



Plate 71. Parrot Crossbill, male, Helendale & Sound, Lerwick, Mainland, Shetland, 3–13 October 2017. © Rory Tallack

Scottish Birds Records Committee report on rare birds in Scotland, 2018

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on behalf of the Scottish Birds Records Committee

This is the 11th annual report of the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC), describing rare birds recorded in Scotland during 2018. Details of previous annual reports that cover the period 2005 to 2017 can be found in McNerny & McGowan (2019), some of 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 2019, White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* being removed from the SBRC List, with records now assessed by local Scottish committees. Additionally, from this date, all records of Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* and Arctic Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni* are 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. From 1 January 2020, Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* and Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* were removed from the SBRC List, and instead are considered by BBRC.

The range and number of rare birds seen in Scotland were similar to other years, with no exceptional events. However, a number of SBRC species were not seen in Scotland during 2018 including: Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Kentish Plover, Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*, Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*.

During 2017, the influx of Parrot Crossbills *Loxia pytyopsittacus* to the Northern Isles was a major occurrence. Seventeen birds were recorded in total, with up to 14 seen in Shetland, two in Orkney and one reaching the Outer Hebrides. This was the first significant influx into Scotland since 1982, when 20 appeared (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

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 2018, Forrester *et al.* 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 (2018).

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 2018, 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-2018 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-2018 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 2016-20. 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, Mark Lewis (replacing Martin Scott in 2019), David Parnaby, Dave Pullan, Martin Scott, David Steel and Mark Warren. Chris McInerney 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/bird-recording/recent-decisions as soon as they are processed, and thereafter in annual reports, such as this, published in *Scottish Birds*. When published, 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. The Excel spreadsheets have also been placed on the SOC website at www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/sbrc-species-analysis, from where they can be downloaded.

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, Ian Broadbent, Paul Collin, Martin Cook, Jim Dickson, Iain English, Rob Fray, Nick Littlewood, Sinclair Mason, Russell Neave, David Parkinson, David Parnaby, Scott Patterson, 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.

Systematic list of accepted records

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* 19 (of 23 birds): 52: 1

Table 1. Accepted record of Lesser Scaup in Scotland, 2018.

2018: Highland Alturlie, Inverness-shire, adult, male, 18 April, photo (H. Addelee *et al.*).

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 seen. A number of individuals have remained for extended periods, sometimes moving between sites, and have returned in following years.

The Alturlie, Highland bird was found amongst Scaup *Aythya marila* on saltwater which is unusual as most Lesser Scaup seen in Scotland are found on freshwater, often instead associating with Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula*. There was a previous sighting at this locality, an adult female observed between December 2013 and January 2014 (Hudson *et al.* 2014).

(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: 309: 28

Table 2. Accepted records of White-billed Diver in Scotland, 2018.

2018: **Caithness** Holborn Head, adult, 7-8 January, photo (R. Hughes *et al.*).
Fife Fife Ness, adult, 26 October (K.D. Shaw).
Fife Fife Ness, adult, 27 October, photo (B. Farquharson).
Highland Broadford Bay, Skye, Skye & Lochalsh, 6 February, photo (N. Bennett).
Highland Tongue Bay, Sutherland, adult, 19 May, photo (J.A. Hanlon).
Highland Tarbat Ness, Easter Ross, Ross & Cromarty, adult, 22 May (D. Tanner).
Moray & Nairn Cullen, adults, three, 1-29 April, photo (D. Pullan *et al.* per Local Recorder).
Moray & Nairn Portknockie, adult, 9 April (A. Coia, K.D. Shaw).
Moray & Nairn Burghead, adult, 16-25 April, photo (J. Clarke, A. Saunders *et al.*).
North-east Scotland Lido beach, Peterhead, dead on tideline, 29 April, photo (D. Grant).
Orkney The Ouse, Finstown, Mainland, adult, 6 January, photo (H. & D. Aiton).
Orkney Houton Head, Orphir, Mainland, adult, returning, 2017 to 26 March, photo (McInerny & McGowan 2019).
Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, adult, 6-7 May, photo (S.J. Davies).
Orkney South Bay ('Nouster Bay'), North Ronaldsay, adult, 29 May, photo (A. Saunders *et al.*).
Orkney Papa Sound, Westray, 19 June (M. Hoit *et al.*).

Plate 72. White-billed Diver, Holborn Head, Caithness, 7-8 January 2018. © Rob Hughes



Orkney Brig o' Waithe, Mainland, adult, 19 December, photo (S. Charlton).

Outer Hebrides Eòlaigearraidh (Eoligarra), Barra, 25 March to 10 May, photo (B.A. Taylor).

Outer Hebrides Sgiogarstaigh, Nis (Skigersta, Ness), Isle of Lewis, two, 26-29 March, photo (B.A.E. Marr).

Outer Hebrides Port Nis (Port of Ness), Isle of Lewis, two, 14 April, photo (B.A.E. Marr).

Outer Hebrides Sgiogarstaigh, Nis (Skigersta, Ness), Isle of Lewis, 14 April, photo (B.A.E. Marr).

Outer Hebrides Sgiogarstaigh, Nis (Skigersta, Ness), Isle of Lewis, 29 April, photo (R.D. Wemyss).

Outer Hebrides Àird a'Mhuile (Ardvule), South Uist, 31 October, photo (J.B. Kemp).

Outer Hebrides Àird Mhòr (Ardmhor), Barra, 24 November to 2019, photo (B.A. Taylor).

Shetland Bluemull Sound, adult, returning, 2 January to 7 April, photo (W.T.S. Miles *et al.*).

Shetland Mousa Sound, adult, returning, 19 January to 9 February (J.G. Brown *et al.*).

Shetland South Nesting Bay, Mainland, adult, returning, 19 January to 3 May (W.T.S. Miles *et al.*).

Shetland Flubersgerdie, Unst, adult, 30 April, photo (D. Cooper).

Shetland Lamba Ness, Unst, adult, 2 November, photo (D. Cooper).

Shetland South Nesting Bay, Mainland, adult, returning, 2 November into 2019, photo (A.H.J. Harrop *et al.*).

White-billed Diver is a scarce though regular visitor to Scotland, with up to 40 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 (McInerney & Shaw 2020). In Shetland and Orkney, a few wintering individuals return to the same sites in successive years, and a very small number 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 is impossible to distinguish these and they are registered as new, SBRC total numbers are probably inflated.

The two Fife Ness observations, the fifth and sixth for the recording area, are interesting as they likely relate to the wintering population

known to occur in the North Sea (McInerney & Shaw 2020). Increasing numbers of White-billed Divers are being seen along the British east coast, particularly during autumn seawatches, with digital cameras aiding this reporting. The second Fife Ness bird was identified by the observer from a photographic image.

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: 32: 1

Table 3. Accepted record of Cory's Shearwater in Scotland, 2018.

2018: Dumfries & Galloway Corsewall Point, 8 August (B.D. Henderson).

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

The only bird seen during 2018 was just the second record for Dumfries & Galloway, with the first seen from the Mull of Galloway on 5 June 1996.

(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): 9,227: 1
(excluding 'At Sea' records)

Table 4. Accepted record of Great Shearwater in Scotland, 2018.

2018: Dumfries & Galloway Corsewall Point, 19 September (B.D. Henderson).

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.

The only bird seen during 2018, by the same lucky observer who saw Cory's Shearwater at the same site in the same year, was the fifth record for Dumfries & Galloway. The most recent previous record was of two seen from the Stranraer to Larne ferry, an undated sighting during 1980.

(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.)

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

3: 15: 4

Table 5. Accepted records of Cattle Egret in Scotland, 2018.

2018: Argyll Calgary, Mull, 12 October to 13 November, photo (W. McPhail, A. Prasad *et al.*).
Clyde North Porton Farm, Bishopton, 12-17 November, photo (G. Keyes *et al.*).
Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock WWT, 7 October, photo (A. Hiller *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Frobost, Rubh' Àird-mhicheil & Ormaclèit, South Uist, 16-28 October, photo (J.B. Kemp, I. Thompson *et al.*).

Cattle Egret remains very rare in Scotland, although more are being found. This reflects the large increase in numbers present in



Plate 73. Cattle Egret, Calgary, Mull, Argyll, 12 October to 13 November 2018. © Anand Prasad

England, where over 200 appeared in 2007, with the species first breeding in 2008; a second influx occurred in 2016, resulting in breeding and flocks of 51 and 87 observed in Devon and Somerset during 2018 (McInerny & McGowan 2019).

(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.)

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

45: 6: 0

(excluding young from known Scottish nests)

Table 6. Accepted record of Montagu's Harrier in Scotland, 2013.

2013: Fair Isle Da Water & various locations, second-calendar-year, 3 June, photo (D. Forsman, G. Gordon, D. Parnaby *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 51 birds to the end of 2018 excludes fledged young from these breeding attempts.



Plate 74. Montagu's Harrier, second-calendar-year, Da Water & various locations, Fair Isle, 3 June 2013. © David Parnaby

The 2013 Fair Isle bird was initially thought to be a Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* and submitted as such to BBRC. Circulation of the file was inconclusive with it suspected that the bird was instead a second-calendar-year Montagu's Harrier. Expert independent opinion was sought and this identification confirmed. Immatures of these two species are extremely difficult to separate having a similar shape and structure, very different to the more distinctive adults.

(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: 32: 2

Table 7. Accepted records of Black Kite in Scotland, 2018.

2018: **Fair Isle** Plantation & roaming, 7-12 June, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*); same **Orkney** Brides, North Ronaldsay, 7 June, photo (S.J. Davies). **Shetland** Vigon, Yell, 24 May, photo (C. Dodd, S. Pinder).

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 2007-18, following just nine in the period 1997-2006.

The bird seen on both Fair Isle and Orkney was recognisable as the same individual through examination of photographs. These images also raised the possibility that the bird was a Black Kite of one of the eastern subspecies, such as *M. m. lineatus* or a hybrid. Accordingly, the record was forwarded to BBRC for subspecific identification, where it is currently being considered.

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



Plate 75. Stone-curlew, Rigifa Pond, Cove Bay, North-east Scotland, 19 August 2018. © Graeme Ruthven

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*
29: 7: 2

Table 8. Accepted records of Stone-curlew in Scotland, 2018.

- 2018: **Highland** Balnakeil, Sutherland, adult, 15 May, photo (C. Leslie).
North-east Scotland Rigifa Pond, Cove Bay, 19 August, photo (B.J. Stewart *et al.*).

Stone-curlew is a very rare visitor to Scotland; there were just 38 observations to the end of 2018 with almost half of these in the Northern Isles, and the remainder scattered across the country, though mostly along the east coast. There is a peak in occurrence in late May and early June.

Such is the rarity of Stone-curlew in Scotland it is a remarkable coincidence that Balnakeil, Sutherland has hosted an adult of the species twice: the 2018 record listed here and another on 28-30 May 2016 (McGowan & McNerny 2018). Despite being two years apart it is therefore possible that these two records refer to the same returning individual.

(Nominate *oedicnemus* breeds in open habitats in southern Europe east to the Caucasus, extending as far north as England and Poland; migrates south to winter in Spain and North Africa. Five other subspecies.)

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*
15: 7: 0

Table 9. Accepted record of Kentish Plover in Scotland, 2017.

- 2017: **Outer Hebrides** Borgh, Beàrnaraigh (Borve, Berneray), 15 May, photo, colour-ringed (G. Wyatt).

Kentish Plover is a very rare migrant to Scotland. Almost all records have been in spring from the east coast of the mainland on sandy beaches, with just one winter observation.

The 2017 Outer Hebrides bird was colour-ringed, showing that it had originated from Brittany, France where it was marked in 2015/16, with likely the same individual seen at Tacumshin, Wexford, Ireland in April 2017.

(A cosmopolitan species with several subspecies, including nominate *alexandrinus*, which breeds patchily in Europe, North Africa and Asia. European birds are migratory and normally spend the winter in sub-Saharan Africa.)

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*
69: 91: 3

Table 10. Accepted records of White-rumped Sandpiper in Scotland, 2018.

- 2018: **Outer Hebrides** Baile Gharbhaidh (Balgava), South Uist, adult, 18 September (J.B. Kemp).
Shetland Virkie, Mainland, adult, 15-23 August, photo (P.V. Harvey *et al.*).
Shetland Virkie, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 14 October, photo (R.M. Fray *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.

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

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

O: 10: 1

Table 11. Accepted record of Caspian Gull in Scotland, 2018.

2018: Fife Leven, second-calendar-year, 11-13 May, photo (M.A. Wilkinson *et al.*) (*Scottish Birds* 39: 75-78).

Caspian Gull is extremely rare in Scotland. Occurrences have been from late autumn to spring. Most observations 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 recorded 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).

The only Caspian Gull observed in Scotland during 2018 was the first record for Fife (Wilkinson 2019). Found on Leven beach this

second-calendar-year was seen by just a few observers over its three-day stay.

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

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

12: 25: 3

Table 12. Accepted records of Yellow-legged Gull in Scotland, 2018.

2018: Argyll Loch Gilp, second-calendar-year, 17 May, photo (J.M. Dickson).

Caithness Thurso, adult, 15 April, photo (R. Hughes).

Clyde Balgray Reservoir, second-calendar-year/third-calendar-year, 1-20 January, photo, same as 2017 (McGowan & McInerny 2019); returning Balgray Reservoir, third-calendar-year/fourth-calendar-year, 8 December to 2019 (J.J. Sweeney).

Clyde Blythswood Square, Glasgow, adult, 5-10 April, photo (R. Miller *et al.*).



Plate 76 a–b. Yellow-legged Gull, adult, Blythswood Square, Glasgow, Clyde, 5–10 April 2018. © Rod Miller

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, the 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 2020). All potential records of this subspecific taxon, which breeds on the Atlantic Islands of the Azores, Madeira and Canaries, should be sent to BBRC (Appendix 2).

Away from Clyde the species remains very rare in Scotland shown by the birds in Caithness and Argyll being the first and third records for their respective recording areas.

The Blythswood Square observation was notable in that the bird was associating with breeding Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* at a central Glasgow location where the latter two species nest on rooftops. The bird was holding territory and was seen displaying and long-calling to gulls of the other two species, suggesting that it was attempting to pair up and mate. This is the first time that such behaviour of a Yellow-legged Gull has been noted in Scotland, although hybrid pairs have been observed in southern England (Olsen & Larsson 2004).

(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: 23: 1

Table 13. Accepted record of White-winged Black Tern in Scotland, 2018.

2018: **Highland** Melvich, Sutherland, adult, 30 May, photo (R. Hughes, D. Stevens, P. Stronach *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.

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

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*
86: 28: 2

Table 14. Accepted records of Woodchat Shrike in Scotland, 2018.

2018: **Shetland** Baltasound, Unst, adult, male, 17 April, photo, died, skin at National Museums Scotland (accession number NMS.Z.2018.121) (R.J. Brookes *et al. per* Local Recorder).
Lothian Barns Ness, first-calendar-year, 16-29 September, photo (I.J. Andrews, M. Till *et al.*) (*Scottish Birds* 39: 81-82).

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 Lothian bird was third record for the recording area, with the last an adult at Tynninghame on 19 August 1967 (Andrews & Till 2019). Many appreciated its extended stay, almost all of whom could add it to their Lothian List.

(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): 27: 2

Table 15. Accepted records of Woodlark in Scotland, 2018.

2018: **Fife** Ferry Hills, North Queensferry, 10 November, photo (G. Sparshott).
Orkney Sandar, North Ronaldsay, 3 April (G. Gay).

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).

The 'flyover' sighting in Fife was the first for the recording area, and only the second mainland occurrence since 2000. Since 1950, the majority of observations have been on the Northern Isles, with 70% on Fair Isle and Shetland.

(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 north-west Africa. Most populations move south to wintering areas, with more northerly populations moving the farthest.)

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*
286: 96: 3

Table 16. Accepted record of Short-toed Lark in Scotland, 2018. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 17.

2018: **Isle of May** 26 May to 2 June, photo (J. Harrison, M. Newell *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.

This was the sixth occurrence on the Isle of May, with the last on 28 May 1998.

Table 17. Accepted records of Short-toed Lark in the Northern Isles, 2018.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	-	-	-
Orkney	-	-	-	-
Shetland	-	2	-	1–13 Oct

There were only two sightings in the Northern Isles and this was the second consecutive blank year for Fair Isle.

(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: 50: 2

Table 18. Accepted records of Red-rumped Swallow in Scotland, 2018.

2018: **Fair Isle** various locations, adult, 3-4 May, photo (R. Cope *et al.*).
Shetland Ham, Foula, 1-2 May, photo (G. & D. Atherton).
At Sea c.50 km east of Lybster, Caithness, 26 May, photo (H. Verdaat *et al. per* Local Recorder), identified as *C. d daurica/japonica* (Holt *et al.* 2019).

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. An individual of an eastern subspecies, either *daurica* or *japonica*, was observed on Orkney and then Skye, Skye & Lochalsh, Highland, in June 2011 (McGowan *et al.* 2013).

The Fair Isle and Shetland sightings conform to the usual timing and distribution. The 'At Sea' occurrence is the second of Asian origin, though the current policy precludes 'At Sea' records being included in the overall total. This bird was first accepted as a Red-rumped Swallow *sensu lato* by SBRC before being forwarded to BBRC where it was accepted as either *daurica* or *japonica*.



Plate 77. Red-rumped Swallow (right), Furze, Fair Isle, 3–4 May 2018. © Richard Cope

Almost 70% of sightings in Scotland have been made since 2000.

(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: 60: 1

Dusky Warbler is a rare but more or less annual visitor to Scotland, with the autumn migration period accounting for all but two sightings. 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.

For the second year running, none were recorded outwith the Northern Isles where there was only a single sighting on Shetland, at Garth, South Nesting, Mainland on 8 November. Radde's Warbler, a species with a similar eastern distribution and rare autumn incidence in Scotland to Dusky Warbler, was not observed in Scotland during 2018.

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

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
157: 108: 6

Table 19. Accepted record of Greenish Warbler in Scotland, 2018, and additional records from 2014. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 20.

2018: **Isle of May** 27-28 May, trapped, photo (M. Newell *et al.*).

2014: **Outer Hebrides** Bornais (Bornish), South Uist, first-calendar-year, 3-4 September (A. Stevenson).
Outer Hebrides Bàgh a' Chaisteil (Castlebay), Barra, first-calendar-year, 13 September (A. Stevenson).

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.

The occurrence on the Isle of May was the first spring sighting on the island since two birds in June 2012.

Table 20. Accepted records of Greenish Warbler in the Northern Isles, 2018.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	1	-	31 Aug–3 Sep
Orkney	-	1	-	7–12 Sep
Shetland	2	1	27–31 May	1–2 Aug

The sightings in the Northern Isles conformed to the usual pattern.

(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: 122: 13

Table 21. Accepted records of Blyth's Reed Warbler in Scotland, 2018. Records for Fair Isle and Shetland are summarised in Table 22.

- 2018:** **Orkney** Holland House, North Ronaldsay, first-calendar-year, 3 October, trapped, photo, later died (S.J. Davies *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Creachan, Brèibhig (Brevig), Barra, first-calendar-year, 4-5 October, trapped, photo (K. Gillon *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, 66% 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.

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).

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

Table 22. Accepted records of Blyth's Reed Warbler in Fair Isle and Shetland, 2018.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	1	3	27 May	8–19 Sep
Shetland	-	7	-	6 Sep–18 Oct

(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. 387: 59

Table 23. Accepted records of Marsh Warbler in Scotland, 2018. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 24.

- 2018:** **Argyll** Balephuill, Tiree, 3 June, photo (J. Bowler *et al.*).
Caithness St John's Pool, male, singing, 10 May to 10 June, photo (J. Smith *et al.*).
Caithness Skirza, two, males, singing, 2 June to 7 July, photo (R. Hughes, N. O'Hanlon *et al.*).
Fife Fife Ness, male, singing, 12 May, photo (M.A. Wilkinson *et al.*).
Isle of May 26 May, trapped, photo (M. Newell *et al.*).



Plate 78. Marsh Warbler, male, St John's Pool, Caithness, 10 May to 10 June 2018. © Julian Smith

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 three birds in Caithness were the first for the recording area since 2005.

Table 24. Accepted records of Marsh Warbler in the Northern Isles, 2018.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	12	5	19 May–20 Jun	3 Aug–8 Sep
Orkney	2	1	30 May–8 Jun	8 Sep
Shetland	30	3	12 May–28 Jun	28 Jul–6 Oct

The 60 Marsh Warblers observed in Scotland during 2018 was the second highest total in the period 2005–18, when 68 were seen in 2008, and this total is double the annual mean (29.8) for that period. The fluctuating spring annual abundance of this species is related to the prevalence of easterly winds in late May and early June, which are presumed to cause birds to overshoot their breeding grounds in Fennoscandia during northerly spring migration from Africa (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

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

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*
53: 15: 3

Table 25. Accepted records of Melodious Warbler in Scotland, 2018.

2018: Borders	St Abb's Head, first-calendar-year, 2 September, photo (D. Graham <i>et al.</i>).
Shetland	Melby, Sandness, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 3 September, photo (R. Tallack <i>et al.</i>).
Shetland	Lunna, Mainland, 29 September to 8 October, photo (D. Bradnum <i>et al.</i> per Local Recorder).

Melodious Warbler is a very rare spring and autumn migrant to Scotland, recorded in most years but not all. About three quarters of occurrences have been in the Northern Isles.

The sighting at St Abb's Head was only the second for Borders, with the first occurrence at the same site in May 2002. Over the period 2000–18, the annual mean total for Scotland was 1.6 birds. The last spring sighting was made in May 2013 on Fair Isle.



Plate 79. Melodious Warbler, first-calendar-year, Melby, Sandness, Mainland, Shetland, 3 September 2018. © Rory Tallack

(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: 95: 5

Table 26. Accepted record of Subalpine Warbler in Scotland, 2018. Northern Isle records are summarised separately in Table 27.

2018: Argyll Torosa, Cornaigbeg, Tiree, male, 8 June (K. Gillon), *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.

Records to subspecies level have been assessed by BBRC, while Subalpine Warbler *sensu lato* 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 27.

The Cornaigbeg bird was the second consecutive annual occurrence on Tiree; all three records for Argyll are from that island.

Table 27. Accepted records of Subalpine Warbler in the Northern Isles, 2018 and additional records for 2016 and 2007 (*per Holt et al.* 2019, and local committees).

2018: Fair Isle Lower Stoneybrek, female, 22 May (M. Golley), *S. cantillans* species.

Fair Isle Lower Stoneybrek, second-calendar-year, female, 1 June to 31 July, trapped, DNA analysis, photo (J. Bloor, D. Roche *et al.*), *S. c. albistriata*.

Shetland Brekins, Foula, second-calendar-year, male, 17 May, photo (D. & G. Atherton), *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*.

Shetland Burrafirth, Unst, female, 19-21 September, photo (I. Johnson, D. Watson *et al.*), *S. cantillans* species.

2016: Shetland Mossbank, Mainland, second-calendar-year/adult, male, 9-11 May, photo (G. Graham *et al.* *per* Local Recorder), *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*.

2007: Caithness Wick, second-calendar-year, male, 5 May, photo (D. May *per* Local Recorder), *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*.

(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: 28: 5

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 five occurrences in 2018. On Orkney, birds were seen twice at Holland House, North Ronaldsay, first on 16-17 May and then on 13-21 August. Three observations were made on Shetland: at Burns, Foula on 24 April, at Everland, Fetlar on 16 May and at Dale of Walls, Mainland on 1 June.

Also reported here are two records from 2017, both from Fair Isle. A sighting at Furze on 2 May was omitted from last year's report. A bird seen at Utra on 16 May and previously accepted by BBRC as Thrush Nightingale *L. luscinia* was reviewed and considered not proven (Holt *et al.* 2019); it is now accepted locally as Nightingale. The relevant total in the header above has been adjusted accordingly.

(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.)

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

105: 90: 4

Table 28. Accepted records of Citrine Wagtail in Scotland, 2018.

- 2018:** **Outer Hebrides** Hirta, St Kilda, first-calendar-year, 30 September, photo (C.R. Hatsell).
Shetland Culsetter, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 31 August (R.M. Fray).
Shetland Norwick, Unst, first-calendar-year, 21-22 September, photo (K. Bayes, I. Johnson, M. Kerby, D. Watson *et al.*); same, Haroldswick and Norwick, Unst, 30 September to 4 October, photo (P. Cosgrove, S. O'Hara *et al.*).
Shetland Gardie, Bressay, first-calendar-year, 2-13 October, photo (A. Marashi, S.A. Stirrup *et al. per* Local Recorder).

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 (85%) 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 many recording areas.

(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.)

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

151: 203: 4

Table 29. Accepted record of Olive-backed Pipit in Scotland, 2018. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in the text.

- 2018:** **Isle of May** 11-13 October, trapped, photo (T. Southall *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. On Fair Isle, two were seen:

the first at Stackhoull on 13 October and another at Johnny Peats on 17 October. There was only one sighting on Shetland, at Aywick, Yell on 13 October. The mid-October dates are typical.

The four observations in Scotland in 2018 is the lowest annual total since three sightings in 2008. In the period 2009-17, the mean annual total was 19 birds, so 2018 represents a marked decrease.

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

Arctic Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni*

366: 160: 7

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).

Records to subspecies level have been assessed by BBRC, while Arctic Redpoll *sensu lato* 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 2018. A summary of records accepted by BBRC is provided in Table 30.

Table 30. Accepted records of Arctic Redpoll in Scotland, 2018 and additional records from 2017. (*per* Holt *et al.* 2018, and local committees).

- 2018:** **Borders** Bell Wood, Cranshaws, first-calendar-year or older, 16 December to 2019, photo (D. Graham *et al.*), *A. h. exilipes*.
Moray & Nairn Ordiequish Forest, third-calendar-year or older, male, 25 March, photo (S.J. Message, S. Mills), *A. h. exilipes*.
Shetland Skibberhoull, Whalsay, third-calendar-year or older, male, 7 February to 17 March, photo (J.L. Irvine *et al.*). *A. c. exilipes*.
Shetland Foula, first-calendar-year or older, 29 October, photo (G. Atherton), *A. h. exilipes*.
Shetland Norwick, Unst, first-calendar-year or older, 29 October, photo (D. Cooper, M.G. Pennington, B.H. Thomason), *A. h. exilipes*.
Shetland Mid Dale, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 30 October, photo (R. Riddington, R.M. Tallack), *A. h. exilipes*.

Shetland Cauldbeck, Baltasound, Unst, first-calendar-year or older, 26 December to 2019, photo (B.H. Thomason), *A. h. exilipes*.

- 2017: **North-east Scotland** Nigg Bay, Aberdeen, first-calendar-year, 18 October, trapped, photo (S. Langlois, M. Lewis, A. Penn, G. Platt), *A. h. exilipes*
Orkney Christie's Brae, Stromness, Mainland, first-calendar-year or older, 13-15 December, photo (P. Slater, T. Wootton), *A. h. exilipes*.
Shetland Norwick, Unst, first-calendar-year or older, 8-14 October, photo (D. Cooper, J.F. Cooper *et al.*), *A. h. exilipes*.
Shetland Norwick & Skaw, Unst, first-calendar-year, 23 November, photo (B.H. Thomason), *A. h. exilipes*.

Only seven Arctic Redpolls were sighted in Scotland in 2018, all of them *A. c. exilipes*. The bird in Borders was the fourth in that area, and observed at the same site as the third in January 2011.

Four *exilipes* seen in 2017 have been added to the total in the header above.

(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. exilipes* elsewhere. Winters to the south of the breeding range.)

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*
many: 39 passage records of 128 birds in 7 influxes: 0

Table 31. Accepted records of Parrot Crossbill in Scotland, 2017.

- 2017: **Orkney** Heddle Hill, Finstown, Mainland, two males, 6-7 October, photo (A.J. Leitch *et al.*)
Outer Hebrides Langais Wood, North Uist, female, 23 October, photo (S.E. Duffield *et al.*).
Shetland Setters Hill Estate, Baltasound, Unst, two males, three females, 2-11 October, photo (N.C. Crouch, P.J. Eele *et al.*); same Haroldswick, Unst, 4 October, photo (A.M. Conlin, N.C. Crouch, P.J. Eele *et al.*).
Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, one male, two females, 4 October, photo (A.M. Conlin, N.C. Crouch, P.J. Eele *et al.*).
Shetland Sand, Mainland, two males, one female, 3-4 October, photo (*per* Local Recorder).
Shetland Helendale & Sound, Lerwick, Mainland, two males, one female, 3-13 October, photo (W. Bowell, P.V. Harvey, R.M. Tallack *et al.*).

A total of 17 Parrot Crossbills were observed in six groups across three recording areas, with all present between 2-23 October. The sighting in Orkney was the fourth, the last one seen in October 1985. In Outer Hebrides, a single observation was made at the same location as the previous sighting, four birds in October



Plate 80. Parrot Crossbill, male, Helendale & Sound, Lerwick, Mainland, Shetland, 3-13 October 2017. © Jim Nicolson



Plate 81 a–d. Parrot Crossbills. **a).** female, Langais Wood, North Uist, Outer Hebrides, 23 October 2017. © *Steve Duffield*. **b).** male, Helendale & Sound, Lerwick, Mainland, Shetland, 3–13 October 2017. © *Rory Tallack*. **c).** male, Haroldswick, Unst, Shetland, 4 October 2017. © *Mark Wilkinson*. **d).** female, Helendale & Sound, Lerwick, Mainland, Shetland, 3–13 October 2017. © *Jim Nicolson*

1982. The remaining birds were noted at various localities in Shetland, the recording area where the last sighting took place in October 1994. This was the first influx into Scotland since 1982, when 20 were recorded (Forrester *et al.* 2007).

(Breeds in Scots Pine forests from Scandinavia eastwards across Finland and Russia to the Kola Peninsula and Pechora River.)

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*
many: 57: 5

Table 32. Accepted record of Ortolan Bunting in Scotland, 2018. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 33.

2018: Isle of May first-calendar-year, 1-2 September (B. Minshull *et al.*).

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. The general trend of decreasing numbers over the last two decades appears to be continuing. This reflects the steep decline of the west European population since 1980 thought to be due to habitat destruction and unsustainable hunting (Jiguet *et al.* 2019).

The Ortolan Bunting on the Isle of May was the first to be recorded there since September 2010. Outwith the Northern Isles, this is the only area with a total in double figures (31 birds). The dates for the four Northern Isles records were typical. The annual mean total since 2000 is 4.6 birds, thus the five sightings in 2018 is normal for the period.

Table 33. Accepted records of Oortolan Bunting in the Northern Isles, 2018.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	2	-	6–27 Sep
Orkney	-	-	-	-
Shetland	2	-	16–31 May	-

(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: 453: 6

Table 34. Accepted records of Little Bunting in Scotland, 2018. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 35.

2018: **Outer Hebrides** Linsiadar (Linshader), Isle of Lewis, 9–10 April, photo (A. Laffin *per* Local Recorder).
Outer Hebrides Hirta, St Kilda, 9 July, photo (C.R. Hatsell).

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 total sightings in Scotland in 2018 was six, this being the lowest number since 1999 when only four birds were seen; remarkably this was Fair Isle’s first blank year since 1956. The mean annual total for the ten years to 2018 was 39.8 birds, so this fall-off in observations is marked. In Scotland, Little Buntings are rare in April and were previously unknown in July; this makes the two observations in the Outer Hebrides notable.

Table 35. Accepted records of Little Bunting in the Northern Isles, 2018.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	-	-	-
Orkney	-	1	-	11 Oct
Shetland	-	3	-	17 Sep–13 Oct

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

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Appendix 1

List of records regarded as not proven by SBRC.

- 2018: Lesser Scaup St John's Pool, Caithness, 1–2 July; White-billed Diver Stennabreck, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 3 March; White-billed Diver Lurn, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 12 March; Night-heron Lochmaben, Dumfries & Galloway, 19 August; Montagu's Harrier Strath Farm, The Laggan, Argyll, 12 May; Yellow-legged Gull Bishop Burn, Loch Ryan, Dumfries & Galloway, 26–27 July; Yellow-legged Gull Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, 31 July; Yellow-legged Gull Bishop Burn & Soleburn, Loch Ryan, Dumfries & Galloway, 7 August to 1 September; Yellow-legged Gull Loch of Skene, North-east Scotland, 22 August; Red-footed Falcon Ancum, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 27 August; Woodlark Loch Park, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 20 March; Cirl Bunting Port Righ, Carradale, Argyll, 11 April.
- 2017: Radde's Warbler Barns Ness, Lothian, 16 October; Parrot Crossbill Auld Haa, Fair Isle, 3 October.

Appendix 2

Summary of assessment of records by the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC), the SBRC List, and other committees, 2016–20. 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

16	17	18	19	20	
■	■	■	■	■	Black Brant <i>Branta bernicla nigricans</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Ferruginous Duck <i>Aythya nyroca</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Lesser Scaup <i>Aythya affinis</i>
■	■	■	■	■	White-billed Diver <i>Gavia adamsii</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Wilson's Petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Cory's Shearwater <i>Calonectris borealis</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Great Shearwater <i>Ardena gravis</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Night-heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Montagu's Harrier <i>Circus pygargus</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>

■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Stone-curlew <i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Continental Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa limosa</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	White-rumped Sandpiper <i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Lesser Yellowlegs <i>Tringa flavipes</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Caspian Gull <i>Larus cachinnans</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Yellow-legged Gull <i>Larus michahellis</i> (except <i>L. m. atlantis</i> - BBRC)
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	White-winged Black Tern <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Franz Josef Land Little Auk <i>Alle alle polaris</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Alpine Swift <i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dryobates minor</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Red-footed Falcon <i>Falco vespertinus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Woodchat Shrike <i>Lanius senator</i> (except <i>L. s. badius</i> - BBRC)
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Short-toed Lark <i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Red-rumped Swallow <i>Cecropis daurica</i> (except <i>C. d. daurica</i> or <i>japonica</i> - BBRC)
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Cetti's Warbler <i>Cettia cetti</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Dusky Warbler <i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Radde's Warbler <i>Phylloscopus schwarzi</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Arctic Warbler <i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Greenish Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Blyth's Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Marsh Warbler <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Melodious Warbler <i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Dartford Warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Subalpine Warbler <i>Sylvia cantillans</i> *
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Nightingale <i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i> (except <i>L. m. golzii</i> - BBRC)
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Red-flanked Bluetail <i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Citrine Wagtail <i>Motacilla citreola</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Olive-backed Pipit <i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Arctic Redpoll <i>Acanthis hornemanni</i> *
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Parrot Crossbill <i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Scottish Crossbill <i>Loxia scotica</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Serin <i>Serinus serinus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Ortolan Bunting <i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Cirl Bunting <i>Emberiza cirlus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Little Bunting <i>Emberiza pusilla</i>

■ = 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

Correction to previous reports:

2017: Add record - Nightingale: Fair Isle, Furse, 2 May 2017

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