern Subalpine Warbler near the lighthouse (pic Bottom of previous column). Tuesday morning (10th May) was grey with a southeast breeze. Early morning radio traffic again dragged me away from my desk, with the words 'Black Kite!' being broadcast over the airwaves. This was just the third record for Bardsey but the second found by Mark!



Fitting new carpets in the Lodge was the order of the day for Steve Hinde and myself from mid-morning on Wednesday, though Mark radioed to say he had found a dragonfly he was not sure what it was. When I got there I identified it as a stunning Red-veined darter. Meanwhile, Mark was counting Swallows on Pen Cristin when he radioed at about 1630hrs saying he had just found a large pale Pipit but was not sure which species it was. Steve and I downed tools and went straight out. It sounded like it was going to be a Tawny Pipit as he described it as being quite pale and unstreaked. However, he had noticed on the only photo that he managed to get, that the bird did not have the diagnostic dark lores.



After a while of watching the bird and examining pictures on the back of my camera I began to think it was a Blyth's Pipit, the second for Bardsey and third for Wales. The news was put out that we had Britain's first spring Blyth's Pipit.



The 15th was another cracking day. A male Ortolan bunting was seen all too briefly, and two different Ospreys passed over the island! There was then a quiet week, though a Black-Throated Diver passed the island on 22nd, with a Turtle Dove seen almost everywhere anyone went! The 24th saw two Mute Swans fly along the coast and into Henllwyn. A stunning Grey-headed wagtail made headlines on 27th, the first record of this Scandinavian Yellow Wagtail for many years.

Saturdays are always a bit hectic on Bardsey as boats come and go bringing and taking visitors to and fro... Radio traffic on 28th May made this particular Saturday even more hectic. A Red-breasted Flycatcher was seen in Cristin Withy early on, and whilst we were watching it more radio comms about a possible Greenish Warbler at Nant sent hearts racing. Eventually the Greenish was heard singing, seen and made its way to the Obs garden where it was trapped and ringed. Later in the day a second Greenish Warbler was found at the Obs.



May 30th saw a second Red-breasted Flycatcher in Cristin Withy and what we thought was the end of spring. Breeding birds were the focus of our attention for the next few weeks, with good numbers of seabirds doing well. One of the highlights is the expansion of our Puffin colony, with now up to over 150 birds seen regularly during the summer! Up to a few years ago there had been just a handful of records of the tiny immigrant Diamond-backed Moth, this year saw these Mediterranean waifs arrive on our shores in their thousands! In the first week in June as many as 50 THOUSAND may have been seen on

the island, with many more going unseen! 5th July saw yet another Greenish Warbler at Nant. June 15th began with a Marsh Warbler singing from deep cover at Ty Nessaf. The following day saw yet another Greenish Warbler – the fourth of the year. So that in a nutshell was spring. A slow April, a blistering May and a cracking June

Late July saw the usual arrivals of Willow Warblers with up to 100 on several days. A juvenile Yellow Legged Gull brought July to a nice close on 31st – only the seventh record for the island. Storm Petrel ringing produced a new record for the number of birds ringed in a single year, with 146 trapped. The 9th of August saw a Little Ringed Plover briefly on the Narrows and was the 12th for the island. On 13th a Marsh Harrier was seen and a Wood Warbler was in the Plantation. On the evening of 14th August a Minke Whale was seen surfacing off the west side of the island. A Red Kite passed over the island on 16th. The 17th of August was a bonkers day. A *Phylloscopus* warbler which was heard calling on 15th, seen briefly on 16th was eventually pinned down at Nant and turned out to be the island's 8th record of Bonelli's Warbler.



Shortly afterwards a Long-eared Owl was found in Cristin Withy and three Green Sandpipers were seen. As I did the week's guided walk I managed to find the island's fourth record of Citrine Wagtail which alighted briefly on the Narrows. The 21st August saw the year's first Sooty Shearwaters and Long-tailed Skua, with a Curlew Sandpiper the following day. The first two records of a record breaking year for Convulvulus Hawk moths was found on 23rd along with an impressive arrival of 731 Willow Warblers and 68 Spotted Flycatchers. We had been joined on the island by three members of the Next Generation Birders who had come to see migration and experience island life and perhaps see a rare bird or two... Having seen a huge fall of Willow Warblers on 23rd, the 24th began with an Icterine Warbler at Nant to get them excited. Whilst watching this I found an Ortolan Bunting sitting in the same tree!! (pic top of next page) Now if that was not enough, another Icterine Warbler was discovered in the garden at Cristin and then like something from a fiction book a Melodious Warbler – then another, and then ANOTHER!!!



We now had five *Hippolais* Warblers on the island, four of them together in the obs garden! The following day we were treated to one of the Melodious Warblers in the hand (which then stayed until mid-September!), another Icterine Warbler and the first two Wrynecks of the autumn! On 3rd September the island's fourth record of Buff-breasted Sandpiper was on the South End, the previous record was 36 years previously to the very day! On 10th September, a Great Shearwater flew along the west side of the island and another Wryneck was found on Pen Cristin. The 11th saw a decent haul of scarcities with a Sooty Shearwater, a fine juvenile Long-tailed Skua, two first-winter Little Gulls as well a flock of three Black Terns and a Little Tern. Also an Icterine Warbler in Nant Withy.

A short intermission in new scarcities followed but the 14th produced a minimum of four Wrynecks, another Ortolan Bunting and a Hobby, with a Pomarine Skua passing at sea. The 15th saw three Wrynecks, including two new ones, with another new one on 17th. Another brief lull in new scarce birds was made pleasurable by great numbers of very confiding common waders on Solfach, with Dunlins and Ringed Plovers literally running over the arms of the photographers! The 26th was back to scarcities, with a Sabine's Gull and yet another new Melodious Warbler. September's final day saw the two long staying Melodious Warblers still present – the Withy one being ringed in the afternoon, and then the discovery late in the day of a Blyth's Reed Warbler at Nant – the fourth for the island if accepted. October began with two Lapland Buntings on 1st and 2nd. At this time, there were also lots of common migrants – and right through September too – there is just not enough room here to write about them all. The 3rd saw the first of a record breaking year for Yellow-browed Warblers (YBW), with two found. The 4th saw more Yellow-broweds and a Pintail. Whilst Humming-bird Hawkmoths were seen regularly on the Fuchsia.

The 6th saw another Osprey and two more YBWs. The 7th's YBW total reached 4, whilst a Little Egret was seen and the island's 26th record of Shoveler. The 8th October saw the scarcities



continue, with a Red-breasted Flycatcher and a Marsh Harrier amongst the commoner species. The 9th saw a new Welsh record for a single site for Yellow-browed Warblers with a minimum of 14 recorded. Also, the first Richards's Pipit of the year was found and a Quail was flushed from the northern end of the island. The 12th saw two Black-throated Divers and a Woodlark recorded along with a good arrival of thrushes.

October 13th has now for many years been a day when a rare bird is guaranteed – no pressure then. So aside from the scattering of Yellow-browed Warblers and Siberian Chiffchaffs a rather smart Radde's Warbler was found at Plas Withy and later trapped at Nant. This is the 6th record of this Asian wanderer to grace our island, and the ninth for Wales! The 16th saw a Black-browed Albatross pass the island at sea. Yellow-broweds continued to be seen daily amongst the commoner Chiffchaffs, finches and thrushes, and then on 19th a Little Bunting was discovered near Carreg Bach – the 15th record for the island (pic below). 20th saw no sign of the tiny bunt, but a Whooper Swan was found and another Woodlark.



As October approached its end we thought we had had just about all it had to give... No, there's more! A Barred Warbler was found on 21st at Nant and a Sabine's Gull was out to sea. So things did begin to slow, but there were still almost daily records of YBWs. Then on 30th Bang... A Pallas's Warbler was trapped – 1218 Starlings, 1157 Chaffinches, 58 Siskins, two Snow Buntings, five Crossbills and three Waxwings were counted. There were also four

YBWs and four Siberian Chiffchaffs. November began with two Goldeneyes being seen and a Tufted duck – both rare on Bardsey, another Whooper Swan on 2nd and yet another Pallas's Warbler on 3rd! Was that it? 12 November found the third Pallas's Warbler of the year! A great year all in all....Bring on 2017!



Hilbre – Steve Williams

Pale-bellied Brent Geese numbers continue to rise and several colour-ringed birds were present in the early winter period including birds ringed in Canada, Ireland and Denmark.

Sadly the same cannot be said for another of Hilbre's iconic species, the Purple Sandpiper. Numbers of wintering Purple Sandpipers continue to decline at Hilbre as the chart below indicates (maximum counts per year 1957-2016).



The island suffered further erosion during winter gales and in January 2016 a substantial rock fall occurred at the South End (see opposite).

This is something that Hilbre, which is made from sandstone, suffers from and further erosion was noted at the North End and on Middle Eye during the year. Winter is also a good time for running repairs to be made to our three heligoland traps that also suffer the effects of weather each year (see below). A large amount of habitat management work was also carried out by a small but dedicated few.



Rock fall at South End of Hilbre (January 2016)

The first migrants began to arrive in late February and early March but the first surprise of the year was the

discovery of Pheasant feathers on the island (a rare bird at Hilbre). The subsequent discovery of a live male was an even bigger surprise; especially considering the semi-resident fox and recent sightings of Weasel on the island. It took up residence on the island from 13 March and is only the third record for Hilbre (all in recent times). It may well have been disturbed by the recent (rather controversial) scrub management work at nearby Red Rocks LNR.

The next surprise visitor was a Red Kite, an increasing species in North Wales but only our sixth record for the island. This bird was spotted flying away from the islands towards the mainland from the Obs balcony – like so many large raptors! It is the earliest spring record for Hilbre.



An Iceland Gull was seen on 17 March followed by a second bird on 17 April; spring is now clearly the peak time to see this species around the islands.

Our first Wheatear was late this year compared to recent years with a male on 24 March. A Spoonbill seen briefly on 30 March became only the fourth record for the islands but was the earliest and it or another was belatedly reported on 15 April. An Osprey spotted from the Obs door was watched fishing in the gutter alongside the Obs garden (see opposite) on 2 April and it could be seen to be ringed (from photos but unfortunately the ring could not be read). This was quickly followed by our second on 4 April but they were the sole records this spring (a poor return by recent standards). However, another was seen on 12 September (still scarcer in autumn here).



Osprey – catching a fish below Obs

Our earliest ever Firecrest (pic below) was caught and ringed on 8 April; beating the previous earliest by one day (9 April 1989).



The same day saw the first of two Ring Ouzels this spring with the second bird on 12 April which also produced a Little Ringed Plover; another species increasing in sightings over the last two decades. The usual small numbers of migrants moved through during April and early May but no large falls of Willow Warblers. In fact the largest count of this 'our bread and butter' migrant was only 22 on 5 May.

However, whilst the numbers of Willow Warblers were lacking other species appeared in better numbers and the highlight of the spring in ringing terms was probably the capture of the French ringed Sedge Warbler on 7 May (see below and opposite).



A Nuthatch found at Red Rocks and circling above the houses on 23 April was phoned in to the Obs and observers watched the bird circling over Red Rocks, landing on the chimney stack of the old nursing home and then taking a brief sortie in the direction of Middle Eye before returning to Red Rocks. Having been watched from the Obs balcony, entering the 'Hilbre recording area air space' it becomes only the third record for the island. Spring Black Terns are not regular at Hilbre so a flock of 15 birds in summer plumage was a delightful sight on 9 May. The small numbers of Little Gulls seen in April/early May

are much more regular although numbers this year were very low with a peak of only 7.

Without doubt the bird of the spring, and probably the year, for the Obs was the Nightjar found on 12 May 2016 sat on a bench in the Observatory garden (see opposite). It was present for a short period before being flushed by the local Meadow and Rock Pipits and Pied Wagtails.



It then flew down the Obs garden fenceline and fortunately was relocated in a stunted silver birch tree where it remained until dusk allowing many observers from the Obs and beyond to enjoy this Hilbre rarity. A superb bird - only the third record for the island and the first for 48 years; the first was trapped and ringed on 30th August 1965 and the second was seen on 28th May 1968.

Another highlight of the spring around the islands were a number of colour-ringed and leg-flagged Sanderlings seen in May with birds seen and photographed having been ringed in Greenland, Iceland, Netherlands, Ghana and Mauritania.



As spring turned to summer insects often become the focus at the Obs – and the setting of the moth trap overnight becomes part of the daily Obs ritual (see right). We enjoyed part of the national Diamond-back moth influx during June. We also enjoyed some of our own specialties (like Netted Pug – see below left) and the odd new moth like Barred Red. The island is awash with colour through the spring and summer with the spring turning

from the pink of the thrift to the blue of the Rock Sea Lavendar (see below).



Rock Sea Lavendar – west side of Hilbre, July 2016



Netted Pug – a Hilbre speciality



Water Rail – only the third record since the fondation of the Obs in 1957

Despite the focus being on insects and flora the summer focus from a birding point of view is on the breeding birds as well as the substantial numbers of roosting terns around the islands which are always a joy to behold. However, most strange was the finding of a Water Rail in the Heli trap on 3 June. It was caught and ringed and became only the fourth record of this secretive species for the islands following records in early August 1952 (which was also caught and ringed before the Obs was founded), one on the slipway at the North End on 5 November 1968 and a third seen first near 'Buzzard Hill' before again moving to in between rocks near the North End on 24 October 2007.



Rock Pipit ringed in Norway

After last year's first successful proven breeding of Rock Pipits on the island since 1987 it was great to report further success this year with more Rock Pipits being ringed. However, the highlight this year was in fact a passage bird that was found in a potter trap on 10 October 2016 to be wearing a colour-ring having been ringed in Norway. It was caught in a 'walk in trap' at Giske Ornithological Station, Norway (a small island off the west coast of Norway) on 14 August 2016 by Kjell Mork Soot. It was seen around the island (and briefly at nearby Red Rocks) up to 16 October.



Yellow-browed Warblers – male (left) and female (right) on wing length

Nationally, the autumn will be remembered for continual easterly influence in the weather and the birds which included a large influx of Yellow-browed Warblers. Hilbre did not miss out on this Siberian six striped sprite. On 3 October (an early date for this species at Hilbre) a bird was discovered in the west side garden of Telegraph House and was subsequently caught and ringed. Later in the day another was found in the Obs garden (and also caught) and then remarkably a third was caught in the Heli. At one point two birds were together in the hand and

the size difference between male and female was quite apparent.

Although not the numbers at other larger observatories Hilbre has never had more than a single Yellow-browed Warbler on one day and only ever had two birds in the same year; so three in a day was remarkable for us. Not finished there a fourth bird was found and subsequently caught and ringed on 29 October and also became the first bird to be seen on more than one day when it was still present the next day (30th) and had possibly had been present from 28th when one was thought to have been heard in the Obs garden. Other highlights during October – a great month at Hilbre – included a Great White Egret, although increasingly common on the 'mainland' there are still only about half a dozen records of this impressive egret at Hilbre; with the first accepted record as recent as 21 August 2012.



On 17 October a Richard's Pipit alighted briefly on the main island a couple of times before flying off south west towards the mainland; a repeat performance of the previous two records on 3 October 2015 and 15 October 2011; although there are still less than 10 records of this species at Hilbre. It, or another, Richard's Pipit was seen briefly at Little Eye before flying back towards West Kirby saltmarsh on 25 October. It was a good autumn on the islands for Whooper Swans with two on 2nd and six on 25th October, 13 on 1st and two on 3rd, six on 7th, three on 8th and finally a single on 29th November. The year ended well with a single drake Scaup around the islands from November to the year-end and in November/December sightings of a single Snow Bunting (on 7 and 12 November and 8 December) and Long-tailed Duck (29th). The Pale-bellied Brent Goose flock built up to over 200 birds including returning colour-ringed birds ringed in Canada, Iceland and Ireland; bringing us neatly back to how the year started.



Spring 2017 will mark the end of 60 years of coverage at the Obs since the foundation of the Bird Observatory in 1957 and we look forward to marking this milestone.

Photos by: Barry Barnacal, Alan Hitchmough, Colin Jones, Matt Thomas, Chris Williams, Steve Williams & Phil Woolen



Gibraltar Point – Kev Wilson

It was a very mild start to the year with generally low numbers of waterbirds, particularly wildfowl, although it was good to have a local wintering flock of pink-footed geese again. The unfortunate stranding of sperm whales in January included three individuals beaching along the coast, generating a massive influx of visitors.

On a positive note, some neighbouring farmland on the Croftmarsh Farm estate was entered into a Higher Level Stewardship and the capital works scheme to create some lagoons was underway in February. This will significantly enhance the reserve hinterland for birds and other wildlife and could provide a freshwater refuge for species such as dragonflies and water voles that may become displaced in a future scheme to restore functioning upper saltmarsh on the Freshwater Marsh of the National Nature Reserve. Similarly a large area of the Seacroft Golf Course dunes will come into grazing management under a Stewardship scheme.

Whilst lengthy discussions were taking place over potential re-modelling of sea defences and habitats here, dynamic coastal processes were evident along the shore. A new sand/shingle bar continued its development of Greenshank's Creek. This became a focal point for roosting waders and a nest site for a small number of little terns later in the season.

On the lagoons, water levels had been low during the winter but were augmented by significant rain in early spring, offering more protection to island nesting shorebirds. However, breeding activity for most birds was hampered by the cold northerly air streams from mid to late April, there was even snow on 27th April! Those northerlies continued well into May. Overall, it was a fairly quiet spring migration but two firsts for the reserve occurred on consecutive days; an Alpine Accentor coming to the bird table at Sykes Farm on 7th May and a singing Western Bonelli's Warbler on 8th (Pic by G. Gatley) – also a county first! (pic below by James Siddle).





A combination of the poor weather conditions and observer coverage, down by about 40% meant that the log entries for 2016 were much less comprehensive than in recent years.

Even with lower observer input, the further crash on willow warbler was easily detectable, with a very poor spring migration resulting in only a handful of territories. More bad news came from turtle doves, for which there may only have been a single territory this year.

The new visitor centre was completed and opened in mid-May and proved a very popular attraction. (The contractors teleporter also proved a popular attraction for a pair of nesting pied wagtails that delayed removal of the machine for 10 days !) The upper deck viewing facility in particular was very popular with birders. The Old Coastguard Station, now refurbished adjacent, has provided an excellent function room for educational visits and events – the first of which was a National Moth Night event on 11th June.

Whilst two Caspian Terns attracted much attention on the lagoons during June (pic by Nige Lound), some 20 pairs of Little Terns were nesting at the Shorebird Sanctuary. They went on to raise 11 juveniles. Whilst Ringed Plovers had a very successful year; 16 pairs raised 22 juveniles.



The RSPB LIFE project provided vital funding again for the Shorebird protection scheme, facilitating the appointment of a Seasonal Assistant Warden and night-wardening cover.

Staff and volunteers were involved in collecting data on waterbird disturbance for a proposed hovercraft scheme operating out of the River Steeping, but otherwise, there was a generally low coverage of the estuarine area. This was unfortunate as other east coast sites were documenting a record arrival of curlew sandpipers which would have been overlooked here, along with a Dowitcher Sp that flew south with bar-tailed godwits and probably settled on the estuary before relocating to Frampton a while later.

Whilst this year more than ever demonstrated our need to recruit more counters, the ringing input was well maintained. For the 16th successful year, the Constant Effort Site monitoring was carried out. It is thought that good weather through the latter part of the breeding season was beneficial to the rearing of nestlings. Some very warm weather spells were recorded through August and into September.

The northerly winds that had blighted the spring brought favour to sea-watches in September with a large movement of Sooty Shearwaters along with good numbers of skuas, Gannets and terns. Interest continued over the sea through October with good numbers of sea duck, inbound whooper Swans, Poms and Bonxies and then two storm petrels in early November.

The main highlight of the autumn was the unprecedented arrival of Yellow-browed Warblers, with up to at least 22 on a single day and probably over 100 individuals through the Reserve the Reserve.

A supporting cast of Radde's Warbler, dusky Warblers, 2 Pallas's Warblers and a Red-flanked Bluetail were also found.

A series of site meetings took place with Natural England and Lincolnshire County Council to identify a suitable route for the National Coast Path through the Reserve, negotiating the River Steeping to the Wash banks and mitigating for waterbird disturbance on Jackson's Marsh – the conundrum continues. In the meantime, large scale improvements were being made to the Cycletrack as part of a Local Enterprise Partnership project managed by LCC.

A formal ceremony took place at the Visitor Centre on 7th October to mark its opening and to perform a dedication to Ted Smith – tributes were led by Simon King. Subsequently, Countryfile made a feature of the early days of the Bird Observatory and its establishment by Ted.

Finally, I would like to recognise and thank all of the staff and volunteers associated with the Reserve and Observatory today, for their dedication and hard work during 2016.



Portland – Martin Cade

2016 was kind to us in many ways, not least in providing two long overdue additions to the Portland bird list: a Great Spotted Cuckoo obliged by taking up a five-week residency during the spring; had it not

turned up in a mist-net we might have been lucky if the other addition - a Red-flanked Bluetail (lower pic below) during October - had managed to last much longer than five minutes but in the event its brief in-hand appearance was long enough for it to be handsomely appreciated.



The list of back-up rarities was certainly not to be sniffed at: second island records of Black Stork, Temminck's Stint, Red-eyed Vireo (upper pic) and Pine Bunting (pic above right) were all garnered, whilst in the less than ten ever category Caspian Gull, White-spotted Bluethroat, Blyth's

Reed Warbler, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Hume's Warbler and Daurian Shrike all obliged with appearances.



Typically, the two passerine migration seasons had their ups and downs. Spring was the more rewarding for numbers with the 'big three' of Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler all represented in average or better numbers; on the downside Sedge Warbler, Garden Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher dropped to only half their recent average, whilst it was terrible season for Whitethroat (with poor passage numbers also later reflected in low breeding season totals and poor productivity). Autumn ticked along without ever getting really busy, with it being particularly disappointing that the trickle down of late autumn arrivals being reported in such plenty on the East Coast scarcely materialised on the South Coast. Overall, rewards on the seawatching front were few and far between: after a dreadful year in 2015 spring tern numbers recovered well, but it was otherwise an almost uniformly poor year for sea passage, with autumn skua totals in particular woefully low.

Good runs of benign weather conditions, together with a favourable growing season for the observatory's sacrificial conservation crops, saw to it that not far short of 6000 birds were ringed during the year – a respectable total by recent standards. There were three additions to the all-time ringing list but few stand-out individual species totals, with the record Meadow Pipit total coming more by dint of targeting than an above-average passage of pipits. Amongst the recoveries reported during the year our first sub-Saharan Reed Warbler – ringed at PBO in August and controlled in The Gambia in November – was pleasing.

Although the routine daily census and ringing sampling formed the backbone of activities through the year it was fascinating to again play host to a nocturnal sound recording project; although by no means yet systematic this sampling has been showing its value with, for example, 1370 Tree Pipits and 4 Ortolan Buntings logged on just one late August night.

Although the highlights from all the natural history recording that's undertaken in tandem with our bird work are too many and varied to mention in the context of this review it's worth singling out at least six more additions to the Portland moth list – it is quite remarkable that after 65 years of nearly daily recording the likes of new birds and moths keep turning up at the rate that they do.



Fair Isle – David Parnaby

Migration made the headlines in many ways on Fair Isle in 2016, beginning with no fewer than eight species either breaking or equalling their earliest ever records for the island (Pied Wagtail, Great Skua, Green

Sandpiper, House Martin, Sand Martin, Redstart, Tree Pipit and Whitethroat; the latter three all arriving on 10th April). For a site with the long-recording history of Fair Isle, to break so many records in a year is really rather unusual. Although spring migration for many common species went on to be rather unspectacular, there were, as ever, some very impressive highlights. None more so than Fair Isle's first Black-browed Albatross, which was first seen from the *MV Good Shepherd IV* before circling over the assembled staff, islanders and visitors on Bunes – wow!



A less spectacular first for the island was the nevertheless appreciated Little Egret (with another in November), whilst other spring rarities included Calandra Lark, Collared Flycatcher, 2 Red-throated Pipits, 2 Rustic Buntings, Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll, Hoopoe and a concentrated arrival of two eastern and four western Subalpine Warblers in a three day period in May, whilst a spring total of 22 Bluethroat was better than recent years.



Spring also saw a group of Killer Whales linger off Sheep Rock before making a close pass down the east coast. Photographs of one of these animals showed that it had also visited Fair Isle in November 2013. The next visit of Killer Whales (in July) put on an amazing show, lingering off Bunes for several hours as they successfully hunted Grey Seals. One of these, a female known as 'Mousa', was accompanied by a calf born earlier in the year. Mousa was also a returning animal, having been seen from the island in June 2011. Other cetacean highlights during the year included a Humpback Whale in October and some showy Risso's Dolphins.

The breeding season proved to be another reasonable one for seabirds, the third consecutive year of decent productivity (although for most species still a long way of the heydays of the 1990s). Particular highlights included the highest ever total of breeding Bonxies (516 territories), Razorbill productivity of 0.74 chicks per egg laid (the best since 1998), Kittiwakes seeing their best productivity since 2000 (0.75 chicks per nest), whilst Arctic Terns and Arctic Skuas were amongst other species to record some of their best breeding seasons in the last decade.

Storm Petrel ringing was again very popular, with some productive nights seeing a total of 2122 ringed during the year (of an Obs total of 6242 new birds ringed), providing an introduction to ringing (and in some cases birds) to a number of guests. A real surprise though was the return of a Swinhoe's Petrel that had been ringed in 2013, but not seen since its initial capture.



Other ringing highlights included new records for Bonxie (566), Chiffchaff (134), Wren (48 – apparently reflecting strong autumn passage), Hawfinch (7) and Goldfinch (8) and the first Brent Goose and Common Scoter to be ringed on Fair Isle. The House Sparrow total of 135 ringed was the second highest ever, whilst interestingly, a Fair Isle ringed bird caught in October 2015 was found 50km away in Shetland in June and an unusually high number caught in October included a bird ringed on Orkney in August. Other interesting movements included a Turtle Dove that moved to the Faeroes, some interesting sightings of wandering darvic-ringed Shags and, remarkably, our first ever recovery of a Twite on Shetland.

We were very pleased to see the first young volunteers benefit from the Simon Aspinall Bursary Fund in the summer. The SABF runs alongside the John Harrison Memorial Fund to provide grants for young people to enable them to volunteer at FIBO and we are very grateful to Jack and Sylvia Aspinall who set up the fund in honour of their son, a former FIBO Assistant Warden, who died of motor neurone disease in 2011. A great selection of volunteers visited the Obs during the summer and we're sure we'll see some of them back, not even the Fulmar chick-ringing could put them off!

The easterly winds throughout a large spell of the autumn that brought so many rarities to the UK benefitted Fair Isle as well. Highlights were the island's first (and second) Siberian Accentors, whilst 4 Pine Buntings (including a flock of 3) were unprecedented and 4 Lanceolated Warblers maintained Fair Isle's record as the UK capital of this stunning little rarity. One particular day stuck in the memory; October 2nd, which saw the arrival of Pechora Pipit, Lanceolated Warbler, Red-flanked Bluetail (the first of several sightings with perhaps as many as four individuals involved during the month), Red-throated Pipit (one of maybe as many as five individuals recorded during the autumn), Radde's, Arctic and Blyth's Reed Warbler, along with 72 Yellow-browed Warblers, 4 Red-breasted Flycatchers, 3 Barred Warblers, 3 Common Rosefinches and 2 Bluethroats (as well as lingering Little Bunting and Short-toed Lark), and all in sunny conditions with just a light easterly breeze, no wonder several people rated it as one of their best day's birding on Fair Isle!

Like many sites in the UK, it was an autumn migration packed full of rarities that is likely to linger in the memory for some time. It was the common migrants though, that were the subject of the paper 'Quantifying full phenological event distributions reveals simultaneous advances, temporal stability and delays in spring and autumn migration timing in long-distance migratory birds' by Will Miles *et al* that appeared in *Global Change Biology*. This is the first paper of the Fair Isle Migration Project, which is analysing over 60 years of FIBO Log data (thanks to a grant from the SOC that allowed digitisation of the Logs) and a summary will be appearing in *British Birds* in 2017. It is a fascinating piece of work detailing changes in the migrations times of various migrants, and it is analysis of this sort that adds extra worth to every census the wardening team undertakes - we look forward to seeing more appearing in the future.

Another major piece of progress was the announcement in the autumn by the Scottish Government that the water's around Fair Isle are to be given Marine Protected Area status. It's been a long struggle by the island community, supported by the Obs, to achieve this; we're delighted for everyone involved and look forward to reporting further progress with the MPA.

Finally, after a slight hiatus during a redesign process, we're delighted that the FIBO 2014 and 2015 reports have

both recently been published, and the new full-colour design and increased number of photographs have received lots of positive feedback. Visit the FIBO website to see how to obtain a copy, or better still, become a Friend of Fair Isle to receive one every year.

Our thanks to the Obs team, volunteers, Directors, islanders, visitors and everyone else who helped with the work of FIBO during 2016, including JNCC, SNH and SOTEAG who provided financial assistance for seabird monitoring, the ranger post and seabird ringing respectively.



North Ronaldsay – Alison Duncan Richard Donaghey

Many thanks to all who contributed to the observatory this year: we had a fantastic team of volunteers and have a full complement of staff and volunteers for 2017, including a number of returnees.



Among the usual wintering birds, the male Northern Harrier was present until 28th February and the drake Green-winged Teal until mid-March. A Common Crane on 26th February was notable and a first winter male Smew from late February through March was presumably the 2015 bird, and a second Smew on 25th March was still only the fifth record for the island.



Though there were no large falls, a trickle of interesting migrants appeared throughout the spring with 3 Hawfinches on 4th April, a White-tailed Eagle appeared briefly on 19th along with a Garganey and on 26th there was a summer plumaged Black-throated Diver. May began with a Rough-legged Buzzard on 2nd; two Blue-headed Wagtails on 3rd were followed by a *flavissima* Yellow Wagtail and the 9th island record of Thrush Nightingale was found near Trollavatn on 9th; also that day there was a male Bluethroat near Nether Linnay with the first Wood Sandpiper flying over calling. A calling male Corncrake at Holland stayed around the telephone exchange until late July. A White-billed Diver on 18th was possibly the same bird which was seen again on 28th. A Common Crane was heard calling overhead on 21st, Red-breasted Flycatcher appeared on 24th and there were 2 Orcas seen off Stromness on 27th. Red-backed Shrikes on 28th and 30th and a Black Tern sat in Nouster were somewhat overshadowed by the second island record of Stone Curlew near Sangar on 30th.

A Marsh Warbler was trapped at Westness on 4th, (subsequently caught on Fair Isle on 10th) and there were 2 more Bluethroats. A flock of Bar-tailed Godwits on Gretchen built up to reach an unprecedented 105, similar numbers staying on for most of the month. It was a good year for Red-necked Phalaropes with 8 records between 9th June and 12th July when there was a group of four at Gretchen. Arctic Terns had a reasonable breeding season, numbers built up to over 4000 by late July and a smart adult Roseate Tern sat amongst some on the beach at Nouster on 28th.

Seawatching in early summer produced a Great Shearwater on 22nd July and a Fea's Petrel on 1st August; over 2000 Fulmars on 12th, 39 Sooty Shearwaters on 14th and a Cory's Shearwater on 25th. A good fall around 20th saw Wrynecks, Icterine and Barred Warblers, Red-backed Shrikes and Common Rosefinches accompanied by a Greenish Warbler at Bewan on 21st and respectable totals of 35 Willow Warblers and 27 Pied Flycatchers. A Marsh Warbler was present at Bridesness on 25th, a Syke's Warbler was trapped at Senness on 28th and a Common Buzzard passed through on 30th. Dedicated seawatchers were rewarded with Great Shearwaters on 30th and 31st August as well as a Balearic Shearwater on 31st. Cetaceans also featured with 11 Risso's Dolphins on 23rd and 2 Bottle-nosed Dolphins on 28th. Good conditions in early September produced another Great Shearwater on 7th and a new day record of 869 Sooty Shearwaters. September highlights included two Buff-breasted Sandpipers and a good movement of Lapland Buntings throughout the month with 57 recorded on 9th and a remarkable total of 110 on 17th.

A Ring Ouzel on 11th was early (one of only two records this autumn) and our first Yellow-browed Warbler on 13th was the first of the autumn in Britain. A Minke Whale was seen on 14th, another Marsh Warbler was trapped on 16th, an assortment of migrants on 22nd included 20

Yellow-browed Warblers (which easily outnumbered the common migrants) and 4 Common Rosefinches.

Non-avian highlights continued with 2 White-sided Dolphins on 23rd and spectacular showings of aurora borealis on 25th and 26th. Meanwhile, goose passage was dominated by over 2000 Pinkfeet on 27th and 28th and other notable birds were a record flock of 23 Woodpigeons and an elusive Ortolan Bunting at Kirbest. A fall on 2nd October included a grand total of 51 Yellow-browed Warblers, though 57 Lapland Buntings (below) were also notable and a Humpback Whale made its way through the firth as last year.



The sixth Bluethroat of the year was on 3rd, the eighth island record of Firecrest, second island record of Little Egret on 4th, another Ortolan and a total of 6 Little Buntings at various sites but the week's highlight was an obliging Red-flanked Bluetail at Lenswick on 7th. A second Red-flanked Bluetail was caught in one of the observatory traps on 13th October, a Norwegian ringed Hawfinch was trapped at Holland and a Hoopoe found at Trollavatn was caught at roost a week or so later and stayed on the island well into November. Late October was an exciting time with a Dusky Warbler skulking around Westness on 22nd and the following day a drake Green-winged Teal appeared on Gretchen, a male Northern Harrier cruised around the island and a Radde's Warbler was found at Kirbest. Seawatching again was a highlight with some amazing figures on 29th and 30th comprising 6248 Fulmars (including 2 blue phase birds), 4 Manx and 228 Sooty Shearwaters, 28 Pomarine Skuas, 869 Kittiwakes and a Fea's Petrel. The other unusual arrival at the end of the month was the island's third Glossy Ibis, staying well into November, as did the Green-winged Teal and Northern Harrier (pic on previous page) which was present until 31st December.





Copeland – Richard Donaghey

The 63rd consecutive season at Copeland Bird Observatory kicked off a month earlier this year with the first weekend visit beginning on the 11th of March with another trip one week later. The early start paid dividends with records of a wintering ring-tailed Hen Harrier, which stayed through to late April and a flock of Twite on the island, including the 75th to be ringed at the observatory. We also picked up the early Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Goldcrest, Redwing, Blackbird and Song Thrush passage that is often missed with the usual mid-April start. A bonus was the first Skylark ringed this century on the 24th, with another trapped later in the year. The first Swallow was recorded on the 5th of April, Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers appeared on the weekend of the 8-10th April and first Wheatear the following weekend. A Long-eared Owl hung around on the 22-23rd of April and represents only the third spring record, with a further 41 in autumn. Corvid movement was strong on the same weekend with over 80 Hooded Crows and five Carrion Crows on the 24th. Two Mallard ringed on the 15th April represent the 13-14th ringed at the Observatory with number 15 trapped on the 1st of May.



The first Blackcaps and Swifts were recorded on the 1st of May, Whitethroat on the 7th and Sedge Warbler on the 15th of May. The Crow Trap produced the 2nd & 3rd Carrion Crows to be trapped on the island on the 15th May; all three represent the only ringing records in Ireland since at least 1975, probably ever. A further ten Hooded Crows and a retrap from the previous year were caught over the same weekend. Three Barnacle Geese on the 13th represented CBO's 13th record, a Shoveler on the 14th only the fifth record and the islands third Osprey appeared on the 6th of June. Other notable June records include a Sooty Shearwater, two Stonechat, one Whinchat and two days with hundreds of Painted Lady butterflies

The Observatory hosted its first mini BioBlitz between the 10-12th of June with 14 resident recorders and a further 45 visitors on boat trips. The surveys included higher plants (85+ spp), rocky shore (40+ spp), ground invertebrates, moths (c35 spp) and the usual birds, butterflies and sea watches. The event was a great success and added a

number of new species for the island. Another new successful initiative was an Artists Weekend at the end of May with 13 artists creating pieces of art inspired by the island and its bird life.



Following the first successful breeding attempts of Puffins at the Observatory in 2015, the first birds arrived back on the 16th of April. Activity peaked through June and the first 2 weeks of July with up to 62 birds and it is very likely that there were 2-3 breeding pairs once more. Signs are good for the establishment of the colony and they are proving a great attraction for visitors. The Black Guillemot, Eider and Fulmar populations remained stable. 24 new female Eiders were ringed, with a further 29 retrapped and 13 new Black Guillemots. Arctic & Common Terns and Black-headed Gulls once again failed to breed on either the Observatory or Mew Islands this year but we did find out that five of our Arctic Terns now breed on Anglesey, including a 26 year old bird. Cuckoos are suspected of breeding with two juveniles ringed in early



July and sightings of adult birds a few weeks previous, probably a first for the island.

The Manx Shearwaters were again productive with 172 new adults and 222 first year birds ringed. Oxford University were back studying the Shearwaters for another year and continue to produce great results which they will publish at a later date. Four more of our Copeland birds now breed on the Calf of Man and another bird on Bardsey Island. An extraordinary five shearwaters were recovered on the beaches of Brazil in a short window between the 26th September and 12th October.

The autumn was a bit of miss and probably one of those 'what could have been'. It was an unprecedented autumn for much of the UK and Ireland with constant eastern winds for 5/6 weeks which delivered scarce and rare birds by the bucket load. Northern Ireland didn't miss out entirely and added two new species in Red-flanked Bluetail and Isabeline Shrike, plus nice records of Red-breasted Flycatcher, 3 YBW and a Lesser Whitethroat. CBO only managed a last gasp extra YBW but surely much was missed!

Strong winds from the east through the autumn were quite problematic cancelling a few weekends and cutting four trips short to one night, particularly September because we couldn't get on/off the island safely. The first real movement of the autumn on the 23rd August saw 60 Willow Warbler (24 ringed), five Sedge Warbler trapped and best of all 30 Spotted Flycatcher (two ringed), which is an island record. Other notable records for the month were four Greenshank on the 13th, a Roseate Tern on the 21st and a Garden Warbler ringed on the 1st, the 97th trapped at the Obs, which might not seem that impressive but when you consider that there have only been 84 ringed in Northern Ireland since 1977 and they only breed in a handful of sites, it is a good record. As I mentioned September was a big miss with only four full days covered. Some of the best movement for the month was recorded on the 18th September with 250 Swallows, 200 Meadow Pipit, 80 Goldfinch, 40 Linnet. Another Garden Warbler was recorded on the 4th. Octobers manning was a little better with nine full days covered and the season was extended to the end of the month for the first time in years. It was a better month for birds with some decent passage at the end of the month. Notables include the first Treecreeper in 10 years, ringed on the 8th October (19th ringed), a Brambling trapped on the 13th (12th ringed) and the Islands 7th Yellow-browed Warbler (all trapped), the fourth in the last seven years, trapped on the 29th. Thrush movement was strong at the end of the month with hundreds passing through which included 14 Redwing, five Song Thrush, three Blackbird and two Fieldfare ringed on the final weekend.

A total of 113 species were recorded through the year which is up 23 species on the previous year. The years ringing total of 1344 new birds was down on 2015's 1718 but the difference can simply be accounted for in the 550 less Lesser Redpolls trapped following last year's record breaking year of 663 new birds. These birds also produced 11 recoveries across mainland Britain and the Calf of Man. In regards to birds handled, there were an extra 10 species on last year with 46. There were seven species of

mammal recorded including Bottlenose Dolphins and 60+ Harbour Porpoise at a time and eight species of butterfly.

Over the season there were feet on the ground for 64 full days with another c55 evening/day trips covered. The greatest effort was in August with 19 days coverage but there were 10 day gaps at the end of September, 11 days at the end of July and a 17 day gap from mid-March to April 7th.

As always CBO is reliant on volunteers to run the observatory through the season and is open to all visiting birders and ringers from March to October. If you are interested in visiting please check out the website and follow us on Facebook for regular updates throughout the season.



Flamborough – Craig Thomas

It proved to be an excellent year at the observatory, with the easterly airflow during October resulting in a superb run of sightings. However, perhaps the

most unprecedented event was the arrival of 139 Yellow-browed Warblers on 21st September. Subsequent highlights included the immature Black-browed Albatross that flew south on 5th October, Flamborough's second-ever Paddyfield Warbler on 12th/13th, the second-ever Pied Wheatear on 14th (pic at end), a record arrival of Little Buntings, with a minimum of 12 individuals appearing mid-month, and the simultaneous landfall of four Dusky Warblers and three Raddes' Warblers. A Siberian Stonechat, a long-staying Olive-backed Pipit (below) and the best showing of Pallas's Warblers for several years provided more than ample 'back-up'.



It is pleasing to reflect upon ever increasing membership of the observatory. Also positive, the sightings page on the website was updated daily throughout the year, with the obs working closely with the BTO to maintain a daily 'log' on Birdtrack. In addition, the 2014/2015 Bird Report has been published recently. However, sales of Reports continue to decline whilst costs ever increase, so the long-term future of a hard copy Report must be questionable. The observatory has also been working with partners and local architects to secure planning permission for a seawatching hide. Surely Flamborough is one of the best seawatching locations in the UK – illustrated by 1003 Sooty Shearwaters moving north on 17th September. However, without any cover seawatching is often not possible during the most promising conditions, so securing a hide is of paramount importance.



Walney – Colin Raven

A wet and stormy start to the year saw Walney island breached by the sea on several occasions during January before the observatory recorded its first sub-zero temperature for 773 days. Despite the generally wild conditions offshore highlights were few but included 12 Shag, a total of four Little Gull (29th-31st) and single Great Skua (23rd and 30th). A few Pink-footed Geese and Whooper Swan flew through and wintering wildfowl included 205 pale-bellied Brent Goose, 85 Barnacle Goose, 45 dark-bellied Brent and two Scaup. Up to 64 Little Egret continued to winter while waders included 10,000 Knot, 25 Purple Sandpiper and several Jack Snipe. Barn Owl, Short-eared Owl and Little Owl were all logged along with regular sightings of Merlin while two Buzzard circled the island (6th). However, highlight of the month involved a first-winter Laughing Gull that fed amongst Black-headed Gulls (30th) – the first island and third Cumbrian record. An influx of Twite was evident (180-23rd) and at least two Water Pipits were amongst 20 Rock Pipit. With the exception of a total of 12 Little Gulls it was generally quiet over the sea during February, however, Red-throated Diver were to the fore (46-4th) along with up to 20 Shag. A total of 360 Pink-footed Geese headed

north and additional wildfowl included a record 230 pale-bellied Brent Goose, 80 Barnacle Goose and 60 dark-bellied Brent Goose. Waders included eight Greenshank and two Black-tailed Godwit while a Woodcock called in (11th). A second-winter Glaucous Gull was a good find. At least three Water Pipits still consorted with 40 Rock Pipit, amongst which were two colour-ringed on Bardsey Island. A group of three Stonechat (20th) and a few Greenfinch were perhaps the first harbingers of spring.

Highlights over the sea in March involved Pomarine Skua (28th), two drake Velvet Scoter (30th) and single Great Northern Diver (19th & 28th), also seen were up to eight Shag, 112 Red-throated Diver (19th) and 520 Common Scoter (29th) along with the first Gannet (19th) and Sandwich Tern (24th) of the year. A total of 166 Whooper Swan and 139 Pink-footed Geese headed north and additional waterfowl included three female Scaup (to 13th), and 220 pale-bellied and 65 dark-bellied Brent Goose. Waders included 10,000 Knot, 12 Purple Sandpiper, 10 Greenshank, four Black-tailed Godwits and a single Woodcock (3rd). At least 46 Little Egret remained in residence (5th). Passerine highlights involved the presence of now four Water Pipits amongst 30 Rock Pipit (11th) and a Hooded Crow (24th). The first hints of diurnal migration produced single Siskin (13th) and Tree Sparrow (20th) amongst a light passage of Meadow Pipit while the first arriving summer migrants involved Wheatear (13th), Chiffchaff (23rd), White Wagtail (26th) and Sand Martin (31st) amongst a trickle of Goldcrest (from 12th). The wintering Twite flock held 120 birds (6th). Although the first Little Tern (24th) and Manx Shearwater (26th) appeared the sea continued to be generally quiet in April. Additional sightings included 200 Sandwich Tern (8th) and 100 Kittiwake (26th). Up to 36 Little Egret remained throughout. A total of 430 Pink-footed Geese (to 20th) and eight Whooper Swan (3rd) flew north and the last Pintail (2nd), Goldeneye (5th) and Wigeon (17th) departed while the Brent Goose flock still held 192 pale-bellied birds (to 8th) and six dark-bellied birds (22nd). A pair of Gadwall was unusual and a flock of up to 11 Shoveler lingered. Up to 80 Whimbrel were logged (from 15th) and the first Common Sandpiper appeared (21st). Other wader sightings included 17 Purple Sandpiper (9th) along with up to nine Black-tailed Godwit and five Greenshank. Passerine highlights involved the three Water Pipit (to 12th), at least five Ring Ouzel (12th-15th) and a male Black Redstart (22nd). Migrant arrival dates involved Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Swallow (all 3rd), House Martin (8th), Redstart (13th), Lesser Whitethroat (15th), Grasshopper Warbler (19th), Whitethroat (22nd), Sedge Warbler (23rd) and both Cuckoo and Swift (30th). However, only Goldcrest, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Wheatear appeared in reasonable numbers. The Hooded Crow put in another appearance (8th) and two Jay continued to linger, raising speculation that the island's first breeding record was imminent. A flock of 40 Twite remained (to 9th) and the last Redwing (9th), Brambling (13th) and Merlin (24th) all departed. Generally quiet conditions prevailed over the sea throughout May

with highlights limited to Long-tailed Duck (17th), Puffin (21st) and Great Skua (21st). Other sightings included good numbers of Sandwich Tern (275-7th), Little Tern (25-13th) and Arctic Tern (50-25th). A Spoonbill called in briefly (8th) and a Water Rail was in breeding habitat (5th) while Grey Heron was surprisingly added to the island breeding list. Single Marsh Harrier (6th) and Buzzard (15th) overflowed the island. A female Long-tailed Duck consorted with the Eider flock (7th). Waders were dominated by exceptional numbers of Sanderling (4000-21st) which included birds colour-ringed in Iceland, The Netherlands and Mauretania. Additional records included 123 Whimbrel (7th). The last of the summer visitors arrived with Whinchat (4th), Reed Warbler (7th), Garden Warbler (26th) and Yellow Wagtail (26th) amongst a trickle of Willow Warbler and reasonable numbers of Blackcap, Wheatear and Spotted Flycatcher (from 6th). A Turtle Dove was only the second island record this century; however, highlight of the month was a typically elusive, though noisy, Dusky Warbler (17th) – the first island record and only the second for Cumbria.

Notable sightings over the sea in June again proved sparse with five Puffin (19th), two Pomarine Skua (18th) and a total of four Arctic Skua the highlights amongst good numbers of Manx Shearwater (650-19th). The female Long-tailed Duck put in another appearance (8th) and a drake Gadwall lingered (8th-10th). The now regular summering flock of Knot built up steadily (3000-10th) while the first returning waders included Greenshank (11th), Whimbrel (19th) and Common Sandpiper (26th). A third-summer Iceland Gull was a surprise (4th). A general lack of suitable conditions during July again produced little of note over the sea. Although singles of Puffin (1st), Black Guillemot (9th), Scaup (10th), Great Skua (17th) and Shag (30th). An post-breeding influx of Little Egret was apparent towards the end of the month (43-22nd), an adult Mediterranean Gull was logged (23rd) and the first Merlin reappeared (31st). The summering flock of Knot continued to linger (3210-23rd) while Whimbrel (39-23rd), Black-tailed Godwit (19-24th) and Greenshank (18-23rd) all began to return through the month. A few Swift and a Yellow Wagtail (30th) were amongst a trickle of Swallow while grounded southbound migrants included Lesser Whitethroat (16th), Redstart (17th), Wheatear (17th), Willow Warbler (17th), Whinchat (18th), Chiffchaff (21st) and Cuckoo (23rd). A Treecreeper was unusual (30th-31st), an exceptional 10 Reed Warbler were recorded (18th) and post-breeding finches included 100 Linnets (16th) and 60 Goldfinch (31st). A family party of Jay (30th) finally added the species to the island's breeding list.

August proved to be another poor month over the sea although the annual post-breeding Sandwich Tern roost built up to 420 birds (8th). A ringtail Hen Harrier lingered (12th-20th) while Merlin were regularly logged and an adult Mediterranean Gull appeared (19th). Although a Garganey was amongst 70 Teal (28th) wildfowl numbers remained low, however, waders began to return in good numbers. Highlights included: two Little Ringed Plover

(2nd), Wood Sandpiper (16th), Little Stint (19th-20th), up to three Curlew Sandpiper (from 22nd), Ruff (from 24th) and up to 24 Greenshank, 16 Black-tailed Godwit and five Whimbrel. Grounded migrants included Pied Flycatcher (23rd), Reed Warbler (6th) and four White Wagtail (29th) amongst totals of 200 Willow Warbler (75-23rd), 43 Wheatear, 20 Spotted Flycatcher (14-23rd), 12 Blackcap, 11 Goldcrest, six Redstart and three Garden Warbler. The first Chiffchaff reappeared at the end of the month. A trickle of Swallow (100-28th), House Martin, Sand Martin, Tree Pipit and Grey Wagtail headed south along with 34 Swift (16th) and single Yellow Wagtail (28th) and Tree Sparrow (29th). An almost complete lack of suitable westerly winds in September meant that again there was little of note over the sea other than two Shag (1st). The early influx of Little Egret was sustained (56-21st). Single Osprey's flew through (6th & 11th) and up to three Merlin took up residence. The first Pink-footed Geese began to head south in small numbers (from 17th) and a few pale-bellied Brent Geese were back in residence by the end of the month. Wigeon numbers continued to build through the month and waders included up to four Whimbrel (to 11th), three Curlew Sandpiper (to 21st) and two Ruff (to 15th) and a Little Stint (18th) along with up to 29 Greenshank (21st) and five Black-tailed Godwit. Although Goldcrest and Chiffchaff started to move through, only Wheatear was present in normal and Willow Warbler were thin on the ground. Additional sightings included single Garden Warbler (12th & 20th), Pied Flycatcher (15th), Spotted Flycatcher (15th), Lesser Whitethroat (17th), Whinchat (19th), Sedge Warbler (20th) and Whitethroat (23rd). Diurnal migration included Grey Wagtail (21-10th), two Tree Pipit (10th & 17th) and a Great Spotted Woodpecker (15th). The winds stayed predominately from the east during October providing little over the sea excepting for Velvet Scoter (13th), Black Guillemot and Glaucous Gull (16th), 11 Scaup and single Great Skua and Great Northern Diver (17th), 10 Shag (21st), Mediterranean Gull (26th), another Great Skua (27th) and a Long-tailed Duck (from 27th). A Great White Egret Pic below – just the third island record – was seen intermittently all month, amongst up to 83 Little Egret.



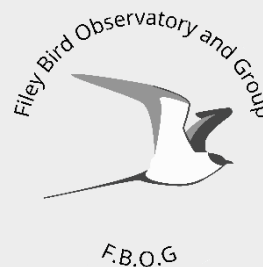
A Marsh Harrier flew through (8th), single Buzzards were logged (2nd & 9th), a Short-eared Owl was flushed from the tidal saltmarsh (20th) and up to three Merlin were present. A total of 17,697 Pink-footed Geese and 61 Whooper Swan flew through and the Brent Goose flock increased until 80 pale-bellied and 13 dark-bellied birds were present. Additional wildfowl included 3,000 Wigeon (18th) and five Gadwall (17th) while 12,510 Oystercatcher (15th), 8,000 Knot (5th), 21 Greenshank (17th), two Black-tailed Godwit (7th) and single Ruff (3rd-10th), Curlew Sandpiper (4th) and Jack Snipe (22nd) were the pick of the waders. The east winds provided five Yellow-browed Warbler and a Richard's Pipit (21st) along with the highlight of the autumn when an Isabelline Shrike was found (28th). The latter was the first for Cumbria and the third new addition to the island list in 2016.



A Firecrest (17th) was amongst good numbers of Goldcrest (60-10th), however although Chiffchaff produced a reasonable passage Blackcap were notably few. Diurnal migration produced peaks of 11,660 Meadow Pipit, 1,535 Linnet, 880 Skylark and 19 Grey Wagtail (1st), 520 Swallow (2nd), 210 Pied/White Wagtail (6th), 460 Jackdaw (11th), five Mistle Thrush (19th), 233 Redwing and 153 Fieldfare (29th) and totals of 207 Tree Sparrow (27-20th), 64 Siskin (28-6th), 51 Lesser Redpoll (12-19th) and 31 Brambling (7-12th). Departing summer migrants included Grasshopper Warbler, Whitethroat and Willow Warbler (2nd), Sand Martin (6th), House Martin (20th) and Wheatear (31st) while arrivals involved Redwing (2nd), Fieldfare (7th) and Twite (11th). Oddities included single Hooded Crow (2nd), Great Spotted Woodpecker (19th-20th & 31st), Treecreeper (12th & 19th) and Stock Dove (6th) with two birds noted (24th).

The dominating autumn theme of an easterly wind continued into November, limiting highlights over the sea to a single Great Skua (1st) and Black Guillemot (13th), the lingering Great Northern Diver (13th-18th), at least three Long-tailed Duck (4th-19th) and two Scaup (27th) amongst up to 28 Shag. Also seen were good numbers of Razorbill (1100-13th). At last six Water Rail were scattered across the island, Little Egret numbers remained high (73-23rd) and Merlin continued to be regularly recorded. Totals of 62 Whooper Swan and 820 Pink-footed Geese flew through while the wintering goose flocks continued to build to include 43 Barnacle Goose, 69 dark-bellied Brent Goose and 280 pale-bellied Brent Geese with the numbers of the latter swelled by a high percentage of

juveniles. Also seen were two adult Greenland White-fronted Geese (from 19th) and a female Scaup (from 9th). Waders included up to 12 Greenshank, 21 Purple Sandpiper (13th) and single Woodcock (12th) and Jack Snipe (19th). Passerine highlights involved a Richard's Pipit and Snow Bunting (1st), a late Yellow Wagtail, perhaps of one of the eastern races (2nd) and a Water Pipit amongst 38 Rock Pipit flushed from the saltmarsh (18th). The last wave of diurnal migration included 24 Tree Sparrow and eight Brambling (6-13th) and the last grounded birds included Goldcrest (to 7th), Blackcap (to 12th) and Chiffchaff (to 20th). The Twite flock held just 25 birds (13th). The year drew to a close in December with the sea continuing to provide limited opportunities, however Shag numbers continued to build with a post roost congregation holding a record 38 birds and both Great Northern Diver and up to five Long-tailed Duck continued to linger. However, 3450 Razorbill fled south ahead of storm Barbara (21st) and calm seas after the passing of storm Connor revealed 52 Red-throated Diver and 273 Common Scoter (27th). Little Egret numbers remained high with up to 60 birds roaming the eastern shore. A ringtail Hen Harrier put in several appearances while a Short-eared Owl was logged (10th). Totals of 15 Whooper Swan and 550 Pink-footed Geese flew through and the wintering goose flocks increased to involve a record 349 pale-bellied Brent Goose, 66 dark-bellied Brent Goose, 55 Barnacle Goose and the two lingering adult Greenland White-fronted Geese. An influx of Scaup was apparent with up to 16 birds recorded while four Goosander were unusual (2nd). A flock of 16,000 Knot (8th) was an impressive sight and additional waders included four Jack Snipe amongst 280 Snipe and 12 Purple Sandpiper while a Black-tailed Godwit and 10 Greenshank were again wintering in favoured island haunts. Predictably, passerine highlights were few and limited to 85 Twite (3rd), 30 Rock Pipit (15th) and eight Raven (3rd) amongst small numbers of winter thrushes.



Filey – Mark Pearson

Our surveying efforts focused on our wetlands during 2016, with full and comprehensive coverage of the many relevant sites within our recording area (with thanks to everyone who did such a fine job!). The premier wetlands in the area – the Dams, East Lea and the Tip – are all managed by FBOG, with the latter two also owned by the Observatory (and the former managed by us on behalf of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust), and all are in fine fettle. Full results are to be published in next year's report.

Talking of which, the 2016 Filey Bird and Wildlife Report will be our 40th, and we're pushing the boat out to make it a special one. As well as the now standard expanded sections covering ringing, other taxa, plenty of articles, our young member's section and more, for this next edition we're gathering stories stretching back across

FBOG's history from those who were there – expect suitably gripping accounts of mouth-watering rarities and epic falls from years gone by!

Bird-wise, it was a decent year: we kept the BBRC busy with Black-browed Albatross and Desert Lesser Whitethroat.



We smashed Yellow-browed Warbler records by, well, a lot (with a peak day count of 34 on 21st September), we'd a nice selection of county rarities including White-rumped Sandpiper, Stone-curlew and Honey-buzzard, our long-staying Surf Scoter (which arrived in December 2015) amazingly stuck it out until mid-May, and five Pallas's Warblers were a joy after a relatively lean run in recent years. We were also happy to receive the news that last year's Spanish Wagtail had been accepted as a first for Britain by BBRC – our third British first, following both Spectacled Warbler and Siberian Pied Flycatcher in the 1990's.

As always these days our programme of events and activities – all free, and all open to the public, and all run by volunteers – forms an important part of our work, and this year was no exception. Our Ringing & Migration Week in particular was a great success, building on the annual Ringing Week (co-ordinated by the ringing team for many years), this year saw us expand the annual event to include walks, talks, workshops and more, which proved very popular with locals and visitors alike. Hundreds of visitors, including many young people, attended the ringing station and events, with fantastic feedback from many an inspired child and adult.

Although the latter days of the week produced relatively low numbers of migrants, the fantastic fall conditions over the first weekend ensured a very respectable daily total of 472 new birds for the week (excluding retraps and controls) were ringed, an improvement on recent years and a great effort from the team.



Scarcity highlights were of a Siberian persuasion, with a pristine Pallas's Warbler and two Yellow-browed Warblers ringed; of much more value scientifically, however, was the controlled Common Redpoll, sporting a very shiny Norwegian ring, which we trapped at 0800 on 21st October incredibly, it was ringed at the observatory on the island of Jomfruland off the Norwegian coast - at midday of the day before! That's 796km, in less than a day.... incredible stuff. Better still, it's brought the two observatories together, and we're now working on a partnership with our continental colleagues which will be finalised shortly.

A series of migration-themed guided walks throughout the week took in Carr Naze, the Brigg, the Country Park and the Dams, and attendees were treated to some fantastic birds and experiences. Top of the list was surely the flood of incoming migrants from Scandinavia and beyond, with thousands of Redwings dropping out of the sky and Goldcrests in the grass by our feet... the Dams wasn't to be outdone, however, with a Great White Egret



and fantastically showy Water Rails delighting visitors there.

We'd four talks during the week, including one on each Saturday evening: on the opening night, Richard Baines gave us a fascinating insight into how birds migrate, while on the last night, Pete Dunn explained the discoveries we've made (and the questions which persist) as a result of ringing activities here at Filey. Thanks to both for two excellent evenings book-ending a superb week here at the Obs.

Another great year, and with lots of projects on the go and membership still on the increase, 2017 is looking just as exciting. Happy new year from the Filey team!



Isle of May – Ian Darling

2016 may justifiably be regarded as an outstanding year with 180 species recorded. This was due in part to persistent easterly winds in autumn bringing a wide

range of rare migrants but also due to Fluke Street's contribution and particularly their records at the tail end of the season adding extra species such as Iceland gull, Red-necked and Slavonian Grebe. Numbers aren't everything but the ringing total of over 6200 was higher than in many recent years. As importantly, seabirds generally had a good season and the tern population had a very successful breeding season with sandwich terns nesting for the first time in many years. The terns were helped greatly by the enhanced nesting areas prepared by SNH

Other than a week in April the Low Light has been occupied continuously and the improved facilities are making visits increasingly popular and putting pressure on accommodation in Spring and Autumn. The high occupancy has, however, helped us hold our charges for another year.

Further works and improvements were carried out to the exterior of the Low Light. The solar panels work well most of the time and the water supply held up well though further improvements are planned for next year. Timber has been delivered to the island with a view to starting the upgrade of the top trap in March. The other traps will be renewed in succeeding years. The Young Birders Training Course was very successful and again I would like to thank the SOC for their sponsorship. Thanks are also due to all who have contributed to the running of the observatory and to the various volunteers who have contributed to carrying out the improvement work. I would again like to record the contributions of all the committee but particularly Mark Oksien for managing Low Light improvements, managing the ringing returns and helping with the Young Birders Week along with Stuart Rivers and Mark Newell. As always we have enjoyed unflinching support from David Steel, Bex Outram and all at SNH.

Summarised highlights

3rd record Citrine Wagtail Two previous records in autumn 1968 and 2014



3rd record Dusky Warbler Two previous records in 1985 and 2011

3rd record Water Pipit Two previous records in 1970 and 2007

4th & 5th records of Blyth's Reed Warbler Three previous records in 1991, 2003, 2007

7th record Olive-back Pipit Previous 1985, 1994, 1998, 2005, 2015 x2

7th record White-tailed Eagle Last recorded in 2012 (all thought to be from re-introduction scheme)

8th record Radde's Warbler (caught & ringed) Last recorded 2013

11th record Slavonian Grebe Last recorded 2009

11th record (Western) Subalpine Warbler (first-summer)

First since 2007 DNA tested



13th bird Leach's Petrel (caught & ringed) First since 2011

14th record Black-throated Diver Last recorded 2012

16th record Marsh Harrier (female) Last recorded in 2013

17th bird Coal Tit Last recorded in 2013

20th bird Rustic Bunting (female) Last recorded September 1999

13th & 14th Barn Owl Assuming 1st bird this year is same as one at end of last year

16th record Greenish Warbler (caught & ringed) Last recorded 2012

18th record Iceland Gull Last recorded in 2012

20th Thrush Nightingale Last recorded in May 2012



7th & 8th records in last 50 years of House Sparrow.

Highest count of Whooper Swan (80) north, almost double previous record



Assistant Warden position there for the coming year (pic above).

We're looking forward to island updates from him, especially since weather-beaten Bardsey local, 20-year-old Ben Porter (below), is now exiled to mainland Cornwall during university term times.



Enormous thanks must be given to the BTO and their Young Birder Volunteer Fund <http://tinyurl.com/OBS-YBOVE>, which provides unremitting financial assistance for birders under 22-years old, covering accommodation and travel costs, a lifeline for cash-strapped future wardens. Without this aid, it would be impossible for many young birders, ringers and would-be rarity-hunters to visit these bastions of British birdwatching history. I am extremely pleased to see the BTO are continuing this



Next Generation Birders at Bird Observatories in 2016 – Jonnie Fisk

As the young birding community seems to grow year by year, so does the uptake by young birders to stay and volunteer at the rich variety of accredited British Bird Observatories around our nation's coasts and islands. Many a half-term holiday, spring exam leave or simple case of no school, college or employment commitments was rightly exploited by keen young birders, hungry for a taste of glamorous, bird-drenched Observatory life last year.

Particular note must go to the Perfect brothers, Sam and Ephraim (pic upper right) from Hertfordshire, who spread themselves across a number of observatories during 2016. Sam (24) spent spring on Skokholm before migrating north for the autumn season on North Ronaldsay, his second stint after a productive autumn there in 2015. 18-year old Ephraim Perfect was stationed on Bardsey island all autumn, and has well-deservedly secured himself an

support into 2017 and will do all I can to encourage young birders to take up their generous offer.

A word of gratitude must also be put in for the various individual Observatories which laid on events to encourage visiting young birders. Sandwich Bay Bird Obs hosted 5 young birders in April at discounted cost, with a Long-billed Dowitcher, Crane, Continental Coal Tits and other spring migrants as reward. Young birders visited Fair Isle by way of the John Harrison Memorial Fund, and the now-annual Bardsey Bird Obs week was another showstopper, with scarce migrants aplenty and literal in-your-face views of Convolvulus Hawkmoths. The Isle Of May Bird Obs held its third 'Young Birders Training Course'; a week of seabird ringing and tern nestbox making on the sun-kissed Scottish Isle. Once again, Spurn Bird Obs's Migration Festival (aka MigFest) held the "Spurn Young Birder Of The Year" for birders aged 16 and under, this time won by George Dunbar from Cheshire (pic below ringing a Manx Shearwater chick on Bardsey).



In May, the BTO hosted 'Camp Thetford', for birders aged 11 - 16, of which a highlight was the coach trip to Landguard Bird Obs where participants saw ringing and moth trapping in action.

For all the practical skills and phenomenal encounters with migrant birds that visiting and staying at Observatories brings, the opportunity to meet like-minded people from all walks of life is often most valuable. Friendships are made and strengthened at Observatories, particularly pertinent for young birders, who may make mates for life. I can honestly say that I have made some of my best friends, and shared some of the most brilliant birding moments with them at Spurn Bird Obs. Likewise, the feeling of camaraderie and community that exists

with many Bird Observatories is a welcome source of warmth for visiting young birders, many of whom may have no birding pals close to home.



It's no surprise, then, that many young birders become hooked on Observatory life and return time after time. Long may it continue. (pic above Ephraim, Josie Hewitt and Dan Rouse made return visits to Bardsey in 2016).

Lastly, a note on the effect bird observatories can have on your wider life. On 28th October this year, Jack Ashton-Booth married Laura Hyde in York. Jack is a birder from the Midlands who first visited Spurn Bird Obs with his friend Rael as teenagers in 2004. He fell in love with the place and, regularly returned. 10 years ago, he met Laura; a characterful local lass in the birders' 'local' pub, the Crown and Anchor. The rest, they say, is history!

BIRD OBSERVATORY CONTACTS

Alderney Bird Observatory

<https://alderneybirdobservatory.org/>

Paul K Veron
Chairman
Alderney Bird Observatory
Links Cottage
Route des Carrieres
ALDERNEY
GY9 3YE
01481 822914

Bardsey Bird Observatory

www.bbfo.org.uk

Warden: Steven Stansfield
Cristin
Bardsey Island
PWLLHELI
LL53 8DE
Tel: 7855 264151
Email: warden@bbfo.org.uk

BTO Liasion

Jez Blackburn
The BTO
The Nunnery
THETFORD
IP24 2PU
Tel: 01842 750050
Email: jez.blackburn@bto.org

Calf of Man Bird Observatory

<http://manxbirdlife.im/info/the-calf-of-man/>

c/o Mr J. Clague
Kionslieu
Plantation Hill
Port St. Mary
Isle of Man
Tel: 07624 462858

Cape Clear Bird Observatory

<http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/Birdwatching/CapeClearBirdObservatory/tabid/567/Default.aspx>

All enquiries:

Birdwatch Ireland
1 Springmount
Newtownmountkennedy
Co. Wicklow
Eire
Tel: 353 (0)1 2819878
Email: info@birdwatchireland.ie

Copeland Bird Observatory

<http://www.copelandbirdobservatory.org.uk>

Booking Secretary: David Galbraith
Email: davidgalbraith903@btinternet.com

Dungeness Bird Observatory

www.dungenessbirdobs.org.uk

Warden: David Walker (FP)
Dungeness Bird Observatory
11 RNSS Cottages
Dungeness
ROMNEY MARSH
TN29 9NA
Tel: 01797 321309
Email: dungenessobs@vfast.co.uk

Fair Isle Bird Observatory

www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk

Warden: David Parnaby
Fair Isle Bird Observatory
Fair Isle
SHETLAND
ZE2 9JU
Tel: 01595 760258
Email: fairisle.birdobs@zetnet.co.uk

Filey Bird Observatory

www.fbog.co.uk

Secretary Dr. Sue Hull
32 West Road, Filey YO14 9LP
01723 515042
secretary@fbog.co.uk

Flamborough Bird Observatory

<http://fbo.org.uk/>
Secretary: Chrys Mellor
Woodview
Lighthouse Road
Flamborough
YO15 1AJ
Tel: 01262 850949
Email: chrys.mellor@btinternet.com

Gibraltar Point Bird Observatory

<http://gibraltarpointbirdobservatory.blogspot.co.uk/>

Warden: Kevin Wilson
Gibraltar Point Field Station
SKEGNESS
PE24 4SU
Tel: 01754 898079
Email: lincstrust@gibpoint.freemove.co.uk

Hilbre Bird Observatory

<http://hilbrebirdobs.blogspot.co.uk/>

Chair & Ringer in Charge: Chris Williams
54 Park Road,
Meols,
Wirral
CH47 7BQ
Email: Chris@islandelec.com

Holme Bird Observatory

www.noa.org.uk

Warden/ Secretary: Sophie Barker
Broadwater Road
Holme-next-the-Sea
HUNSTANTON
PE36 6LQ
Tel: 01485 525406
Email: info@noa.org.uk

Isle of May Bird Observatory

www.isleofmaybirdobs.org

Secretary: Margaret Thorne
Craigurd House
Blyth Bridge
West Linton
EH46 7AH
Tel: 01721 752612 Mobile: 07818887315
Email: craigurd@hotmail.com

Landguard Bird Observatory

www.lbo.org.uk

Warden: Seasonal
BOC liasion: Nigel Odin
Landguard Bird Observatory
View Point Road
FELIXSTOWE
IP11 3TW
Tel: 01394 673782
Email: landguardbo@yahoo.co.uk

North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory

: www.nrbo.co.uk/
Warden: Alison Duncan
Twingness
North Ronaldsay
ORKNEY
KW17 2BE
Tel: 01857 633200
Email: alison@nrbo.prestel.co.uk

Portland Bird Observatory

<http://portlandbirdobs.blogspot.co.uk>

Warden/Secretary: Martin Cade
Old Lower Light
PORTLAND
DT5 2JT
Tel: 01305 820553
Email: obs@btinternet.com

Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory

www.sbbot.co.uk

Warden: Ian Hodgson
Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory
SANDWICH
CT13 9PF
Tel: 01304 617341
Email: info@sbbot.co.uk

Skokholm Bird Observatory

<http://skokholm.blogspot.co.uk/>

Wardens: Richard Brown /Giselle Eagle
Skokholm Island
Martins Haven
Pembrokeshire
SA62 3BJ
Tel: 07971 114 303
Email: skokholmwarden@gmail.com

Spurn Bird Observatory

www.spurnbirdobservatory.co.uk/

Warden: Paul Collins (FP)
Spurn Bird Observatory
Kilnsea,
Via Patrington
HULL
HU12 0UG
Tel: 01964 650479
Email: pcnfa@hotmail.com

Walney Bird Observatory

<http://walneybo.blogspot.co.uk/>

Ringling Trainer/warden: Colin Raven
18 Seathwaite Road
BARROW-IN-FURNESS
Cumbria
Tel: 01229 830517
Email: walneyobs@gmail.com

This newsletter was compiled and edited by Steve Stansfield. Thanks to Steffan Walton, Ephraim Perfect, Ben Porter and Peter Howlett for help with proof reading it.

Contact info@birdobsCouncil.org.uk with any enquiries.