

Plate 77. White-billed Diver, adult, North/South Wick, Papa Westray, Orkney, 6-30 April 2017. © David Roche

# Scottish Birds Records Committee report on rare birds in Scotland, 2017

#### C.J. MCINERNY & R.Y. MCGOWAN on behalf of the Scottish Birds Records Committee

This is the tenth annual report of the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC), describing rare birds recorded in Scotland during 2017. Details of previous annual reports that cover the period 2005 to 2016 can be found in McGowan & McInerny (2018), some which are cited in this report.

A summary of the rare bird species considered by SBRC, the SBRC List, and other committees is given in Appendix 2, and is shown at www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/sbrc-list-past-lists

Recent changes to the SBRC List include, from 1 January 2017, the removal of Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* and Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, with Ferruginous Duck records now considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) and Egyptian Goose and Glossy Ibis records assessed by local Scottish committees. Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* remains on the SBRC List but with records assessed by local committees on Shetland and Fair Isle. In contrast, both Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* were added to the SBRC List, being no longer considered by BBRC.

Furthermore, from 1 January 2019, White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* was removed from the SBRC List, with records now assessed by local Scottish committees. Additionally, all records of Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* and Arctic Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni* are to be considered by BBRC, and Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* and Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* were added to the SBRC List, being no longer assessed by BBRC.

During 2017, the most striking observations of rare birds were the highest Scottish annual totals of Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* and Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*. In the case of Cattle Egret this reflects the large numbers colonising England in the past few years, with breeding now recorded, which follows the trend of Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, also colonising the UK in recent times. As with Little Egret, it is likely that more Cattle Egrets will be seen in Scotland in the future. The 27 Arctic Redpolls and 75 Little Buntings *Emberiza pusilla* were the second highest Scottish annual totals. In contrast, a number of species, such as Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*, Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexan-drinus* and Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* were not observed in Scotland during 2017.

39:2 (2019)

#### Format of the report

The species accounts in the report follow a standard format, which is modelled on the annual BBRC reports published in *British Birds*. Nomenclature and taxonomic sequence follow the latest version of the *Scottish List*, which follows the 9th Edition of the British List (BOU 2018a, Forrester 2018).

On the header line, after the species or subspecies name, are three numbers:

- Total number of birds in Scotland to the end of 2004, based on Forrester *et al.* (2007), with adjustments in some cases, and also including records added in this report. In some cases, older records, 'At Sea' records, or records pertaining to the breeding population are explicitly excluded from the totals, following the example of Forrester *et al.* (2007). In the case of Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* and Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*, numbers seen in the past were so great that totals have not been estimated.
- Total number of birds in Scotland during the period since 2004, but excluding the current year.
- Where appropriate, acceptances by BBRC and by local committees are included. Returning birds or repeat sightings of the same individual, insofar as these can be judged, are not counted.
- Total number in the current year (2017).

Occasionally, adjustments to totals have been made to take account of late retrospective acceptances by local committees, or when corrections are detected from Excel spreadsheet totals.

Immediately below the header line is a table of accepted Scottish records for 2017, with details. For those species assessed locally in the Northern Isles, full details of accepted Northern Isles records are not given. Instead, they are summarised as a separate table or in the text.

For all taxa, information is also provided about pre-2017 records that were not included in previous reports. These are presented in reverse chronological order. Records assessed by SBRC are listed in full, otherwise only summary information is provided.

It should be noted that records of individual birds reappearing at the same location in subsequent years can be accepted by Local Recorders without submission to SBRC; full details of these returning birds are nonetheless provided in this report. Revised and/or corrected details are also provided for some pre-2017 records, published previously.

For each record listed in full, the following information is provided:

- Year
- Recording area www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/local-recorders-network
- Location(s). In the case of some recording areas, individual islands or component administrative areas are also named.
- Number of birds if more than one, with age and/or sex if known.
- 'Returning' if applicable.
- Date(s). Note that the use of a date range does not necessarily imply that a bird was confirmed to be present throughout; in some cases, it may have been observed only on the first and last dates given.
- 'Found dead' or 'died' if applicable.
- 'Trapped' if applicable.
- Use of DNA analysis to aid identification.
- Existence of a photograph or video, if this formed part of the assessment process.
- Names of observers, in alphabetical order. Every effort has been made to name only those people who played a part in finding and/or identifying the bird. However, if no submission was made by these observers, the submitter of the record is also credited: if the submitter was the Local Recorder this is shown as 'per Local Recorder'. All other observers are covered by the use of 'et al.'
- Details and location of specimen if preserved in a museum, with specimen accession number if available.

Additional sightings of the same bird at a different location, or a cross-reference to additional sightings in a different recording area or year. Where a bird is said to be the same, this is usually a presumption based on the judgment of the observer, Local Recorder and/or others.

The table of records is followed by the main text of the species account. At the end of each account, a brief summary of global breeding and wintering distribution, with mention of relevant subspecies to Scotland, is given in parentheses.

#### **Species coverage**

Species coverage is unchanged from the last report. Rare subspecies of several species on the SBRC List are still assessed by BBRC, the most important being Subalpine Warbler and Arctic Redpoll. For these, the accounts in the SBRC report summarise accepted BBRC records in order to give as complete a picture as possible of the species' occurrence in Scotland.

A list of records assessed by SBRC and considered to be 'not proven' can be found in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 summarises the involvement of different committees in the assessment of the taxa on the SBRC List each year for the period 2015–19. Appendix 3 lists corrections to previous SBRC reports.

#### **SBRC**

SBRC was set up in 1984 as a subcommittee of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) Council. Its role is to assess records of species that are rare in Scotland but not rare enough in Britain to be assessed by BBRC. Current members are Mark Wilkinson (Chairman), Jim Dickson, David Parnaby, Dave Pullan, Martin Scott, David Steel (replacing John Nadin in 2018), and Mark Warren. Chris McInerny is non-voting Secretary and Bob McGowan is non-voting Museum Consultant. For more information about SBRC, see www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/about-sbrc.

Records accepted by SBRC are published on the SOC website at www.the-soc.org.uk/birdrecording/recent-decisions as soon as they are processed, and thereafter in annual reports, such as this, published in *Scottish Birds*. The accepted record details are also added to Excel spreadsheets which list all records for SBRC species. These Excel spreadsheets display the data chronologically, by recording areas, and graphically. Examples of the graphs have been used in SBRC reports published in *Scottish Birds*. The Excel files are archived at the Waterston Library, SOC Headquarters, Aberlady www.the-soc.org.uk/about-us/library. They may be consulted on request, and we encourage interested parties to use this resource, which is a convenient way to access and interrogate SBRC records. In the future, we plan to place the Excel spreadsheets on the SOC website to make them more widely available.

#### **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, we are grateful to all observers who submitted records of Scottish rarities to Local Recorders and SBRC during the period. Without their efforts to find and record these birds, this report could not exist. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to those who gave permission for their excellent photographs to be reproduced here.

Next, we thank the following current and former Local Recorders for their assistance in compiling, checking and correcting records for this report: Yvonne Benting, Paul Collin, Martin Cook, Jim Dickson, Iain English, Rob Fray, Nick Littlewood, Sinclair Mason, Russell Neave, David Parkinson, David Parnaby, Scott Patterson, Chris Pendlebury, Graham Sparshott, Peter Stronach, Stephen Welch, and Val Wilson. We are particularly grateful for the co-operation of the Northern Isles recorders in helping to compile summaries for species assessed locally within their areas included in this report.

We appreciate Keith Naylor's scrutiny of past SBRC reports, and thank him for his continuing valuable contribution.

#### Systematic list of accepted records

### **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* 19 (of 23 birds): 51: 1

Table 1. Accepted records of Lesser Scaup inScotland, 2017.

2017: North-east Scotland Loch of Skene, adult, male, 23–24 May photo (H. Addlesee *et al.*). Orkney Loch of Boardhouse, Birsay, Mainland, adult, male, 1 January to 24 April, photo, same as 2016 (McGowan & McInerny 2018).

Lesser Scaup is a rare though increasing visitor to Scotland, since the first in 1990, with observations throughout the country. Most records have been of singles, although multiples, including a group of three, have been observed. A number of individuals have remained for extended periods, sometimes moving between sites, and have returned in following years.

(Breeds in North America from Alaska to Ontario and south to California, Colorado and Minnesota. Most migrate to winter from USA south to Central America, the Caribbean and Hawaiian Islands, but smaller numbers regularly move eastwards to winter in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.)

#### White-billed Diver Gavia adamsii 194: 284: 25

 Table 2. Accepted records of White-billed Diver in

 Scotland, 2017, with additional records for 2016.

2017: Borders Eyemouth, first-calendar-year, 10 November (C. Hartley). Isle of May 6 November (D. Steel). Lothian Ferny Ness, second-calendar-year, 8 February to 1 March, photo (K. Gibb, M.D. Hodgkin, N. Maclver et al.). Highland Sandwood Bay, Sutherland, 12 February (S. Jacques). Moray & Nairn Cullen, 23 March, 6 May, photo (D. Pullan). Moray & Nairn Burghead, third-calendar-year or older, 2 April (P.R. Gordon). Moray & Nairn Lossiemouth, adult, 22-23 April, 16 May (R. Proctor *et al.*). North-east Scotland Fraserburgh, 19 November, photo (M. Keighley, N. Littlewood). **Orkney** Water Sound & Burray, South Ronaldsay, adult, returning, 4 January to 31 May, same as 2016 (McGowan & McInerny 2017); same 10-25 December (C. Hall et al.). Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, 2-11 February (S.Z. Perfect et al.).

Orkney North/South Wick, Papa Westray, adult, 6-30 April, photo (D. Roche et al.); same Pierowall Bay, Westray, 24 May, photo (S.J. Davies). Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, 17 April (S.J. Davies). Orkney Tor Ness, North Ronaldsay, two, adults, 8–12 May (S.Z. Perfect et al.). Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, adult, 19 May (E. Taylor). Orkney Rives Geo, Sanday, second-calendaryear, 24 May, photo (E. Neave-Webb et al.). Orkney South Wick, Papa Westray, secondcalendar-year, 1 June (A.J. Leitch et al.). Orkney Houton Head, Orphir, Mainland, adult, photo, 2 November to 2018 (S. Pinder et al.). Orkney Mull Head, Papa Westray, 6 November, photo (D. Roche et al.). Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, adult, 29 November (S.J. Davies et al.). Outer Hebrides Eòlaigearraidh (Eoligarry), Barraigh (Barra), adult, 27 March to 4 May, photo (M. Oksien, B. Taylor, K. Taylor). Outer Hebrides Rubha Àird a' Mhuile (Rubha Ardvule), Uibhist a Deas (South Uist), second-calendar-year, 10 May, photo (B.S. Barnacal, K. Evans, J.B. Kemp). Shetland South Nesting Bay, adult, returning, 23 January to 10 May (P.V. Harvey et al.). Shetland Bluemull Sound, adult, returning, 26 April, photo (per Local Recorder). Shetland Flubersgerdie, Unst, adult, 28 April, photo (D. Cooper). Shetland Flubersgerdie, Unst, adult (different from 28 April), 5 May (D. Cooper). Shetland Mousa Sound, 31 August to 2 September, photo (K. Milsom et al.). Shetland Bluemull Sound, first-calendar-year, 7 November (B.H. Thomason). Shetland South Nesting Bay, adult, returning, 13 November, photo (W.T.S. Miles).

2016: Orkney Mull Head, Papa Westray, 1 November, photo (J. Branscombe).
 Orkney Water Sound & Burray, South Ronaldsay, adult, returning, same as 2015 (McGowan & McInerny 2017) to 2 May.



Plate 78. White-billed Diver, Fraserburgh, North-east Scotland, 19 November 2017. © Mark Keighley

White-billed Diver is a scarce though regular visitor to Scotland, with up to 30 being reported each year. Most occur in spring at a number of favoured localities in the Outer Hebrides, Moray & Nairn and North-east Scotland where birds stop-over to moult before moving to summer breeding areas in the high Arctic. In Shetland and Orkney, a few wintering individuals return to the same sites in successive years, and a very small numbers of immature, non-breeding birds have been observed during the summer.

There may be some overlap among Scottish records given the species' mobility. It also seems likely that some of the spring birds return to use the same stop-over sites each year. As it impossible to distinguish these and they are registered as new birds, SBRC total numbers are probably inflated.

Records of White-billed Diver from 1 January 2019 will not be assessed by SBRC, but instead by local committees (Appendix 2).

(Breeds in parts of Arctic Russia, Alaska and Arctic Canada; winters on the Pacific coasts of Russia and Canada, and along the Atlantic coast of Norway and in the North Atlantic.)

## **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris borealis c.* 228: 29: 3

Table 3. Accepted records of Cory's Shearwater inScotland, 2017.

2017: Fife Fife Ness, 23 August (B. Farquharson, R. Shand).
 North-east Scotland Girdle Ness, 23 August (M. Lewis).
 Outer Hebrides The Minch, from the car ferry

between Steòrnabhagh (Stornoway) and Ullapool, 21 July, photo (T. Mainwood, M. Warren *et al.*).

Cory's Shearwater is a rare visitor to Scottish waters, recorded near-annually, with most seen off North Ronaldsay and the Outer Hebrides during the late summer and early autumn. A very few enter the North Sea where they are observed moving along the east coast. Although an increase in sightings from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s occurred, numbers



Plate 79. Cory's Shearwater, The Minch, Outer Hebrides, 21 July 2017. © Tony Mainwood

since have decreased, with about two or less seen annually, although none were observed in 2010, 2012 and 2015.

The Outer Hebrides bird was unusual both for its early date in July, but also because it was seen closely from the car ferry which allowed photographs to be taken (Plate 79). Very few photographic images exist of Cory's Shearwater in Scotland; hence a drawing was used in the species' account in *The Birds of Scotland* (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

(Breeds on the Azores, Canary Islands and other nearby Atlantic islands, with the closely related Scopoli's Shearwater *C. diomedea* breeding in the Mediterranean. Both species occur in North Atlantic waters in autumn and are on the British List, but most are assumed to be Cory's, with Scopoli's not yet recorded in Scottish waters.)

#### Great Shearwater Ardenna gravis

c. 522 (1950–2004): 9,223: 4 (excluding 'At Sea' records)

Table 4. Accepted records of Great Shearwater inScotland, 2017.

2017: Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, 31 August, photo (A.F. McNee, S.Z. Perfect, A.C. Williams).
Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, 1 September (A.F. McNee, S.Z. Perfect).
Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, 10 September (S.Z. Perfect).
Outer Hebrides Rubha Aird a' Mhuile (Rubha Ardvule), Uibhist a Deas (South Uist), 27 July, photo (J.B. Kemp). Great Shearwater was rarely seen in Scotland until many were observed during 2005–07. Since then, however, no more than six have been recorded in any one year, if 'At Sea' records are discounted. This underlines the exceptional nature of the influxes witnessed during 2005–07.

The species is a late summer and autumn visitor, with most sightings from North Ronaldsay, Orkney, and a few from the Outer Hebrides and along the east coast of mainland Scotland. Three of the 2017 records fit this pattern, and follow the typical North Ronaldsay observation of birds flying west past Dennis Head at the north end of the island. These are thought to be returning to the North Atlantic, having previously entered the North Sea, probably after westerly gales.

(Breeds on South Atlantic islands and carries out a clockwise loop migration in the North Atlantic outside the breeding season. In the north-east Atlantic occurs most regularly off the south-west coast of Ireland in late summer and autumn.)

### **Night-heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* 46: 14: 2

Table 5. Accepted records of Night-heron inScotland, 2017.

 2017: Outer Hebrides Gleann & Gearraidh Gadhal (Garrygall), Barraigh (Barra), secondcalendar-year, 25 April to 13 May, photo (B.A. Taylor et al.).
 Outer Hebrides Gleann & Gearraidh Gadhal (Garrygall), Barraigh (Barra), third-calendaryear, 25–28 April, photo (B.A. Taylor et al.).

Night-heron is a less-than-annual visitor to Scotland, with a spring peak in observations. There is a wide geographical spread, but most are seen in the Northern Isles and the Outer Hebrides.

This is first instance of two Night-herons seen together in Scotland since 1822, when a pair was shot at the Hirsel, Borders on 25 May, the first Scottish record (Forrester *et al.* 2007); although two were present on Fair Isle in April 2008, they were separate (Breaks 2009, ap Rheinallt *et al.* 2010a). Both 2017 birds were sub-adults, though one was a year older than the other (Plates 80–81).



Plate 80. Night-heron, second-calendar-year, Gleann & Gearraidh Gadhal (Garrygall), Barraigh (Barra), Outer Hebrides, 25 April to 13 May 2017. © Bruce Taylor



Plate 81. Night-heron, third-calendar-year, Gleann & Gearraidh Gadhal (Garrygall), Barraigh (Barra), Outer Hebrides, 25–28 April 2017. © *Bruce Taylor* 

(Holarctic with four subspecies. Nominate *nycticorax* breeding in mainland Europe and into Asia, with another subspecies in North America. Populations move south in winter.)

#### **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* 3: 10: 5

Table 6. Accepted records of Cattle Egret inScotland, 2017.

Dumfries & Galloway Auchneel Farm, 2017: Stranraer, 29 January to 16 March, photo (B.D. Henderson et al.) (Henderson 2017). Dumfries & Galloway Culmore Farm, Sandhead, 8 November, 6 December, photo (B.D. Henderson). Fife West Fife (site confidential), 'first week' in November to 12 December, photo (per Local Recorder). Lothian Musselburgh lagoons, first-calendaryear, 26 September, photo (D. Allan et al.); same Prora, 29-30 September, photo (C.N. Davison et al.). Perth & Kinross Trochry, Strathbraan, 28 September, photo (J. & S. Pritchard, A.

Whewell et al.).

Cattle Egret remains very rare in Scotland, although more are being found. This reflects the large increase in numbers seen in England, where over 200 appeared in 2007, with the species first breeding in 2008; a second influx occurred in 2016, resulting in breeding again in 2017, and flocks of 51 and 87 observed in Devon and Somerset during 2018 (BTO 2018).



Plate 82. Cattle Egret, Trochry, Strathbraan, Perth & Kinross, 28 September 2017. © Andrew Whewell

The five in Scotland during 2017 is the highest annual total, although it is possible that some of the observations relate to the same individuals. For example, the Lothian and Perth & Kinross birds may have been the same; while the Dumfries & Galloway individual first seen from January to March (Henderson 2017), possibly returned the following November.

(Occurs widely in sub-tropical and temperate areas throughout the world, the European population being centred on the Mediterranean, extending north to central and western France, with increasing numbers of records farther north. Generally, a short-distance migrant.)



Plate 83. Cattle Egret, Prora, Lothian, 29–30 September 2017. © *Ian Andrews* 

#### **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* 22: 4: 1

Table 7. Accepted record of Purple Heron inScotland, 2017.

2017: Lothian Scoughall, 14 April (C.N. Davison).

Purple Heron is a very rare visitor to Scotland, with a peak of sightings in May and June likely reflecting spring overshoots from the continental Europe, and the majority of the remainder occurring in September and October being dispersing juveniles.

The species was last seen in Scotland during 2011 when four singles were observed in Fife, Moray & Nairn, Outer Hebrides and Shetland, all within the period 10–25 April (McGowan *et al.* 2013, McGowan & McInerny 2015). Thus the 2017 record falls within this more recent pattern of April occurrence.

(Breeds from Western Europe across to southeast Asia, and also in sub-Saharan Africa, where Western Palearctic populations winter. These populations belong to the nominate subspecies *purpurea*, with two other subspecies breeding in Madagascar and the eastern part of the range, respectively.)

#### **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* 45: 4: 1 (excluding young from known Scottish nests)

Table 8. Accepted record of Montagu's Harrier inScotland, 2017.

2017: Shetland Boddam, Sumburgh & Brow Marsh, Mainland, third-calendar-year or older, female, 14 May, photo (G.F. Bell, P.A. Harris, P.V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*).

Montagu's Harrier is a very rare migrant to Scotland, with the few records mostly in spring along the east side of the country from Borders to Shetland. A few breeding attempts have been successful, though none since 1955, and the total of 49 birds to the end of 2016 excludes fledged young from these breeding attempts.

This was the first Montagu's Harrier seen in Scotland since 2014 (McGowan & McInerny 2016), and only the third for Shetland. The species remains very rare, and has been seen by just a few lucky observers, as all recent sightings have been of brief fly-throughs. A lingering bird in a convenient location would be appreciated by many Scottish ornithologists.

(Breeds from North Africa, Iberia, England and Sweden across continental Europe and central Asia to Yenisei River; winters in African savannas and on the Indian subcontinent.)

#### **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* 19: 30: 2

Table 9. Accepted records of Black Kite in Scotland,2017, with an additional record for 2012.

- 2017: Lothian Bruntsfield, Edinburgh, 28 April (T. Dougall).
  Highland Strath Fleet, near Loch Craggie, Sutherland, adult, 23 May (P. Clarke, B. Etheridge, P. Rowntree *et al.*).
- 2012: Caithness Scoolary, adult, 19 June (C. Laurie, J. Smith, R. Whytock).

Black Kite is a very rare visitor to Scotland from continental Europe. Most have been seen in spring, from April to June, with far fewer sightings in summer and autumn. There have also been instances of summering, and a single case of hybridisation with Red Kite *Milvus milvus*. Occurrences have increased in recent years; there were 30 during 2007–2017, following just nine in the period 1997–2006.



Plate 84. Montagu's Harrier, third-calendar-year or older, female, Sumburgh & Brow Marsh, Mainland, Shetland, 14 May 2017. © *Roger Riddington* 

The Edinburgh bird was seen by the observer from his living room window, after he was alerted by the alarm calls of gulls. Fortunately, he located his binoculars quickly, as it was on view for less than two minutes.

The Caithness sighting was the first in that recording area.

(Nominate *migrans* breeds throughout most of Europe except the far north; winters in sub-Saharan Africa. Other subspecies elsewhere in the Old World.)

#### **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* 69: 87: 4

**Table 10.** Accepted records of White-rumped Sandpiper in Scotland, 2017, with an additional record for 2016.

- 2017: Outer Hebrides Baile Sear, Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist), adult, 29–30 July, photo (B. Rabbitts et al.).
  Outer Hebrides Àird an Rùnair, Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist), adult, 2–3 August, photo (J. Farooqi et al.).
  Outer Hebrides Àird an Rùnair, Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist), first-calendar-year, 5 October, photo (B. Rabbitts).
  Outer Hebrides Baile Gharbhaidh, Uibhist a Deas (South Uist), first-calendar-year, 7–9 October, photo (per Local Recorder).
- 2016: North-east Scotland Loch of Strathbeg, adult, 21–25 July, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

White-rumped Sandpiper is a scarce but annual visitor to Scotland from North America, with most observations in late summer and autumn on the Outer Hebrides. The four records during 2017 fit this pattern.

(Breeds in North America at high latitudes, migrating to winter in Brazil, Argentina and Chile.)

#### **Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans* 0: 9: 1

Table 11. Accepted record of Caspian Gull inScotland, 2017.

2017: Lothian Skateraw, adult, 7–17 March, photo (C. Scott *et al.*).

Caspian Gull is extremely rare in Scotland. Occurrences have been from late autumn to spring. Most observations (70% to date) have been in coastal East Lothian, amongst flocks of gulls.

It is now known that a regular movement of the species takes place each year through England, with most observations in the south and east. The majority are immatures present in summer and autumn having moved west from their Eastern European breeding areas. However, Caspian Gull remains very rare elsewhere in the UK. Under-recording of this difficult-to-identify species is also likely, especially immatures (McInerny 2010).

(Breeds at inland lakes in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, wintering mostly in the eastern Mediterranean, but with smaller numbers reaching western maritime Europe.)

#### Yellow-legged Gull Larus michahellis 12: 24: 1

Table 12.Accepted record of Yellow-legged Gull inScotland, 2017.

2017: Clyde Balgray Reservoir, second-calendaryear/third-calendar-year, 22 November to 2018, photo (J.J. Sweeney).

Yellow-legged Gull is very rare in Scotland, found throughout the country, usually in groups of other large white-headed gulls, often Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus*. Birds have been found at all times of the year, sometimes remaining for extended periods, with a number of individuals returning to the same locations in consecutive years. However, this species it probably under-recorded being challenging to identify, particularly immatures.

It seems likely that most if not all records of Yellow-legged Gull in Scotland refer to the nominate subspecies *L. m. michahellis*, which has a Mediterranean and south-west European distribution, including England (McInerny 2009).

However, observers should be aware that one record in Scotland of Yellow-legged Gull of the subspecies *L. m. atlantis* has been accepted

recently by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) and BBRC, as the first for Britain (Stoddart & McInerny 2017; BOU 2018b). This bird, a near-adult, was present at Baile na Creige, Barraigh (Craigston, Barra), Outer Hebrides on 10 September 2005. All potential records of this taxon, which breeds on the Atlantic Islands of the Azores, Madeira and Canaries, should be sent to BBRC (Appendix 2).

The presence of vagrant Yellow-legged Gulls in Scotland with Lesser Black-backed Gulls can be explained by the latter acting as a 'carrier species'; the two species are very closely related taxonomically, and are known to hybridize (Olsen & Larsson 2004). Importantly, Lesser Black-backed Gulls move between North Africa and Scotland for their breeding and nonbreeding ranges, with Yellow-legged Gulls occasionally joining migrating flocks. Furthermore, increasing numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls remain to winter in Scotland, accounting for the Scottish winter records of Yellow-legged Gulls.

(Nominate *michahellis* breeds mainly from south-west Europe east to the Black Sea, with immatures dispersing widely in winter as far north as Britain and the Baltic. *L. m. atlantis* breeds on the Azores, Madeira and Canaries, wandering south to north-west Africa.)

### White-winged Black Tern Chlidonias leucopterus 59: 20: 3

Table 13. Accepted records of White-winged BlackTern in Scotland, 2017.

2017: Orkney Ancum Loch, North Ronaldsay, adult, 9–18 July, photo (S.Z. Perfect *et al.*); same Fair Isle Buness, 21 July, photo (R. Cope *et al.*); same Orkney Ancum Loch, North Ronaldsay, 1–19 August.
Outer Hebrides Loch Mòr & Loch a' Chinn Uacraich ('Coot Loch'), Beinn na Faoghla (Benbecula), adult, 19 June, photo (G. Chiancianesi, I.R. Thompson *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Seilebost, Na Hearadh (Harris), adult, 14–19 July, photo (R. Wemyss *et al.*).

White-winged Black Tern is a rare visitor to Scotland, mostly observed along the east side of the country and on islands between late spring and late autumn.



Plate 85. White-winged Black Tern, adult, Loch Mòr & Loch a' Chinn Uacraich ('Coot Loch'), Beinn na Faoghla (Benbecula), 19 June 2017. © *Ian Thompson* 

The North Ronaldsay and Fair Isle bird remained for an extended period, moving back and forth between the two islands. Two were seen on the Outer Hebrides during 2017; eight birds have now been seen in this recording area since 2000, with only two before.

(Breeds on marshy lakes in central and Eastern Palearctic areas, migrating south to winter in Africa, Australasia and the Indian subcontinent.)

## Alpine Swift Tachymarptis melba 34: 8: 1

Table 14.Accepted record of Alpine Swift inScotland, 2017.

**2017**: **Clyde** Baron's Haugh, Motherwell, 16–21 March, photo (North Ayrshire RSPB *et al.*).

Alpine Swift is a very rare visitor to Scotland, seen usually between mid-April and late July. Spring occurrences probably involve overshoots from mountain breeding grounds on the European continent, while those in summer relate to wandering non-breeders. There are very few autumn records. The Clyde bird, the only Alpine Swift seen in Scotland during 2017, frequented an area over trees next to Baron's Haugh where it was presumably catching insects in the cold and changeable March weather. It was not known where it was roosting overnight during its five day stay, but a number of tall tower blocks nearby may have given suitable sites for this montane species, which usually roosts on cliff faces. This was the second for Clyde, the previous in early May 1992 at Balgray Reservoir. It was also the earliest Scottish record, by almost a month, the previous earliest being 15 April 1993 at Largiebaan (Largybaan), Campbeltown, Argyll; on the continent birds first arrive in breeding areas during March.

(Nominate *alba* breeds in north Africa and southern Europe from Iberia to the Middle East, moving to southern Africa in winter. Other subspecies in the Indian subcontinent and Africa.)

#### Woodchat Shrike Lanius senator 86: 21: 7

 Table 15. Accepted records of Woodchat Shrike in Scotland, 2017.

2017: Caithness Mey, second-calendar-year, male, 28 May, photo (S. Manson, K. Munro *et al.*). Fair Isle Mire o' Vatnagaard, second-calendar-year, male, 16 June, photo (C.R. Hatsell *et al.*). Fair Isle Pund, first-calendar-year, 19 August, photo (R. Cope *et al.*). Highland Strathdearn, Garbole, Inverness, second-calendar-year, female, 7–9 June, photo (*per* Local Recorder). Orkney Burness, Sanday, male, 16 June, photo (R. Neave, W. Sichel *et al.*). Orkney Bewan, Papa Westray, first-calendar-year, 25 September, photo (D. Roche *et al.*). Upper Forth Kirkton Farm, Crianlarich, first-calendar-year, 13 October, photo (J. Holland).

Woodchat Shrike is a rare, almost annual, passage migrant to Scotland, with most in the Northern Isles. Adults and sub-adults are seen in spring as overshoots from their European continental breeding areas, with dispersing juveniles recorded in autumn. The seven records in 2017 made the highest annual total for the species in Scotland; six birds were seen in 1988, and five in another six years since 1966. The Crianlarich bird was the first for the Upper Forth recording area; the Strathdearn record was the first for Inverness, though the ninth for Highland as a whole.

(Nominate *senator* breeds from north-west Africa, Iberia, France and Belgium south to Turkey; *badius* on Mediterranean islands; and another subspecies from Turkey to Iran. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

## **Woodlark** *Lullula arborea* 68 (1950–2004): 26: 1

Table 16. Accepted records of Woodlark in Scotland, 2017.

 2017: Shetland Norwick, Unst, two, 10 February to 8 March, photo, same as 2016 (McGowan & McInerny 2018).
 Shetland Wick of Gruting, Fetlar, 23 October (B.H. Thomason).

Woodlark is rare in Scotland, found mostly in late autumn and early winter in the Northern Isles. There has been one instance of attempted breeding, in Angus & Dundee in 1993 (Forrester *et al.* 2007), though only one mainland occurrence since 2000, in Lothian in 2008. Since 1950, the vast majority of occurrences have been on the Northern Isles, with 70% on Fair Isle and Shetland.

There were just two sightings of Woodlark in 2017, both in Shetland. However, the two birds at Norwick, Unst, Shetland were considered to be the same individuals seen in November 2016 at Northdale and Haroldswick, Unst, and so are not counted in the species total.

(Two subspecies. *L. a. arborea* breeds in north and central European areas from western Russia through Finland and Norway to England, where present north to Yorkshire. The other subspecies breeds from Iran and the Middle East through southern Europe to northwest Africa. Most populations move south to wintering areas, with more northerly populations moving the farthest.)

#### **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* 286: 87: 9

Table 17. Accepted record of Short-toed Lark in Scotland,2017. Northern Isles records are summarisedseparately in Table 18.

2017:	Lothian Tyninghame, 22–24 July, photo (C.N.
	Davison, K. Gillon <i>et al.</i> ); same, Tyninghame
	11–16 September (M. Hannam et al.).

Short-toed Lark is found annually in Scotland in very small numbers, mostly in spring and autumn, with the majority of observations in the Northern Isles, where records are assessed locally. It is very rare elsewhere, particularly on the mainland.

The sighting in Lothian was the first on mainland Scotland since one near Arbroath, Angus & Dundee in 2009; the last in Lothian was one in 2004, also at Tyninghame.

Table 18. Accepted records of Short-toed Lark in theNorthern Isles, 2017.

Number of birds			irds Date	range
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	-	-	-
Orkney	1	1	1–2 Jun	6–18 Oct
Shetland	3	3	6 May–11 Jun	26 Aug–2 Oct

Perhaps most noteworthy is the lack of a sighting on Fair Isle in 2017; this was the first blank year for the island since 1963. Eight were seen elsewhere in the Northern Isles, with two on Orkney and six on Shetland.

(Eight or nine subspecies, with the subspecies seen in Scotland and the UK undetermined. Breeds widely in dry, sandy areas from southern and eastern Europe to the Middle East and western China, with populations migrating to winter in India, the Middle East and Africa.)

#### **Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* 40: 46: 4

Table 19. Accepted records of Red-rumped Swallow inScotland, 2017.

2017:	Argyll Gott, Tiree, 24 May, photo (M. & A.
	Harrison et al.).
	Fair Isle Hesswalls & Vaasetter, 23 May
	(N.J. Riddiford).
	Orkney Peedié Sea, Kirkwall, Mainland, 11–14

May, photo (G. Cannon, A. Upton *et al.*). Shetland Norwick, Unst, 16 May (A.M. Conlin). Red-rumped Swallow is observed in Scotland annually in small numbers from April through to November, mainly along the east coast and on islands. A small increase in frequency over the last 14 years or so is thought to reflect a northward expansion of the European continental breeding range. One individual of an eastern subspecies, either *daurica* or *japonica*, has been observed on Orkney and then Skye, Skye & Lochalsh, Highland, in June 2011 (McGowan *et al.* 2013).

The four occurrences in 2017 matched the annual mean total for the last ten years. The May dates are typical of peak arrival. Fair Isle has 12% of the total Scottish records since 1950. The last sighting on mainland Scotland was at Scourie, Sutherland, Highland in 2013.

(Eleven or 12 subspecies. Breeds widely from southern Europe eastwards across the Palearctic region, and in sub-Saharan Africa. *C. d. rufula* breeds in Europe and the Middle East, with nominate *daurica* and *japonica* in Asia. Northern populations are migratory, wintering in Africa and southern Asia. In recent years its range has expanded into more northern and western European areas.)

## **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* 60: 52: 8

Dusky Warbler is a rare but more or less annual visitor to Scotland, with the autumn migration period accounting for all but two sightings. Like Radde's Warbler, it occurs mainly in the Northern Isles, where records are assessed locally. Nearly all other sightings have been along the east coast of mainland Scotland.

None were recorded outwith the Northern Isles in 2017, which are shown in Table 20. Here there were eight sightings: two on Fair Isle, two on Orkney and four on Shetland.

Table 20. Accepted records of Dusky Warbler in theNorthern Isles, 2017.

Nu	mbe	r of birds	s Da	ate range
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	1	1	2 May	19–22 Oct
Orkney	-	2	-	10–26 Oct
Shetland	-	4	-	6–29 Oct

The May sighting on Fair Isle was only the second spring occurrence in Scotland. The October dates for the other seven birds were typical.

The middle total in the header line has been increased by an additional two records from Shetland, as a belated adjustment from earlier reports: viz. Sandwick, Mainland, 19 October 2012 (*Scottish Birds* 35: 119); and Sandgarth, Voe, Mainland, 9 November 2014 (*Shetland Bird Report* 2014: 79).

(Breeds from western Siberia to China, wintering from the Himalayas to south China; two subspecies, with European vagrants belonging to nominate *fuscatus*.)

### **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* 46: 26: 2

Table 21. Accepted records of Radde's Warbler inScotland, 2017.

 Shetland Sandwick, Mainland, 29 September, photo (E. Casey, R.M. Fray).
 Shetland Dale of Walls, Mainland, 8 October, photo (R.M. Fray, P. Norris, M. Ponsford *et al.*).

Radde's Warbler is a rare late autumn visitor to Scotland, with the majority of occurrences in the Northern Isles, principally Shetland, and the remainder along the east coast. The two seen in 2017 were typical in timing and location, though the Sandwick bird was unusual in being found exhausted at Sandwick Junior High School, where it subsequently died having flown into a window. Photographs taken by a pupil and shown to the Local Recorder allowed its identification. There has been a good run for this species in recent years, with 2011 being the last blank year.

(Breeds from southern Siberia east to Sakhalin and North Korea; migrates to winter in southern China and south-east Asia.)

### **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* 157: 101: 5

Table 22. Accepted records of Greenish Warbler inScotland, 2017. Records from the Northern Isles aresummarised in the text.

2017: Argyll Turraman Loch, Colonsay, male, singing, 15 June, photo (I. Fisher, D.C. Jardine *et al.*).
 Outer Hebrides Eirisgeigh (Eriskay), male, singing, 31 May, photo (J.B. Kemp *et al.*).

Greenish Warbler is a rare but annual migrant to Scotland, increasingly regular over the past few decades. It is mostly seen in late August and early September, with more than 80% of sightings in the Northern Isles, where records are assessed locally.



Plate 86. Radde's Warbler, first-calendar-year, Isle of May, 6 October 2016. See Scottish Birds 38(2): 111. © Chris Southall

The Argyll and Outer Hebrides sightings were the third for these recording areas. In the Northern Isles one bird was seen at Isbister, Whalsay, Shetland on 7 June, while there were two sightings in Orkney: one at Holland House, North Ronaldsay on 24–27 August and one at Hundland, Papa Westray on 12 September.

(Four subspecies. *P. t. viridanus* breeds from the Baltic east through Russia to central Siberia and northwest China, wintering in the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka. Other subspecies breed in central and eastern Palearctic areas, wintering in southern India and northern Indochina.)

### Blyth's Reed Warbler Acrocephalus dumetorum 46: 111: 11

Table 23. Accepted record of Blyth's Reed Warbler inScotland, 2017. Records for Shetland and Fair Isle aresummarised in Table 24.

2017: Highland Inverdruie Fish Farm, Aviemore, Badenoch & Strathspey, second-calendaryear/adult, male, singing, 28 June to 3 July, photo (N. Barber, P. Stronach *et al.*). Orkney Sandback, North Ronaldsay, firstcalendar-year, 25 August, photo (G. Gay *et al.*). Orkney Holland House, North Ronaldsay, first-calendar-year, 26–29 September, trapped, photo (S.J. Davies *et al.*). Orkney Sandside Bay, Deerness, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 4 October, photo (R. Cruise, A. John, M. Warren *et al.*).

Blyth's Reed Warbler is a rare but annual spring and autumn migrant to Scotland, increasingly seen since 2000. Although the first Scottish record dates from 1910, 68% of occurrences have been in the last decade. The increasing frequency of the species in Scotland follows a westward spread from European Russia through southern Finland, Estonia and Latvia, with breeding also noted in Sweden and Poland (BirdLife International 2019a).

The recent significant increase in numbers seen in Britain means that the species no longer meets criteria for consideration by BBRC and is instead reviewed by SBRC. However, from 1 January 2017 the species has been assessed by local committees on Shetland and Fair Isle (Appendix 2), where five and two were recorded, respectively. The overwhelming majority of sightings (88%) have been in the Northern Isles. While most occurrences are in September and October, there have been an increasing number of spring singing males over the last several years, such as the one in Highland which was the fourth for the recording area. This bird was discovered at Inverdruie Fish Farm, Aviemore by a visitor on holiday from North America, who alerted the Local Recorder. It was 'remarkably showy for the species, singing amongst bramble, raspberry and nettles and occasionally in the adjacent Alder trees'.

 Table 24. Accepted records of Blyth's Reed Warbler in

 Shetland and Fair Isle, 2017.

Number of birds			I	Date range
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	1	1	9 Jun	25 Sep
Shetland	1	4	3 Jun	20 Sep-13 Oct

The middle total in the header line has been adjusted following a late acceptance of a 2011 record from Highland viz. Handa, Sutherland, 24–25 August (Holt *et al.* 2018).

(Breeds from Sweden, Finland and Baltic countries, through Russia to Lake Baikal and Mongolia, and south to Iran and north Pakistan; migrates to winter in the Indian subcontinent and Myanmar.)

### Marsh Warbler Acrocephalus palustris many: c. 361: 26

Table 25.Accepted record of Marsh Warbler inScotland, 2017.Northern Isles records aresummarised separately in Table 26.

Marsh Warbler is a scarce annual migrant to Scotland with most occurrences involving singing males in late spring; very rarely, birds remain to breed. The Northern Isles account for the overwhelming majority of records, and these are assessed locally.

The sighting in Outer Hebrides was the seventh for the recording area and the first for Barraigh (Barra).

<sup>2017:</sup> Outer Hebrides Bàgh a' Chaisteil, Barraigh (Castlebay, Barra), male, singing, 4 June, photo (B.A. Taylor *et al.*).

Table 26. Accepted records of Marsh Warbler in theNorthern Isles, 2017.

Nu	mbe	r of b	oirds Date	range
	Spr.	Aut.		Aut.
Fair Isle	6	2	7–26 Jun	19 Sep–1 Oct
Orkney	1	3	10–11Jun	17 Aug-30 Sep
Shetland	9	4	30 May–28 Jun	28 Aug-20 Oct

The 26 Marsh Warblers observed in Scotland in 2017 was lower than the annual mean of 31.5 between 2007 and 2016. The fluctuating annual abundance of this species is related, for spring birds at least, to variation in the prevalence of easterly winds in late May and early June, which are presumed to cause them to overshoot their breeding grounds in Fennoscandia during northerly spring migration (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

As is usual, most single birds in 2017 only remained for a few days, though one on Foula, Shetland lingered from 12 June to 2 July. Singing males were heard in Outer Hebrides, Fair Isle (one) and Shetland (two), with a pair observed on Foula from 17 June to 16 July. Breeding has been noted at Norwick, Unst, Shetland in 2005, 2008 and 2014 (ap Rheinallt *et al.* 2010b, McGowan & McInerny 2016).

(Breeds in Britain, France, Denmark and Fennoscandia east through Europe to Russia; winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

### **Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta* 53: 13: 2

 Table 27. Accepted records of Melodious Warbler in Scotland, 2017.

2017: Fair Isle Schoolton & Houll, 17 September, photo (N.J. Riddiford, D. Parnaby *et al.*).
 Orkney Cott, Papa Westray, first-calendar-year, 25 August, photo (D. Roche *et al.*).

Melodious Warbler is a very rare spring and autumn migrant to Scotland, recorded in most years but not all: for example, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2009 and 2016 were blank years. About three quarters of occurrences have been in the Northern Isles.

(Breeds in north Africa, Iberia, France, Belgium, and south-west Germany to the north-west Balkans; migrates to winter in sub-Saharan West Africa.)

#### **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* 193: 87: 6

Table 28. Accepted record of Subalpine Warbler inScotland, 2017. Northern Isle records are summarisedseparately in Table 29.

2017: Argyll Carnan Mòr, Tiree, male, 7 May, photo (J. Bowler), *S. cantillans* species.

Subalpine Warbler occurs annually in Scotland as a rare migrant, mainly in spring. The overwhelming majority are seen in the Northern Isles.

All records to subspecies level have been assessed by BBRC, while Subalpine Warbler *sensu latu* is assessed by SBRC apart from the Northern Isles where it is reviewed locally. However, from 1 January 2019 all records will be considered by BBRC (Appendix 2). Northern Isles records are listed in Table 29.

The Tiree bird was the second sighting for Argyll, the first also occurring on Tiree in 2012. It was accepted at species level, but was only the fifth Subalpine Warbler seen outwith the Northern Isles since 2009.



Plate 87. Melodious Warbler, first-calendar-year, Cott, Papa Westray, Orkney, 25 August 2017. © *David Roche* 

**Table 29.** Accepted records of Subalpine Warbler in the Northern Isles, 2017, and additional records for 2016 and 2015 (*per* Holt *et al.* 2018, and local committees).

2017: Fair Isle Chalet, second-calendar-year, male, 30–31 May, trapped, DNA analysis, photo (W. Carter, C.R. Hatsell, D. Parnaby et al.), S. c. iberiae/inornata.
Orkney West Kirkbest, Westray, female, 14 July, photo (D. & S. Otter), S. cantillans species.
Shetland Scatness, Mainland, second-calendar-year, male, 2–4 May, photo (S.J. Minton et al.), S. c. cantillans/albistriata.
Shetland Scatness, Mainland, second-calendar-year, female, 10 May, trapped, photo (S.J. Minton, R. Riddington), S. c. cantillans/ albistriata.
Shetland Scousburgh, Mainland, second-calendar-year, male, 29 May, photo (J.N.

calendar-year, male, 29 May, photo (J.N. Dymond), *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*.

- 2016: Shetland Ham, Foula, second-calendar-year, male, 14–20 May, later found dead, photo (D. & G. Atherton *et al.*), *S. c. cantillans/ albistriata*.
- 2015: Shetland Gravins, Foula, second-calendar-year or older, male, 12 June, photo (D. & G. Atherton *et al. per* Local Recorder), *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*.
   Shetland Cullivoe, Yell, second-calendar-year, male, singing, 1–6 July, audio recording (B.H. Thomason), *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*.

In 2017 the Orkney bird was accepted at species level. The Fair Isle bird was accepted as 'Western Subalpine Warbler' *S. c. iberiae/inornata* following DNA analysis, and the three Shetland occurrences were accepted as 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*.

It should be noted that five individuals on Shetland during April to June 2017 were determined only as either Subalpine Warbler or Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler *S. subalpina* (R. Fray pers. com., Holt *et al.* 2018). As these were therefore not identified to species, they are excluded from the species total in the header line.

(Nominate *cantillans* breeds in south Italy and Sicily, *albistriata* from south-east Europe through Greece, Aegean Islands to Turkey, *iberiae* in Iberian Peninsula, south France and North-west Italy, *inornata* from Morocco to Libya. Migrates to winter in the sub-Saharan Sahel, though *inornata* probably north-west Africa.)

## **Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* 139: 24: 2

Nightingale is a rare, but almost annual, passage migrant to Scotland; spring observations predominate. In the Northern Isles, claims are assessed locally, and Fair Isle and Shetland account for the vast majority of sightings.

There were two occurrences in 2017. The first was seen at Ham, Foula, Shetland on 18 May, and the second one at Tor Ness, North Ronaldsay, Orkney on 27 May.

There has been a total of 13 sightings in the last four years, all but four on Shetland.

(Nominate *megarhynchos* breeds from Morocco and western Europe through North Africa and southern and central Europe to the Ukraine and Turkey; *L. m. golzii* from the Aral Sea to Mongolia (one record in Scotland, and another two in England); and another subspecies from the Caucasus area and eastern Turkey to Iran. Winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

## **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* 15: 56: 3

Table 30. Accepted records of Red-flanked Bluetail inScotland, 2017.

2017: Caithness Coastguard Station, Wick, first-calendar-year/female, 19 October (P. Shand).
 Fair Isle School & Hall, first-calendar-year/female, 18–19 October, photo (A. Carroll, H. Fearn, B. Minshull *et al.*).
 Shetland Isbister, North Roe, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 5–16 October, photo (A. Matthews *et al. per* Local Recorder).

Red-flanked Bluetail is a rare but annual migrant to Scotland, increasingly regular in the last two decades. The vast majority (96%) of sightings in Scotland have been in autumn and 81% have been in the Northern Isles.

Assessment of Red-flanked Bluetail was undertaken by BBRC until 1 January 2017. A recent increase in numbers seen in Britain means that the species no longer meets criteria for consideration by BBRC, and it is now assessed by SBRC (Appendix 2).



Plate 88. Red-flanked Bluetail, first-calendar-year, Isbister, North Roe, Shetland, 5–16 October 2017. © Mark Wilkinson

The Caithness sighting was the first for the recording area and only the 13th for the Scottish mainland. The October dates of all three 2017 observations were typical.

(Breeds in Finland through Eurasia to Kamchatka and south to Mongolia, China and Japan. Migrates to winter in China and southeast Asia.)

### **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* 105: 89: 1

Table 31.Accepted record of Citrine Wagtail inScotland, 2017.

2017: Fair Isle South Harbour, first-calendar-year, 17 September, photo (R. Cope *et al.*).

Citrine Wagtail is a rare but annual spring and autumn migrant to Scotland, increasingly regular since the 1990s, though found mostly on islands. Occurrence is generally in autumn, with few seen in spring. The overwhelming majority (86%) have been in the Northern Isles, with a further 7% in Outer Hebrides. Despite the recent increase in numbers, Citrine Wagtail remains an extreme rarity in other parts of the country, being unrecorded in ten recording areas. The Fair Isle sighting was typical in locality and timing.

(Nominate *citreola* breeds in Russia from Kola Peninsula to River Khatanga, south to Himalayas; another subspecies south of Tien Shan Mountains. Migrates to winter in China, south-east Asia, north of the Indian subcontinent and shores of Arabian Gulf.)



Plate 89. Citrine Wagtail, first-calendar-year, South Harbour, Fair Isle, 17 September 2017. © *Richard Cope* 

#### **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* 151: 185: 18

Table 32.Accepted record of Olive-backed Pipit inScotland, 2017.Northern Isles records aresummarised separately in Table 33.

2017: Isle of May 27–28 September, photo (M.A. Newell, D. Steel *et al.*).

Olive-backed Pipit is a rare but regular autumn migrant in Scotland. There was a marked increase in occurrences in Britain and Europe since the 1980s. The species has been considered by SBRC since 2013 and assessed locally in the Northern Isles since 2015 (Appendix 2).

The vast majority of sightings in Scotland are in the Northern Isles, with only 23 birds (7%) seen in other areas. During 2017, 18 birds were observed, with two on Fair Isle, six on Orkney and nine on Shetland. The observation on the Isle of May was the eighth for the island.

Table 33. Accepted records of Olive-backed Pipit inthe Northern Isles, 2017.

Nu	Date range	nge	
	Spr.	Aut.	Aut.
Fair Isle	- 27 Se	2	27 Sep-27 Oct
Orkney	- 24 Se	6	24 Sep-26 Oct
Shetland	- 30 Se	9	30 Sep–26 Oct
	- 24 Se	2 6 9	24 Sep-26

(*A. h. yunnanensis* breeds from Urals east to Kamchatka, Manchuria and Japan; one other subspecies. Winters in south-east Asia.)



Plate 90. Olive-backed Pipit, Isle of May, 27–28 September 2017. © Mark Newell

#### Arctic Redpoll Acanthis hornemanni 366: 129: 27

Arctic Redpoll is a scarce though annual visitor to Scotland. Most sightings since 2005 have involved the subspecies *A*. *h*. *hornemanni* (Hornemann's Redpoll), though many earlier occurrences referred to *A*. *h*. *exilipes* (Coues's Redpoll).

All records to subspecies level have been assessed by BBRC, while Arctic Redpoll *sensu latu* is assessed by SBRC apart from the Northern Isles where it is reviewed locally. However, from 1 January 2019 all records will be considered by BBRC (Appendix 2).

No records were assessed by SBRC for 2017. A summary of records accepted by BBRC is provided in Table 34.

Table 34.Accepted records of Arctic Redpoll inScotland, 2017 (per Holt et al. 2018, and localcommittees).

Clyde Earnock, Hamilton, two, second-2017: calendar-year or older, 14 February, photo (S. Ball, J. Maxwell, L. Stewart et al.), A. h. exilipes. Fair Isle Quoy, 23 October (R. Nason), A. hornemanni species. Fair Isle Pund, Gilsetter and School Brae, firstcalendar-year or older, 23-30 October, photo (R. Cope, C. Dodd, D. Parnaby et al.), A. h. hornemanni. Orkney Westness, North Ronaldsay, firstcalendar-year or older, 8-10 October, photo (P. Gay et al.), A. h. hornemanni. Orkney Nether Linnay, North Ronaldsay, 21 October (S.J. Davies), A. hornemanni species. Orkney The Lurn, North Ronaldsay, firstcalendar-year or older, 24 October, photo (S.Z. Perfect *et al.*), *A. h. hornemanni*. Orkney Manse Lane, Stromness, Mainland, four, 15 December, photo (T. Wootton), A. hornemanni species. Outer Hebrides Nis (Ness), Lewis, secondcalendar-year or older, 17 March, photo (S. Elmer per B.E.M. Marr), A. h. hornemanni. Shetland Norwick, Unst, first-calendar-year or older, 20 September, photo (E. Williams), A. h. hornemanni. Shetland Ollaberry, Mainland, first-calendaryear, 6-8 October, photo (R. Hughes et al.), A. h. hornemanni. Shetland Skaw, Unst, first-calendar-year or older, 6-7 October, photo, same as Baltasound below (P.N. Collin, D. Weir et al.), A. h. hornemanni.

**Shetland** Baltasound, Unst, two, firstcalendar-year or older, 6–14 October, then a further three, first-calendar-year or older, 15– 31 October, photo (*per* Local Recorder), *A. h. hornemanni*.

Shetland Ham, Foula, first-calendar-year, 7– 16 October, photo (G. Atherton *et al.*), *A. h. hornemanni.* 

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, first-calendar-year, 8–11 October, photo (M.A. Maher, M.G. Pennington, B.H. Thomason *et al.*), *A. h. exilipes*. Shetland Melby, Mainland, two, firstcalendar-year, 20 October, trapped, photo (R. Riddington, R.M. Tallack), *A. h. hornemanni*. Shetland Uyeasound, Unst, two, firstcalendar-year or older, 24 October, photo (A.P. Chick, J. Clarkston, P. Espin, A.C. Sims per Local Recorder), *A. h. hornemanni*. Shetland Uyeasound, Unst, first-calendar-

year or older, 28 October, photo (B.H. Thomason), A. h. hornemanni. Shetland Baltasound, Unst, first-calendar-

year or older, 25 December, photo (B.H. Thomason), *A. h. hornemanni*.

Twenty-seven Arctic Redpolls were sighted in Scotland in 2017, this being the second highest annual total in the last two decades, and only exceeded by 30 in 2012.

A total of 18 *hornemanni* were observed with autumn dates ranging from 20 September to 25 December, and three *exilipes* with autumn dates ranging from 8–11 October. Six individuals on Fair Isle and Orkney were accepted at species level only.

The observations in late winter and spring are noteworthy: the two in Clyde were only the 12th and 13th sightings in February and were the first for that recording area; the bird at Nis (Ness), Lewis was only the second sighting in the first half of March.

Note the additional four records from 2016 listed in Appendix 3.

(Breeds on the Arctic tundra, with a circumpolar range divided between two subspecies: *A. h. hornemanni* on Ellesmere and Baffin Island (both Canada) and in Greenland, and *A. h. erilipes* elsewhere. Winters to the south of the breeding range.)

## **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* many: 52: 5

Ortolan Bunting is a rare and declining, but still annual, passage migrant to Scotland. In recent years the Northern Isles, where records are assessed locally, have accounted for more than 90% of occurrences.

There were no observations in 2017 outwith the Northern Isles, where five were seen.

Records from Orkney and Shetland are shown in Table 35. There were two spring sightings, with the date for the North Ronaldsay, Orkney bird being relatively late. The autumn dates were typical of the September peak.

The general trend of decreasing numbers over the last two decades appears to be continuing. This reflects the 'steep decline' of the European population between 1980 and 2013, thought to be due to habitat destruction (EBCC 2015, BirdLife International 2019b).

Table 35. Accepted records of Ortolan Bunting in theNorthern Isles, 2017.

Nu	mbei	r of bi	rds Date	range
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	-	-	-
Orkney	1	2	8–10 Jun	13–28 Sep
Shetland	1	1	14 May	11–16 Sep

(Breeds patchily from Algeria and Iberia north to Norway and east through Europe to Asia; winters in sub-Saharan Africa.)

## **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* 593: 378: 75

Table 36. Accepted records of Little Bunting in Scotland,2017, and an additional record for 2015. Northern Islesrecords are summarised separately in Table 37.

- 2017: Highland Keoldale, Durness, Sutherland, first-calendar-year, 29 September, photo (A. Williams et al.).
  Isle of May 16–18 September, photo (G. Routledge et al.).
  Lothian Skateraw, 20–21 October, photo (A.F. Thomas et al.).
- 2015: Outer Hebrides Football pitch, Bàgh a' Chaisteil, Barraigh (Castlebay, Barra), 23 October, photo (I. Ricketts).

Little Bunting is a scarce but increasingly regular passage migrant to Scotland, mostly in the Northern Isles, where records are assessed locally. The great majority are found in autumn, but there have also been a few in winter and spring. The increase in frequency in recent years has been dramatic; the mean annual total for the last ten years was 40.1 birds, compared to 18.6 for the preceding tenyear period. There is no obvious explanation for the increase in Scottish observations as the European population is thought to be stable (BirdLife International 2019c).

Whilst the total of 72 for the Northern Isles in 2017 did not match the highest annual total of 97 in 2016, it was still the second highest annual number of sightings.

Two of the three occurrences outwith the Northern Isles in 2017 were on the Scottish mainland. The sighting at Keoldale, Durness, Sutherland was the tenth for the recording area; and the observation at Skateraw, Lothian was only the third for that recording area.

The spring sighting on Fair Isle was notable, lingering from 2–14 May. The last spring occurrences in Scotland were in 2014, with two on Fair Isle, one on Orkney and three in Shetland.

Table 37. Accepted records of Little Bunting in theNorthern Isles, 2017.

Number of birds Date range						
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.		
Fair Isle	1	9	2–14 May	11 Sep–28 Oct		
Orkney	-	7	-	24 Sep-4 Oct		
Shetland	-	55	-	20 Sep-5 Nov		

(Breeds from northern Fennoscandia to eastern Siberia; winters from north-east India and Nepal to south-east Asia.)



Plate 91. Little Bunting, Isle of May, 16–18 September 2017. © Gus Routledge

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#### Appendix 1.

List of records regarded as not proven by SBRC.

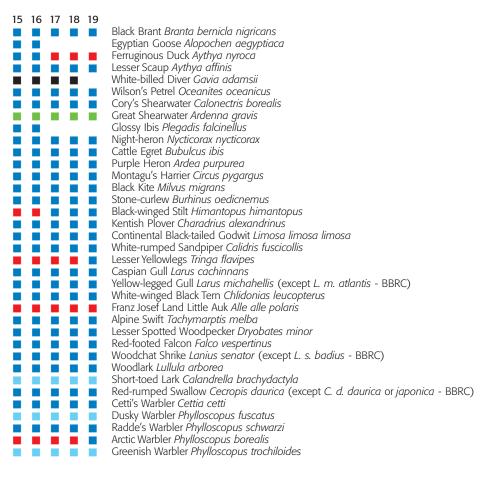
2017: White-billed Diver (23), Dunnet Bay, Caithness, 21 July; White-billed Diver, Embo, Sutherland, Highland, 4–13 October; White-billed Diver, Brora, Sutherland, Highland, 13 October to 5 January 2018; White-billed Diver, Papa Westray, Orkney, 23 October; Whitebilled Diver, Peterhead, North-east Scotland, 28 December; Cory's Shearwater, Fife Ness, Fife, 4 August; Blyth's Reed Warbler, Haskies, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 7 October.

2016: White-billed Divers (12), Mull Head, Papa Westray, Orkney, 10 November to 27 December.

2009: Yellow-legged Gull, Isle of Raasay, Skye & Lochalsh, Highland, 4 July.

#### Appendix 2.

Summary of assessment of records by the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC), the SBRC List, and other committees, 2015–19. All species and subspecies assessed by SBRC are included with two exceptions. First, any species or subspecies not on the *Scottish List* is automatically assessed by SBRC if it is not assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC). Second, some species on the *Scottish List* have additional rare subspecies assessed by BBRC that are not shown here. Species and subspecies considered by BBRC are listed on www.bbrc.org.uk/main-information/species-taxa





■ = SBRC ■ = BBRC ■ = SBRC except Northern Isles (Fair Isle, Orkney and Shetland) ■ = SBRC except Shetland and Outer Hebrides ■ = SBRC except Fair Isle and Shetland ■ = SBRC except Outer Hebrides ■ = SBRC outside core range www.the-soc.org.uk/content/bird-recording/sbrc/identification-of-scottish-and-parrot-crossbills

\* Up to 31 December 2018 only birds not identified to any particular subspecies were considered by SBRC or local committees; birds identified to subspecies were assessed by BBRC. From 1 January 2019 all records to be considered by BBRC.

The species and subspecies considered by SBRC listed here are also shown on www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/sbrc-list-past-lists

#### Appendix 3.

Corrections to previous reports:

2016: Dusky Warbler, Isle of May, 14 October.

Greenish Warbler, Kilminning, Fife, 20 August.

- Arctic Redpoll: four records were inadvertently omitted from Table 32. The missing records are: Fair Isle North Shirva, second-calendar-year or older, 7–16 April, trapped, photo (C.R. Hatsell, S. Thomson *et al.*), *A. h. hornemanni*.
- Fair Isle School Brae, first-calendar-year or older, male, 9–11 November (D. Parnaby, D.N. Shaw), *A. h. exilipes*.
- Fair Isle School Brae, first-calendar-year, 10–11 November, photo (D. Parnaby, D.N. Shaw), *A. h. exilipes*.
- **Orkney** Queenamidda, Rendall, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 19–20 November, trapped, photo (A. Forsyth, M. Rendall, B. Ribbands), *A. h. exilipes*.

2013: Night-heron, Boreray, St Kilda, 4 May 2011.

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