

# Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2010



Nigel Hudson and the Rarities Committee

This is the 53rd annual report of the British Birds Rarities Committee. With the Committee now well into its sixth decade, we are also approaching the 30th anniversary of Zeiss sponsorship (*Brit. Birds* 76: 475), a tremendous commitment that has enabled BBRC to provide an ever-improving annual report. The recently announced sponsorship from the RSPB (*Brit. Birds* 104: 348–349) has enhanced Zeiss's long-term support and is also greatly appreciated.

A summary of the key items discussed at the 2011 BBRC AGM has already been published in *BB* (*Brit. Birds* 104: 402–404). Further to the items discussed there, we have now concluded our review of the British Redhead *Aythya americana* records. This has resulted in the removal of the third and fourth records, while the (pending) fifth record was also judged not to be acceptable. We recognise and accept that these reviews are not universally popular and that birders hold individual views on where the thresholds for acceptance in such cases should be applied. The difficulty of these decisions is reflected in the protracted period that the Committee took to complete the review and we plan to publish an article outlining our decision-making process in *BB* in due course. Ultimately, the approach we have taken is consistent with that applied to recent Canvasback *A. valisineria* claims (*Brit. Birds* 102: 529).

There is no doubt that the more complex identification issues absorb a much greater proportion of Committee members' time and effort, and several other records remain outstanding as we go to press. These include the putative Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens* referred to last year (*Brit. Birds* 103: 562–563), now joined by a potential adult Thayer's Gull *L. (glaucoideus) thayeri* in

Essex. A first-winter female *Ficedula* flycatcher at Spurn in August 2010 is another bird that has challenged the Committee. The plumage features and biometrics of this bird were not 100% conclusive but mtDNA evidence supported the identification as Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis*. Molecular data is likely to play an increasing role in difficult identifications, providing a new level of complexity for BBRC members to wrestle with.

These records reflect the changes in the issues that the Committee has had to consider, mirroring the development of bird identification techniques. We are well aware that some members of the birding community feel that we are, at times, too stringent in our analysis, influenced by those improving technological advances that encourage us to require more supporting evidence to confirm difficult identifications. Interestingly, a response to a letter in *BB* in 1980, penned by Peter Grant in his role as BBRC Chairman, alluded to a similar situation at that time. He wrote: 'My own impression is that adjudication standards are becoming more stringent. There is some tangible support for this in the fact that, while identification and reporting standards have undoubtedly shown a gradual improvement, the rejection rate has remained fairly static at around 20%. One hopes that the committee represents a cross-section of national opinion on what standards should be applied. If this is the case, and because a vote for rejection by only two of the ten members means that a record is not accepted, the committee's corporate decisions automatically reflect a much higher degree of stringency' (*Brit. Birds* 73: 229). These sentiments are clearly still valid today. Moreover, the adoption of an electronic voting system has certainly presented the opportunity to speed things up, by removing

the delays introduced by pending records and prolonged postal recirculations that dogged our progress much more recently than 30 years ago. We remain convinced that the collective deliberations of ten Committee members makes for more robust decision-making than the conclusions drawn by individual commentators or collective attempts at judgement through web-based forums.

Other outstanding decisions include the series of Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans* and 'orange-billed' tern records that the Committee has been investigating for a protracted period. We await the final conclusions of French researchers, but many readers will be aware of their preliminary findings, which indicate that the issue of hybrids is potentially a real challenge to the identification of individuals on this side of the Atlantic.

The reviews and recirculations of records of Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli*, Great Snipe *Gallinago media* and Royal Tern *S. maxima* continue, and the Druridge Bay Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* review is progressing too, the last in close liaison with BOURC. In addition, BOURC has concluded its evaluation of BBRC's recommendations on records of 'Ehrenberg's Redstart' *Phoenicurus phoenicurus samamensis* and this form is to be removed from the British List, with details of the decisions included within the text of this report. Records of a number of other taxa, particularly rare subspecies, are on hold while investigations into their identification continue. These include several potential additions to the British List. We shall publish an update on these shortly.

With regard to Committee membership, we are delighted to announce that Steve Votier has been confirmed in post. There were no further nominations following the announcement in support of Steve (*Brit. Birds* 104: 311). As reported in that announcement, the next vacancy is expected to arise in April 2014, when James Lidster will have completed his term.

And so to an analysis of the year's records. Just one species, Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, was added to the British List, no species were removed from the BBRC list, and, with no significant influxes to add scores of records, it is not surprising that 2010

was, statistically, rather similar to 2009. The number of records handled for the current year, 2010, was 526, compared with 521 in 2009; and the overall acceptance rate, 84.4%, was close to the 83.4% of the previous year. The number of taxa involved increased by only four, reinforcing the impression of a very similar pattern in most areas. A notable change was the significant reduction in records relating to previous years, partly reflecting our improved assessment processes, which ensure that fewer records are 'stuck' in the system after being pending. Two other indices changed significantly, one very welcome and the other not unexpected. The first was that the number of corrections in the report continued its downward trend with just six being published this year. The other was the number of records that had a supporting photo, which increased to 73% this year, up on the average of about two-thirds noted in recent years (*Brit. Birds* 104: 401). The proportion of photographed records seems set to continue to rise, as cameras become an ever-more-necessary element of equipment carried by field birders. In a similar vein, it was noticeable this year how many sound recordings accompanied records; in total, about 20 were received, which is partly a reflection of the number of Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* and Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* claims. Continuing the similarity with 2009, the number of records that were assessed purely on photographs provided by the bird information services was around 1%, and we hope that the newly revamped BBRC website will

	2010	2009	2008
Acceptances			
– current year	467	459	660
Not Proven			
– current year	59	62	67
Acceptances			
– previous years	56	104	103
Not Proven			
– previous years	38	50	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>870</b>
Corrections	6	11	22
Number of taxa in accepted records	117	113	134

improve that still further.

Following a complete overhaul, the BBRC website ([www.bbrc.org.uk](http://www.bbrc.org.uk)) is about to be relaunched and we encourage all readers to visit the new site. In particular, we urge all observers to use the online rarity submission form. We have designed this to offer an easy and logical format for recording all the salient information that we require in a rarity submission, so we hope it will help observers and recorders in the same way that it will benefit our Secretary and voting members when they are indexing and reviewing records. It enables all records, with or without photographs, to be submitted digitally and also allows submitters to keep abreast of the progress of the assessment.

We are aware of about 15–20 records, without any published photographs, that are still outstanding, meaning that over 96% of the year's records have been submitted for consideration, an apparently consistent statistic in recent years.

The 2010 report includes the following highlights:

- 1st Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* and White-bellied/Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregatta garallaria/tropica*
- 1st & 2nd Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* for Category A
- 2nd Rufous-tailed Robin *Luscinia sibilans*
- 2nd & 3rd 'Northern Harrier' *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*
- 3rd–6th Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*
- 4th Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*, Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* and Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*
- 5th Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*
- 6th frigatebird *Fregata* sp.
- 6th White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* and Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*
- 7th Green Heron *Butorides virescens*, Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* and Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*
- 7th & 8th Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*
- 8th Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*
- 9th Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, 'Balearic Woodchat Shrike'

*Lanius senator badius* and Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus*

## ● 9th & 10th Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

Following the recommendations made by RIACT (see Kehoe 2006) we also include further reports of rare races: 'Dark-breasted Barn Owl' *Tyto alba guttata*, 'Northern Long-tailed Tit' *Aegithalos caudatus caudatus*, 'Black-bellied Dipper' *Cinclus cinclus cinclus*, 'Ashy-headed Wagtail' *Motacilla flava cinereocapilla* and intergrade *M. f. cinereocapilla* × *iberiae*.

## Acknowledgments

BBRC continues to be supported financially by Carl Zeiss Ltd, and their support for the last 30 years has been invaluable in enabling us to undertake our function. We are also grateful to the RSPB for their support.

We wish to thank all the observers and photographers who sent details of their rare-bird observations to BBRC, either directly or via County Recorders or the BirdGuides and/or Rare Bird Alert online galleries. Once again, we wish to express our heartfelt thanks to county and regional recorders and their records committees for the invaluable work that they undertake in supporting the BBRC function. Thanks also go to all those individuals who updated information on earlier sightings through correspondence following the posting of Work-in-Progress files on the BBRC website throughout the year. While they may not be acknowledged in the report, their contribution remains very significant for improving the accuracy of the information provided. BirdGuides has continued to assist the Committee, particularly by enabling the submission of photographs for consideration by BBRC. We thank the following in particular for their support in various ways during the year: Steve Arlow, Nick Askew, Rob van Bemmelen, Jez Blackburn, Javier Blasco-Zumeta, Colin Bradshaw, Rob Carver, Martin Collinson, Peter Combridge, Mark Constantine, Magnus Robb and the Sound Approach team, Pierre-André Crochet, Steve Dudley, William Earp, Chris Gibbins, Dick Groenendijk, Mark Gurney, Andrew Harrop, Paul Harvey, Chris Kehoe, Peter Kennerley, Paul Leader, John Martin, Killian Mullaney, Keith Naylor, Urban Olsson, David Pearson, Adrian Pitches, Richard Porter, Peter Pyle, Roy Slaterus, Jimmy Steele, Bryan Thomas, Roland van der Vliet and Dave Walters. John Marchant continued in his role as Archivist and Brian Small as Museum Consultant, while Ross Ahmed, Rob Fray, Andy Musgrove and Keith Naylor provided valuable support to the BBRC Secretary. We also thank the Dutch Birding team for providing electronic copies of papers from that journal for reference; Ian Lewington for our logo; the BTO for their continued generosity in providing space and facilities for our archive; and all the staff at the NHM, Tring, for their continued support for our work and for allowing unlimited access to the specimens in the collection.

*Adam Rowlands*

## Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155–158). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) dates; (5) if photographed or sound-recorded (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (6) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; and (7) observer(s), in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and ‘probables’ are not included. In cases of the very similar Eastern Bonelli’s *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli’s Warblers *P. bonelli*, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to frigatebirds *Fregata*, Zino’s/Fea’s Petrels *Pterodroma madeira/feae*, White-bellied/Black-bellied Storm-petrels *Fregetta grallaria/tropica* and Booted/Sykes’s Warblers *Hippolais caligata/rama* (see also *Brit. Birds* 94: 395).
3. The sequence of species, English names and scientific nomenclature follow the ‘British Birds’ List of Birds of the Western Palearctic; see [www.britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/the-british-birds-list/](http://www.britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/the-british-birds-list/)
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain (i) to the end of 1949, (ii) for the period since 1950, but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult, but a consensus view is represented by ‘probably/presumed same’ (counted as the same in the totals); records for which it is less certain whether the birds involved were the same or not are counted as different in the totals. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species recurring at the same, or a nearby, locality after a lapse of time. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee requires firm evidence before more than one is accepted.
5. The breeding and wintering ranges for each species are given in parentheses at the end of each species account.
6. The following abbreviations have been used in the main text of the report: CP = Country Park, GP = Gravel-pit, Resr = Reservoir, SF = Sewage-farm.

## Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (9, 115, 1)

Norfolk Buckenham Marshes RSPB, adult, 13th December into 2011, photo (B. Lewis per Norfolk Recorder).

This is the first accepted record of Lesser White-fronted Goose in Britain since one at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, on 16th–28th February 2003. With escaped and feral birds at large in several parts of Britain, it is rarely possible to be sure of the origin of particular individuals of this and other, similar species (such as Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*). However, the circumstances of each record do allow for a considered assessment. In this instance the bird chose a typical locality – this is the fourteenth record of Lesser White-front in the Yare Valley and the ninth at this site. It arrived with Taiga Bean Geese *Anser f. fabalis* and then kept company with that species throughout its stay, and finally left the area with them in late January 2011. Taiga Bean Goose is the traditional ‘carrier’ species for Lesser White-fronts in the Yare Valley. This recalls a similar situation in the Netherlands where, historically, a few would arrive each winter with flocks of Taiga Bean Geese, and continue to associate with them rather than joining the more abundant European White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons* (Blaauw 1923). In fact, the cold weather in December 2010 saw unusually high numbers of Taiga Bean Geese reaching western Europe, including the highest number in the Netherlands since the 1980s (*Dutch Birding* 33: 51).

During the twentieth century, the Lesser White-fronted Goose has declined across much of its

range and is now extremely rare in Europe. However, it is not uncommon in wildfowl collections in western Europe, where some are known to escape (and known escapes have occurred in Norfolk and Suffolk in recent years). The Swedish reintroduction scheme is also a potential source of birds in Britain. Since the scheme began, in 1981, a total of 301 goslings and 47 one- or two-year-old geese were released in a former breeding area in the mountains of Swedish Lapland (Andersson & Larsson 2006). These birds winter in the Netherlands, where the population has increased slowly, reaching 74 in Zuid-Holland and 43 in Noord-Holland in November and December 2010 (*Dutch Birding* 33: 61). Most of the reintroduced birds remain loyal to their regular Dutch wintering sites, and do not associate with Taiga Bean Geese, but marked individuals from this scheme were recorded in Britain during the 1990s and a ringed bird was seen with Barnacle Geese *B. leucopsis* from Svalbard in Dumfries & Galloway in January 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 459–460). The surviving birds from this population are unlikely to be marked, so it is not possible to eliminate this as a source for the Norfolk bird.

Adding further to the confusion, genetic analysis reveals that some of the birds from the reintroduction stock were contaminated with genes from White-fronted Geese (Tegelström *et al.* 2001). Consequently, further releases of birds in Sweden were stopped in 1999 and those captive birds found to be carrying White-fronted Goose genes have been removed from the captive population. Efforts are being made to recreate a captive breeding population founded on birds from the wild (Andersson & Larsson 2006).

Although the decision to accept this bird will doubtless be criticised in some quarters, the Committee considers that, short of accepting no further records of Lesser White-fronted Goose, this alternative, pragmatic, approach, which applies to other vagrant waterfowl, seems appropriate.

(Rare & declining throughout entire breeding range from N Scandinavia to NE Siberia. Reintroduction scheme in Swedish Lapland boosts numbers wintering in the Netherlands. Migratory, wintering in scattered groups in the Netherlands, Hungary, S Black & Caspian Sea areas, N Kazakhstan & Yangtze valley, China.)

## Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

### North American races *B. c. interior/parvipes* (0, 2, 0)

1993 North-east Scotland Lyne of Skene, two, 16th–17th January, photo (J. Oates *et al.*); presumed same as North-east Scotland 1992 (see below); also seen Perth & Kinross.

1993 Perth & Kinross Near Perth, second-year male, 26th January, neck-collared, shot, photo (M. Nicholson, W. Parrington, A. Robinson per *Shooting Times* 25th Feb to 3rd Mar 1993); seen earlier in North-east Scotland.

1992 North-east Scotland Near Alford, two, 17th–19th November (per *Ibis* 139: 197–201); presumed same Muir of Fowlis, 22nd–24th November (per M. Grantham).

This is the first accepted record of a vagrant Canada Goose in Britain, which means that Canada Goose is now accepted into Category A of the British List (having previously been only in Category C2E). Although the current taxonomic arrangement of the Canada Goose complex has been challenged (Hanson 2006, 2007), we have in this case applied the existing taxonomy, with seven subspecies of Canada Goose recognised (*canadensis*, *fulva*, *interior*, *maxima*, *moffitti*, *occidentalis* and *parvipes*). The two birds reported here resembled the subspecies *interior*, although distinguishing a lone *parvipes* from *interior* in Britain can be very difficult (Batty & Lowe 2001; Sangster *et al.* 2005) and the two birds were thus accepted as *interior/parvipes*. The two individuals appeared to be a pair and although only one was neck-collared, the statistics give a total of two accepted birds, with a first date of 17th November 1992.

The neck-collared bird was ringed as a first-winter male on 10th February 1992 in Maryland, USA (39°0'N 76°0'W). Although we have the luxury of knowing that in this case the birds came from the heart of the range of *interior*, and well outside the range of *parvipes*, it was felt that subspecies identification was not fully established in light of the (small) possibility of another subspecies or an intergrade being present at the ringing site (BOU 2010).

Another neck-collared Canada Goose arrived in Europe in 2010, being one of two birds



present with Greenland White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons flavirostris* at Garður, Iceland, from 15th October; that bird was ringed and neck-collared at Centerville, Maryland, on 1st March 1994 (*Dutch Birding* 32: 404). As the 1992/93 pair in Scotland accompanied wintering Greylag Geese *A. anser* from Iceland, it seems most likely that they reached Iceland and then travelled with Greylags to Scotland, presumably having initially abmigrated from northeast Canada, perhaps caught up with the regular autumn migration of Greenland White-fronts to Europe (Calbrade et al. 2010).

The Committee is in the process of analysing records of apparent vagrants of this species to determine whether it meets the frequency threshold for a national rarity. We are also working to determine an acceptable record of Cackling Goose *B. hutchinsii* to be considered for admission to the British List by BOURC. Observers are requested to continue to submit records of both species for consideration. We are grateful to those who have done so already, and these records are included in our ongoing deliberations.

(Canada and N USA, introduced W Europe. Race *B. c. interior* breeds NE Canada from Hudson Bay E to Baffin Island, and NW Greenland. Winters SE USA. Race *B. c. parvipes* breeds W Alaska, E to Yukon Territory. Most winter Washington and Oregon, some also NE Texas.)

### Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (9, 65, 3)

Essex Wallasea Island, adult, 23rd–25th January, photo (J. Delve et al.).

Lancashire & N Merseyside Martin Mere WWT, Pilling, Marshside RSPB and nearby sites, first-winter, 14th October into 2011, photo (R. E. Danson, B. Drew, M. Jones per L&NM Recorder).

Sussex Pett Level, adult, 26th December into 2011, photo (N. Redman, G. Spinks et al.).

(Breeds Taimyr Peninsula, Siberia. Migrates SW to winter in coastal regions of W Black Sea in Romania & N Bulgaria. Small numbers regularly winter in the Netherlands, Greece & Turkey. Some may still use former wintering areas along Caspian Sea.)

### Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* (1, 2, 1)

Essex Chigborough Lakes, juvenile male, 2nd October, photo (S. Wood et al.) (plates 292 & 293).

This rather brief visit of a bird accompanying a small flock of Eurasian Wigeons *Anas penelope* was extremely well documented by the finders and accompanied by an excellent series of images by Adrian Kettle, which proved worthy winners of this year's Carl Zeiss Award (*Brit. Birds* 104: 462–465). The bird was sexed as a male by the presence of black feathering in the vent, which was visible in one of the photographs and documented in the written submissions.

(Breeds E Siberia from Yenisey River E to Anadyr & Kamchatka, N to 70°N, although breeding range believed to have contracted in recent years. Much of population now winters South Korea & lower Yangtze River, China, with small numbers regular in E & S Japan.)



Adrian Kettle

Adrian Kettle

292 & 293. Juvenile male Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*, Chigborough Lakes, Essex, October 2010.

### Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (0, 37, 1)

Denbighshire/Caernarfonshire Conwy Estuary, 7th–9th April, photo (A. Davies, M. Hughes *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Great Pool, Tresco, male, 10th December 2009 to 5th May, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 568.

(Breeds E North America from Labrador S to North Carolina & W to Manitoba. Most are resident or dispersive but N breeders migrate to winter in coastal SE USA.)

### Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (10, 225, 5)

Argyll Loch na Keal, Mull, male, 30th April to 1st May, photo (B. Hyde, R. Taylor *et al.*); presumed same Gigha, off Kintyre peninsula, 2nd May (K. Helm per Argyll Recorder).

Cambridgeshire Paxton Pits, female, 27th–28th May, photo (M. R. Davis *et al.*); also seen Leicestershire & Rutland.

Cheshire & Wirral Silver Lane Pools, female/juvenile, 21st–23rd September, photo (I. McKerchar, J. Platt).

Cleveland Port Clarence and Saltholme RSPB, adult male, 8th April (M. A. Blick *et al.*); presumed same as Haverton Hole, Cleveland, 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 568; also seen Yorkshire.

Dumfries & Galloway Threave, adult male, 26th November to 8th December, photo (per Dumfries & Galloway Recorder).

Leicestershire & Rutland Groby Pool, female, 26th May, photo (B. Croxtall, A. Pocock *et al.*); also seen Cambridgeshire.

Norfolk Cley Marshes NWT, male, 7th June, photo (E. T. Myers *et al.*).

Yorkshire Pepper Arden Bottoms, adult male, 2nd–6th May, photo (S. L. Green *et al.*); also seen Cleveland.

This species is more remarkable for where it hasn't turned up than for where it has. It remains surprisingly rare in Wales, which accounts for only seven of the 240 records, and it is one of the glaring omissions from the Fair Isle list. Unsurprisingly for a Nearctic vagrant, the best areas to find new arrivals are Cornwall and the Outer Hebrides, with 23 and 20 records respectively, but snapping at their heels is Norfolk with 19. Indeed, the east coast is a good bet for an opportunity to add this species to your self-found list, as Yorkshire and Kent also feature in the top six areas. An interesting disparity is developing in the Northern Isles, where Orkney has 13 records and Shetland lags behind with only eight. Although Shetland is better placed to receive newly arrived Blue-winged Teals, a scarcity of eutrophic waterbodies seems to make that archipelago less appealing – presumably they move on quickly before being discovered.

(Breeds from S Alaska, across much of temperate Canada to SC USA. Migratory, wintering in S USA, Mexico, Caribbean & N South America.)

### Redhead *Aythya americana* (0, 2, 0)

2004 East Glamorgan Kenfig Pool, male, 29th October 2003 to 1st January, presumed same Llanilid, 9th, 13th March, Kenfig Pool, 13th October to 26th December, and presumed same as Kenfig Pool 2003; previously accepted (*Brit. Birds* 97: 563, 98: 634), but now considered not proven following review.

2004 Outer Hebrides Loch Tangasdal, Barra, first-winter female, 20th September 2003 to 15th April, presumed same Loch an Duin, Barra, 7th–8th November; previously accepted (*Brit. Birds* 97: 563, 100: 20), but now considered not proven following review.

2003 East Glamorgan Kenfig Pool, male, 21st September 2002 to 19th January, presumed same Cosmeston Lake, 6th–15th February, Lisvane Resr, 16th–23rd February, and presumed same as Kenfig Pool 2002; previously accepted (*Brit. Birds* 96: 557, 97: 563), but now considered not proven following review.

2002 East Glamorgan Kenfig Pool, male, 7th November 2001 to 5th February; previously accepted (*Brit. Birds* 95: 487), now considered not proven following review.

The review of all records of this species has now been completed. In summary, the Nottingham-

shire and Leicestershire & Rutland birds (in 1996 and 1997 respectively) remain accepted, two previously accepted records have been removed from the list, while pended records from Argyll/Outer Hebrides and East Glamorgan were also found not proven (see Appendix 3). The review was initiated following concerns about the returning male in East Glamorgan. It was clear that we needed to apply consistent criteria to all records, to ensure that we could define thresholds to allow us to distinguish birds with potential evidence of hybridisation from the genuine article. The Kenfig bird also confirmed that potentially anomalous features may become apparent only during protracted observation or after studying a large number of photographs. That has encouraged us to be cautious when assessing records where observations have been relatively brief or the documentary evidence is rather limited. We intend to publish the review in *BB* in due course, to give a fuller justification for our decisions and to provide observers with guidance in regard to future claims of this species.

(Breeds from C Alaska to S California & E to prairie provinces of W Canada & USA. Local breeder in NE USA but range expanding along NE seaboard. Winters in warmer regions of S USA, Mexico & Cuba.)

### **Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 150, 7)**

Avon Chew Valley Lake, male, 7th March to 8th April, photo (R. M. Andrews, G. Jones *et al.*).

Clyde Hogganfield Loch, adult male, 22nd February to 24th March, photo (I. Fulton, A. K. McNeil *et al.*).

Cornwall Hayle Kimbro, male, 15th–27th March, photo (A. R. Pay *et al.*).

Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, adult male, 11th–16th October, photo (P. Berry *et al.*).

East Glamorgan Cardiff Bay and Cosmeston Lakes, adult male, 11th October 2009 to 24th April, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 102: 533–534, 103: 569; presumed same 7th November into 2011, photo (per East Glamorgan Recorder).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge WWT, first-winter female, 27th December into 2011, photo (M. McGill *et al.*).

Gower Eglwys Nunydd Resr, Port Talbot, first-winter female, 1st February to 1st April, photo (E. A. Hunter *et al.*).

Orkney Loch of Ayre and Holm Sound, Holm, first-winter female, 28th November into 2011, photo (K. E. Hague *et al.*).

Warwickshire Draycote Water, adult male, 24th September to 17th October, photo (T. Marlow *et al.*); presumed same as Draycote Water 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 569.

2009 Warwickshire Draycote Water, adult male, 1st October to 2nd November, photo (R. Hazel, D. Hutton *et al.*), previously accepted as new bird (*Brit. Birds* 102: 533–534; 103: 569), but now presumed same as Draycote Water 2007 & 2008; note also revised observers.

2006 Moray & Nairn Loch Spynie, female, 21st–26th November (R. Proctor *et al.*); previously considered not proven (*Brit. Birds* 100: 753), but now accepted after additional information submitted – note also revised dates.

(Breeds from C Alaska through Canada to Hudson Bay & S to Washington & South Dakota. Isolated populations E of Great Lakes. Winters along both coastlines of USA, in E from New Jersey to Mexico, W Indies, C America to N Colombia.)

### **King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (68, 150, 8)**

Fair Isle Finnikuoy, second-winter male, 15th–20th October, photo (M. Breaks *et al.*); also seen Orkney.

Highland Dunnet Bay, first-winter male, 27th March, photo (M. Ellwell, S. Laybourne).

Moray & Nairn Burghhead, second-winter male, 16th November 2009 to 6th April, photo (per birding information services), presumed same, 8th October into 2011, photo (per Moray & Nairn Recorder).

Norfolk Sheringham and West Runton, first-summer male, 27th July, photo (R. May, J. Miller, P. J. Vines *et al.*); also seen Suffolk, Yorkshire.

North-east Scotland Cruden Bay, adult male, 11th–27th April, photo (C. N. Gibbins, H. E. Maggs *et al.*); presumed same Sands of Forvie NNR, 4th May to 18th June, photo (I. Patterson per





Hugh Harrop

**294.** First-summer male King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, Leebotten, Shetland, May 2010.

North-east Scotland Recorder) and Blackdog, 10th June, photo (N. A. Littlewood).

Orkney North Hill, Noup, Westray, female, 21st May, photo (B. Ribbands). Bride's Ness and Ancumtoun, North Ronaldsay, second-winter male, 13th–14th October (P. A. Brown, A. J. Clunas *et al.*); also seen Fair Isle.

Shetland Leebotten, Mainland, first-summer male, 8th–16th May, photo (D. P. Hall *et al.* per Shetland Recorder) (plate 294). West Voe of Sumburgh, Mainland, two: first-winter female, 1st November into 2011, photo (P. V. Harvey, S. J. Minton *et al.*); first-winter male, 5th December into 2011, photo (H. R. Harrop *et al.*).

Suffolk Kessingland, then Minsmere, Dunwich and south to Thorpeness, first-summer moulting to second-winter male, 12th September to 16th November, photo (C. Darby *et al.*); also seen Norfolk, Yorkshire.

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, first-summer male, 2nd July (P. Cunningham, B. Richards); presumed same Filey Brigg, 9th–25th July, photo (I. Bimrose *et al.*); also seen Norfolk, Suffolk.

(Breeds from Kanin Peninsula E across Arctic Siberia, including Novaya Zemlya & W Svalbard, Arctic Alaska, N Canada & N Greenland. European population winters along ice-free coasts of White Sea, N Norway & Iceland. Pacific population winters in Bering Sea.)

### **Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* (1, 12, 1)**

Dorset West Bexington and The Fleet, male, 6th–30th March, photo (A. Barrett *et al.*).

This is the first record for Dorset, and its location, timing and behaviour left the Committee with little doubt that it was a wild bird. The judging of rare wildfowl has been, and will continue to be, a thorn in the side of the Committee. Assessing whether a bird is wary or not is entirely subjective, and often irrelevant as many of the species assessed are 'confiding where found'. Observation of rings and wing-tags is not always easy, and for species that spend so much time on water it is often necessary to wait for a bird to stretch its legs and/or wings during preening. No ring was reported on the Dorset bird, although its wary and flighty behaviour may have made the presence of one difficult to establish with confidence.

A good example of the difficulties in detecting tags was provided by the long-staying drake Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* in the Netherlands. The following comment is from the CDNA 2009 report (Ovaa *et al.* 2010): 'The CDNA reviewed the record of an adult male at Noordhollands Duinreservaat, Castricum, Noord-Holland, in most winters from January 2003 to at least 15 November 2009 (it was not seen in the winters of 2003/04 and 2004/05). Photographs taken in

January 2008 (five years after its first sighting!) showed that the bird wore a metal wing-clip (most likely the remains of a wing-tag) on its left wing for which the CDNA was not able to retrace the origin, despite extensive research. The wing-clip may have been applied either on a wild bird trapped for research or [on] a bird in captivity. However, it is certain that the bird has been handled by men and, in combination with the uncertain origin of the wing-clip, the CDNA concluded [that] this individual [was] no longer acceptable. The CDNA is, however, still anxious to receive any information on the use of wing-tags especially in wild Nearctic *Aythya* ducks.'

(Forested regions of North America from C Alaska throughout W & C Canada to Hudson Bay, S to Montana & NE California. Winters throughout North America, from Aleutian Islands & coastal Alaska S along both seaboard to N Mexico, with small numbers wintering inland.)

## Zino's/Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma madeiralfeae* (0, 41, 4)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 16th October (R. J. Butcher).

Pembrokeshire Grassholm, 11th July, photo (J. Grecian, S. C. Votier *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 256).

Yorkshire Grimston, 18th September (T. Isherwood); presumed same Spurn, then Easington, 18th September (R. Twigg *et al.*) (fig. 1). Flamborough Head, 16th October (A. Malley, B. Richards, D. Thurlow).

2009 Yorkshire Spurn, 5th October (A. A. Hutt *et al.*).

(Zino's confined to C mountains of Madeira; non-breeding range unknown. Fea's breeds on Bugio in the Desertas & Cape Verde Islands. In non-breeding season disperses throughout N Atlantic.)

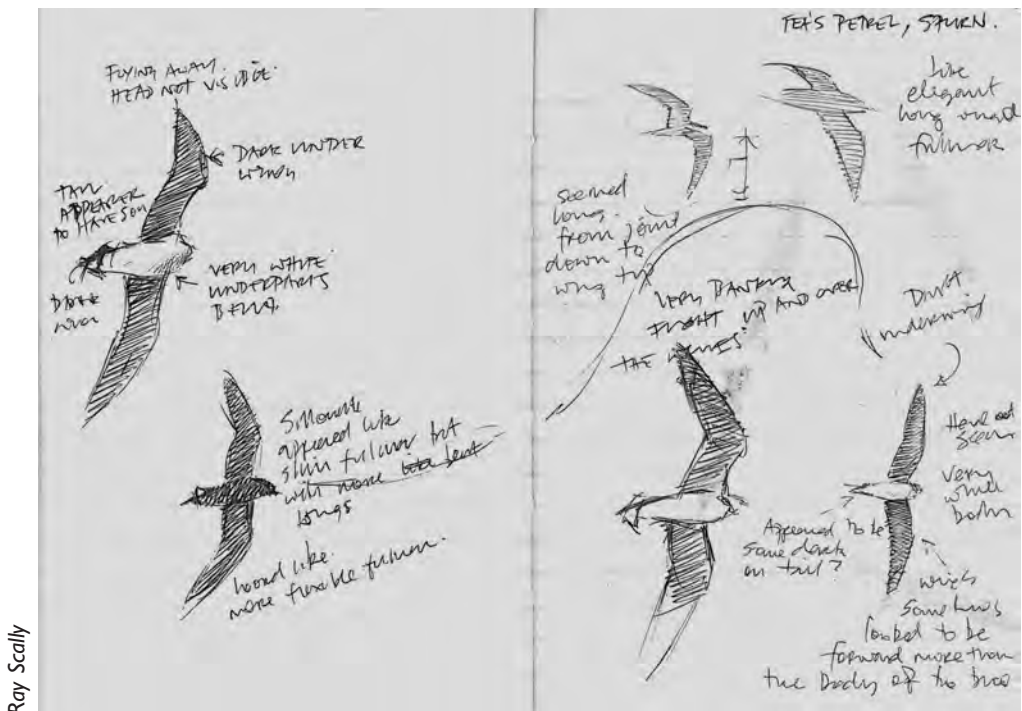


Fig. 1. Zino's/Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma madeiralfeae*, Spurn, Yorkshire, September 2010.

## White-bellied/Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria/tropica* (0, 1, 0)

2009 Avon Severn Beach, 25th November (A. Gaunt, R. L. Greer, J. P. Martin *et al.*).

Seeing extraordinary seabirds is something that cannot be planned for, just thoroughly celebrated by the privileged few! For birders heading for Avon's Severn Beach on 25th November 2009, hopes were focused on the possibility of some Leach's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* driven into the Bristol Channel by a southwesterly gale. When a petrel with pied plumage and

(especially) a remarkable flight style came into full view, they soon knew that ‘extraordinary’ was what they were watching.

Fly-by rare seabirds are phenomena fraught with joys and struggles, chiefly because of the brevity and distance of the views. Thankfully this bird showed well, initially to the five original observers, then (more distantly) about an hour later to a further 15 or so lucky folk. These facts are not incidental. It meant that the bird’s features could be checked and double-checked, talked through as observers were watching it and then reviewed on its second showing.

Converging characters, and multiple taxa among the two currently recognised species of *Fregetta* petrels meant that the bird could not be identified to species, and must remain as either Black-bellied or White-bellied Storm-petrel. The record was accepted unanimously as a *Fregetta* petrel by both BBRC and BOURC, but must remain as either Black-bellied or White-bellied Storm-petrel.

When trawling through the list of Britain’s extraordinary seabirds, it is noteworthy that a number have occurred in the late-autumn to winter period. These are not seasons normally synonymous with pelagic trips, or even necessarily seawatching. This may be worth bearing in mind for those who want to at least try to prefix some of the birds on their seabird species list with the word ‘extraordinary’.

(White-bellied breeds on Tristan da Cunha & Gough in S South Atlantic, & islands in S Indian & Pacific Oceans; Black-bellied has circumpolar distribution on subantarctic islands but status in S Atlantic uncertain owing to confusion with White-bellied. Both species disperse N of breeding range outside breeding season.)

## Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro* (0, 1, 0)

2007 At sea Sea area Sole, 13 km SE of Scilly, 28th July, photo (R. L. Flood, J. K. Higginson, T. James *et al.*) (plate 295).

This record was subject to significant deliberations by both BBRC and BOURC, which assumed greater importance once the only previous accepted record for Britain (from Hampshire in November 1911) was removed from the British List (BOU 2009), leaving this as a potential first. It has now been accepted by both committees (BOU in press) and so becomes the first for Britain. It represents another significant achievement for the pioneering pelagic expeditions in the waters around Scilly, following the first British records of Fea’s Petrel *Pterodroma feae* (*Brit. Birds* 98: 639–640, 99: 394–400), ‘Scopoli’s Shearwater’ *Calonectris d. diomedea* (*Brit. Birds* 102: 539–540, 103: 712–717) and the first Swinhoe’s Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* to be observed ‘in the field’ in British waters (*Brit. Birds* 102: 540). While Bob Flood’s experience in the identification of storm-petrels is well-established, the committees still wanted to confirm that the potential pitfall of an aberrant Leach’s Storm-petrel *O. leucorhoa* could be excluded satisfactorily, to which the findings of Miles (2010) were especially pertinent. The acceptance of this record will allow BBRC to consider several subsequent claims, which were pended awaiting the outcome of the Scilly record. Fortunately, this record was accepted ahead of the BOURC Taxonomic Sub-committee making any judgement on the taxonomic status of this species, which has been questioned recently by a number of sources. It seems inevitable that a split is on the horizon; if that happens, it is unlikely (on present knowledge) that field records will be assigned to a specific taxon and the unfortunate situation of placing records in an either/or category appears unavoidable.

(Fairly small N Atlantic population breeds on islands off coast of Portugal, Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands & Cape Verde group. Elsewhere, breeds Ascension & St Helena in S Atlantic, & in N Pacific in Galapagos, Hawaii & islands of N Japan. Distribution outside breeding season poorly understood.)



Joe Pender

295. Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, sea area Sole, 13 km southeast of Scilly, July 2007.



### Frigatebird sp. *Fregata* (0, 2, 1)

North-east Scotland Battery Park, Peterhead, 8th September (M. B. Cowie).

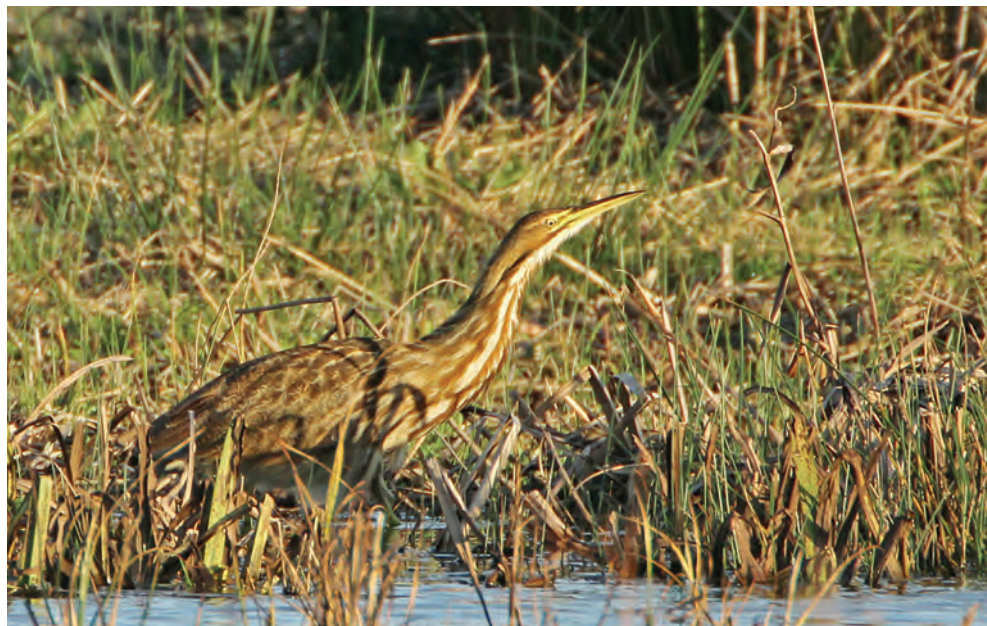
Surely one of the most exciting sights to greet any seawatcher is the appearance of one of these modern-day pterodactyls. This record was submitted as a Magnificent Frigatebird *F. magnificens*, and that does remain the most likely identification, especially given the prevailing weather conditions at the time and the strongly suggestive description. However, the Committee felt that for only the third record of Magnificent (and the first not involving a moribund or exhausted individual), the features seen did not quite add up to a completely watertight case, and the spectre of other species was a possibility, albeit a remote one.

The occurrence of frigatebirds in British and Irish waters defies any logical pattern or prediction. The famous 1953 Ascension Frigatebird *F. aquila* was found on Tiree (Argyll) in early July, while both Magnificents originally turned up in late autumn/early winter: the Shropshire bird on 7th November 2005 and the Isle of Man bird on 22nd December 1998. In contrast to these, however, two unassigned frigatebirds were found originally on 13th June 1995 (in Cornwall) and 20th August 1960 (in North-east Scotland). The geographic spread of records is also interesting, with four of the six UK sightings coming, as expected, from the Atlantic seaboard. The two records from North-east Scotland are notable exceptions and may suggest the possibility of others turning up farther south in the North Sea in late summer.

### American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* (32, 8, 1)

Cornwall Trewey Common, 26th–31st October, photo (R. Moores *et al.*); presumed same Walmsley Sanctuary, 1st–6th November, photo (per birding information services) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 400; plate 296).

(Widespread across Canada, mostly S of 60°N, & throughout USA except southern states. Northern breeders migrate to winter mostly S of 40°N in USA & into C America.)



Gary Thoburn

296. American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*, Walmsley Sanctuary, Cornwall, November 2010.

### Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (c. 250, 232, 1)

Somerset Ham Wall RSPB, two adults: male in song, 28th May to 25th July (per Somerset Recorder), presumed same as Walton Heath, Somerset, 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 573; female, 15th–23rd July at least, photo (per Somerset Recorder).

1964 Kent Deal, adult male, 4th May, caught, died later (K. Chapman, K. A. Charman, D. F. Harle per A. Henderson).

It has been widely reported that Little Bitterns bred at Ham Wall in 2010, and we know that breeding behaviour was observed, including what appeared to be regular flights to the same area of reeds, suggesting that the adults were feeding young. Unfortunately, we have not received any substantive record (photographs or description) of a juvenile from this site so, at the time of writing, this report contains reference to the adult birds only. We urge any observers who saw the purported juvenile to provide us with evidence so that this historic event can be properly documented.

(Widespread, patchy & declining in Europe N to 53°N. To E, breeds to 60°N in Russia, & E to Kazakhstan & NW China. W Pal. population migratory, wintering mainly in E Africa, S from Sudan & Ethiopia. Other populations largely resident or dispersive in N Indian subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa & Australia.)

### Green Heron *Butorides virescens* (1, 5, 1)

Cornwall Heligan, first-winter, 6th October to 1st December, photo (S. Christophers, D. Julian, R. Mitchell per birding information services) (plate 297).

This colourful little heron was discovered by the site wildlife team and, to the delight of many a paying visitor, it resided contentedly in the magical environs of the Lost Gardens of Heligan for two months. Pale spots were obviously visible at the tip of each wing-covert and since these markings are present only in the juvenile wing, ageing this bird was straightforward. Nearly a century elapsed between the first Green Heron in Britain being shot near St Austell, Cornwall, on 27th October 1889 and the discovery of the second (the famously twitched bird at Stone Creek, Yorkshire, in November–December 1982), but the pace of occurrences has hotted up since. Although only the seventh seen in Britain, this latest Cornish individual was the fourth to put on a crowd-pleasing show within a decade; modern-day birders really have been spoilt for choice. Previous long-stayers in Lincolnshire, Anglesey and Kent, during the autumns of 2001, 2005 and 2008 respectively, were all extremely popular. Four of the seven British Green Herons have turned



Michael McKee

297. First-winter Green Heron *Butorides virescens*, Heligan, Cornwall, October 2010.



up in east-coast counties, leading to the assumption that they may have been ship-assisted for at least the latter part of their Atlantic crossing – an accusation also levelled towards the immature that arrived in the Netherlands in April 2006 (an individual which then migrated annually between there and southern France for several years). Green Heron (still called Green-backed Heron when it last appeared in a BBRC report) has also occurred on the Channel Islands (from August to October 1992) and in Ireland (a first-winter that was seen in Co. Cork on 11th–13th October 2005 before moving to Wales in November of the same year), but the only Scottish record involves a first-winter found freshly dead, probably having been killed by a Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*, at Tynninghame Bay, Lothian, on 25th October 1987.

(Breeds SE Canada throughout E USA & Mexico. N populations winter from S USA through C America to N South America.)

### **Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (69, 72, 4)**

Cornwall Par, 22nd–24th May, photo (per birding information services).

Northumberland River Wansbeck, Morpeth, first-winter, 31st October to 16th November, found dead on last date, photo (A. & J. Kirkup *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 20).

Pembrokeshire Angle Bay, juvenile, 3rd October to 15th November, photo (T. Parry *et al.* per Pembrokeshire Recorder).

Yorkshire Kilnsea, Spurn, 15th September, photo (K. & M. Sharpe *et al.*).

(W Pal. breeding population small & fragmented, centred on Mediterranean basin, from S Spain to Black Sea & E to Kazakhstan, with large population in Danube Delta. Northern populations migratory, wintering in N tropical Africa. African population largely resident.)

### **Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (22, 167, 9)**

Devon Shaugh Prior and nearby, Dartmoor, 2nd–3rd May, photo (P. Edmonds, A. & R. Smaldon). Jurston, Chagford, 13th June, photo (D. Price, P. Slader).

Co. Durham Deepdale, Barnard Castle, 27th–28th May, photo (S. C. Bell, J. Wood *et al.*).

Highland Findhorn Valley, adult, 8th May (S., T. & T. Austin); presumed same Waternish Point, Skye, 31st May (C. & H. Lewis); also seen Outer Hebrides, Shetland. River Spey, nr Cromdale, juvenile, 9th–10th September, photo (D. M. Pullan, R. W. Thaxton *et al.*). Kyle of Lochalsh, 9th September (G. Love-Jones *et al.* per R. McMillan).

Kent Eythorne, 10th October, photo (C. Blackman, H. Radcliffe).

Outer Hebrides Clachan Farm area, Berneray, adult, 18th–25th May, ringed, photo (J. McInnes *et al.*); also seen Highland, Shetland.

Shetland Burrafirth and Uyeasound, Unst, adult, 2nd–6th June, ringed, photo (A. I. & S. J. McElwee *et al.*); also seen Highland, Outer Hebrides.

Somerset Robber's Bridge, Oareford, adult, 27th April (R. Thewlis).

Yorkshire Hackforth, Catterick, 23rd May (M. Pearey, N. Smith).

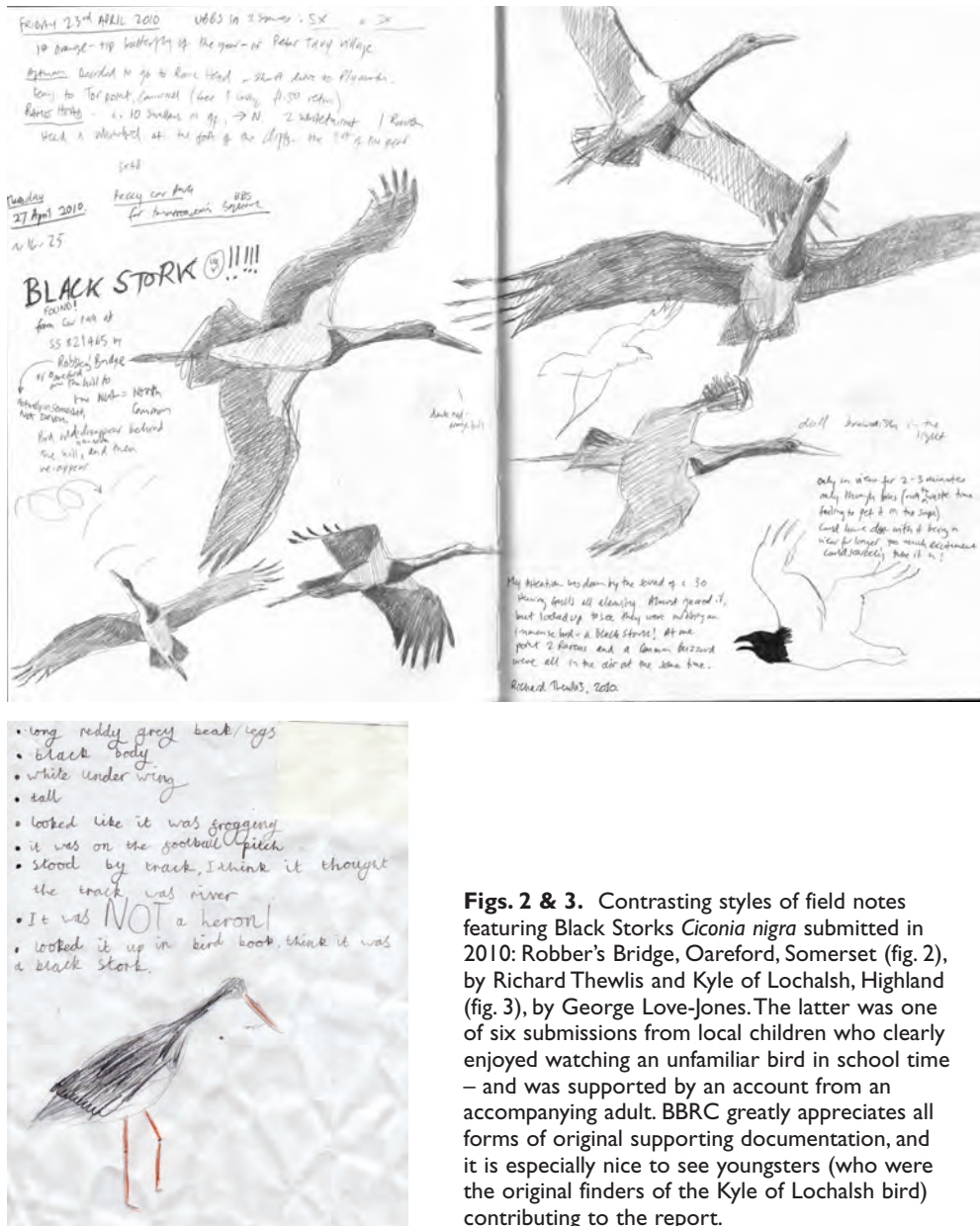
Records of Black Storks in Britain extend from April to November, although most sightings are in the summer months – about 80% of the total have occurred between May and August, with a slight peak in May and early June, and a smaller one in August. It seems likely that most involve wandering subadults, which may remain in Britain for some time once they have arrived. Although attempts are made to link records in each year's reports, this is far from straightforward, as the colour-ringed bird in 2010 demonstrates, and there is a clear implication here that annual totals may be overestimates if such wandering birds occur. Juveniles, such as the bird seen in Highland in September 2010, remain very rare in Britain, but a few have been seen from late July to September and they seem to be occurring more frequently.

The origin of the colour-ringed bird in Shetland had been tracked down before it even left the islands. As the first 'ring-recovery' of this species from Britain, it gives the first clue as to the likely origins of our vagrants. The bird had been ringed as a chick at Kemence, in northern Hungary, close to the Slovakian border, in June 2007. In September 2008 it was sighted at a wetland near Biharugra, in southeast Hungary, close to the Romanian border, and in March 2009 it appeared

near Groningen, the Netherlands. The colour ring was also seen (but not read) on the bird in the Outer Hebrides, and the same bird is assumed to have been involved in two other spring records in Scotland (while two other sightings during the same period have not been submitted).

Apart from small populations in eastern France and eastern Belgium, the closest migratory populations of Black Storks are in central Europe, so it is perhaps not surprising that this could be where British vagrants originate. There is also a small population in Iberia, but this appears to be largely resident. At three years old, the colour-ringed bird seen in Shetland was a subadult nearing breeding age, and colour-ringing has shown that these birds may wander widely prior to their first breeding.

(Breeds from C Iberia & E France through C Europe to Russia & in small numbers into N Greece & Turkey. To E, breeds widely in small numbers in forested temperate regions of Russia & Siberia to Russian Far East. Most are migratory, wintering in Africa, S & SE Asia.)



**Figs. 2 & 3.** Contrasting styles of field notes featuring Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* submitted in 2010: Robber's Bridge, Oareford, Somerset (fig. 2), by Richard Thewlis and Kyle of Lochalsh, Highland (fig. 3), by George Love-Jones. The latter was one of six submissions from local children who clearly enjoyed watching an unfamiliar bird in school time – and was supported by an account from an accompanying adult. BBRC greatly appreciates all forms of original supporting documentation, and it is especially nice to see youngsters (who were the original finders of the Kyle of Lochalsh bird) contributing to the report.

## Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (340, 164, 22)

### *Main arrivals*

Devon River Otter, Budleigh Salterton, 20, some ringed (incl. VTH, UO2, VU7, R9T, UN8, TX9), 7th–12th September (then in dwindling numbers to 15th December), photo (C. Townend *et al.*).

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 12th–14th August, photo (A. Hayden, S. Leishman *et al.*); presumed same Holes Bay, Upton, 13th August, photo (R. Collier); also seen Hampshire.

Hampshire Pennington Marshes, 14th–15th August, photo (D. A. Thelwell *et al.*); also seen Dorset.

Wiltshire Eysey, Cricklade, immature, 27th–29th August, photo (P. Adams *et al.*).

*All the following records in 2010, apart from the overwintering birds in Somerset & Worcestershire, are presumed to be birds from one of the above arrivals – see comments below.*

Anglesey Cefnysgwydd Bach Farm, nr Valley RSPB, immature (R9T), 15th–24th October, photo (J. P. Hughes, R. Roberts *et al.*).

Avon Cabot Park, Avonmouth, 17th–26th September, photo (P. Quinn *et al.*).

Berkshire Freeman's Marsh, 9th December into 2011, photo (A. Berryman *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 51).

Carmarthenshire Penclacwydd WWT, 26th September, photo (M. Jones, W. Thomas).

Devon Flow Point, Teign Estuary, 7th September (R. Shute). Aveton Gifford, 12th–23rd September, photo (T. Forster *et al.*). Beer Head, 18, 13th September, photo (K. Hale *et al.*).

Dorset Near Swyre, 7th September, photo (A. Barrett, B. Spencer). Lodmoor RSPB, adult, 8th September, photo (D. Croxson *et al.*). Stanpit Marsh, immature, 18th September to 10th October, photo (M. Andrews *et al.*). Radipole Lake RSPB, 29th November, photo (P. Baker, L. Phillips).

Dumfries & Galloway Mersehead RSPB, immature, 11th–26th October, photo (C. Baines *et al.*).

East Glamorgan Kenfig NNR, 28th November (A. Tilt); presumed same Dunraven Bay, 29th November to 3rd December, photo (N. P. Roberts *et al.*) and Monkash, 7th–9th December, photo (per East Glamorgan Recorder).

Hampshire Pennington Marshes, 19, 13th September (J. Claxton, S. S. King, P. Toye). Blashford Lakes, Ibsley Water, 18th September, photo (M. & N. Elliott *et al.*). Pennington Marshes, 26th September, photo (M. P. Moody *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness RSPB, 18, 13th–15th September, photo (N. Upton, D. Walker *et al.*). East Malling, seven, 11th October, photo (A. Whitehouse).

Meirionnydd Broad Water, Tywyn, 17th September (G. Willetts) and 29th September (M. Shrubbs).

Norfolk Haddiscoe Island, 14th September (P. J. Heath, K. Ingham). Breydon, 21st September (I. N. Smith). Welney WWT, 24th October to 15th November, photo (per Norfolk Recorder).

Northamptonshire Pitsford Resr, immature, 17th September (J. Moon).

Northumberland Cresswell Pond, 15th October (A. D. McLevy).

Somerset Catcott Lows, Ham Wall, Shapwick Heath, up to four (including L9M, N4C), 3rd October 2009 to 10th February, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 574–576.

Suffolk Dunwich Pools, 23rd October, photo (J. H. Grant, S. Piotrowski per Suffolk Recorder). Southwold, 30th October (C. Fulcher, S. Mayson).

Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, immature, 18th September to 1st October (J. Mercer *et al.* per Wiltshire Recorder).

Worcestershire Grimley and nearby, 20th November 2009 to 4th January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 574–576.

*All the following records in 2009 are presumed part of that year's influx, Brit. Birds 103: 574–576.*

2009 Caernarfonshire Foryd Bay, 13th October (J. Barnes, M. Jones).

2009 Derbyshire Ogston Resr, 27th September (P. D. Highman, B. Scrimshaw).

2009 Dorset Hengistbury Head, three, 25th October, photo (D. N. Smith, A. Thompson).

2009 Norfolk Hopton-on-Sea, 4th October (I. N. Smith).

2009 Nottinghamshire Langford Lowfields RSPB, 27th September (J. Ellis, G. L. Gamage, J. Straw); note revised observers, *Brit. Birds* 103: 574–576.

2009 Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, two, 10th September (R. Drew). Orfordness, 4th October (D. Crawshaw, M. Marsh).

After the large influx in 2009, only five birds stayed to see in the 2010 New Year: four in Somerset and one in Worcestershire (and all these had disappeared within a few days). But year-listers had no need to worry, since another influx was to occur, albeit on a somewhat smaller scale. Singles in Dorset (then Hampshire) and Wiltshire in August proved to be the forerunners of the main arrival, which began on 7th September (only three days later than in 2009), when 20 birds were seen in Devon. Then it seems likely that a similar dispersal to that in 2009 took place with birds moving mainly east and north, although, as in 2009, a few turned up in Wales.

Once again, our pragmatic and minimalist approach has been to count the first arrivals in the statistics and then presume that all subsequent sightings emanate from those. We are aware that a number of sightings have not been submitted, perhaps partly because of 'ibis fatigue', but we believe that the above records constitute a majority of the sightings. We also have attempted to track the origins of the ringed birds, and believe that most have come from Spain, although the possibility that some came from the Camargue, in southern France, cannot be completely ruled out.

With just one bird having overwintered into 2011, in Berkshire, a very similar pattern to that in 2009 has emerged. There have now been four influxes in the last ten years (2002, 2007, 2009 and 2010) so it may seem that Glossy Ibis is a likely candidate for removal from the BBRC list. However, the other years of that decade have been lean, with only ten birds in total (and none at all in 2004). Note also that the influx in 2007 occurred in the spring, while the other three began between 4th and 7th September.

(Regularly breeds France & Spain; otherwise, European breeding range centred N & W of Black Sea in Ukraine & Romania, with small population in Balkans. To E, breeds from Volga River to Kazakhstan. Palearctic population migratory, most wintering in E Africa, but W European population wintering Morocco & Mediterranean basin. Resident or dispersive populations occur in Africa, S Asia, Australia, E USA & the Caribbean to N South America.)

### **Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 37, 1)**

Greater Manchester Hollingworth Lake, first-winter, 7th–21st November, photo (M. Griffiths, M. Mitchel *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 401; plate 298).

A fantastic record for this landlocked, rarity-starved county, and a just reward for patch-workers who persevere at sites like Hollingworth Lake. Pied-billed Grebe remains a great rarity, this being the first to reach Britain since 2002 – the longest barren period over the 47 years since the first for Britain turned up, in Avon in 1963. There is evidence that habitat loss has led to a recent decline



**298.** First-winter Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*, Hollingworth Lake, Greater Manchester, November 2010.



of this species in northeastern USA and, since this is the region from which we might expect our birds to originate, that decline might be expected to have an effect on appearances here.

Ice formation affects food availability and is thus a determining factor in Pied-billed Grebe distribution; birds usually remain put until freezing conditions force them to move, and are often among the first species to return after a thaw. Unsurprisingly, then, November, now with nine records, is the most likely month for this species to appear, followed by January with seven and April with six. It is possible that late freezing of more southerly North American waterbodies might account for some of our midwinter records. Equally, they could have arrived here earlier in the autumn and remained undetected until January, or been discovered when moving north in April. At all seasons, British records are widely spread geographically and long stays are not unusual.

(Throughout North America from C Canada S through USA to C America, the Caribbean & much of South America. Northern populations migratory, wintering S USA & Mexico.)

## Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

### North American race, 'Northern Harrier' *C. c. hudsonius* (0, 2, 1)

Norfolk Burnham Overy Staithe and Thornham, then roaming the coast between Holme and Morston, first-winter male, 27th October into 2011, photo (M. A. Golley, S. J. White *et al.*) (plates 300 and 301).

2009 Co. Durham Selset Resr, second-winter male, 22nd February, photo (M. Newsome) (plate 299).

Britain's first Northern Harrier was a juvenile that lingered on Scilly from 22nd October 1982 until 7th June 1983. However, the record was not accepted and published in the BBRC report until nearly 25 years after the event (*Brit. Birds* 100: 707), and a detailed account explaining the rationale of that decision (Martin 2008) soon followed. Of course, much has been written and discussed over the years regarding the identification and taxonomy of Northern Harrier (aka 'Marsh Hawk'), but it is intriguing to suddenly find ourselves virtually overrun by them; as well as the Norfolk bird mentioned above, two more juveniles wintered in Ireland in 2010/11 and another potential juvenile was photographed in the Outer Hebrides early in 2011.

This exceptional influx might seem astonishing, but multiple arrivals of North American species is nothing new; if conditions allow for one individual vagrant to arrive, then why shouldn't several make the crossing? Waders and gulls are the norm, but the same can be said for Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*, Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* and some other

transatlantic vagrants. Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* and Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* also spring to mind. Northern Harrier is an abundant bird in North America (100,000 pairs are estimated to breed in Canada and USA), is a common east-coast migrant and regularly migrates over open sea (the species winters in Cuba and in the Dominican Republic); indeed, a migrant has even been seen some 350 km northeast of Newfoundland, circling a boat before continuing away towards Iceland! Even so, that a Northern Harrier could reach the east coast of England was still too challenging a notion for many birders, and it was only once the bird in question had been photographed from all angles (a month into its stay) that the identification was finally resolved.



Mark Newsome

**299.** Second-winter male Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*, Selset Resr, Co. Durham, February 2009.





**300 & 301.** First-winter Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*, Norfolk, February 2011.

Juvenile females may look surprisingly distinctive, but it turns out that juvenile males may not always be quite so straightforward. Despite compelling evidence, there still remained a disconcerting degree of scepticism towards the record, but a surprise twist in the plot effectively dismantled that barrier. Photographs of a male, taken in northeast England in February 2009, emerged belatedly and suddenly there was no room left for manoeuvre; here, finally, was unequivocal proof of Northern Harrier not only being a valid vagrant to Britain but also one that could easily reach Norfolk! Once the penny had dropped that it was not a hitherto unknown variation of immature Hen Harrier, the identification of the Co. Durham male (first suggested by Mike Henry) was straightforward, and once the juvenile male in Norfolk had been clinched, it too suddenly looked peculiarly distinctive. Fortunately for the many visitors who came to see it, this bird eventually settled into a routine that meant it could be seen on a near-daily basis as it patrolled the saltmarshes between Thornham and Brancaster. Now that a workable set of field-friendly criteria for telling juvenile Northern from Hen Harrier (effectively a combination of overall plumage tones, head and breast pattern, underparts colour and underwing barring) has been established, might we expect more? Or should we now be paying more attention to second-winter birds (the plumage that will be worn by the 2010/11 birds if they return)?

(Breeds Alaska E to Canadian Maritime Provinces, S throughout Canada & USA from California E to Pennsylvania & Maryland, & S to Baja California, Mexico. Northern populations migratory, wintering from USA S throughout C America to N Colombia.)

### **Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (2, 26, 1)**

Cornwall St Just, juvenile, 4th December 2009 to 25th January, photo (R. Phillips per Cornwall Recorder, M. D. Warren *et al.*).

Norfolk Holme, juvenile, 9th–10th October, photo (D. Nurney, S. Plume, C. D. Rand *et al.*).

(Fragmented range on steppe grasslands from Ukraine E through Russia to 100°E & S to Kazakhstan & NW China. Occasionally breeds to W of main range in Europe. Migratory, wintering throughout much of E & C Africa & the Indian subcontinent.)

### **Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (10, 7, 1)**

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, adult male, 28th–31st March, photo (A. Cook, J. Torino *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 158; plate 302).

This stunning small falcon, the first for the county, becomes the earliest British record. As it was



**302.** Adult male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Minsmere, Suffolk, March 2010.

P7 on Lesser Kestrel, but shorter than P7 on Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*.

(Fragmented breeding range throughout Mediterranean basin from Portugal, Spain & Morocco E to Ukraine, Turkey & Caspian Sea. Numerous in parts of Spain but declining to east. Outside W Pal., uncommon, with sporadic breeding E to E Kazakhstan, NW China & W Mongolia. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

### Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (222, 160, 5)

Argyll Near Portnahaven, Islay, immature white-morph, 15th January to 10th February, found dead, photo (J. S. Armitage, S. J. McElwee *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 109).

Devon Saunton Sands, white-morph, 18th March, photo (R. Jutsum).

Gower Rhossili, immature white-morph, 27th March, photo (C. D. Brewer).

Isles of Scilly Gimble Porth, Tresco, white-morph, 13th–14th February, photo (R. Lawson, A. Wickens *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Europie, Ness, Lewis, white-morph, 25th April, photo (J. Sievwright).

(In Europe, most numerous in Iceland & Norway, smaller populations breeding N Sweden, Finland & Arctic Russia. To E, breeds across Arctic Siberia, Alaska, N Canada & Greenland. European birds mostly resident but high-Arctic breeders from N Canada & Greenland migratory, occasionally wintering S to NW Europe.)

### Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (134, 255, 9)

Essex/Greater London Rainham Marshes RSPB, male, 8th April, photo (per birding information services); also seen Isle of Wight, Kent.

Isle of Wight Yarmouth, male, 6th April, photo (D. Hale, G. & P. Warke *et al.*); also seen Essex/Greater London, Kent.

Kent Harty Marshes, Sheppey, male, 7th April (H. Rutherford); also seen Essex/Greater London, Isle of Wight.

Lincolnshire Frampton Marsh RSPB, two, adults, 29th May, photo (J. Badley *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell RSPB, five, 5th–6th June, photo (per birding information services).

Yorkshire Nosterfield and nearby, 25th–26th April, photo (S. Worwood *et al.*); presumed same Clifton Backies LNR, York, 26th April (A. P. Walker).

A fairly typical year in many respects, and the equal seventh best on record. The bias towards the

an adult male, the identification was straightforward. News of it was released quickly, giving many people their second chance to see the species this decade (following one on St Mary's, Scilly, in May 2002). With just two modern-day twitchable birds, it would seem that this species is genuinely rare in Britain, although the difficulty of identifying females and young birds may mean that some still go undetected. Anyone faced with a potential female Lesser Kestrel should concentrate on recording as much detail as possible on the upper- and underwings and face pattern, as well as obtaining photos that allow the wing formula to be assessed. Although active moult can affect the relative position of the primary tips, the outermost primary (P10) is longer than

southern half of England is to be expected (of the 264 records since 1950, 75% have occurred in the southeast, southwest and East Anglia), as is the fact that all were in spring (74% of all post-1950 records arrived during April, May or June).

(Breeds along Atlantic coast of France & locally throughout Mediterranean basin to Black Sea. To E, breeds from S Siberia & C Asia to NW China & S to Hong Kong. Most European birds winter in sub-Saharan Africa &, increasingly, in SW Iberia. Asian breeders winter across S & SE Asia & S China. Other distinctive races occur in Australasia, the Americas & Hawaii.)

### **Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (32, 69, 0)**

**2009 Yorkshire** Leconfield, 3rd–4th August, photo (P. Clark); presumed same as Tophill Low, Yorkshire, 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 580–582.

(Breeds locally in Mediterranean basin from N Africa & S Iberia to Black Sea, most in S Spain, Portugal & Greece. To E, breeds across SW Asia to Pakistan & Kazakhstan but distribution highly fragmented. Winters sub-Saharan Africa. Other race resident in Africa.)

### **Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* (0, 6, 1)**

**Lincolnshire** Frampton Marsh RSPB, adult, 9th–19th May, photo (J. Badley, P. Hyde, W. Lawrance, P. Sullivan) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 235; plate 303).

Oriental Pratincole remains an extremely rare visitor to Europe, and the 2010 record follows one in 2009 (in Kent and Sussex) that was conceivably the same individual. Unsurprisingly, this was the first record for Lincolnshire, and formed a nice double for the new reserve at Frampton Marsh following the previous year's Collared Pratincole *G. pratincola* (which graced the same scrapes). It also followed an established pattern of being found in the spring in the southeastern quarter of England.

The nearest breeding birds to Britain are in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent (although these birds are mostly short-distance migrants within India so are unlikely to be the source of our vagrants). However, the east Asian population breeds well to the east and south of the Lake Baikal watershed, and migrates to the south and east to winter in southeast Asia,



Graham Catley

**303.** Adult Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*, Frampton, Lincolnshire, May 2010.

Indonesia and Australia. So just how do the birds seen in Britain get here, especially in the spring? One explanation would be that, occasionally, an individual will find its way into Africa during its first autumn, move north with Collared Pratincoles and find itself in the wrong continent. But then where does it go? Pratincoles in northern Europe always attract attention, so it is unlikely that they stay for too long (the 1993 individual notwithstanding). Is it also possible that some birds from China are undertaking a regular migration into Africa for the winter, similar to that by Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis*? It would certainly seem to be a possibility that one or two Orientals remain undiscovered among wintering Collared Pratincoles. But then a loop back to China via western Europe is another matter entirely. Of course, one thing we should know by now about avian migration is that nothing should surprise us.

The identification of the 'red-winged' pratincoles has been well covered recently (e.g. Driessens & Svensson 2005, Hyde *et al.* 2010).

(Breeds SE Transbaikalia and NE Mongolia to NE China, S throughout much of E Asia and Indian subcontinent to Sri Lanka, Malay Peninsula and Philippines. Southern breeders resident or dispersive, northern breeders winter S to Australia.)

### **Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (2, 71, 2)**

**Greater London** Beddington SE, adult, 2nd May, photo (P. Alfrey, R. Browne *et al.*); presumed same London Wetland Centre, Barnes, 2nd May, photo (R. Arnfield, W. Newnham, R. Riddington *et al.*).

**Outer Hebrides** Loch Bornish and nearby, South Uist, adult, 4th–12th August, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*).

The first for London (and only the eighth to be discovered in Britain in spring) was first noted flying over Beddington Sewage-farm before being relocated on the ground a little later that morning at the London Wetland Centre in Barnes, some 12 km or more to the northwest. As with many previous 'lesser golden plovers' found in breeding plumage, the identity of the bird caused some debate initially: in this plumage, separation from American Golden Plover *P. dominica* can be tricky when the views are less than ideal, and when counting the number of primary tips extending beyond the longest tertial is not possible. In such circumstances, it is easier to assess the extent to which the primaries project beyond the tail, and where the tip of the longest tertial falls (more or less level with the tail tip in Pacific, whereas the longest tertial falls short of the tail tip in American; Golley 2009, van Duivendijk 2011).

The record from South Uist was the third for this island and the Outer Hebrides. It arrived on a typical date; late July and early August remains the peak period for this species in Britain, with 40 individuals discovered between 18th June and 7th August.

(Breeds across Siberian tundra from Yamal Peninsula E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, including New Siberian islands, & W Alaska. Small numbers winter regularly Kenya & Persian Gulf, main wintering range from Indian subcontinent to S China & S Japan, S through SE Asia to Australia, New Zealand & islands in C Pacific.)

### **White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* (0, 5, 1)**

**Essex/Greater London** Rainham Marshes RSPB, adult, 7th July, photo (S. Shippey, H. Vaughan *et al.*); also seen Gloucestershire, Kent, Lancashire & N Merseyside.

**Gloucestershire** Slimbridge WWT, adult, 9th–10th July, photo (G. Diggle *et al.*); also seen Essex/Greater London, Kent, Lancashire & N Merseyside.

**Kent** Dungeness RSPB, adult, 11th–21st July, photo (D. Walker *et al.*); also seen Essex/Greater London, Gloucestershire, Lancashire & N Merseyside.

**Lancashire & N Merseyside** Seaforth NR, adult, 27th–28th May, photo (A. J. Conway, P. Kinsella, S. Wende *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 236; plate 304); also seen Essex/Greater London, Gloucestershire, Kent.

On 6th June 2007, a White-tailed Lapwing was seen in Dumfries & Galloway, before moving to Lancashire & N Merseyside four days later. Being the first record in Britain for 23 years, it generated a huge amount of interest in the process. And now, just three years later, another one turns





Steve Young/Birdwatch

**304.** Adult White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*, Seaforth, Lancashire & N Merseyside, May 2010.

up in rather similar circumstances, being seen first in Merseyside in late spring, before staying for a protracted period. This marvellous wader was present for nearly two months, during which it completed a grand tour of England (and also hopped across the North Sea, since what was almost certainly the same bird was seen on the Wadden Sea island of Texel, in the Netherlands, in mid June).

(Occasionally breeds along Black Sea coast of Romania. To E, main breeding range from Armenia & E Caspian Sea, E along Syr Darya & Amu Darya through Turkmenistan & Uzbekistan to S Kazakhstan, & S to Iraq & N Iran. Resident in Iraq & S Iran, but N populations winter Pakistan to N/C India, & also S Egypt & N Sudan.)

### **Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (0, 93, 6)**

Cumbria Port Carlisle, adult, 28th July to 5th August, photo (D. J. Robson *et al.*).

Devon Dawlish Warren, juvenile, 22nd–25th August, photo (L. Collins, I. Lakin *et al.*).

Dorset Lodmoor RSPB, adult, 3rd–5th August, photo (D. J. Chown *et al.*).

Essex Abberton Resr, juvenile, 3rd–9th October, photo (A. Kettle, D. Rhymes *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Alkborough Flats, adult, 18th–24th August, photo (G. P. Catley, N. Drinkall *et al.*); also seen Yorkshire.

Lothian Tynninghame Bay, juvenile, 27th August to 15th September, photo (D. Allan *et al.*).

Yorkshire Blacktoft Sands RSPB, adult, 8th–9th August, photo (M. J. Pilsworth *et al.*); also seen Lincolnshire.

**2009** Shetland Brough, Whalsay, adult, 29th July, photo (J. Atkinson).

This is a fairly typical spread, given that 85% of all British records are in the four months from July to October. The distribution is also more or less as expected, although the Lincolnshire bird was only the second for that county. And this is yet another rarity with Graham Catley's name alongside it; there are very few who can compete with his self-found list, especially considering that he lives on the British mainland.

The adults in Cumbria and Dorset both triggered debate, with the former sparking some internet discussion (although the finder stuck to his guns). The latter was initially thought to be a Little Stint *C. minuta* before Dave Chown identified it correctly. The Shetland bird of 2009 was also reidentified, this time retrospectively, thanks to Killian Mullarney's grasp of the subject and a photo published on the Nature in Shetland website. The identification of juveniles has been well



established for some time but worn adults still present a trap for the unwary.

Scilly is currently the top county for this species, with 12 records, closely followed by the Outer Hebrides with 11 (in large part due to the multiple arrival in 1999) and then Cornwall (8) and Devon (7). There are very few inland records and the keen patch-watchers in the midlands must surely be due a repeat of the single records from Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. Surprisingly, there are just five records from Wales but this is perhaps a reflection of more limited observer coverage, at least in part, especially considering the regularity with which the species is found in southwest England and in Co. Wexford.

(Breeds on tundra of W Alaska, E across Arctic Canada to S Baffin Island & coastal Labrador. Has bred extreme NE Siberia. Migrates across Great Plains & E seaboard of USA to winter in C America & coasts of tropical South America to Brazil & Peru.)

### Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* (0, 6, 1)

Dorset Ferrybridge, adult, 27th August, photo (Paul Baker per Dorset Recorder) (plate 305).



Paul Baker

**305.** Adult Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, Ferrybridge, Dorset, August 2010.

The seventh record and the first away from eastern Britain. Apart from a juvenile found dead on Fair Isle on 31st August 1994, all records have been of adults retaining their distinctive breeding plumage to a varying extent, with the dates of discovery spread between 18th July and 21st September. Although the Dorset bird showed well to its finder, the significance of the unmarked bright orange sides to the neck, upper breast and throat, bordered by black marks on the white lower breast, was not appreciated until after the event.

Meanwhile, and despite nearly 30 years having passed since the clarification of field characters (Jonsson & Grant 1984; Alström & Olsson 1989), the wait for the first live juvenile here (or indeed anywhere in Europe) continues. A Red-necked Stint in this plumage must be a strong contender for the next 'first' to be discovered by sharp-eyed cyber-birders!

(Breeds on tundra of Arctic Siberia from E Taimyr Peninsula E to Chukotskiy Peninsula S to Anadyr, & in extreme W Alaska. Winters in coastal NE India & SE Asia to Australia & New Zealand.)

### Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (1, 224, 2)

Essex Holland Haven, juvenile, 7th–20th October, photo (S. Cox, M. Rodwell *et al.*).

Lothian Whitesands Bay, juvenile, 30th November 2009 to 11th January, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 586 (plate 306).

Nottinghamshire Idle Valley, Lound, adult, 5th–10th August, photo (M. Dawson, R. Doan *et al.*).

This species usually spends the winter on alpine grasslands and along the edges of lakes in the high Andes south to southernmost Argentina and Chile at altitudes between 2,500 m and 4,700 m. So wintering at sea level in Scotland is exceptional. Photographs reveal that, even by early January, this individual had not moulted and it still retained heavily worn juvenile plumage. The Lothian bird is only the second to overwinter here, the first being at Staines Reservoir, Surrey, from 14th October 1982 to 24th April 1983.



Jim Wood

**306.** Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Whitesands Bay, Lothian, January 2010.

(Breeds in extreme NE Siberia on Chukotskiy Peninsula & Wrangel Island, E across N Alaska & Arctic Canada to N Baffin Island & NW Greenland. Migrates through North American interior to winter in South American Andes, from S Ecuador to Tierra del Fuego.)

### Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (4, 24, 2)

Cleveland Greatham Creek, adult, 20th–21st September, photo (D. J. Britton *et al.*).

Yorkshire Patrington Haven, adult, 22nd–23rd August, photo (J. Grist *et al.*); presumed same Kilnsea, 23rd August, photo (B. Stephenson *et al.*).

(Breeding range restricted to Siberian tundra from Yana River to Kolyma River delta, possibly further E. Migrant through coastal Alaska, China & Japan to winter New Guinea, Australia & New Zealand.)

### Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (15, 212, 7)

Cleveland Saltholme Pools RSPB, first-summer, 6th–15th June, photo (M. A. Blick *et al.*). South Gare and Seaton Snook, juvenile, 10th–12th September, photo (G. N. Megson, M. Sidwell *et al.*).

Highland Broadford, Skye, adult, 12th–16th May, photo (M. Benson *et al.*) (plate 307).

Leicestershire & Rutland Rutland Water, 2nd June, photo (R. G. Bayldon, M. G. Berriman *et al.*).

Lothian Tynninghame Bay, adult, 13th–14th May, photo (M. Griffin *et al.*).

North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary, 23rd–25th May, photo (P. Shepherd *et al.*).

Yorkshire Old Moor RSPB, 23rd May, photo (D. M. Waddington *et al.*).

A good showing after a blank year in 2009 (the previous blank years were 2001 and 1968). Spring records in Britain outnumber autumn records by about 3:1, and careful scrutiny of flocks of northbound, Arctic-nesting Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* and Dunlins *Calidris alpina* in May and June would seem to offer the best chance of finding one of these charismatic waders. There is, however, an almost continual spread of arrival dates from 1st May to 12th October, but outside this period there are only three records: one at Breydon Water, Norfolk, on 8th March 1991, and two April records (in 1858 and 1863). Most adults depart from their breeding grounds in July and juveniles follow from August onwards.

In the 2004 report we speculated as to whether the increasing trend towards inland records would persist. Two more here would seem to confirm this trend, and since 2000 no fewer than



**307.** Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (right), with Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, Broadford, Skye, Highland, May 2010.

20% of all records have been from inland sites. Predictably, east-coast records still predominate but one on Skye is a further reminder that this species can turn up almost anywhere.

(Nominate European race breeds in boreal forest bogs of N Norway, Sweden & Finland, & into Arctic Russia, where distribution uncertain. These migrate through E Mediterranean, Black & Caspian Seas to winter in Persian Gulf, W India & Sri Lanka, with small numbers in coastal E Africa. E race *sibirica* breeds from Taimyr Peninsula to Kolyma River delta, & winters from Bay of Bengal through coastal SE Asia to Australia.)

### Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata* (0, 6, 0)

2008 Isles of Scilly Wingletang, St Agnes, 11th October, photo (R. Millington *et al.*).

2007 Isles of Scilly Lower Moors, St Mary's, three, juveniles moulting to first-winter, 21st October to 26th December, photo (P. Aley, E. A. Fisher, B. Thomas *et al.*).

These recently accepted records of this cryptic species illustrate some interesting and important aspects of rarity recording and assessment.

Following the discovery of the second British Wilson's Snipe, at Lower Moors in 2007 (details given in the 2009 BBRC report, *Brit. Birds* 103: 587), Ashley Fisher spent an extraordinary amount of time studying that particular bird. Remarkably, in doing so he discovered three other potential Wilson's Snipes! With the help of meticulous note-taking and critical thinking he amassed an incredible amount of information about a species that many birders are (not surprisingly) struggling to identify. The next step, of course, was having the confidence to submit these records – never straightforward when the criteria for a species are still developing. What eventually happened was that details of these three birds were submitted to BBRC informally. However, not only did the Committee find that all three birds were acceptable records of Wilson's Snipe, but the information gleaned from these observations will undoubtedly prove useful for the assessment of future claims.

The record from St Agnes is equally interesting. It is the first to be found away from the Lower Moors area of St Mary's and, consequently, it did not allow days and weeks of in-depth study at point-blank range, something that a potential Wilson's away from St Mary's is also unlikely to offer. The key point about this record was the manner in which the observer secured as much field evidence as possible. Aware that what he had just found would need photographs to help confirm the features of both the upperwing and underwing in flight, Richard Millington quickly arranged for as many photographers as possible (no mean feat on barren moorland on a small island) to gather where the bird was last seen. The resulting in-flight photographs proved to be crucial in the assessment of this record.



It was assumed that, after the events of autumn 2007, this species would prove to be regular on Scilly, and perhaps elsewhere; but careful searching by the resident Scilly birders responsible for finding half of all the current British records suggests otherwise.

(Breeds throughout North America from N Alaska & N Canada S to N California & North Carolina. Winters SW Canada & throughout USA & C America to N South America.)

### Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (532, 155, 2)

Shetland Ham, Foula, juvenile, 11th–14th September, photo (K. Gibb, A. Grieve, M. A. Wilkinson) (plates 308 & 309).

Suffolk Covehithe, 1st October (C. A. Buttle, A. Riseborough, R. Walden).

(Scarce & local breeder in Norway & Sweden, which hold most of declining European population. Smaller & fragmented population breeds from Poland to Estonia. Also breeds E through European Russia, W & N Siberia to Yenisey River. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)



Kris Gibb



Kris Gibb

**308 & 309.** Juvenile Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Foula, Shetland, September 2010.

### Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (6, 201, 2)

Ceredigion Ynys-hir RSPB, juvenile/first-winter, 19th October to 25th November, photo (R. Jones, R. Squires *et al.*).

Cheshire & Wirral Neumann's Flash, adult, 25th August, photo, (D. Hughston), then Inner Marsh Farm RSPB, 26th August (K. A. Dummigan *et al.*); presumed same as Inner Marsh Farm 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 587–588, also seen Flintshire.

Cumbria Port Carlisle, first-winter, 13th November 2009 to 4th January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 587–588.

Devon Colyford, Axmouth, juvenile/first-winter, 9th–14th November, photo (S. D. Waite *et al.*); also seen Dorset.

Dorset Lodmoor RSPB, Radipole RSPB and The Fleet, juvenile/first-winter, 7th November into 2011, photo (T. Tapley *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 76); also seen Devon.

Flintshire Connah's Quay, adult, 28th August to 11th October, photo (S. Skelton, A. Wallbank *et al.*); also seen Cheshire & Wirral.

Lancashire & N Merseyside Banks Marsh and Marshside RSPB, first-winter, 7th March to 1st May, photo (per L&NM Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 191); presumed same as Banks Marsh and Marshside 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 587–588.

2009 Flintshire Connah's Quay, juvenile, 19th–21st October (K. J. Smith); presumed same as Cheshire & Wirral 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 587–588.

2009 Outer Hebrides Howmore, South Uist, juvenile, 12th September and 2nd–15th October

(S. E. Duffield, J. B. Kemp) (note revised dates and observers, *Brit. Birds* 103: 587–588); presumed same Baleshare, North Uist, 26th October (B. Rabbitts).

(Breeds primarily Arctic Siberia, where breeding range expanding W to Lena River delta. North American range restricted to coastal tundra of W & N Alaska, E to Mackenzie River. Migrates through USA to winter coastal S USA to N/C America.)

### Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* (1, 159, 8)

Cornwall St Ives, juvenile, 18th September, photo (D. Parker, R. Sharples *et al.*).

Devon Topsham, first-winter, 20th November 2009 to 5th February, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 589–590. Exminster, Exe Estuary, first-winter, 19th September to 10th October, photo (J. Waldon *et al.*).

Essex Abberton Resr, first-winter, 15th November 2009 to 3rd January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 589–590.



Steve Arlow

**310.** Juvenile Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*, Porth Hellick, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2010.

Isles of Scilly Porth Hellick, St Mary's, juvenile, 14th September to 6th October, photo (K. Webb *et al.* per Isles of Scilly Recorder) (plate 310). Periglis, St Agnes, adult, 27th October to 6th November, photo (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

Lancashire & N Merseyside Stocks Resr, 17th–18th May, photo (G. Waddington *et al.*).

Lothian North Berwick, adult, 13th May, photo (D. J. Bates *et al.* per Lothian Recorder).

Shetland Strand Loch, Mainland, juvenile, 11th October, photo (P. V. Harvey, G. Taylor *et al.*).

Somerset Dunster Hawn, adult, 17th July, photo (J. White *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 305).

Eagle-eyed readers will notice a change in the pre-1950 statistics, which have been given as five in the last two reports. The correct number is just one, that being at Loe Bar, near Helston, Cornwall, on 14th June 1924 (*Brit. Birds* 18: 167). This follows an assessment by BOURC of all early records (see *Ibis* 149: 652), which found the other pre-1950 records to have been insufficiently documented.

(Breeds over much of North America from W Alaska to Newfoundland & S to California, Texas & North Carolina. Some winter in coastal USA to S of breeding range but most winter in C America, Caribbean & N South America, S to N Argentina & Chile.)

### Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 27, 1)

Devon Black Hole Marsh, River Axe, juvenile, 10th–15th October, photo (S. D. Waite *et al.*).

(Breeds C & S Alaska through subarctic Canada to Quebec & Labrador. Migrates throughout USA & winters Caribbean & C America, S to Argentina.)

### Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (19, 282, 10)

Cheshire & Wirral Inner Marsh Farm RSPB, adult, 31st July to 16th August (A. Thomas, C. Wells *et al.*).

Cornwall Walmsley Sanctuary and nearby, 10th–14th May, photo (C. Selway *et al.*).

Gwent Newport Wetlands RSPB, juvenile, 28th–29th September, photo (N. Casburn, C. Jones *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Big Pool and nearby, St Agnes, adult, 9th–13th August, photo (G. K. Gordon *et al.*);



presumed same Great Pool, Tresco, 15th–16th August, photo (per Isles of Scilly Recorder).

Leicestershire & Rutland Rutland Water, first-winter, 20th November to 4th December, photo (M. G. Berriman, R. E. Davis, D. J. Scott *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Frampton Marsh RSPB, 5th May, photo (P. Sullivan per Lincolnshire Recorder).

Norfolk Wissington beet factory, 29th April, photo (A. & C. Banwell, C. Donner).

Outer Hebrides Rubha Ardvule then Kildonan, South Uist, juvenile, 18th–19th September, photo (S. E. Duffield, J. B. Kemp). Rubha Ardvule, juvenile, 3rd–6th October, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*).

Oxfordshire Port Meadow, juvenile, 14th October to 8th November, photo (A. Hartley *et al.*).

This dependable and regular rarity produced another crop of typical records in 2010, with a geographical spread that extended from the Outer Hebrides to Scilly and included a couple of obligatory inland birds. Since an inexplicable dearth of birds in 1993 and 1994, when the annual totals were only one and two respectively, numbers quickly returned to ‘normal’ and have even increased slightly over the past decade. As might be expected, September is the key time for finding one, although they have been discovered in every month. Long-stayers, such as the Oxfordshire bird, are relatively frequent and they have overwintered on several occasions.

(Breeds throughout much of subarctic Alaska & Canada, east to James Bay. Migrates through USA, where some overwinter, but majority winter from Caribbean & C America to Chile & Argentina.)

### Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (6, 130, 0)

2009 Kent Bough Beech Resr, juvenile, 6th August, photo (M. Wheeler *et al.*).

(Occasionally breeds Finland & Baltic countries to Ukraine & W Russia. To E, breeds commonly in forest-steppe region of Siberia to Mongolia & NE China. Winters throughout sub-Saharan Africa, especially E Africa, & Indian subcontinent E to S China & SE Asia; also Australia.)

### Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (0, 230, 7)

Cornwall Hayle RSPB, juvenile/first-winter, 6th September, photo (C. C. Barnard, T. Twigg *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Dowdeswell Resr, first-winter, 29th–30th September, photo (T. Mabbett *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Great Pool, Tresco, first-winter, 8th–16th September, photo (S. Croft, S. Roumana *et al.*).

Kent Grove Ferry NNR, first-winter, 9th September to 19th October, photo (J. Brighten *et al.*).



Steve Young/Birdwatch

311. Female Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, Seaforth, Lancashire & N Merseyside, May 2010.

Lancashire & N Merseyside Seaforth NR, female, 22nd–25th May, photo (T. Vaughan *et al.*) (plate 311).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point NNR, first-winter, 13th–15th September, photo (R. K. Watson, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Welney WWT, first-winter, 2nd–12th October, photo (J. C. Smith *et al.*).

2009 Devon Bowling Green Marsh RSPB and Exminster Marshes RSPB, first-winter, 2nd–7th September, photo (D. Cullen, M. S. Wolinski *et al.*).

2009 Lothian Musselburgh Lagoons, first-winter, 14th–26th November, photo (P. R. Bould *et al.*).

(Breeds interior W Canada south to California & throughout mid-west states of USA; also S Ontario. Most migrate through interior USA & winter in South America from Peru S to Argentina & Chile.)

### **Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 64, 2)**

Derbyshire Willington GP and Foremark Resr, second-winter or adult, 28th October to 5th November, photo (D. Oulsnam *et al.*).

Staffordshire Chasewater Resr, adult, 15th–30th July, photo (G. Evans *et al.*); presumed same Gailey Resr, 31st July to 1st August, photo (S. Richards *et al.*).

2005 Shetland Hamars Ness, Fetlar, first-winter, 9th November, photo (B. H. Thomason); previously considered not proven as Laughing Gull (*Brit. Birds* 101: 577) but record resubmitted and now accepted as Franklin's Gull following a review of the photographic evidence.

(Breeds locally throughout interior provinces of temperate W Canada, E to Great Lakes & S to mid-west USA. Winters along Pacific coast of South America, from Guatemala to Chile.)

### **Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (1, 90, 1)**

Argyll Machrihanish, first-winter, 12th November, photo (E. Maguire *et al.*).

(Locally common on tundra of NE Siberia from Lena River E to at least Kolyma River. In Canada, rare & local breeder in W Hudson Bay region, perhaps elsewhere. Siberian birds migrate E past Point Barrow, Alaska in September to unknown wintering area assumed to lie near edge of pack ice, perhaps in Bering Sea or N Pacific, S to N Japan.)

### **Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* (8, 165, 5)**

Anglesey Traeth Lligwy, adult, 14th January to 2nd March, photo (D. Wright *et al.* per Anglesey Recorder); presumed same as Traeth Dulas, Anglesey, 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 595–596.

Cleveland South Gare, adult, 29th January, photo (D. J. Britton *et al.*).

Co. Durham Whitburn, adult, 28th, 31st August and 11th September, photo (R. Scott *et al.*); presumed same Seaham and Ryhope, 3rd–4th September, photo (S. G. Addinall *et al.*).

East Glamorgan River Taff, Cardiff and nearby, adult, 7th March to 11th April, photo (G. N. Smith *et al.*); presumed same as River Taff 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 595–596.

Highland Thurso, adult, 8th–11th March, photo (S. Laybourne *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Chowder Ness, Barton-on-Humber, first-summer, 28th June, photo (G. P. Catley *et al.*).

Sussex Arlington Resr, adult, 18th–22nd April, photo (D. G. Barber *et al.*).

(Breeds widely across N North America from W & C Alaska through Canada to James Bay. Winters locally on ice-free rivers & lakes in N USA, & S along both coasts of USA to Mexico & Caribbean.)

### **Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* (1, 21, 1)**

Northumberland East Chevington, 21st June, photo (A. & M. Young).

This is the first record since 2006 and, like the Essex bird from that year, was seen only by its finders, who likewise secured conclusive photographic evidence. This is the third for Northumberland, which now ranks as the best county for this species.

A one-day bird in Angus & Dundee in 2003 was seen only by its finder and those birders in the immediate vicinity, so we are at the stage where a long-staying bird would be greatly appreciated. The last properly twitchable bird stayed in the tern colony at Cemlyn Bay, Anglesey, as long

ago as July 1988. Anyone lucky enough to find a ‘dark-mantled’ tern should try to record the exact pattern of black and white on the lores, forehead and face. The mantle colour should also be noted, bearing in mind the effect that harsh lighting can have on its appearance.

(Tropical seas. West Indies & Atlantic population breeds Banc d’Arguin, Mauritania, Pagalu, Gulf of Guinea & widely throughout Caribbean S to offshore N Venezuela. Other populations breed from Red Sea & Arabian Gulf locally through Indian Ocean to SE China, Philippines, & N Australia. Northern populations migratory, wintering at sea to S of breeding areas.)

### Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (51, 281, 3)

Argyll Near Moss, Tiree, adult, 25th April, photo (I. Simms, R. M. Ward).

Devon Bowling Green Marsh RSPB, Topsham and nearby, two, 28th June to 11th July, photo (M. S. Wolinski *et al.*); also seen Dorset.

Dorset Abbotsbury and West Bexington, one, 29th June to 1st July, photo (A. Barrett, M. Morse *et al.*); one of two seen also in Devon.

(Small population in N Germany & Denmark. Widespread though local in Spain but colonies are isolated & small elsewhere in Europe. To E, breeds discontinuously from Turkey & SW Russia through Kazakhstan, Mongolia & NW China, with isolated population in NE China. European population winters coastal W Africa, S to Gulf of Guinea. Asian populations winter Persian Gulf to Indian subcontinent & SE Asia. Other races occur Australia & the Americas.)

### Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (26, 264, 1)

Clyde Endrick Mouth NNR, 19th June, photo (D. O’Brien); also seen North-east Scotland.

North-east Scotland Meikle Loch, adult, 21st June, photo (P. S. Crockett); presumed same Loch of Strathbeg RSPB, 21st June, photo (T. W. Marshall, D. Parnaby *et al.*); also seen Clyde.

A quick glance at a UK distribution map of this impressive tern reveals its widespread occurrence throughout the country (*Brit. Birds* 100: 720, fig. 6). Norfolk clearly has the monopoly with 48 records to date, including the first, at Breydon Water in 1825, while Suffolk is second with 27. Breydon still remains particularly attractive to this species, which has been recorded there on a further 18 occasions after the first. What is most striking about the species’ occurrence pattern is its propensity to fly over coastal rarity hotspots and appear at virtually any inland waterbody. Among the landlocked counties, Nottinghamshire has amassed an extraordinary 13 records, and Leicestershire and Cambridgeshire are equally impressive with seven and five respectively.

This is a real midsummer rarity, with the bulk of records falling between mid June and mid August – well outside the traditional vagrancy periods of spring and autumn, meaning that the discovery of one of these hefty and unmistakable terns probably almost always comes as something of a shock.

The numbers recorded in the first decade of the present century were lower than those of any other decade since the 1950s, despite the fact that it has featured in the BBRC report every year

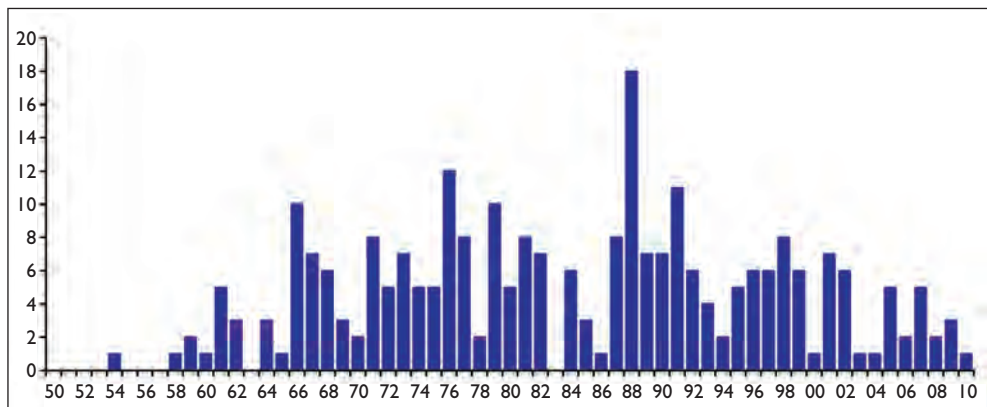


Fig. 4. Records of Caspian Terns *Hydroprogne caspia* in Britain, 1950–2009.

since the peak year of 1988 (when there were 18). There were just single birds in 2000, 2003 and 2004, and just one individual was considered to account for the three sightings in Scotland in 2010.

(Isolated European population breeds Baltic coasts of Estonia, Sweden & Finland to head of Gulf of Bothnia. To E, fragmented populations from Black Sea coast of Ukraine across steppe-lake region of C Asia to NW Mongolia & E China. European birds winter W Africa to Gulf of Guinea, Asian birds winter on coasts to S of breeding range. Other populations in Australia, S Africa & North America.)

### **Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (23, 170, 7)**

Cambridgeshire Ely beet pools, adult, 28th May (S. Sharp).

Cheshire & Wirral Inner Marsh Farm RSPB, juvenile, 18th–24th September, photo (C. Wells, S. Williams, P. Woollen *et al.*); also seen Flintshire.

Cleveland Saltholme Pools RSPB, juvenile, 28th July to 25th August, photo (T. Francis, G. Joynt, C. Sharp *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 306; plate 312).

Cornwall Dinham Flats, Camel Estuary, adult, 20th–23rd April, photo (I. Prophet *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

Flintshire Inner Marsh Farm RSPB, juvenile, 18th September, photo (K. Smith *et al.*); also seen Cheshire & Wirral.

Gower Eglwys Nunydd Resr, Port Talbot, juvenile, 25th–30th September, photo (D. Jenkins-Jones, W. Morris, J. Slocombe *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, adult, 8th May, photo (A. Mears, P. Pearson, A. Rhodes *et al.*).

Leicestershire & Rutland Rutland Water, juvenile, 31st August to 13th September, photo (S. M. Lister, T. J. Sherwood *et al.*); also seen Nottinghamshire, Shropshire.

Nottinghamshire Annesley Pit Top, juvenile, 4th September (P. Naylor); also seen Leicestershire & Rutland, Shropshire.

Shropshire Venus Pool NR, juvenile, 29th August, photo (J. Almond, H. J. Griffiths *et al.*); also seen Leicestershire & Rutland, Nottinghamshire.

2009 Lincolnshire Alkborough Flats, adult, 27th June (N. Drinkall).

(Breeds in small, scattered colonies through S & E Europe from Iberia to Poland. Numerous & widespread from N Black Sea E to W Kazakhstan, with Volga/Ural River complex holding most of European population. Winters tropical W & C Africa & from Nile Delta to E Africa. Other populations in Indian subcontinent, E Asia, S Africa & Australia.)



Ian Forrest

**312.** Juvenile Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*, Saltholme, Cleveland, August 2010.



**Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* (2, 6, 1)**

Oxfordshire Chipping Norton, juvenile *S. o. orientalis*, 15th–18th December, photo (J. Dunleavy) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plates 74, 101, 187, 313).

All the ingredients were present to make the Oriental Turtle Dove in Oxfordshire one of the top birding stories of winter 2010/11. Indeed, the events that unfolded in Chipping Norton are likely to become one of the leading birding folklore narratives of the era. The bird was identified originally by Richard Thewlis and Ian Lewington from photos taken in December 2010 and submitted over a month later to the BTO's Garden BirdWatch by an unsuspecting Mr J. Dunleavy. It was then relocated in early 2011 by Steve Akers in his back garden, on the other side of Chipping Norton, quite independently and with no prior knowledge of the first sighting. Once again, Ian Lewington was instrumental in confirming the identification (and plate 313 is of the bird in spring 2011, once it had moulted into first-adult plumage).

The bird could not have chosen a better garden or more amenable household, as the Akers family opened their home to literally hundreds of birders, allowing them to view the bird at the well-stocked feeding station in their back garden through their kitchen window. What's more, the Akers family raised a sizeable sum for charity in the process (see *Brit. Birds* 104: 338–339). When it wasn't in their garden, there were occasional sightings in the surrounding area.

Records of Oriental Turtle Doves in northern Scotland in 2002–03 were attributed to the race *S. o. meena* of central Asia, sometimes referred to as 'Rufous Turtle Dove', but the Oxfordshire bird was the first of the nominate form since one, probably of this taxon, on Fair Isle in late October 1974. Consequently, this individual was *particularly* popular. As the two forms are often viewed as incipient species and a potential split, this long-staying bird was especially appreciated by those who had made the long trek to northern Scotland and already added *meena* to their lists; they now have an armchair tick in the making.

Awareness of Oriental Turtle Dove is now more widespread than ever, and any Turtle Dove *S. turtur* in late autumn and winter is worthy of close inspection. While the characteristics of the two taxa (*orientalis* and *meena*) are well documented (e.g. Hirschfeld 1992), there is nevertheless some convergence of characters (for example the tail pattern; Leader 2004) and an apparent narrow overlap zone in southwest Siberia where intergrades occur. So not all individuals are



John Carter

**313.** First-adult Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia o. orientalis*, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, April 2011.

straightforward, and a number of records from northern Europe have not been assigned to sub-species. Some examples of (the late moulting) juvenile *meena* can be especially tricky and might easily be overlooked as juvenile Turtle Doves, a fact worth bearing in mind for Britain's growing army of 'self-find' listers!

(Breeds from S Urals, E to Japan & S to Tien Shan & Himalayas, C China & Taiwan. Northern populations migratory, wintering in SE Iran, Indian subcontinent, & from S China to N Thailand & Indochina.)

### **Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (15, 46, 1)**

**Outer Hebrides** Kilaulay, South Uist, immature male, 4th November, found dead, photo (T. Fountain, J. Warner).

(Breeds across S Canada from British Columbia to New Brunswick, & through USA S to C Mexico and Greater Antilles. Winters throughout South America to Argentina.)

### **Barn Owl *Tyto alba***

#### **Central European race, 'Dark-breasted Barn Owl' *T. a. guttata* (–, 3, 0)**

**2009 Lincolnshire** Goxhill Haven, 20th November, found dead, ringed in Belgium, photo (M. L. van den Bos, G. P. Catley).

(Resident to the north of *T. a. alba*, from the Netherlands and Denmark, east to western Russia and south to Bulgaria, largely to the east of the 3°C January isotherm. Intergrades with nominate *tyto* are frequent towards the western and southern limits of its range.)

### **Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* (c. 200, 206, 3)**

**Outer Hebrides** Lewis: Mangersta, adult male, 12th September 2009 to 5th January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 603; presumed same Brue, 17th February, photo (M. S. Scott *et al.*), Borve, 11th–27th March, photo (M. S. Scott *et al.*), Mangersta, 14th July (C. & R. Anderson). Aird an Rùnair, North Uist, male, 14th April, photo (K. Jones, M. Misso *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 192); presumed same, 6th May, photo (J. Boyle). Hirta, St Kilda, adult male, 4th June, photo (W. T. S. Miles, S. Money).

**Shetland** Crussa Field, Unst, female, 1st–2nd May, photo (R. Brookes, G. Rodger, B. H. Thomason *et al.*) (plate 314).

(Occasionally breeds N Scandinavia & Iceland, depending on availability of small mammals. Outside Europe, erratic circumpolar breeder across tundra & N islands of Arctic Russia, Siberia, Alaska, Canada & N Greenland. Most disperse S in winter but some resident or nomadic if food available.)



Rob Brookes

**314.** Female Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus*, Crussa Field, Unst, Shetland, May 2010.

## Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* (1, 20, 1)

Co. Durham Horden, juvenile male, 11th October, photo (M. Penrose).

Although this species has been found in Nottinghamshire (in 1971) and Greater London (in 1984), this is the first record for the east coast, at least on the mainland. It was found on the same day as a Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* at North Gare, 11 km to the south. Interestingly, the preceding days had seen a predominantly easterly airflow across the North Atlantic, so it is not entirely clear how these birds were displaced to Northeast England – but there had been some deep Atlantic low-pressure systems bringing strong westerlies on 5th and 6th October and perhaps these two birds may have been reorientating, having initially made landfall farther north and west. It is also possible, of course, that they had left a ship in the North Sea following this displacement.

The nighthawk was found by the named observer, a construction manager on a building site. He realised that it was unfamiliar and thought it might be some sort of owl. It was very approachable, sitting in a lone tree, so he took several photos with a digital camera. He also saw it flying around and at one point it even attempted to land on his car roof. That could have been the end of the story, but the next day Ian Smith visited the site on business. When he was shown the photographs of the ‘funny-looking bird’, he immediately identified it but, unfortunately, despite much subsequent searching, it was never seen again. Yet again, digital photos have enabled us to confirm the identification of a bird not seen by a birder, and even to be confident of its age and sex.

(Breeds throughout temperate North America, S to Panama. Winters South America, S to C Argentina. Some migrate over W Atlantic, occurs on passage in Bermuda & Lesser Antilles.)

## Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 72, 2)

Carmarthenshire Cefn Sidan Sands, Pembrey, 20th March, photo (D. Davidson, G. Harper, R. Hunt *et al.*).

Suffolk Kessingland, 26th March to 6th April, photo (M. Tickner *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 159; plate 315).

2009 Cornwall Nanjizal, 13th May (K. A. Wilson).

(Locally common throughout Mediterranean basin from Iberia to Greece, but rare or absent from many regions. Outside Europe, breeds locally from Mauritania & Canary Islands across NW Africa & Middle East to Arabian Peninsula & coastal S Iran. Most winter N African tropics, but some remain in S Europe.)



Simon Stirrup

315. Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*, Kessingland, Suffolk, April 2010.

### European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (196, 112, 1)

Yorkshire Easington, juvenile, 12th–13th September, photo (D. Adams, B. Napierski).

2008 Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 28th May (J. P. Siddle).

Anyone looking at a field guide for the first time might think that a bright blue bird the size of a Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* would be unlikely to cause the Committee much deliberation. Nonetheless, this species is large and obvious and so may be reported by members of the public, who are unlikely to submit a watertight description. Furthermore, Rollers can become surprisingly elusive and wander quite widely, making it difficult to assess numbers. The 2010 bird made itself even more elusive by being found within the confines of a gas terminal with no public access.

European Rollers are declining across much of their European range and the two here are the first to be accepted since two in 2007. There were 11 sightings in the first decade of this century (compared with 12 in the 1990s, 18 in the 1980s, 32 in the 1970s, 23 in the 1960s and 16 in the 1950s). Rollers have been seen in Britain in every month except December although there have been no new arrivals between November and March, all reports from the winter months being of birds that turned up earlier and remained. Of the four records from January to March and the five from April, the most recent was in 1955, while the last bird seen in November was in 1968, and the only two found in that month date from the nineteenth century. There is an overall peak in sightings in May and June and another, smaller, one in September and October, although July and August records are not unusual. In recent years, spring records have become increasingly rare and the 12 accepted since 2000 have been found in May (2), June (1), July (4), August (1), September (1) and October (3).

There are sightings from most recording areas, although there are a few gaps in the west. East Anglia accounts for the largest proportion of records, leading to suggestions that most of our vagrants arrive from the east rather than the south. In the twenty-first century, half of the records (six) have been on the east coast of England between Northumberland and Lincolnshire (in May and July–October), with the remainder scattered rather widely: three in Wales (two in July and one in October), one in Sussex in June, one on Scilly in October and one in Scotland (the west coast of Ayrshire) in May.

(NW Africa and S Europe from Portugal to Greece, and locally through Balkan countries and E Poland to Estonia & E to Ukraine. More numerous from Turkey & S Russia to S Urals, SW Siberia and C Asia to W China and N Pakistan. Some winter equatorial W Africa but most in E Africa from Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

### Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (0, 115, 4)

Cleveland North Gare, first-winter, 11th October, trapped, photo (D. Clayton, D. Harrison *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Troy Town and Parsonage, St Agnes, first-winter, 14th–18th October, photo (P. R. Brash, M. J. Pearson *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides North Locheynort, Bornais, South Uist, one, 10th October, two, 11th, one to 12th October, photo (S. E. Duffield, J. Poyner *et al.*).

(Breeds throughout S Canada, & USA E of Rocky Mountains. Migrates throughout E USA to winter in N South America. Other races resident in South America.)

### Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* (0, 8, 2)

Cornwall Sennen Cove, female, 20th May, photo (M. Warren *et al.* per birding information services).

Surrey Staines Moor, first-winter, 11th October 2009 to 2nd January, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 605.

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, first-winter, 7th November, photo (B. & J. Beaumont, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

2009 Shetland Geosetter, Mainland, first-winter, 11th October, photo (D. Fairhurst, G. Taylor *et al.*).

The female in Cornwall showed characters consistent with nominate *cristatus*, currently the only



subspecies on the British List, and it is likely that the three first-winters listed here were also of this form. However, some confusion surrounds the diagnosis of the disputed form *confusus* and more work is needed before we can assign vagrant individuals confidently. The 1999 Irish bird, which showed characteristics intermediate between *cristatus* and *lucionensis*, showed that it is unsafe to assume that all birds originate from the core range of the nominate form.

(Breeds from Ob River basin in S Siberia, E to Sea of Okhotsk & Kamchatka, N Japan & throughout much of E China. Nominate *cristatus* winters Indian subcontinent & throughout SE Asia to Philippines, N Borneo & Indonesian islands.)

### Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (0, 77, 3)

Hampshire Forton Lake, Gosport, adult female, 10th–11th September, photo (J. A. Norton *et al.*).  
Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point NNR, first-winter, 10th October, photo (A. Burgess, R. Hayes, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Shetland Scousburgh, Mainland, adult female, 12th–17th October, photo (J. Aalto, M. Suojarinne, B. & J. Wood *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 403; plate 316).

After a two-year absence, this species makes a welcome return to the BBRC report. All three records published here involved birds showing characters most commonly associated with the form *isabellinus*. This appears to be the most frequent form recorded in Britain, but is yet to be formally accepted to the British List. This hurdle is complicated by the variation found in females and first-winters (the predominant plumage types to be recorded in Britain, with 2010 representing a typical showing), and also the ongoing debate about where the lines should be drawn between the various taxa (and even their nomenclature) (e.g. Panov 2009). Given the decision to treat *phoenicuroides* and *isabellinus* as separate species in the second edition of the *Collins Bird Guide*, birders may be encouraged to take more interest in assigning these shrikes to subspecies level and, hopefully, we shall soon be able to resolve the situation relating to the national list, which should in turn enable BBRC to report the relative frequency of the two forms more accurately.

(Breeds widely across arid regions of C Asia from Caspian Sea and W Iran E to Tajikistan, Afghanistan, N Pakistan, S Mongolia & NW China, with isolated subspecies in Zaidam depression, N Tibetan Plateau. Winters NE & E Africa, S Arabian Peninsula, S Iran & NW Indian subcontinent.)



Michael McKee

**316.** Adult female Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* with a freshly hung Twite *Carduelis flavirostris* at one of several larders that this bird established during its six-day stay; Scousburgh, Shetland, October 2010.

### Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (21, 161, 1)

Isles of Scilly Near airport, St Mary's, male, 8th–13th September, photo (K. Webb *et al.* per Isles of Scilly Recorder); also seen Norfolk.



Kevin Du Rose

**317.** Male Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*, Kelling, Norfolk, August 2010.

Norfolk Kelling and Salthouse, male, 17th–19th August, photo (J. Sellwood *et al.*) (plate 317); also seen Isles of Scilly.

Readers may well be surprised that the Norfolk and Scilly records are treated here as involving the same individual, despite the sightings being some 600 km and almost three weeks apart. The reason for this is that a close examination of the excellent images available for the bird at both localities revealed an exact match in several distinctive plumage features – including the pattern in the wings and the outline of the black mask – and the state of the bird's moult. One account submitted also showed that if the bird had followed a

direct track from the north or northeastern part of the species' breeding range to Norfolk and continued along it, it would eventually have arrived on Scilly.

(European range centred E of Balkans to E Poland, with small numbers W through N Mediterranean to S France & NE Spain. To E, breeds locally from Black Sea coasts, across S Russia & Kazakhstan to NW China & SW Siberia. Migrates through E Africa to winter in S Africa, from Namibia to S Mozambique & N South Africa.)

### Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* (0, 22, 1)

North-east Scotland Loch of Strathbeg RSPB, first-winter *L. m. pallidirostris*, 14th–18th October, photo (X. Funnell, H. E. Maggs *et al.*).

The several well-seen and photographed *pallidirostris* in Britain in recent years have enabled a growing familiarity with this taxon among the birding community. The occurrence pattern (or lack of one) suggests that almost any patch, including those deep inland, may receive a future visit from this central Asian vagrant. The statistics show that first-winters predominate, appearing from mid September and peaking in early November, although there are April and June/July records on the books too.

Both the nomenclature and the taxonomy of *pallidirostris* are currently in a state of flux. The English name 'Steppe Grey Shrike' is widely used in western Europe for *pallidirostris*, despite being applied to Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor* of the races *L. e. homeyeri/leucopterus* in the Russian literature. Furthermore, the steppe grassland of central Asia is not the biome typically occupied by *pallidirostris*, which usually frequents desert and semi-desert with scattered saxaul *Haloxylon* sp. and scrub including *Halimodendron halodendron*. Here it often occurs alongside the likes of Isabelline Shrikes *L. isabellinus*, Sykes's Warblers *Hippolais rama* and Asian Desert Warblers *Sylvia nana*. Taxonomic changes are waiting in the wings, with a recent molecular phylogeny of the 'great grey shrike complex' revealing that *pallidirostris* is closely related to *lahtora* of the Indian subcontinent (Olsson *et al.* 2010). This research established that both of these forms, together with *aucheri* and *buryi* of the Middle East, are sufficiently distant from others in the complex to merit treatment as a distinct species, *L. lahtora*, with *pallidirostris* becoming a race of *lahtora*, and perhaps with the 'new' species adopting the name Asian Grey Shrike. The authors

acknowledge, however, that there is conflict between the genetic data in their findings and morphological appearance, which has governed the relationships within this complex until now. The dynamic aspects of taxonomy, identification and nomenclature connected with both Great Grey and Southern Grey Shrikes seem unlikely to wane in the near future. Further research is required and observers are urged to photograph and make detailed notes on any 'odd' grey shrike encountered. Indeed, a claim of *homeyeri* Great Grey Shrike from 2010 is currently in circulation with the Committee.

(Central Asian race *L. m. pallidirostris* breeds C Asia from lower Volga E to S Mongolia and extreme NW China, S to N Iran and N Pakistan. Winters to S and W of breeding range from Sudan, N Ethiopia and Somalia through Arabian Peninsula to W Iran.)

### Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

#### West Mediterranean islands race, 'Balearic Woodchat Shrike' *L. s. badius* (0, 8, 1)

Cornwall Windmill Farm NR, first-summer male, 10th–11th April, photo (per birding information services).

(Restricted to islands in W Mediterranean including Balearics, Corsica & Sardinia, E to Elba & Capraia. Winters in W Africa, from Ivory Coast to N Cameroon.)

### Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 232, 13)

Essex/Greater London Rainham Marshes RSPB, three: one, 30th January to 14th March, photo (H. Vaughan *et al.*); two, 21st–23rd October, photo (M. Dent *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness RSPB, at least one from 2009 remaining to 26th January, see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 607–608; three, presumed same as those from autumn 2009, including male in song, 24th March to 5th April, ringed, photo (D. Walker *et al.*). Grove Ferry NNR, two, male and female, seen intermittently, 25th January to 3rd April, photo (P. Upson *et al.* per Kent Recorder). Dungeness RSPB, male, 23rd–27th October, photo (D. Major *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, four, 16th–20th March, seven, 21st March, at least two remaining to 30th March, photo (J. Evans, R. Harvey, R. Walden *et al.* per Suffolk Recorder) (plate 318).

2009 Essex/Greater London Rainham Marshes RSPB, two, 6th December 2008 to 29th March, photo (note revised dates, *Brit. Birds* 102: 587; 103: 607–608).

The group of seven at Minsmere on 21st March is the largest flock on record in Britain. And the three birds seen in Kent in late March and early April included one ringed in Sussex in November 2009 (part of the ring number, read in the field,



Jon Evans

**318.** Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, Minsmere, Suffolk, March 2010. One of a record British flock of seven birds at the RSPB's flagship reserve.

was sufficient to confirm the bird's identity). With small influxes in several recent years, and with many birds homing in on potentially suitable breeding habitat, perhaps it will not be too long before this species joins that elite group of BBRC species breeding in Britain.

(Widely but locally distributed throughout C & E Europe, from Denmark, Germany & Italy NE to C Sweden & Estonia. Absent from much of NW Europe but locally numerous in Spain. To E, breeds from S Russia to Volga River. Largely resident or dispersive in Europe. Other races, sometimes regarded as separate species, occur in C Asia & from S Siberia to NE China, & winter NW Indian subcontinent, S China & S Japan.)

### **Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus***

#### **Northern race, 'Northern Long-tailed Tit' *A. c. caudatus* (–, 8, 4)**

Norfolk Stiffkey, 31st October, photo (A. I. McElwee).

Suffolk Southwold, two, 17th–19th October, photo (M. Deans, S. J. Nixon, B. J. Small *et al.*). Lowestoft, 13th November, photo (J. Gaskell *et al.* per Suffolk Recorder).

The above records are just the tip of the iceberg that was a much larger invasion into northwest Europe in the late autumn of 2010, proving once again that the North Sea and English Channel present formidable barriers to this (and many other) species. In the Netherlands, where several thousand birds were recorded during this invasion, many birds were seen actively migrating, sometimes over water, and in large groups (e.g. 33+). By late winter there were still birds to be found at scattered sites across the Dutch countryside, before they seemingly slipped back to their breeding grounds farther north and east. There was one Dutch control of a bird ringed in Lithuania (van Bemmelen in prep.).

(N and E Europe, and N Asia east through Siberia and N Mongolia to Kamchatka, Hokkaido and NE China. Largely resident or dispersive outside the breeding season.)

### **Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (11, 287, 13)**

Fair Isle Shirva, first-winter, 14th–15th August, photo (J. Ashton-Booth *et al.*). Vaadal, first-winter, 31st August to 2nd September, trapped, photo (I. & S. Hunter *et al.*).

Norfolk Holme, adult male, 6th–16th September, trapped, photo (G. Andrews, S. Barker *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Grogarry, South Uist, first-winter, 8th September, photo (S. E. Duffield, J. B. Kemp, B. Rabbits).

Shetland Unst, two: Haroldswick, 18th August, photo (R. Brookes, W. T. S. Miles, R. M. Tallack *et al.*); Norwick, first-winter, 28th September, photo (T. Davison, R. M. R. James, W. Soar). Mainland, five: Sumburgh Head, first-winter, 4th–5th September, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*); Kergord, 23rd–24th September (D. R. Watson); Sumburgh Head, adult, 23rd–27th September, photo (D. Andrews *et al.* per Shetland Recorder); Sullom, first-winter, 26th September, photo (A. Butler, D. Houghton, J. A. Norton); Busta House, 30th September (P. Cosgrove, F. Shilling *et al.*). Out Skerries, first-winter, 4th September, photo (M. S. Chapman, E. Tait, R. W. Tait). Tresta, Fetlar, 28th–29th September, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

2009 Fair Isle Burkle, 16th–19th September, photo (D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

2009 Shetland Out Skerries, adult, 15th October, photo (M. J. McKee, C. Turner, T. Warrick *et al.*).

(Breeds locally in N Scandinavia, becoming widespread across N Russia E to extreme NE Siberia, S to Baikal region, Ussuriland & NE China. Other races breed in Alaska, & Kamchatka through Kuril Islands to N Japan. Migrant through E China to winter widely in SE Asia to Java, Philippines & Sulawesi.)

### **Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 105, 2)**

Norfolk Holme, 22nd–23rd November, trapped, photo (S. Barker *et al.*). Wells Woods, 29th November to 3rd December, photo (S. M. Woodman *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 21).

(Breeds in Altai Mountains to W Mongolia, S through Tien Shan & Pamirs to NE Afghanistan, NW Himalayas & mountains in NW China. Winters S Afghanistan to N India, E to W Bengal. Another race breeds in C China from Hebei to S Yunnan, W to lower slopes of Tibetan Plateau.)



## Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (1, 90, 6)

Devon Lundy Island, first-winter, 4th September, trapped, photo (A. M. & R. J. Taylor).

Norfolk Eccles on Sea, 14th May (P. J. Heath, A. J. Kane *et al.*). Wells Woods, 26th–28th September, photo (S. J. White *et al.*).

Shetland Creadyknowe, Whalsay, first-winter, 9th–15th September, trapped, photo (J. L. Irvine, B. Marshall *et al.*). Seafield, Lerwick, Mainland, 11th–15th October, photo (J. G. Brown *et al.*); presumed same Helendale, Lerwick, 29th October to 1st November (P. M. Ellis *et al.*).

Yorkshire Bampton, 11th–12th September, photo (T. Dolan *et al.*).

A fairly typical batch of records in many ways, although six in a year is just one short of the record total, in 2006. The totals for this species need to be treated with caution, however, as there are almost as many undetermined records of Western Bonelli's/Eastern Bonelli's as there are birds identified to species, although the implication here is that the majority of undetermined birds are in fact Western Bonelli's (there are just five accepted records of Eastern Bonelli's).

Spring records of Western Bonelli's are surprisingly scarce, and the one in Norfolk is only the 16th for this season, all having been found between 29th April and 3rd June, apart from three separate sightings on 9th April. Most spring records are from the southern coastal counties between Scilly and Suffolk, but there have also been singles in Yorkshire, Cumbria, Orkney and Shetland, and singing birds inland in Cheshire and Radnorshire. Another 15 undetermined birds in spring show a similar pattern, including one inland in Leicestershire. Quite why the species is so rare here in spring is a mystery, especially as it is a common breeding bird in France.

Autumn records are more frequent and widespread. There are records from most coastal counties from Northumberland to Scilly, but none elsewhere in England. In Wales, there are six records from Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, as well as the first British record, which was on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, in 1948; while there is also a single record from the Calf of Man. Nearly all the Scottish records come from Orkney, Shetland and Fair Isle, apart from singles in Argyll and Borders in 2006. Sightings are spread right through the autumn, with the earliest on 7th August, a distinct peak in September and, while November records like the bird in Shetland in 2010 may seem unusual, there have been at least five others either found in that month or lingering into it, with two birds in Orkney remaining until 15th. Once again, undetermined birds show a similar pattern, although there is an inland record from Berkshire and a couple of sightings from the Welsh mainland.

Separation of Western and Eastern Bonelli's Warblers is not a task to be undertaken lightly. Although suggested plumage characters have been published (Harvey 1999; Page 1999), subsequent research has not been able to confirm that these are consistent, especially in autumn (Svensson 2002). Occhiato (2007) provided useful comparative photographs of both species, although these were of adults in spring, and the application of the criteria to young birds in autumn is uncertain. There is also some overlap in measurements so that, even in the hand, not all silent birds will be separable.

What's more, singing birds can also be difficult to separate, as the songs of the two species are extremely similar. Groenendijk & Luijendijk (2011) cleared some of the fog surrounding vocal similarities and differences, however, and sonogram analysis may prove conclusive. Fortunately, the two species have quite different contact calls: a strong 'hoo-eet' in the case of Western Bonelli's, and a 'chup' in the case of Eastern Bonelli's. Nevertheless, observers must ensure that the bird is actually seen to call, and that the call is properly transcribed or, even better, recorded.

(Breeding range centred on SW Europe from Iberia to N France, S Germany, Italy, Austria, & locally in mountains of N Africa. Winters along S edge of Sahara, from Senegal & S Mauritania to N Cameroon.)

## Western Bonelli's/Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli/orientalis* (0, 74, 1)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-year, 10th–11th September, trapped, photo (P. A. Brown *et al.*).

2008 Fair Isle Hjukni Geo, 17th–18th September, photo (P. Mayer *et al.* per Fair Isle Recorder).

(Western: see above. Eastern: breeding confined to E Mediterranean, from Bosnia-Herzegovina to S Bulgaria & Greece, east to S Turkey. Winters in NE Africa, from Sudan to Ethiopia.)

## Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (0, 18, 7)

Gwent Wentwood Forest, male in song, 10th May to 18th June, sound recording, photo (A. Pym, C. Trott per Gwent Recorder).

Kent Walderslade, Chatham, male in song, 29th April to 9th June, sound recording, photo (P. B. Harnett, N. L. Jarman *et al.*).

Norfolk Stiffkey Fen, male in song, 3rd April, sound recording, photo (J. R. McCallum, A. I. McElwee *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 160). Titchwell RSPB, male in song, 29th–30th April, sound recording, photo (A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, male in song, 4th June, sound recording, photo (A. I. & S. J. McElwee *et al.*) (plate 319).

Yorkshire Potteric Carr, male in song, 11th May to 22nd June, sound recording, photo (R. J. Scott, N. Whitehouse *et al.*). Grimston, male in song, 13th–18th June, sound recording, photos (T. Isherwood, G. Taylor *et al.*).

2009 Hampshire Brockenhurst, male in song, 10th–17th May, sound recording, photo (D. Houghton *et al.*).

2004 Cheshire & Wirral Dibbinsdale, male in song, 29th April to 20th May, sound recording, photo (P. Brewster, P. S. Woollen *et al.*).

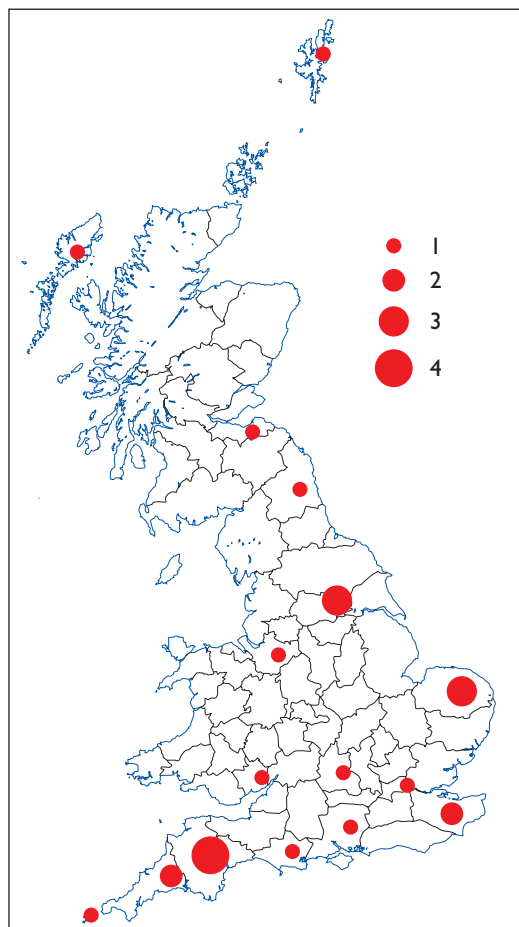
The year 2010 was a record one for this species. Contributing factors must include the growing familiarity with the species' key song phrases, especially the upward-inflected 'whEEP' notes.

The emerging pattern of occurrence indicates that an Iberian Chiffchaff could appear almost

anywhere in Britain, inland or coastal, from north to south and east to west! Dates now span the period from early April to late June. As the morphological differences between Iberian and Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita* are so subtle, recordings of the song and call will, evidently, continue to be crucial in confirming identification, and all accepted records to date have included sound recordings in the submission.

The belated acceptance of a much-discussed individual at Dibbinsdale, Merseyside, in April and May 2004, is published here and an analysis of this bird appears with sound recordings and sonograms at [www.club300.de/](http://www.club300.de/) (go to publications/articles); see also Collinson & Melling (2008).

There is still much to be discovered about Iberian Chiffchaffs, in particular the increasing frequency with which singing individuals establish territories throughout the length and breadth of Britain (and elsewhere in Europe north of the Mediterranean), at a time when the breeding range in far southwestern France is contracting, and the population is in severe decline (and seemingly being replaced by Common Chiffchaffs; Dubois 2008). Furthermore, vagrant males of other Mediterranean warblers only infrequently maintain a territory for a prolonged period in Britain; for example, Western Bonelli's Warbler



**Fig. 5.** Records of Iberian Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus ibericus* in Britain, 1950–2009.

*P. bonelli*, which breeds as close as southern Normandy in France, has done so on just three occasions (Cheshire & Wirral 1963, Kent 1967 and Scilly 1981, plus the recent long-stayer in Derbyshire, in July and August 2011, which has not yet been assessed by BBRC). Other issues where further research is required include 'mixed singing', where a bird will include phrases of Common Chiffchaff within its song, how the frequency with which each song is given can change as its stay progresses, and the reasons for the curiously scruffy plumage of some individuals, such as the well-watched Potteric Carr bird in 2010.



Stef McElwee

**319.** Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland, June 2010. The first for Shetland.

Observers will hopefully have more opportunities to become familiar with the less distinctive conflict song and, especially, the call; the latter is perhaps the most likely method for detecting Britain's first female and also autumn records.

(Breeds locally in French Pyrenees & S throughout W Iberia. N African range restricted to NW Morocco & N Algeria to NW Tunisia. Wintering range poorly known.)

### Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* (0, 5, 1)

Gwent Blorenge, Abergavenny, first-summer male in song, 3rd–15th June, photo (T. Hutton, A. Perry, M. Wright *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 238; plate 320).

All records of Marmora's Warbler in Britain have involved males in song, found between 12th May and 8th June. But this year's bird, a male on territory on moorland far from the coast, is most reminiscent of the first British record, on Midhope Moor in Yorkshire, which stayed from 15th May to 24th July 1982. The other four were found at coastal sites: Spurn (Yorkshire) in 1992, St Abbs (Borders) in 1993, and Scolt Head (Norfolk) and Sizewell (Suffolk) in 2001. The Blorenge bird was aged as a first-summer by the old, worn wing feathers. The age of the previous birds has not been published but photos of the birds in Suffolk and Borders suggest that they were also first-summers.

Marmora's Warbler is still treated as a polytypic species by BOU, with two subspecies, although these were treated as separate species by Shirihihi *et al.* (2001). The race (or species) occurring in Britain has never been established formally, although it is widely believed that only the nominate form has occurred here. The nominate race breeds in Corsica, Sardinia and some small islands off the west coast of Italy, and a part of the population moves to coastal Italy and North Africa outside the breeding season. By contrast, 'Balearic Warbler' *S. (s.) balearica* is largely sedentary in the Balearic Islands, but undergoes some post-breeding dispersal to mainland Spain.

Separation of the two races or species was covered by Shirihihi *et al.* (2001), with a summary and some further research material online at [www.surfbirds.com/Features/marmoras10/marmoras.html](http://www.surfbirds.com/Features/marmoras10/marmoras.html) Voice is important, with nominate *sarda* having a harder call and a more musical,

Dave Stewart



**320.** First-summer male Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*, Bloreng, Abergavenny, Gwent, June 2010.

jangly song which is less reminiscent of Dartford Warbler *S. undata*. Structurally, *sarda* is more robust than *balearica*, which is a particularly small *Sylvia*, although this is obviously difficult to assess in a vagrant context. The main difference in plumage is in the colour of the underparts, with *sarda* being darker and greyer compared with *balearica*, which is paler below with pink or brown tones, the differences being most pronounced in males. Differences in the colour of legs and bill have been suggested, but seem to be less reliable. Published notes, transcriptions of calls and photographs all support the supposition that the British records have all involved *sarda*.

(Nominate form breeds Corsica, Sardinia & small islands off W coast of Italy & N Tunisia. Winters in N Algeria, Tunisia & Libya. Another race mostly resident on Balearic Islands.)

Michael McKee



**321.** Juvenile Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, Out Skerries, Shetland, October 2010.

### **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (1, 41, 4)**

Co. Durham Whitburn, juvenile, 9th October (J. P. Cook).

Fair Isle Upper Leogh, juvenile, 22nd–23rd September, photo (D. Fairhurst, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, juvenile, 8th October, photo (M. Wakeman *et al.*) (plate 321). Northdale, Fetlar, juvenile, 9th October, photo (J. R. McCallum, B. H. Thomason).

(Breeds across Siberia from Irtysh River in W Siberia, N to 64°N, & E to Yakutia & Sea of Okhotsk, & to the south from SW Siberia & NE Kazakhstan through Mongolia to Ussuriland & N & NE China. Winters from Sri Lanka & NE India to S China, & S throughout SE Asia.)



### **Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (7, 118, 5)**

Fair Isle Schoolton, juvenile, 2nd–3rd October, trapped, photo (S. J. Davies *et al.*).

North-east Scotland Collieston, juvenile, 11th October (P. S. Crockett).

Shetland Ham, Foula, 28th September, photo (D. & G. Atherton, N. & P. Wright *et al.*). Skaw, Unst, juvenile, 6th–7th October, photo (P. Bright-Thomas, R. Brookes, M. Garner *et al.*). Out Skerries, juvenile, 9th October, photo (M. J. McKee, C. Turner *et al.*).

(Singing males regular in eastern Finland. To E, discontinuously from C Urals E across much of Siberia to Kamchatka, Kuril Islands, Hokkaido & NE China. Winters in Indian subcontinent, from Nepal E through NE India into SE Asia & Philippines.)

### **River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 37, 2)**

Norfolk Thorpe-next-Haddiscoe, male in song, 2nd–16th July, sound recording, photo (A. & C. Allen *et al.*).

Shetland Quendale, Mainland, 20th September, photo (T. Murphy *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

2009 Fair Isle Vaila's Trees, 31st May, photo (D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

The two records in 2010 take the tally of River Warblers to have been recorded in Britain in the last decade to ten (this period thus being responsible for a quarter of all British records). In line with the well-documented expansion in northern and central Europe, this species has gradually become more regular in Britain during the 50 years since the first was found, on Fair Isle in September 1961, but the prediction that River Warbler would become a breeding colonist has failed to materialise. Nevertheless, singing males do continue to arrive with some regularity (14 in the last 20 years) and, indeed, it is currently twice as likely for the species to be encountered in late spring and summer than it is in autumn. Given how unobtrusive a silent River Warbler is likely to be on passage, many autumn birds will of course avoid detection, but the heavy weighting towards singing males suggests that we must be overlooking lone females in summer. The day may yet come when a wandering female does come across a singing male, but this was sadly not the case in 2010, despite the male boldly declaring his presence for a full fortnight in July. His efforts did not go unrewarded, though; thanks to an efficiently organised twitch that consisted of a series of regular viewing events attended by many satisfied customers, £1,800 was raised for charity.

The Thorpe Marshes bird was the third for Norfolk, making it the third-best county for this species in Britain (Fair Isle boasts a whopping 13 records and Shetland six). Singing males had previously been seen near Roydon, from 29th May until 6th June 1981 (the subject of a twitch that was famously enjoyed by the press of the day; see *Brit. Birds* 74: 357), and at Broughton Fen on 8th–21st July 1989, but there has yet to be a confirmed autumn sighting (despite a couple of candidates that 'got away'). That no fewer than 13 of the 19 Fair Isle/Shetland records involve autumn migrants is not only proof that River Warblers are quite regular at that season in Britain, but also evidence enough that they are being missed elsewhere on the east coast. Any birder encountering a large unstreaked *Locustella* in a migrant context will already have hit the jackpot (as Savi's Warbler *L. luscinioides* – also a rarity – would be the only other likely candidate), but the breast streaking of River Warbler can be surprisingly difficult to see on a skulking individual, so the pattern of the undertail-coverts may be the best clue to its true identity. After that, pursuit of views good enough to compile a full description will depend as much on luck as on perseverance; any *Locustella* that wants to become invisible will inevitably do so!

(Breeds C & E Europe from Germany to C Finland, & E through C Russia to W Siberia. Southern limit extends to Croatia & Ukraine. Migrates through Middle East & NE Africa to winter in E Africa.)

### **Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (–, 577, 19)**

Cornwall Marazion Marsh RSPB, male in song, 17th–20th April, photo (D. Parker *et al.*).

Norfolk Stiffkey Fen, male in song, 23rd May, sound recording (M. Austin, A. I. McElwee *et al.*).

How Hill, male in song, 6th–12th June (T. Allwood, P. J. Heath, A. J. Kane). Broadland site, male in song, 29th June to 7th July (M. Grantham *et al.*).

Somerset Loxton's Marsh, male in song, 25th–29th June, sound recording, photo (J. J. Packer *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, two: male in song, 30th April to 19th May, sound recording (J. A. Rowlands *et al.*); another male in song, 9th–19th May, sound recording (J. A. Rowlands *et al.*). Orfordness, 1st May, trapped, photo (D. Crawshaw, G. J. Jobson, M. Marsh).

Sussex A total of nine, all photographed, location/observer details withheld: four adults (18th May to 15th July, 13th July, 24th July, 2nd August) and five juveniles (29th June, 8th July (two), 23rd July, 19th August).

Yorkshire Old Moor RSPB, male in song, 26th–30th May, photo (K. Thorpe *et al.*). Blacktoft Sands RSPB, male in song, 12th–13th July (M. J. Pilsworth, P. C. Short).

2009 Essex Seventy Acres Lake, Cheshunt GP, male in song, 30th April to 30th May (I. Kendall *et al.*); note revised location, dates and observers, previously listed at Lee Valley CP, *Brit. Birds* 103: 613–614.

2009 Hampshire Undisclosed location, male in song, 1st May to 27th June, sound recording, photo (observers withheld).

2006 Kent Grove Ferry NNR, male in song, 25th April to 10th July, two males in song, 30th April, photo (per B. A. Ryan).

(Breeds W Europe, from Iberia to the Netherlands; range contracting to SE but expanding to NE, into Baltic countries. To E, occurs through temperate Russia S through Ukraine to Black Sea coasts, & E across C Asia to NW China & W Mongolia. European birds winter in W Africa from Senegal to N Nigeria; Asian birds winter in NE Africa.)

### Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* (0, 14, 2)

Shetland Ireland, Mainland, first-winter, 11th–12th September, photo (H. R. Harrop, A. Wheeler *et al.*) (plate 322).

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, first-winter, 1st–3rd September, photo (C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

2009 Fair Isle Plantation, 21st June, trapped, photo (J. Ashton-Booth *et al.*).

(Race *H. p. elaeica* breeds throughout Balkans from Croatia to Greece & Turkey, S Caucasus, S Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Iran & N Afghanistan. Migrates through Middle East to winter in E Africa. Other races breed North Africa, some wintering to south of breeding range.)



Hugh Harrop

322. First-winter Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, Ireland, Shetland, September 2010.

### Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 117, 5)

Hampshire Needs Ore Point, first-winter, 12th–15th September, photo (D. J. Unsworth *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 27th August, photo (J. Cockram, P. Nichols, E. Stubbings *et al.*).

Northumberland Bamburgh, first-winter, 8th September, trapped, photo (M. S. Hodgson).

Shetland Quendale, Mainland, first-winter, 1st–2nd October, photo (D. Bywater *et al.*).

Yorkshire Grimston, first-winter, 4th September (A. F. Johnson, T. Isherwood, J. Richardson *et al.*).

(Range expanding W, now breeding in S Finland. To E, breeds C Russia & W Siberia to Yenisey valley, C & N Kazakhstan to W Mongolia & W Xinjiang province, China. Winters N & peninsular India, S to Karnataka.)

### Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais rama* (0, 10, 4)

Northumberland Druridge Bay CP, first-winter, 15th–16th August, photo (M. Kerby *et al.*).

Shetland Burraferth, Unst, first-winter, 16th–17th August, photo (W. T. S. Miles, R. M. Tallack *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 385; plate 323). Channerwick, Mainland, 2nd–9th October, photo (R. Haughton, R. Riddington *et al.*). Tresta, Fetlar, first-winter, 6th October, photo (J. R. McCallum, B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

With only ten previous records it is unsurprising that the four Sykes's Warblers found in Britain in 2010 represent a new record annual total. As with a number of other 'modern rarities', this is a 'new' species which is a taxonomic conundrum and an identification challenge with an unpredictable occurrence pattern.

Sykes's Warbler was treated as a race of Booted Warbler *H. caligata* by BOURC until 2002, although some authorities maintained it as a separate species in the past. Like Booted and the two olivaceous warblers, it is currently included in the genus *Hippolais* by BOURC (and BB), but phylogenetic studies have placed all four species closer to *Acrocephalus* and quite distinct from the clade containing the four true *Hippolais* species (Icterine *H. icterina*, Melodious *H. polyglotta*, Olive-tree *H. olivetorum* and Upcher's Warblers *H. languida*). However, several authorities now include Sykes's, Booted and the olivaceous warblers within the genus *Iduna* (Leisler *et al.* 1997; Helbig & Seibold 1999; Fregin *et al.* 2009) and as we went to press it emerged that the BOU is to follow suit (see pp. 633–634).



Mike Pennington

**323.** First-winter Sykes's Warbler *Hippolais rama*, Burraferth, Unst, Shetland, August 2010.

As to field appearance, this is slowly becoming better appreciated: a ‘milky tea’ warbler which has a deportment that is more *Acrocephalus* ‘long’ than *Phylloscopus* ‘plump’ (cf. Booted Warbler). Young birds in Britain in autumn have a strangely worn first-winter plumage, with plain tertials and a peculiar pinkish hue to the sandy remiges. A candidate still needs careful handling, however, in particular when separating from worn adult Booted Warbler in late autumn, as in the example of the ‘Green Farm Warbler’ (Lidster 2009).

In terms of occurrence, Shetland and Fair Isle have accounted for eight of the 14 records, though others have been found from Dorset to Northumberland via Norfolk. A somewhat surprising pattern of occurrence dates thus far seems to show two arrival periods, the first in the second half of August and the second in October (including late September and early November). One trapped on 1st July at Portland, Dorset, is a salutary reminder that rare birds can be, by their very nature, entirely unpredictable.

(Breeds S Kazakhstan to W Xinjiang province, NW China, S locally to Persian Gulf states, Iran, Afghanistan & N Pakistan. Winters N & W India, occasionally S to Sri Lanka.)

### Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (1, 75, 6)

Shetland Grutness, Mainland, 21st June, photo (C. Round *et al.* per Shetland Recorder) (plate 324). Baltasound, Unst, two: adult, 6th August, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*); first-winter, 22nd–23rd August, photo (R. Brookes, M. Nydegger, R. M. Tallack *et al.*). Quendale, Mainland, 10th September (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington). Ristie, Foula, first-winter, 30th September, photo (P. R. French, A. Grieve, M. A. Maher *et al.*).

Sussex Pett Level, first-winter, 27th September, photo (Rye Bay Ringing Group).



Hugh Harrop

**324.** Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Grutness, Shetland, June 2010.

Six in a year has so far been bettered only by the nine in 1994 (though there were also six in 2008). Shetland, with five of the 2010 records, dominated proceedings. The Grutness bird was the eleventh to be discovered in Britain in late spring (all being found between 30th May and 22nd June), and all but three of those have occurred in Fair Isle/Shetland. Two more reached Shetland in September, typical dates for autumn records, but the two remaining Shetland records, from Unst, were more unusual. Both were in August, and the adult on 6th August was surprisingly early (although recalling three other midsummer/early autumn records: in Orkney on 18th July 1994, Yorkshire on 13th August

2004 and Shetland on 17th August 2008). Such early arrivals may suggest that this species is breeding closer than the north and west coasts of the Black Sea. This supposition is partly supported by the trapping in the Netherlands of an adult and two recently fledged juveniles at Kroonspolders, Vlieland, Friesland, on 21st August 2007 and another recently fledged bird there on 28th August 2007; it was assumed that the species had bred there (Ovaa *et al.* 2008). What is not in doubt is the ability of this species to reach all parts of western Europe, including Iceland in September 2004 (<http://notendur.hi.is/yannk/acragr04.html>) and the Azores in September 2008 ([www.birdingazores.com/index.php?page=rarebirdref&id=1304#NotFirst](http://www.birdingazores.com/index.php?page=rarebirdref&id=1304#NotFirst)).



The Sussex record is the fourth Paddyfield Warbler to be trapped in the Pannell Valley, following singles there in October 1992, September 2003 and October 2007. The reason for this high strike rate is, without doubt, the incredible volume of *Acrocephalus* warblers trapped and ringed by the Rye Bay Ringing Group. In 2009 alone, 8,176 Sedge *A. schoenobaenus*, 6,589 Reed *A. scirpaceus*, three Marsh *A. palustris* and one Aquatic Warbler *A. paludicola* were trapped there (The Wetland Trust newsletter 2010).

(In Europe, restricted to Black Sea coasts from N Bulgaria & Danube delta E to Ukraine. To E, breeds widely across steppes of S Russia & SW Siberia, Kazakhstan, NW China & W Mongolia, S to Uzbekistan & N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent N of Sri Lanka.)

## Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 96, 10)

**At sea** Sea area Dogger, 12th October, photo (M. Ambler).

**Fair Isle** The Chalet, 10th June, trapped, photo (J. Ashton-Booth *et al.*). South Harbour and nearby, first-winter, 11th–18th October, photo (S. J. Davies *et al.*).

**Norfolk** East Hills, Wells-next-the-Sea, adult, 28th September (J. R. McCallum, R. Millington, S. J. White *et al.*).

**North-east Scotland** Foveran, 30th September, trapped, photo (H. E. Maggs *et al.*).

**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, two: Inglis Geo, first-winter, 30th September, trapped, photo (P. A. Brown, P. J. Donnelly, R. M. Tallack *et al.*); Quoy of Longar, first-winter, 1st October, photo (P. A. Brown, R. M. Tallack, M. Warren *et al.*).

**Shetland** Quendale, Mainland, first-winter, 27th September (D. Fairhurst, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*). Aith, Fetlar, first-winter, 3rd–7th October, photo (M. Garner, J. R. McCallum, B. H. Thomason). Out Skerries, first-winter, 9th October, photo (P. R. French *et al.*).

**2009 Fair Isle** Lower Stoneybrek, first-winter, 5th October, trapped, photo (A. J. Bull, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

**2007 Isles of Scilly** Green Bay, Bryher, 11th–23rd October, photo (A. H. Pulsford, J. Walsh, G. & R. Wyatt *et al.*).

It is interesting to speculate on the true status of this species in Britain. It was as recently as 1996, with the occurrence of birds at Filey (Yorkshire) and Warham Greens (Norfolk), that BBRC acknowledged that this species could be confidently identified in the field; until this point, all accepted records resulted from birds checked and confirmed in the hand. Since then, a gradually increasing observer familiarity with the species' subtle yet distinctive characteristics have led to increasing numbers being found.

Could the numbers of Blyth's Reed Warblers being found and identified continue to increase? For instance, the distinctive and conspicuous Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* has rather similar breeding and wintering ranges to those of Blyth's Reed Warbler. The flycatcher is by far the commoner of the two to reach our shores, yet within the northern parts of their respective European breeding ranges, Blyth's Reed is perhaps the commoner bird. For example, BirdLife International (2004) gave European population estimates of 3.2–4.6 million pairs for Red-breasted Flycatcher and 2.0–5.0 million pairs for Blyth's Reed Warbler. In Finland, moreover, the figures are 1,000–2,000 pairs of the former compared with 5,000–8,000 pairs of the latter. Fraser & Rogers (2006) gave the average number of Red-breasted Flycatchers recorded annually in Britain since 1968 as 96, with a peak of 196 in 1984, which gives an idea of the potential numbers of Blyth's Reed Warblers that may actually be turning up.

Of course, this is only a part of the picture, and (for example) Red-breasted Flycatcher may be more prone to post-juvenile dispersal towards the west than Blyth's Reed Warbler; but the day is surely coming when there will be double-figure counts of accepted Blyth's Reed Warblers every year – especially given that the species is currently expanding westwards. It will, however, remain a tricky species to identify confidently, and a combination of features will always be required to gain acceptance. Much has been made of the diagnostic tongue-clicking 'tac' call, but given the difficulties in transcribing calls and the possibility of atypically calling Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus*, we will always need more than just the call to ensure acceptance. The Bryher bird from

2007 takes the total for that year to 16, far eclipsing the ten records in both 2003 and 2010.

(Breeds widely throughout S Finland, Baltic countries & European Russia to 64°N. To E, extends across C Siberia to Lake Baikal & upper Lena River, S through W Mongolia & NW China, Kazakhstan & Tajikistan to N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka & E into NW Burma.)

### **Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (7, 233, 4)**

Anglesey Malltraeth Marsh RSPB, 15th June, trapped, photo (S. Dodd *et al.*).

Derbyshire Straws Bridge Pond, Ilkeston, male in song, 12th May to 25th June, photo (L. Martin *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 239).

Devon Slapton Ley NNR, first-winter, 25th September, trapped, photo (N. C. Ward *et al.*).

Shetland Burrafirth, Unst, 6th June (P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

(Breeds discontinuously throughout much of continental Europe from Iberia to Greece, N to S Sweden & Finland, & E across S Russia, Turkey & Caucasus to W Siberia. C Asian race *zarudnyi* breeds from Volga to NW China & W Mongolia. Winters throughout C & S Africa.)

### **Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* (0, 7, 1)**

Kent St Margaret's at Cliffe, male in song, 28th March, photo (J. Chantler *et al.*).

(Resident throughout Mediterranean basin, & N along Atlantic seaboard of W France. Elsewhere, other races breed throughout Indian subcontinent, S China & S Japan to SE Asia & N Australia, & in sub-Saharan Africa.)

### **Dipper *Cinclus cinclus***

#### **North European race, 'Black-bellied Dipper' *C. c. cinclus* (–, 3, 1)**

Shetland Burn of Uradle, 24th January to 6th February, photo (R. M. Fray, B. Scobie *et al.*).

This taxon was only recently added to the BBRC list, following publication of the RIACT report (Kehoe 2006). With three ringing recoveries and an estimated 200+ records attributed at local/county level to nominate *cinclus* (e.g. Slack 2009), the fact that there are just four records accepted to date by BBRC means that we are clearly playing catch-up! Interestingly, claims of Black-bellied Dipper seem to have decreased noticeably in recent years; perhaps they are more able to remain in continental Europe during milder winters? Thus BBRC welcomes all records of Black-bellied Dipper, both older and more recent. In this regard, the comprehensive comments in the RIACT report are worth repeating here:

'BBRC has not previously assessed records of "Black-bellied Dippers", but we aim to do so at least until status issues are further clarified. Only birds that completely lack any hint of chestnut on the breast are likely to be acceptable, although a limited/narrow brown band is not unusual in this race, while some nominate *cinclus* show a narrow chestnut band at the breast/belly interface. Birds showing chestnut on the underparts probably can't be distinguished from darker individuals of the British forms *C. c. gularis* and *C. c. hibernicus*, or from *C. c. aquaticus* from central Europe, which has occasionally been suspected here. Informal reports of any unusually dark birds which seem to fall short of classic nominate *cinclus* are welcome, especially when accompanied by good photographs.'

The RIACT report can also be downloaded: [www.britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/key-articles](http://www.britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/key-articles)

(Breeds Scandinavia, Baltic countries & W Russia. Outside the breeding season, resident or dispersive to S & W of breeding range.)

### **White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (27, 46, 1)**

Shetland Swinister, Sandwick, Mainland, 26th September (J. G. Brown, D. Gibbs *et al.*).

2009 Fair Isle Hjukni Geo, 10th October, photo (M. A. Maher *et al.*).

(Palearctic race *Z. d. aurea* widespread in C & S Siberia from Yenisey River to Ussuriland, S to N Mongolia, extreme NE China, Korean Peninsula & Japan. Small population extends W to foothills of European Urals. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan & S Japan to Indochina & C Thailand. Nominate race resident or altitudinal migrant in Himalayas, SW China & Taiwan.)



Mark Oksien

**325.** First-winter Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*, Castlebay, Barra, Outer Hebrides, October 2010.

### Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* (0, 6, 2)

Outer Hebrides Brevig, Barra, first-winter, 9th–11th October, photo (S. R. Green *et al.*); presumed same Castlebay, Barra, 14th–16th October, photo (S. L. Rivers *et al.*) (plate 325). Loch Druidibeg NR, South Uist, first-winter, 10th October, trapped, photo (S. E. Duffield, I. R. Thompson *et al.*).

‘With the last twitchable Hermit Thrush being on Tresco (Scilly) in 1993, many birders will be hoping that this species evens the score before too long.’ These prescient words appeared in the account for Veery *C. fuscescens* in last years’ BBRC report. The Veery total had just risen by two, to nine, and this year’s brace of Hermit Thrushes, the first multiple arrival on record, has *almost* evened the score (there are now nine records of Veery to the eight of Hermit Thrush).

Although October accounts for all the autumn records, these are the earliest by one and two days respectively. Most unusually for this genus, two of the three previous Scottish records were in spring: on Fair Isle on 2nd June 1975 and on Fetlar from 30th April to 1st May 1998.

This year’s birds were found within a day of each other and just 50 km apart, and it is tempting to wonder how many more Hermit Thrushes might have made landfall in the more remote parts of western Scotland. They tend to migrate a little later in autumn than other *Catharus* thrushes, and the journey to their wintering grounds, mostly in the southern USA and Mexico, involves a shorter migration. This probably accounts for much of their rarity in Europe.

Unlike populations of its close relatives, the Hermit Thrush population appears to be increasing. Ironically this is thought to be caused by habitat fragmentation, creating more of its favoured forest-edge habitat. Can we expect more frequent appearances in future?

(Breeds C and S Alaska and east across boreal and temperate region of Canada, south through Rocky Mountains to N Mexico, and in NE USA south through Appalachian Mountains. Winters in S USA and Mexico, south to Guatemala and El Salvador.)

### Swainson’s Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (0, 25, 2)

Fair Isle Lower Stoneybrek, 15th September (A. Saunders).

Shetland Levenwick, Mainland, first-winter, 2nd–3rd October, photo (D. Gray, J. M. Hague, A. Lawson *et al.*).

With eight records in total, Shetland (six) and Fair Isle (two) now account for 80% of Scottish and 30% of British records, the other Scottish records coming from Orkney and the Outer

Hebrides. Elsewhere, Scilly has recorded 11 of the 16 English records, Devon and Cornwall two each, and Kent one. The sole Welsh record was from Skokholm, Pembrokeshire. The Fair Isle 2010 bird is, by 12 days, the earliest autumn arrival, all others having been found between 27th September and 27th October.

Swainson's Thrush is an abundant bird throughout most of its breeding range. It is also a long-distance migrant, with eastern birds of the race *C. u. swainsonii* (to which the specimen picked up freshly dead at Blackrock Lighthouse, Co. Mayo, on 26th May 1956 was ascribed) reaching as far as northern Argentina in winter. At times on migration, or in winter in South America, it can appear to be extremely common and easy to find as flocks congregate in fruiting trees. One might expect Swainson's Thrushes to occur here more frequently, but they seem to hug the land, migrating south through middle America and, unlike Grey-cheeked Thrushes *C. minimus*, are not common in the Caribbean on migration.

(Breeds across S Alaska & Canada to S Labrador & Newfoundland, generally to S of range of Grey-cheeked Thrush *C. minimus*, S to N California, New Mexico, Great Lakes & West Virginia. Migrates across E USA to winter from Mexico S to NW Argentina.)

### **Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (0, 50, 1)**

Isles of Scilly Near Middle Town, St Martin's, 19th October, photo (P. D. Lanaway, G. Macdonald, I. Thomas).

Another record for Scilly, which has now accounted for nearly half of Britain's 51 Grey-cheeked Thrushes, yet this is the first *Catharus* of any kind to make landfall on St Martin's. Although there have been records from 22nd September through to 26th November, mid to late October is the peak period for arrival. Making landfall here is far from the end of their problems, however. Four were found dead, three dying, one drowned, one was killed by a cat, while one in Ireland survived a strike from a Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*.

Although greatly outnumbered by Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* in North America, Grey-cheeked Thrush is twice as common in Britain. Both species arrive on the eastern seaboard of the USA at around the same time. For example, in autumn 2010 both species peaked in the second half of September at Braddock Bay Bird Observatory in New York state ([www.bbbo.org](http://www.bbbo.org)). The timing of movement would thus not seem to be a factor affecting their relative abundance on this side of the Atlantic and, indeed, their arrival dates here are broadly similar. Grey-cheeked has a more northerly breeding distribution (although since most winter in northeastern South America, the distance covered on migration may be no greater) but it also has a greater propensity to migrate over the sea, moving through the West Indies in numbers, for example – and if flocks encounter fast-moving depressions, they become susceptible to displacement across the Atlantic.

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia E throughout Alaska & N Canada to Labrador & Newfoundland. Migrates across E USA to winter in N South America.)

### **Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus* (1, 7, 1)**

Greater Manchester Leigh, male, 8th December, photo (I. Reynolds) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plates 77 & 326).

This record gives us further proof (if any was needed) that digital photography has changed the way we record rare birds. In the days of film, why would a non-birder have wasted exposures trying to photograph Waxwings *Bombicilla garrulus*, just to show his birdwatching brother? But that's exactly what Ian Reynolds was trying to do from the first-floor window of his home in Leigh. Instead of photographing Waxwings, however, he captured an image of a bird that has eluded birders in this country for almost a quarter of a century.

As an aircraft enthusiast, Ian had the camera equipment to take the necessary photos, and when a thrush appeared in the trees he knew it was not a Waxwing but he took a photo anyway. Looking at books, he thought it might be a Redwing *Turdus iliacus*; his brother was also unsure of the bird's identity and urged Ian to send the shots to the county recorder. Christmas and other



commitments got in the way, and it was several weeks later when Ian McKerchar opened the attachments in an e-mail sent via his website, Manchester Birding ([www.manchesterbirding.com](http://www.manchesterbirding.com)).

Ian McKerchar knew exactly what he was looking at, and its significance. He got in touch with Ian Reynolds and visited the house, just to confirm that this wasn't some sort of elaborate hoax. But he was able to confirm that everything was as it seemed, and saw the exact branch that the Dusky Thrush had perched on. A search of the surrounding area was carried out, but it was now seven weeks after the event, and the search only confirmed that the bird had flown. According to the photographer, the bird had spent half an hour in the tree but had never been seen again.



Ian Reynolds

**326.** Male Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus*, Leigh, Greater Manchester, December 2010.

There have been just eight previous British records of Dusky Thrush, the last being on Skomer, Pembrokeshire, on 3rd–5th December 1987. These include three Shetland records, on Mainland in November 1975, Whalsay in September 1968 and Fair Isle in October 1961; and four other, widely scattered records from England, Cornwall in November 1983, West Midlands in February and March 1979, Cleveland from December 1959 to February 1960, and one shot in Nottinghamshire in October 1905.

Since the last British record, Dusky Thrush has been split from Naumann's Thrush *T. naumanni* (recorded twice in Britain, both in Greater London in January, in 1990 and 1997). Theoretically, this was good news for listers, although very few people could add both species to their lists. The split brought an unexpected twist, however. In the past, records of Dusky Thrush that showed some characters of Naumann's would still have been accepted as *T. eunomus*. Now, such birds would be regarded as hybrids rather than intergrades, and accepted only as an either/or. Consequently, a review of previous records of Dusky Thrush may now be necessary.

(Breeds N Siberia from 66–72°N in the Yenisey River region east to the Chukotka Mountains, and Anadyr region in the Chukotskiy Peninsula, south to S Kamchatka. Winters in N and E China south to the Yangtze River, the Korean Peninsula and Japan.)

### **Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis* (2, 63, 5)**

**Cleveland** Hartlepool Headland, first-winter, 3rd April, photo (C. Sharp *et al.*) (plate 327).

**Fair Isle** Dutfield, first-winter male, 23rd–28th October, trapped, photo (P. A. Harris, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

**Highland** Melvich, adult female, 2nd October, trapped, photo (G. Crittenden, E. Maughan).

**Orkney** Lang Hill, Kirkwall, Mainland, adult male, 16th October (T. Dean).

**Yorkshire** Newholm, adult female, 10th January to 7th March, photo (D. Cappleman *et al.* per Yorkshire Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 101).

Five in a year is bettered only by 2005, when six were recorded. Undoubtedly they are occurring more frequently, with 25 of the 70 records (36%) having been since the start of this century. The trend is even clearer in Scotland, where 15 of the 36 records (42%) have occurred since the turn of the millennium. That this increase is also matched on Fair Isle, where fairly consistent coverage levels have been maintained since the mid 1950s, might suggest either a population increase or a western expansion rather than increasing observer effort.



Ian Forrest

**327.** First-winter Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*, Hartlepool Headland, Cleveland, April 2010.

Black-throated Thrush suffers a high not-proven rate. For example, five birds reported for just one day in January 2010 and another in December were considered not proven. Inevitably, some short-stayers, reported in non-birder's gardens, will slip through the net but handily placed digital cameras may reduce that proportion in future (if the story of the 2010 Dusky Thrush *T. eunomus* is anything to go by). Fortunately, wintering birds often remain for extended periods, allowing observers ample time to connect; of the ten accepted January records, two stayed for

just one day, three remained for 1–2 weeks and five for more than a month. The ageing and sexing of this species is also not always easy. The trapped bird in Highland caused much debate but our conclusion was that this was an adult female rather than a first-year male. As usual, ageing the bird correctly is the starting point; and the lack of greater-covert contrast, together with the shape of the primary coverts and the tail feathers, strongly suggested an adult, and thus female rather than male.

Black-throated Thrush is often abundant on its breeding grounds and, since much of its range lies within that of the Redwing *T. iliacus*, its occurrence in Britain seems linked to the migration behaviour of that species – even the most easterly breeding Redwings migrate west to winter in the Western Palearctic. The timing of many Black-throated Thrush records in the Northern Isles and eastern England coincides with the arrival of Redwings from late September into November. Few Redwings remain in northern Scotland during the winter and many move south through England, and beyond, in search of milder weather and an ample food supply. Between December and March, Black-throated Thrush records are also widely spread and often far inland, and they may become long-stayers if a suitable food source is found. Spring records are rare, and usually brief, suggesting that birds are moving north following an undetected arrival the previous autumn.

(Breeds C & N Urals, E across W Siberia & E Kazakhstan to NW China, winters Iraq to N India, E through Himalayan foothills to Bhutan.)

### **American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (0, 24, 1)**

Devon Turf, 10th–18th November, photo (I. Fleming *et al.* per Devon Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plates 22 & 328).

This species remains an extremely rare vagrant, with a somewhat erratic occurrence pattern. There was, for instance, a gap of ten years between the splendid Inverbervie (North-east Scotland) bird of Christmas 1988 and the next, on Scilly in October 1998. It has fared rather better in



David Land

**328.** American Robin *Turdus migratorius*, Turf, Devon, November 2010.

recent years, with no fewer than three in 2006, one of which was found in Highland in May and could well have overwintered.

In North America many birds winter within their breeding range, with just hard weather and lack of food forcing them farther south. Of the populations that do migrate, they occur regularly only as far south as Guatemala with small numbers east to Bermuda. Indeed, it is perhaps surprising that the species reaches our shores as often as it does.

The majority of British records are from the late autumn but there have also been several mid-winter discoveries. These probably relate to birds that arrived earlier but remained undetected until finally settling into suitable habitat. Just such an individual was found in the seemingly unlikely location of Peckham in south London, where it remained from early January to late March 2006, although its presence was revealed more widely only on the penultimate day of its lengthy stay.

(Breeds throughout North America from tree line of Alaska & N Canada, S to S Mexico. Winters from S Canada to S USA & C America, S to Guatemala.)

### **Brown Flycatcher** ***Muscicapa dauurica* (0, 3, 1)**

Yorkshire Buckton, adult, 5th September, photo (C. C. Thomas, D. Waudby *et al.*) (plate 329).

The fourth for Britain, which means that the total is now evenly split between Fair Isle (July 1992, September 2008) and the east coast of Yorkshire (October 2007 plus the above).

(Breeds S Siberia from S Yenisey Valley & N Mongolia, E to Amurland, Sakhalin & Kuril Islands, & S to NE China & N Japan. Migrates to winter from E Himalayas east to S China & S to Sri Lanka, Indochina & Malay Peninsula to Java, & Philippines & Borneo.)



John Harwood

**329.** Adult Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, Buckton, Yorkshire, September 2010.



## Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (1, 184, 2)

Northumberland Longstone, Farne Islands, adult, 14th August, photo (M. Breaks, J. Moss, T. Simon *et al.*).

Shetland Ham, Foula, 11th September, photo (D. & G. Atherton, M. A. Wilkinson *et al.*); presumed same Ristie, Foula, 16th September, photo (K. Gibb, A. Grieve, M. A. Wilkinson).

2009 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point NNR, first-winter, 19th–26th September, trapped, photo (M. Briggs *et al.*).

As might be expected, the Northern Isles and the east coast of England account for the vast majority of Thrush Nightingale records, and Shetland remains the best place to find one. The first five British records were all on Fair Isle and all (not untypically) were in May. The fact that all the records listed here are autumn birds is, therefore, of interest.

Since the population is increasing and expanding to the west, it seems likely that Sprossers will continue to reach our shores with some regularity. Away from the east coast, however, this remains a rare bird; for example, there are just two records from Scilly, the last as long ago as September 1983, while singles on Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, in September 1976, the Calf of Man in May 1989, and at Heysham, Lancashire & N Merseyside, in September 1993 (the only other west-coast records), reinforce its rarity in the west. Perhaps the most remarkable record is of the adult extracted from a mist-net on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, in August 2008, which suggests that this species may occasionally oversummer here but remain undetected. Sharp-eared birders should always be alert to any singing nightingale lacking the rich and varied melodic song typical of Common Nightingale *L. megarhynchos*.

(Widespread throughout E Europe with population increase during 20th century. Range still expanding NW into SW Norway, & locally abundant in S Scandinavia & Baltic countries. C European range extends from Denmark, SE to Romania & Ukraine, & through temperate European Russia to S Siberia. Winters E Africa, from S Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

## Rufous-tailed Robin *Luscinia sibilans* (0, 1, 1)

Orkney Observatory, North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 2nd October, found dead, skin now at National Museums Scotland (NMS.Z 2010.95), photo (A. E. Duncan, M. D. Warren *et al.*).

For a select few, the first-winter Rufous-tailed Robin on Fair Isle in October 2004 seemed the stuff of fantasy birding and a once-in-a-lifetime event. But for a second to occur just six years later gives hope and inspiration to all who scour Britain's windswept islands in search of Siberian waifs. Together with a bird at Białystok in eastern Poland on 30th December 2005, there have now been three records in the Western Palearctic in the last six years. This species has perhaps already eased out of the realm of birding myth and legend to become a viable target for rarity hunters. Hopefully, the next one will appear in the near future, at an accessible location and with its heart still beating strongly.

(Breeds S Siberia from N Sakhalin & Russian Maritime provinces bordering S Sea of Okhotsk, W to Altai Mountains & upper Yenisey River, N to 62°N in Yakutia, & S to mountains in NE China. Winters China S of Yangtze River, to N Indochina & Thailand.)

## Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (2, 66, 30)

Borders Mire Loch, St Abbs Head, first-winter, 16th October, trapped, photo (A. J. Kerr *et al.*).

Cleveland Saltburn, first-winter, 10th October, trapped, photo (D. A. Money *et al.*).

Devon Lundy Island, first-winter, 18th October, trapped, photo (A. M. Taylor, A. J. Watts *et al.*).

Fair Isle Ward Hill, first-winter/female, 27th September, photo (D. & M. Roberts *et al.*). Gully, first-winter, 27th September, trapped, photo (R. Hughes *et al.*). Vatnagard, first-winter, 16th October, photo (S. J. Davies *et al.*).

Hampshire Sandy Point, first-winter male, 18th–23rd October, photo (A. C. Johnson *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Middle Town, St Martin's, first-winter, 19th–23rd October, photo (M. Navin *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 404).

Kent Dungeness, first-winter, 6th November, photo (M. Hollingworth, D. Walker *et al.*).



Lothian Scoughall, North Berwick, first-winter/female, 11th October, photo (N. Milligan *et al.*).  
 Norfolk East Hills, Wells-next-the-Sea, first-winter male, 9th October, photo (J. E. D. Furse, R. W. Martin, I. P. Prentice). Burnham Overy Dunes, first-winter/female, 11th October, photo (M. Roxby *et al.*). Weybourne, first-winter, 11th October, trapped, photo (M. J. Preston *et al.*).  
 Waxham, first-winter, 12th–14th October, photo (R. McIntyre *et al.*) (plate 330). Trimingham, first-winter/female, 14th–17th October, photo (M. D. Fiszer *et al.*). Holme, first-winter, 17th October, photo (per Norfolk Recorder).  
 Northumberland St Mary's Island, Whitley Bay, first-winter, 9th–12th October, photo (A. H. Banks, A. Curry *et al.*). Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, first-winter/female, 9th October, photo (L. Robson *et al.*).  
 Orkney Queenamidda, Rendall, Mainland, first-winter, 11th October, trapped, photo (E. R. Meek, B. Ribbands, E. J. Williams).  
 Pembrokeshire Skomer, 25th October, photo (D. Boyle, J. Gillham).  
 Shetland Norwick, Unst, first-winter/female, 28th September (P. Cosgrove, D. Fairhurst, Y. Harbinson *et al.*). Skaw, Whalsay, first-winter, 30th September, trapped, photo (J. Atkinson, J. L. Irvine, B. Marshall *et al.*). Mainland, four: Tresta, first-winter, 8th October, photo (D. Brown *et al.*); Geosetter, first-winter male, 8th October, photo (J. R. Best *et al.*); Kergord, first-winter, 14th–15th October, photo (J. Swalwell *et al.* per Shetland Recorder); Troswick, first-winter/female, 15th October, photo (W. T. S. Miles, R. M. Tallack *et al.*).  
 Suffolk Corton, first-winter, 28th September, photo (J. Brown *et al.* per Suffolk Recorder). Pakefield, 30th September, photo (D. Sivyer). Lowestoft, first-winter, 17th–24th October, photo (R. Wincup *et al.* per Suffolk Recorder).  
 Sussex Stanley Common, 7th November, photo (A. M. Davis *et al.*).

With occurrences in ten successive years since 2001, Red-flanked Bluetail now seems to be firmly established as an annual vagrant: the grand total is now just two short of a century, with over half of these in the last three years alone! Over 95% (of all records) have turned up between late September and early November, as might be expected, while 80% of records are from Scotland, the northeast and East Anglia. Where the age has been established, almost all have proved to be first-winters – only two have been accepted as adults. This recent step-change in status has been so sudden and unexpected that it points to a fundamental shift in the migration behaviour of



Kevin Du Rose

**330.** First-winter Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Waxham, Norfolk, October 2010.

this species; perhaps part of the population now winters in southern Europe (there are four late autumn/winter records from Spain) or West Africa? Ringing recoveries would be required to establish whether 'our' birds are from the expanding Finnish population, or whether they originate farther east. Despite three consecutive bumper crops, it still requires another six years with at least ten sightings a year before this gorgeous *Tarsiger* would meet the criteria set for removal as a BBRC species – but how many of us would bet against that happening?

(Small population breeds NE Finland but main range extends through cool temperate forests of N Eurasia from E Russia & Siberia to Kamchatka, N Japan & NE China. Winters S China, Taiwan & S Japan through SE Asia to N peninsular Thailand. Distinctive race *rufilatus* of Himalayas & W China, sometimes treated as distinct species, descends to lower elevations during winter.)

### **Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus***

#### **Caucasus race 'Ehrenberg's Redstart' *P. p. samamisticus* (0, 0, 0)**

1989 Norfolk Holkham Meals, male, 12th September, previously accepted (*Brit. Birds* 83: 475), but now considered not proven following review.

1975 Norfolk Heacham, adult male, 26th October, previously accepted (*Brit. Birds* 69: 346), but now considered not proven following review.

BBRC's research into the identification of this form has already been published (Small 2009) and, together with BOURC, we have now completed the review of all British claims. This form will now be removed from the British List (BOU in press). The two remaining accepted records are listed above, with others that were considered appearing in Appendix 3, to accompany those listed in the 2006 BBRC report (*Brit. Birds* 100: 754). The Committee remains of the view that *samamisticus* is a potential vagrant to Britain and that rarity hunters should be alert to the possibility of discovering one. Indeed, some of the records considered in the review may well have involved *samamisticus*, but were considered insufficiently documented to be acceptable. Observers confronted with a potential male *samamisticus* should be fully acquainted with the salient features identified in Brian Small's review and are encouraged to ensure that they age the bird accurately while determining the exact extent of white fringes across the tertials, secondaries and primaries.

(Breeds in mountains of W Asia from C Turkey east to the Caucasus and mountains of northern Iran. Winters in NE Africa.)

### **Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus***

#### **Eastern race, 'Siberian Stonechat' *S. t. maurus* (1, 340, 4)**

Cornwall Nanquidno Valley, first-winter male, 2nd–5th October, photo (K. Dalziel, J. Hawkey *et al.*).

Norfolk Kelling Water Meadows, male, 10th October, photo (M. Nash, N. R. Rogers).

North-east Scotland Perthumie Bay, Stonehaven, first-winter/female, 10th October, photo (N. A. Littlewood).

Shetland Funzie, Fetlar, first-winter/female, 27th September, photo (B. H. Thomason).

(Breeds widely across N Asia from N Urals S to N Caspian Sea, Mongolia & N China, E to Kolyma basin, Okhotsk coast & N Japan. Winters from N Indian subcontinent to S China & SE Asia. Other races occur S Asia & Africa.)

### **Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 26, 1)**

Suffolk Gunton and North Denes, Lowestoft, 10th October, photo (R. Wilton *et al.* per Suffolk Recorder) (plate 331).

This is a fairly typical record in terms of both date and location, being the fourth for Suffolk. The identification of birds in autumn is not too difficult providing the salient features have been noted carefully. In the spring, the species is more distinctive, with the black lores (especially on males) being particularly striking. The fact that there has been just one Isabelline Wheatear in spring, at Winterton, Norfolk, on 28th May 1977, might seem surprising but the largely north–south or northeast–southwest orientation to their migration routes seems to limit the extent to which they straggle to the west. Many spring vagrants sing and it would be a treat to see



Jon Evans

**331.** Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Lowestoft, Suffolk, October 2010.

and hear one of these in Britain. On the breeding grounds they can mimic anything from Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* and Black Kite *Milvus migrans* to ‘whinnying’ horses, whistling kettles and even Altai Snowcock *Tetraogallus altaicus*!

There are various stories surrounding the origin of the term ‘isabelline’, not least that it derives from Isabella, a former Archduchess of Austria. The story goes that her father, Philip II of Spain, laid siege to Ostend, and Isabella vowed not to change her underwear until the city was taken. This took longer than she had expected, three years to be exact and, be it true or false, it conjures an accurate image that would fit the coloration of this species, and that of Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*. As yet, the description ‘colour of long-worn underwear’ hasn’t appeared on a BBRC submission form!

(European population breeds along Black Sea coast from E Greece N to Ukraine & SW Russia. In Asia, breeds widely across arid grasslands from Turkey through Kazakhstan, Mongolia & N China, S to Iran & N Pakistan. Winters from N Sahel zone to E Africa, & throughout Middle East from Arabian Peninsula to S Iran, Pakistan & NW India.)

### **Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (2, 57, 2)**

Isles of Scilly Golf Course and nearby, St Mary’s, first-winter male, 12th October, photo (I. & J. Southworth, T. Veen, R. Wilkinson *et al.*).

Orkney Twingness, North Ronaldsay, female, 10th–14th October, photo (R. J. Butcher, M. D. Warren *et al.*).

2009 Norfolk Horsey, first-winter female, 14th–15th October, photo (B. Jarvis *et al.*).

(European range centred on Black Sea, reaching E Romania & Bulgaria. To E, small numbers in S & E Ukraine, but occurs widely across S Russia, S Siberia, Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China, E to Gulf of Bohai. Winters in NE & E Africa, & SW Arabian Peninsula.)

### **Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (11, 45, 1)**

Isles of Scilly Garrison, St Mary’s, first-winter female *O. h. hispanica*, 9th–13th October, photo (P. St Pierre, K. Webb *et al.*) (plate 332).

2009 Isles of Scilly Porth Askin, St Agnes, first-summer male *O. h. melanoleuca*, 2nd–3rd June, photo (note that bird now assigned to the eastern race *melanoleuca*; *Brit. Birds* 103: 620–621).

Following the comments in last year’s report regarding the racial assignment of the 2009 bird (*Brit. Birds* 103: 620–621), further research has enabled us to publish this record as the eastern form, *melanoleuca*. That bird sparked a significant debate and was initially considered most likely





**332.** First-winter female Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2010.

to be *hispanica* by the observers. However, subsequent investigations, both by the observers and by other commentators, suggested that the bird was more likely to be *melanoleuca*, but that no diagnostic characters could be established. While many of the features fell within the apparent overlap zone, the conclusion that this individual can be safely assigned to *melanoleuca* is in keeping with the prevailing view of most BBRC voters. A combination of the extent of the black mask on the throat and ear-coverts, the limited remaining ochre coloration on the upperparts and underparts and the rather muted moult contrast in the wings were critical in resolving this decision successfully. The 2010 bird, uncharacteristically for a female, was more straightforward, with the relatively light and warm coloration on the upperparts, evident in many of the images, strongly indicative of *hispanica*. The shade of the ochre wash across the breast, extremely similar to the colour of the upperparts, is also indicative of *hispanica*. In autumn *melanoleuca*, the breast is typically richer, more reddish orange, contrasting with the darker brown upperparts. The dark brown coloration also frequently extends to the breast-sides and flanks in eastern birds. A short paper on this subject is in preparation for *BB*.

(Breeds Mediterranean basin; nominate *hispanica* in NW Africa & Iberia, E to France & N Italy, eastern race *O. h. melanoleuca* from S Italy to Greece, & SW Asia from Turkey to S Caucasus, S to Israel & SW Iran. Winters N tropical Africa from Senegal & N Nigeria to Ethiopia & Eritrea.)

### Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (9, 103, 2)

Northumberland Seahouses, first-winter male, 14th–16th November, photo (R. White *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 23).

Yorkshire Long Nab, Burniston, male, 19th November, photo (N. W. Addey, J. Clegg, A. Ford).

(Breeds widely but discontinuously across arid & desert regions of N Africa from Morocco to Middle East, N to S Caucasus, & across C Asia from C Iran & N Pakistan to Mongolia & N China. Some N African birds resident, but many winter in Sahara & Sahel region of N Africa from Mauritania E to Ethiopia & Somalia. Asian breeders winter Arabian Peninsula to NW India.)

### Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (1, 30, 1)

Outer Hebrides Garrynahine, Lewis, adult male, 1st June, photo (B. Steel *et al.*).

2009 Isles of Scilly Near Samson Hill, Bryher, first-summer female, 12th–13th May, photo



(J. K. Higginson, C. Langsdon *et al.*).

There are just three previous accepted records of female/first-winter Collared Flycatchers: a female on Out Skerries, Shetland, in May 1976; a first-winter on Fair Isle in October 1986; and a female on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, in May 1999. This undoubtedly reflects the difficulties of confirming the identification of birds in this plumage. Fortunately, the images of the Scilly bird were good enough to ensure that it could be accepted with confidence. The Committee is still considering the photographs of a potential first-summer female from North Ronaldsay in May 2008, which is clearly also a strong candidate. We are also still reviewing a record of a first-winter flycatcher from Spurn in autumn 2010 that showed some plumage features and biometrics indicative of Collared; the results from DNA analysis were also in support of this species. In the last case, despite the strong evidence in support of the identification as Collared, we are still considering whether the evidence is sufficient to accept the record.

(Scattered pockets breed E France & S Germany but more numerous through C & E Europe to temperate regions of European Russia W of Urals. Isolated populations breed on Swedish islands Gotland & Öland, & S Italy. Winters in E & C Africa, from Tanzania to Zimbabwe.)

### **Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava***

#### **Central Mediterranean race, 'Ashy-headed Wagtail' *M. f. cinereocapilla* (1, 4, 0)**

1966 Bedfordshire Dunstable SF, male, 15th–21st May (A. J. Livett, J. T. R. Sharrock *et al.*).

This is a good example of an old record that was sufficiently well documented to be accepted and added to the BBRC totals. We very much welcome such submissions; observers are reminded that we need to see contemporary evidence to support such claims and that these will need to include detailed descriptions of head pattern and call.

(Breeds Sardinia, Italy, Sicily, SW Slovenia and NW Croatia, intergrading with *M. f. iberiae* in S France and NE Spain. Winters WC Africa from Mali to Nigeria, E to Lake Chad.)

### **Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava***

#### ***M. f. cinereocapilla* x *iberiae* (0, 1, 2)**

Lancashire & N Merseyside Brockholes Wetland LWT, male, 22nd–23rd April, photo (Z. Hinchcliffe, C. Partington *et al.*).

Northumberland Brownsman then Staple Island, Farne Islands, male, 6th May, photo (M. Breaks, D. Steel *et al.*).

Both of these records were submitted as potential intergrades and showed head patterns with white superciliums of varying extent, consistent with this diagnosis. We welcome submissions of such individuals to help with our understanding of the plumage variation shown by extralimital *flava* wagtails in a British context.

### **Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava***

#### **SE European & W Asian race, 'Black-headed Wagtail' *M. f. feldegg* (0, 15, 1)**

Cornwall Land's End, first-summer male, 29th April to 1st May, photo (M. D. Warren *et al.*).

(Breeds Balkans & Greece E through Turkey to E Kazakhstan & Afghanistan, & S to Iran. Western populations winter Nigeria to Uganda & S to Congo, eastern populations winter NW India.)

### **Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (0, 229, 12)**

Avon Chew Valley Lake, juvenile/first-winter, 7th September (R. J. Higgins, K. E. Vinicombe).

Cornwall Tregiffian, Sennen, first-winter, 3rd–7th September, photo (M. D. Warren *et al.*).

Derbyshire Ogston Resr, juvenile/first-winter, 28th–30th August (S. Mann, T. Sexey *et al.*).

Fair Isle North Haven, juvenile/first-winter, 22nd–23rd September (S. J. Davies *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Big Pool, St Agnes, first-winter, 1st–4th September, photo (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

Northumberland Beadnell Bay, first-winter, 26th September, photo (G. Russell).

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, juvenile/first-winter, 6th September, photo (M. G. Pennington *et al.*).  
 Burra, Yell, juvenile/first-winter, 20th September, photo (D. Preston). Isbister, North Roe,  
 Mainland, first-winter, 26th September (M. S. Chapman, R. W. Tait). Out Skerries, first-winter,  
 2nd–10th October, photo (S. Dunstan *et al.*). Sandwick, Mainland, first-winter, 3rd–7th October,  
 photo (R. A. Haywood *et al.*).

Yorkshire Spurn, first-winter, 15th August, photo (M. J. Pilsworth *et al.*).

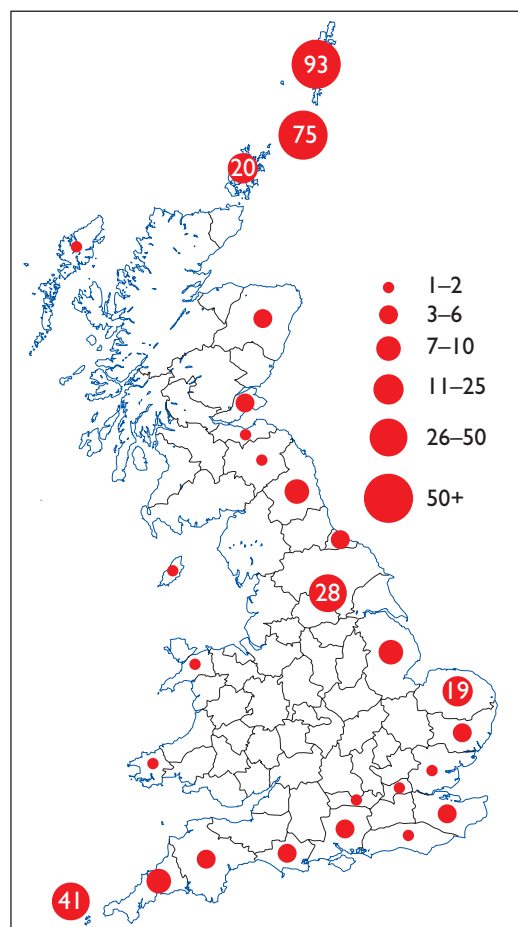
1991 Leicestershire & Rutland Eyebrook Resr, first-summer male, 18th May, photo (C. M. Hubbard, I. Merrill *et al.*); note revised observers, *Brit. Birds* 85: 536.

(Nominate race breeds in N Russia, from E Kola & Kanin Peninsula across N Siberia to Taimyr Peninsula & S to C Siberia. To south, small numbers now breed regularly in Belarus, Baltic countries & occasionally S Finland; otherwise from Ukraine & S Russia, E across Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China. Black-backed race *calcarata* breeds C Asia to Tibetan Plateau. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent, S China & SE Asia to peninsular Thailand.)

## Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (1, 21, 0)

2007 Cornwall Brew Pool, first-winter, 20th October to 1st November, sound recording, photo (K. A. Wilson *et al.*); previously considered not proven (*Brit. Birds* 102: 600–601), but now accepted after additional information submitted.

(Breeds S Transbaikalia, N Mongolia & extreme NE China. Winters locally throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka.)



**Fig. 6.** Records of Olive-backed Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni* in Britain, 1950–2009.

## Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 336, 12)

Cornwall Nanjizal, two, 11th–14th October (K. A. Wilson).

Fair Isle Vaila's Trees, 10th–13th October, photo (J. Ashton-Booth *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Mount Todden, St Mary's, 13th October, photo (A. & P. Ewer *et al.*).

Norfolk Stiffkey, 9th–10th October, photo (A. I. McElwee *et al.*).

Northumberland Brownsman, Farne Islands, 12th–15th October, photo (J. Moss *et al.*).

Orkney Halley, Deerness, Mainland, 6th–7th October, photo (K. E. Hague *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Brevig, Barra, 9th October (K. Gillon, C. Scott *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, 1st–2nd October, photo (M. J. McKee, C. Turner, M. F. Walford *et al.*).

Quendale, Mainland, 9th October (M. Garner, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*); presumed same

13th October, photo (R. A. Hargreaves *et al.*).

Hillwell, Mainland, 9th October, sound recording, photo (M. Garner, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington).

Baltasound, Unst, 14th–15th October, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

This species continues to hover just below the threshold required for removal from the BBRC list, with 'only' 126 records in the last decade. The 12 records here are entirely

typical: a small influx in the Northern Isles, and scattered records down the east coast and in the far southwest. The bird on Barra was only the second for the Outer Hebrides, perhaps reflecting a genuine rarity there when the recent levels of observer coverage and generally sparse cover on the islands are taken into account. The period of occurrence in 2010 was quite distinct, with all 12 found between 1st and 14th October.

(European range restricted to N Urals. Widespread across C & E Siberia to N China, Kamchatka, Kuril Islands & Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan & throughout N & C parts of SE Asia. Those in Himalayas & mountains of WC China winter throughout Indian subcontinent.)

## Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* (1, 16, 3)

Fair Isle North Light, first-winter, 20th–30th September, photo (J. Ashton-Booth *et al.*).

Orkney Yesnaby, Mainland, 27th September, photo (A. J. Leitch *et al.*).

Shetland Tangwick, Eshaness, Mainland, 28th September to 6th October, sound recording, photo (M. S. Chapman, G. N. Smith *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 386; plate 333).

(North American race *A. r. rubescens* breeds W Greenland, N & NW Canada, & Alaska, winters W & S USA, Mexico & C America. Asian race *japonicus* vagrant to W Pal., breeds NE Siberia W to Baikal region, winters N Pakistan & NW India to S & E China, S Korea & S Japan.)



Hugh Harrop

**333.** Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*, Tangwick, Eshaness, Shetland, October 2010.

## Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*

### Greenland race, 'Hornemann's Redpoll' *C. h. hornemanni* (11, 66, 12)

Fair Isle Easter Lother, 23rd–24th September, photo (T. Cleeves *et al.*); presumed same Hoini, 27th September (S. J. Davies) and Dronger, 30th September to 4th October (R. Hughes *et al.*). Observatory, first-winter, 16th–18th October, photo (P. A. Harris, D. N. Shaw *et al.*); presumed same The Haa, 20th–26th October, photo (S. J. Davies *et al.*).

Northumberland Brownsman, Farne Islands, first-winter, 24th September to 2nd October, photo (M. Breaks *et al.*).

Orkney Kirbest, North Ronaldsay, 20th–25th September, photo (R. J. Butcher *et al.*). Saltess, Sanday, first-winter, 26th September, photo (A. J. Leitch *et al.*).

Shetland West Yell, Yell, 19th September, photo (J. Ballantyne, D. Preston). Unst, three: Norwick, 19th–20th September, photo (R. M. Tallack *et al.*); Norwick, first-winter, 19th September to 7th October, photo (R. M. Tallack *et al.*); Burrafirth, 19th September (R. M. Tallack), presumed same

Haroldswick, 20th–26th September, photo (M. G. Pennington *et al.*), and Baltasound, 27th September, photo (M. G. Pennington, M. Smith). Mousa, 20th September, photo (R. M. & R. P. Fray, H. Watson). Virkie and Toab, Mainland, first-winter, 23rd–29th October, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*). Sumburgh Head, Mainland, first-winter, 4th November, photo (G. F. Bell, R. M. Fray per Shetland Recorder).

Historically, the number of ‘Hornemann’s Redpolls’ occurring in Britain has been obscured by the fact that many early records of Arctic Redpoll were not sufficiently well documented to determine the subspecies involved, but the number of Hornemann’s accepted in the last decade suggests that this form may be increasing.

(Breeds Ellesmere & Baffin Island to N Greenland, on E coast S to Scorsby Sound. Disperses erratically to S of breeding range in winter, reaching NW Europe irregularly.)

### Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (73, 172, 1)

Bedfordshire The Lodge RSPB, Sandy, female, 27th March to 11th April, photo (M. Brandon, A. & F. Crofts *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 161; plate 334).

(Old World *L. l. bifasciata* is local resident within larch *Larix* forests of N Eurasia from N Russia to E Siberia, reaching Sea of Okhotsk & S to Baikal region. Breeds irregularly in Finland & very occasionally Sweden & Norway. In non-breeding season occasionally disperses as far as NW Europe. Nominate *leucoptera* breeds across N North America.)



Mike Lawrence

**334.** Female Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*, The Lodge RSPB, Sandy, Bedfordshire, March 2010.

### Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* (0, 14, 1)

Norfolk Blakeney Point and Cley next the Sea/Salthouse, adult male, 31st May to 2nd June, photo (J. Cockram *et al.*) (plate 335).

A small influx of Trumpeter Finches occurred in 2005, with four birds reaching Kent and Suffolk in May and June of that year and then, just three years later, further singles were seen in Norfolk, Outer Hebrides and Sussex in 2008. Lest we forget just how rare this species really is in Britain, it is worth remembering that those seven birds actually doubled the all-time British total. Never mind that it had taken more than three decades for the first seven birds to arrive; in a four-year period the running tally had suddenly risen to 14!

After a blank year in 2009, another Trumpeter Finch arrived in 2010, at exactly the same locality in Norfolk as the county’s first ever, in 2008. Not only that, it arrived on the very same





Kevin Du Rose

**335.** Adult male Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*, Cley, Norfolk, June 2010.

date and lingered in almost exactly the same vicinity as the 2008 bird, and for a similarly short time. Given the extreme rarity of this species in northwest Europe, let alone Britain (and Norfolk), this was surely more than mere coincidence – and the fact that the 2008 sighting had been of a first-summer male while the 2010 bird was an adult male added credence to the supposition that this was, in all likelihood, a returning individual (although it is treated as a new bird in the statistics). During the three days it spent at Cley, this splendidly pink-plumaged, red-billed finch proved delightfully confiding and was enjoyed by a steady stream of admirers. The accurate ageing and sexing of vagrant Trumpeter Finches has often proved problematic, thanks in part to some peculiarities of moult and the variability of the species' immature plumages (both perhaps linked to the species' erratic breeding strategy). The colourful Cley bird could not, however, be anything other than an adult male.

The distribution and movements of Trumpeter Finch were discussed in some detail in 2007 (*Brit. Birds* 100: 97–98), but there is no longer any question that modern records relate to anything other than genuinely wild birds. The recent influxes into Britain have been mirrored by an increase of records in Europe, with birds even reaching Fennoscandia for the first time. Trumpeter Finch is a species that one might tip to occur outside its normal range more regularly as the effects of European desertification take hold. Only time will tell if this is a side-effect of climate change that British birders will enjoy more of in years to come.

(Largely resident, from Canary Islands, SE Spain & deserts of N Africa, E through Middle East to S Iran & Pakistan, but also nomadic. E populations in particular dispersive, some wintering E to deserts of NW India.)

### White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (1, 34, 7)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, 11th June, trapped (not ringed), photo (R. Brown *et al.*) (plate 336).

Cornwall Boscastle, male in song, 30th April to 2nd May, photo (J. Fanshawe *et al.*).

Fair Isle Observatory, 19th–20th May, photo (S. J. Davies *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly The Parsonage, St Agnes, 26th May, photo (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Fulbeck, adult, 18th–19th June, photo (R. M. High).

Shetland Scousburgh, Mainland, 21st May, photo (P. Wilson *et al.*).

Suffolk Woodbridge, male in song, 6th June, photo (J. Pemberton *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 240).

Multiple arrivals of White-throated Sparrows are nothing new (and, in fact, occur in nearly half of the years that the species has been recorded), but the arrival of at least seven birds in one



**336.** White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*, Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, June 2010.

to how these sparrows crossed the Atlantic came in the shape of one individual (not listed above) that arrived in Southampton Docks, Hampshire, at 6.30 am on 6th May 2010. It was the last of five that had been on the deck of the *Queen Mary II* ever since leaving New York on 29th April; four of these had still been aboard on 5th May (the day that this 12-storey-high luxury liner sailed within 30 km of Scilly and along the southern coastline of Cornwall and Devon), but they had hopped ship prior to it docking at Southampton. Of course, it is conceivable that no Nearctic sparrow is physiologically capable of making this huge journey unaided and that all European records relate to ship-assisted individuals – perversely it may be the physical inability of White-throated Sparrow to undertake long flights in spring that leads to it reaching Europe with such great regularity! Its ready tolerance of human presence and willingness to seek sanctuary on boats are useful survival tactics. Luckily, there is no bar to such stowaways being integrated into our avifauna as genuine vagrants.

The second White-throated Sparrow for Denmark also arrived in spring 2010. The majority of records elsewhere in Europe reflect a similar pattern of occurrence to that well established for Britain (the majority being seen in spring, near to shipping routes) and it is interesting that the only record for southern Europe involves a May sighting near the port of Gibraltar. The picture in Iceland, however, differs slightly in that most of the half-dozen White-throated Sparrows recorded there have been found between November and January, suggesting that some could conceivably be late-moving reverse migrants. Of the 42 British records, 41 have occurred in the last 50 years, and the trend for the species to arrive with ever greater frequency continues. That said, many birders would enjoy a greater variety of stowaways, and there are plenty of other North American sparrows that could just as easily hitch a lift, surely?

(Breeds North America from SE Yukon E to Newfoundland, S to Great Lakes & N USA to New Jersey. Winters SE USA, from Massachusetts S to Florida, Texas & into N Mexico & California.)

### Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (0, 34, 2)

At sea Sea area Dogger, 19th May, photo (M. Lewis, D. Still *et al.*).

Kent Folkestone, adult male, 15th–17th May, photo (S. Dixon per I. A. Roberts).

2008 Cornwall Ventonleague, Hayle, 26th November, photo (P. A. Rutter).

(Breeds throughout North America from tree line of N Alaska & Canada, S to S California, N Texas & N Georgia. British records of forms previously recognised as Slate-coloured Junco, breeding throughout N & E of range, S to Georgia. Northern populations migratory, wintering to S of breeding range.)

spring is exceptional. The first to arrive was in Cornwall and, surprisingly, it was a county first. Even more surprising is the fact that the individual found on St Agnes represents the first Nearctic sparrow of any kind to be recorded on Scilly! At the other end of Britain, the Fair Isle bird was the fourth for the island, while it and the Scousburgh bird (which spent a short time in the jaws of a cat) represent the 14th and 15th records for the Shetland archipelago.

A significant clue as

## Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (8, 227, 0)

2009 Isles of Scilly Peninnis, St Mary's, 20th September (J. & T. G. Davies).

(European range restricted to small & declining population in C Finland, centred on Gulf of Bothnia. To E, breeds widely across Russia & Siberia to Kamchatka, S to NE China & NE Hokkaido. Winters locally from E Nepal through Himalayan foothills to NE India, & widely throughout SE Asia.)

## Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* (0, 3, 1)

At sea Sea area Dogger, female, 9th–10th June, died, photo (Ryan Irvine *et al.*) (plate 337).

This is only the fourth Pallas's Reed Bunting to reach Britain and the first to do so in spring, so this diminutive bunting comfortably retains its status as a mega rarity. The first was an adult female, on Fair Isle from 29th September to 11th October 1976, while the second, a juvenile, was also on Fair Isle, on 17th–18th September 1981. Nine years later, a first-winter male was trapped and ringed at Icklesham, Sussex, on 17th October 1990, although its true identity was not realised until two years later (from photographs). After three records in 14 years, it is perhaps surprising that a further 20 years have passed before the fourth, especially given the continued expansion of an increasingly rarity-savvy birding community.

In the Western Palearctic, the range of Pallas's Reed Bunting just extends into northeastern Russia, where it breeds on the tundra of the western slopes of the northern Ural Mountains, and the Bol'shezemel'skaya tundra west to the Pechora River. The main breeding range lies well to the north and east, however, across northern and central Siberia. It is thus perhaps unlikely to be anything more than an extreme rarity in Britain, although there are a number of other Siberian vagrants with a similar breeding range in northeast European Russia and a not dissimilar migration strategy that occur more regularly in Britain (such as Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* and Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*).

We still have a poor grasp of the mechanisms underlying vagrancy, but it seems that knowledge of breeding and wintering ranges alone are not always good predictors. This spring record raises the possibility that Pallas's Reed Bunting may very occasionally overwinter in western Europe, in similar vein to certain other buntings of Siberian origin.



Ryan Irvine

**337.** Female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*, sea area Dogger, June 2010.

Pallas's Reed Bunting is rather unobtrusive and could easily be overlooked among flocks of Reed Buntings *E. schoeniclus* (all four accepted British records were ultimately examined in the hand), although the contact call is distinctive and resembles that of Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*.

(Two races breed N Siberia from Ob River E to Sea of Okhotsk and N Kamchatka. A third race breeds S Siberia and N Mongolia. Winters throughout E China, S to Fujian; also S Korea and S Japan.)



Black-headed Bunting - Out Skerries Oct 2010

Photo 1



Chris Turner

**338.** Adult female Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*, Out Skerries, Shetland, October 2010.

### Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (7, 185, 4)

Highland Raffin, Stoer, male, 1st–2nd June, photo (D. Mainland, H. Stevens). Oldshoremoor, Kinlochbervie, male, 1st July, photo (C. Nicholson, J. Sykes *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Porth Coose, St Agnes, first-winter, 7th October, photo (D. Page, D. Price *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, adult female, 2nd–8th October, sound recording, photo (M. J. McKee, C. Turner, M. F. Walford *et al.*) (plate 338).

2007 Fair Isle Quoy, female, 1st–7th June, photo (M. B. Rossor, M. J. Whittingham *et al.*).

1989 Norfolk Blakeney Point, female/first-winter, 10th–11th September (D. H. Russell, A. M. Stoddart, A. Vittery *et al.*), previously given as Red-headed/Black-headed (*Brit. Birds* 86: 536), but now accepted as Black-headed Bunting after additional information submitted.

(Breeds from C Italy to Greece, Turkey, N Iraq & W Iran, N through Caucasus to Ukraine & S Russia. Winters in W & C India.)

### Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 29, 2)

Gower Eglwys Nunydd Resr, Port Talbot, first-winter, 20th September, photo (P. Parsons, K. Thomas *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, 8th–11th October, photo (D. Boyle).

Two records from Wales, the second and third of this species from the Principality, follow one on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, on 13th–14th October 1999. The record from Gower was also the first Nearctic landbird to be discovered in that recording area. Typically, both individuals proved elusive; the first was present for just a few hours late in the afternoon, and the second was only actually seen on the first and last dates of its stay, despite being searched for extensively in the interim.

The number of Bobolinks recorded in the last decade was nine, compared with eight in the 1990s and six in the 1980s, a decade renowned for Nearctic landbird arrivals. However, it is the downturn on Scilly that has become noticeable, with only two found there in the last 14 autumns, compared with six in the period between 1983 and 1996.

(Breeds widely across S Canada & N USA, S to NE California & New Jersey. Winters Peru to S Brazil & N Argentina.)



### Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* (0, 4, 1)

Co. Durham Seaburn, male, 10th May, photo (J. Pillans per Co. Durham Recorder).

2009 Fair Isle Upper Stoneybrek, Haa, male, 8th–10th May, photo; note revised location, *Brit. Birds* 103: 632–633.

(Breeds E Canada from C Saskatchewan to Nova Scotia, and NE USA from C Minnesota to Massachusetts, S through Appalachian Mountains to SW Carolina and NW Georgia. Winters in southern breeding grounds south to C Mexico.)

### Northern Parula *Parula americana* (0, 14, 1)

Argyll Carnan Mor and Balephuill, Tiree, first-winter, 25th–29th September, photo (J. Bowler *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 103: plate 387; plate 339).

Fifteen years is a long time to wait for one of these delightful sprites, so this individual was understandably popular. It was a long-overdue first for Scotland; the lion's share of British records come from Scilly, and all others are from the southwest with the single exception of a moribund bird found in Wigan, Greater Manchester, in 1982 on the rather late date of 2nd November



**339.** First-winter Northern Parula *Parula americana*, Tiree, Argyll, September 2010.

(perhaps suggesting a ship-assisted passage into northwest England). That Scotland was overdue this species is reinforced by the fact that there have been seven records from Iceland, although many birders will be hoping that the next is slightly more accessible.

The excellent images obtained of the Tiree bird enabled accurate ageing as a first-winter based on several features visible in the closed wing: the rather dull primary coverts contrasting with fresher and less-worn greater coverts; the brown tinge to the primary tips; and the generally worn appearance of the wings and tail all indicate a first-year. Adults of this and other North American wood-warblers in autumn have an immaculately fresh appearance to the wings and tail, including wider blue edging to the (duskier) primary coverts and remiges (P. Pyle pers. comm.). Sexing proved harder to pin down, with the size of the tail spots and the contrast between the scapulars and mantle suggesting a male, while the lack of any breast markings and the greenish tone to the crown and mantle both pointed to a female.

(Breeds in temperate woodland in E North America, from SE Manitoba to Nova Scotia, S to N Florida. Winters E and S Mexico south to Nicaragua and West Indies, some remaining in S USA.)

### Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (0, 41, 1)

Sussex Pett Level, first-winter, 15th October, photo (Rye Bay Ringing Group).

(Breeds widely across North America from W Alaska E throughout Canada to Newfoundland, S to Maine. Migrates through E USA to winter in NE South America.)

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### Appendix 1. Records of former BBRC species, removed from the list prior to 2010

#### Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

1982 Cleveland Crookfoot Resr, male, 6th November (R. Little).

(Widespread breeder throughout N America from Alaska to Newfoundland, S to N USA. Winters British Columbia, Canada & throughout USA and Mexico to southern C America and W Indies.)

#### White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*

2005 Orkney Ingaess Bay, Mainland, first-summer, 16th June (K. E. Hague).

(In W Pal., rare & sporadic breeder along Arctic coasts of European Russia, E from Yamal Peninsula & Novaya Zemlya. Also breeds in coastal regions of Siberia, N Alaska & Canada E to Mackenzie River & Baffin Island. Winters at sea, in E Atlantic, S to S Norway, but distribution poorly known.)

#### Albatross sp. (Diomeidae)

1987 Norfolk Cley, adult, 11th October (P. C. Bewick, M. Freeman, M. Reed).

Two submissions for Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* were received from observers on the north Norfolk coast in October 1987, the first on 11th October and the second on 18th October (at two sites). Not surprisingly they were presumed to relate to the same individual and were assessed as such. However, anomalies in the descriptions, not least that one was aged as an adult and the other as immature, meant that the submissions were pended. As a result of BBRC's improved digital circulation system, however, almost all such 'long-term pends' have been reopened and reassessed. In this case it was decided to treat the two sightings separately rather than together, which has resulted in the adult being accepted as an albatross sp. (most probably Black-browed) and the immature being found not proven. Since 2002, BBRC no longer considers 'either/or' records of albatrosses (see *Brit. Birds* 94: 395) but, since this record started life before that decision, it was felt only right that it should be assessed and published as a non-specific albatross.

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### Appendix 2. Records where identification accepted, but considered a likely escape and placed in Category E (see *Ibis* 136: 253)

#### Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

Devon Blackhill and Exe Estuary, adult, 28th October 2009 to 28th February, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 103: 636.

#### Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

Dorset Radipole Lake RSPB, adult male, from 2009 to 14th January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 102: 599, 103: 636–637.

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### Appendix 3. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) after discussion with the Secretary; b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; c) those mentioned in 'Recent reports' in *British Birds* if full details were unobtainable; or d) certain escapes. In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced that the identification was fully established; only in a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

2010 **Blue-winged Teal** Wigtown Harbour, Dumfries & Galloway, 18th October. **King Eider** Flamborough Head, Yorkshire, 7th November. **Pacific Diver** *Gavia pacifica* Titchwell RSPB, Norfolk, 3rd January. **Black-browed Albatross** *Thalassarche melanophris* Salthouse, Norfolk, 30th October. Dunwich, Suffolk, 25th October. **Sooty Albatross** *Phoebastria fusca* Loch na Keal, Mull, Argyll, 5th October. **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra* Mundesley and Eccles on Sea, Norfolk, 12th August. **Black Stork** Feering, Essex, 21st May. **Pallid Harrier** St Abbs Head, Borders, 4th September. **Booted Eagle** *Aquila pennata* Great Bromley, Essex, 12th May. Needham Market and nearby, Suffolk, 13th May to 11th June. **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* Winterton-on-Sea, Norfolk, 5th October. **Gyr Falcon** Newquay, Cornwall, 10th February. Maer Lake, Cornwall, 18th February. Braunton Burrows, Devon, 18th March. **Black-winged Stilt** King's Quay West, Isle of Wight, 8th September. **Pacific Golden Plover** Oronsay, Argyll, 24th July. Brenish, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 2nd June. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Freiston Shore RSPB, Lincolnshire, 14th October. **Red-necked Stint** Hickling Broad, Norfolk, 1st August. **Baird's Sandpiper** Ibsley Water, Hampshire, 11th October. **Wilson's Snipe** Nanjizal, Cornwall, 17th October. **Long-billed Dowitcher** Llanon, Ceredigion, 9th December. Caerlaverock WWT, Dumfries & Galloway, 28th April. Rattray Head, North-east Scotland, 3rd January. **Spotted Sandpiper** Kirby Lakes, Leicestershire & Rutland, 31st October. **Solitary Sandpiper** Walmsley Sanctuary, Cornwall, 23rd May. **Marsh Sandpiper** Badshot Lea, Farnham, Surrey, 7th April. **Bonaparte's Gull** Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, 21st October. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Foremark Resr, Derbyshire, 20th–23rd November. Porthcawl Harbour, Bridgend, East Glamorgan, 13th March. **American Herring Gull** *Larus smithsonianus* Monkstone Point, Pembrokeshire, 16th February. **Gull-billed Tern** Slapton Ley NNR, Devon, two, 30th June. New Grounds WWT, Gloucestershire, 30th June. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* Kenfig NNR, East Glamorgan, 25th March. **Pallid Swift** Carmel Head, Anglesey, 26th June. Winchester, Hampshire, 30th April. **Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* Penlee, Cornwall, 29th May. Spurn, Yorkshire, 28th October. **'Northern Long-tailed Tit'** Salen, Mull, Argyll, three, 26th October. Northrepps, Norfolk, two, 4th November. **Savi's Warbler** Wells East Hills, Norfolk, 27th September. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Tidmoor, Chickerell, Dorset, 3rd–5th November. Marsden Bay, Co. Durham, 30th September. Sumburgh, Mainland, Shetland, 2nd October. **Black-throated Thrush** Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, 12th January. Nitten Field, Gower, 8th January. Legbourne, Lincolnshire, 7th December. Kilve, Somerset, 8th January. Farnham, Surrey, 12th January. Alvecote Pools, Warwickshire, 10th December. Potteric Carr, Yorkshire, 11th January. **American Robin** Blashford Lakes, Hampshire, 12th March. **Black-eared Wheatear** Donna Nook, Lincolnshire, 12th October. **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* Lundy, Devon, 16th April. **Citrine Wagtail** Observatory, Fair Isle, 28th May. Wall Common, Steart, Somerset, 1st September. **Olive-backed Pipit** Ward Hill, Fair Isle, 30th September. **'Hornemann's Redpoll'** Kelling Quags, Norfolk, 11th October. **Blackpoll Warbler** Lower Moors, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 10th October.

2009 **Blue-winged Teal** Berney Marshes, Norfolk, 3rd May. **Black-browed Albatross** Fife Ness, Fife, 17th October. South Ronaldsay, Orkney, 10th October. **Glossy Ibis** Digswell, Hertfordshire, 11th September. West Stow, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, 20th September. **Baird's Sandpiper** Hirta, St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, 29th–30th May. **'Dark-breasted Barn Owl'** Howden's Pullover, Lincolnshire, 15th February. Welney WWT, Norfolk, 28th January to 29th March. **Penduline Tit** Slimbridge WWT, Gloucestershire, three, 11th November. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Foula, Shetland, 21st October. **Citrine Wagtail** South Raeva, Fair Isle, 5th October.

2008 **Squacco Heron** Rainham Marshes RSPB, Essex/Greater London, 10th November. **'Dark-breasted Barn Owl'** Cotswold Water Park, Wiltshire, 30th January to 16th March. **Hume's Warbler** Brue, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 5th November. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* North Landing, Yorkshire, 23rd June. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Wells Woods, Norfolk, 4th–8th October. **'Hornemann's Redpoll'** Wick, Caithness, 9th January. Ham, Foula, Shetland, 1st–3rd October.

2007 **Redhead** Kenfig NNR, East Glamorgan, 1st–3rd August. **Arctic Warbler** Waxham, Norfolk, 22nd October.

2006 **Redhead** Loch Bhasapoll, Tiree, Argyll, 14th December 2005 to 22nd March. Loch Earsay, Brue,



Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 14th January. **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* St Mary's Island, Northumberland, 17th December. **Gyr Falcon** Near Stony Porth, Bryher, Isles of Scilly, 10th May.

2005 **Black-browed Albatross** Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, 25th September.

2004 **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Lower Moors, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 4th–5th September.

2002 **Tropicbird** *Phaeton* sp. Penzance, Cornwall, 16th May.

2001 'Ehrenberg's Redstart' Hartlepool Headland, Cleveland, 25th September.

2000 'Ehrenberg's Redstart' Blow's Down, Bedfordshire, 19th April. Grutness, Mainland, Shetland, 23rd–26th September.

1994 'Ehrenberg's Redstart' St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 22nd October.

1987 **Black-browed Albatross** Sheringham, Norfolk, 18th October. Salthouse, Norfolk, 18th October.

1984 'Ehrenberg's Redstart' Holkham Meals, Norfolk, 24th September.

1972 'Ashy-headed Wagtail' Belvide Resr, Staffordshire, 27th April.

1968 **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* Stoke Fleet, Kent, 27th April.



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