

Scottish Birds Records Committee report on rare birds in Scotland, 2020

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on behalf of the Scottish Birds Records Committee

This is the 13th annual report of the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC) describing rare birds recorded in Scotland during 2020. Details of previous annual reports that cover the period 2005 to 2019 can be found listed in McNerny & McGowan (2021), 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

Changes to the SBRC List from 1 January 2020 are as follows: Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* and Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* are removed from the List. Records for Lesser Scaup and Kentish Plover are now considered by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) and the four other species assessed by local Scottish committees. From March 2022, SBRC will no longer consider records of Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica* (Lewis & McNerny 2022a, 2022b, www.the-soc.org.uk/content/bird-recording/sbrc/identification-of-scottish-and-parrot-crossbills). For a summary of these changes see Appendix 2 and www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/sbrc-list-past-lists

The distribution and number of most rare birds seen in Scotland during 2020 was similar to other years. However, two raptor species were seen after a break of a few years: two Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* were noted, the first since 2017; and two Red-footed Falcons *Falco vespertinus* were reported after a longer gap of five years, the last being in 2015. Higher numbers of the large shearwaters were observed with nine Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris borealis* and 13 Great Shearwaters *Ardenna gravis*. Furthermore, the highest or equal highest annual totals were recorded for a number of species: five Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, an exceptional two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos minor* (the second and third national records), 10 Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius senator*, 11 Radde's Warblers *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, 15 Citrine Wagtails *Motacilla citreola*, and two Serins *Serinus serinus*.

In contrast, a number of SBRC species were not seen in Scotland during 2020 including Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*, Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, and Black Kite *Milvus migrans*.

Format of the report

The species accounts in the report follow a standard format. Nomenclature and taxonomic sequence follow the latest version of the *Scottish List*, which follows the 9th Edition of the British List and subsequent changes adopted by the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU 2022, Forrester *et al.* 2021; www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/the-scottish-list).

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 a few 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 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 and so are not added to totals.
- Total number in the current year (2020).

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, which are displayed here www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/sbrc-species-analysis

Immediately below the header line is a table of accepted Scottish records for 2020, with details. For those species assessed locally in the Northern Isles (Shetland, Fair Isle and Orkney), 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-2020 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 for completeness. Revised and/or corrected details are also provided for some pre-2019 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 gender 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 at the location or observed throughout; in some cases, it may have been observed only on the first and last dates and may even have moved elsewhere.
- 'Found dead' or 'died' if applicable.
- 'Trapped' if applicable.
- Use of DNA analysis to aid identification.
- Existence of a photograph, video or audio recording, 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 SBRC.

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

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 2017–21. Appendix 3 lists corrections to the SBRC Excel spreadsheets.

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 Lewis (Chairman from November 2021), Jim Dickson, Rob Fray, Dave Pullan, Chris Rodger (from November 2021), David Steel and Mark Warren. Chris McNerny is non-voting Secretary and Bob McGowan is non-voting Museum Consultant. Mark Wilkinson was Chairman up to November 2021. For more information about SBRC see www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/about-sbrc

Records accepted by SBRC are announced on the SOC website as soon as they are processed at www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/recent-decisions, and thereafter formally published in annual reports, such as this, in the June issue of *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 both by year from 1950 to 2020 and seasonally by 10-day periods. Examples of the graphs have been used in SBRC Reports published in *Scottish Birds*, with some in this report. The SBRC species Excel spreadsheets have been placed on the SOC website at www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/sbrc-species-analysis, where they can be downloaded; they are updated once a year following publication of the SBRC Report. The SBRC and SOC encourage interested parties to use these SBRC species Excel files which are a convenient way to analyse and interrogate SBRC data, but we ask that SBRC Reports published in *Scottish Birds*, such as this, are cited as a way to acknowledge SBRC as the source of the data.

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 the report would not exist. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to those who gave permission for their excellent photographs to be reproduced here.

We thank the following Local Recorders for their assistance in compiling, checking and correcting records for this report: Yvonne Benting, Ian Broadbent, Paul Collin, Jon Cook, Jim Dickson, Iain English, Rob Fray, Russell Neave, David Parnaby, John Poyner, Fraser Simpson, Graham Sparshott, Stephen Welch, and Val Wilson. We are particularly grateful for the co-operation of the Northern Isles recorders Rob Fray (Shetland, Fair Isle) and Ian Andrews (Fair Isle) and Russell Neave (Orkney) in helping to compile summaries for species assessed locally within their areas included in this report. We very much appreciate the help of Stephen Hunter in managing the SBRC pages on the SOC website, uploading accepted SBRC records on the recent decisions page www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/recent-decisions and the SBRC species Excel spreadsheets www.the-soc.org.uk/bird-recording/sbrc-species-analysis. We thank Mark Lewis, Keith Naylor and Mark Wilkinson for comments on the manuscript.

Systematic list of accepted records

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* 29: 11: 2

Table 1. Accepted records of Stone-curlew in Scotland, 2020.

2020: **Argyll** Ardalanish Bay, Ross of Mull, Mull, 19 April, photo (N. Shannon).
Fair Isle Gilsetter & Chatham's Land, 26 May, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Stone-curlew is a very rare visitor to Scotland; there were just 40 observations to the end of 2019 with almost half of these in the Northern Isles, and the remainder scattered across the country mostly along the east coast. There is a peak in occurrence in late May and early June, although birds have been observed at all times of the year (McInerny & McGowan 2021).

The two 2020 records were typical dates for the species in Scotland. The Mull bird was just the second for Argyll, with the last on 23–24 May 1997 at Gruinard Flats, Islay (*Scottish Bird Report* 1997: 31).

(Nominate *B. o. 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.)



Plate 75. Stone-curlew, Ardalanish Bay, Ross of Mull, Mull, Argyll, 19 April 2020. © Nigel Shannon

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* 69: 143: 1

Table 2. Accepted record of White-rumped Sandpiper in Scotland, 2020.

2020: **Outer Hebrides** Loch Ordais, Lewis, first-calendar-year, 29 September, photo (*per* Local Recorder).

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.

That just one was seen in Scotland during 2020 is surprising considering that during 2019, 49 were observed. It is fascinating how numbers of vagrants of a particular species can fluctuate between years. This likely reflects both appropriate weather patterns, which for this Nearctic shorebird is the prevalence of strong westerly winds across the Atlantic during the migration period, and breeding success, as many of the 2019 birds were first-calendar-year and so born that year.

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

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* 34: 43: 4

Table 3. Accepted records of Lesser Yellowlegs in Scotland, 2020.

2020: **Ayrshire** Fail Loch, first-calendar-year, 12–13 September, photo (J. Rose *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Paiblesgearraidh (Paiblesgarry), North Uist, first-calendar-year, 24 September, photo (P. Winn *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Hogha Gearraidh, Baile Raghail (Hougharry, Balranald), North Uist, first-calendar-year, 26 October, photo (*per* Local Recorder).
Outer Hebrides Àird a' Mhachair (Ardivachar), South Uist, first-calendar-year, 7–21 December, photo (M. Gillingham).

Lesser Yellowlegs is a rare visitor to Scotland from North America. The majority of birds are found in late summer and autumn, with smaller numbers in spring; and there are observations in about half of the recording



Plate 76. Lesser Yellowlegs, first-calendar-year, Paiblesgearraidh (Paiblesgarry), North Uist, Outer Hebrides, 24 September 2020. © Pete Winn

areas, though with almost 24% of records in the Outer Hebrides.

The four first-calendar-year birds observed during 2020 in the autumn are typical for this species in Scotland. The Ayrshire individual was the fourth for the recording area. The last blank year for Scotland was 2004.

(Breeds in North America at higher latitudes. Migrates to winter in southern USA, south through the Caribbean, Central and South America to Tierra del Fuego.)

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*
12: 30: 2

Table 4. Accepted records of Yellow-legged Gull in Scotland, 2020, and an additional record for 2019.

- 2020:** Clyde Balgray Reservoir, fourth-calendar-year/fifth-calendar-year, returning from 2019, 12 March, photo (J.J. Sweeney).
Clyde Balgray Reservoir, adult, 3–22 February, photo (J.J. Sweeney).
Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, adult, 6 December, photo (B.D. Henderson).
2019: Clyde Richmond Park, Shawfield, Glasgow, fourth-calendar-year/fifth-calendar-year, 23 December to 15 March 2020, photo (K. Hoey *et al.*).

Yellow-legged Gull is very rare in Scotland, although 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 Gulls 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* from the Atlantic islands has been accepted by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) and BBRC as the first for Britain (Stoddart & McInerny 2017). All potential records of this subspecific taxon, which breeds on the Azores, Madeira and Canaries, should be sent to BBRC (Appendix 2).

(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: 25: 2

Table 5. Accepted records of White-winged Black Tern in Scotland, 2020.

2020: Dumfries & Galloway The Whig, Loch Ryan, first-calendar-year, 5–23 October, photo (E. & S. Grover, B.D. Henderson *et al.*).
Orkney Echna Loch, Burray, first-calendar-year, 31 August to 4 September, photo (I. Cunningham, P. Higson, A. Leitch *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.

The sighting at Loch Ryan was only the second for Dumfries & Galloway, the first being one at Carsethorn, Kirkbean in November 1997.

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



Plate 77. White-winged Black Tern, first-calendar-year, Whig Loch Ryan, Dumfries & Galloway, 5–23 October 2020. © Stephen Grover

Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*
4: 2: 0

Table 6. Accepted records of Wilson's Petrel in Scotland, 2020.

2020: At Sea off St Kilda, 6 July, photo (P. Connaughton *et al.* per Local Recorder).
At Sea north-west of Shetland, 10 August, two, photo (P. Harris, P.V. Harvey, W.T.S. Miles *et al.*) (*Scottish Birds* 40: 366–369).

Wilson's Petrel is an extremely rare visitor to Scotland with just six records prior to 2020 (McInerny & McGowan 2021).

The idea that this species likely occurs in Scottish waters in mid to late summer well off-shore in the North Atlantic was tested and confirmed by Miles *et al.* (2020) who chartered a vessel from Shetland and successfully found two birds north-west of the archipelago. The bird off St Kilda was also observed and photographed from a boat. It seems for those who wish to add this species to their *Scottish List* a similar nautical adventure will be required.

The two records, of three birds, in 2020 are not added to the annual total in the header as both were recorded 'At Sea'.

(Oceanic. Three subspecies, nominate *O. o. oceanicus*, *O. o. exasperates* and *O. o. chilensis*, all widespread across the southern oceans where it is the world's most numerous seabird. Breeds on the Antarctic continent and offshore islands of South America. Trans-equatorial migrants occur in all oceans. The two subspecies *O. o. oceanicus* and *O. o. exasperates* are thought to migrate into the North Atlantic; although either could occur in Western Palearctic waters, Irish and Icelandic specimens have been identified as *O. o. exasperates*.)

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*
c. 228: 33: 9

Table 7. Accepted records of Cory's Shearwater in Scotland, 2020.

2020: Ayrshire Saltcoats, 10 August (T. Byars).
Dumfries & Galloway Corsewall Point, 25 September (B.D. Henderson).
Highland Tarbat Ness, Ross & Cromarty, 13 August (D. Tanner).

Highland Tarbat Ness, Ross & Cromarty, 14 August (M. Shepherd).
Highland Tarbat Ness, Ross & Cromarty, 19 August (A.F. McNee).
Highland Brora, Sutherland, 25 August (D. MacAskill).
Isle of May 30 July (D. Steel).
Lothian Hound Point, 29 July, photo (M. Griffin *et al.*); **same** Fife, St David's, 29 July (J.S. Nadin *et al.*).
Lothian Hound Point, 9 August photo (M. Holling, C. McGuigan *et al.*); **same** Fife, St David's, 9 August (J.S. Nadin *et al.*) (*Scottish Birds* 40: 370–375).

Cory's Shearwater is a rare visitor to Scottish waters, recorded near-annually, with most seen off North Ronaldsay, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides during the late summer and early autumn. A 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, and none were observed in 2010, 2012, 2015 and 2019.

Against this background an exceptional nine birds were recorded during 2020, the highest annual count since 2006 when 10 were noted. Birds were seen off all coasts of the mainland, but it was interesting and unexplained that none were recorded from the Outer Hebrides, considering that eight Great Shearwaters were observed from these islands during 2020.

It is possible that some of the records seen along the east records relate to the same birds; such repeat sightings of identifiable individual seabirds have occurred in the past. For example, the bird observed on 30 July from the Isle of May flying east and leaving the Firth of Forth might well have been the same as that seen the previous day from Hound Point (Lothian), but is listed here as a different bird.

The bird seen on the 9 August from Hound Point and St David's (Fife) at times was observed flying with the first Scottish record of Scopoli's Shearwater *C. diomedea*, which remained until the 11 August (Nadin 2020). The identification of a Scopoli's Shearwater in Scottish waters was enabled as the bird flew close inshore allowing photographic images of the underwing; these

revealed critical identification features which allowed it to be separated from the very closely related Cory's Shearwater (Nadin 2020). Most large shearwaters observed in Scotland are not seen as well as this bird, and so observers will not have noted the underwing detail. Therefore, SBRC has decided to take a pragmatic approach and accept such records as Cory's Shearwater as the default species, as birds seen in Scotland are most likely to be *C. borealis*.

(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 recorded in Scottish waters just once.)

Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis*
 c. 522 (1950–2004): 9,228: 13 (excluding 'At Sea' records)

Table 8. Accepted records of Great Shearwater in Scotland, 2020.

2020: Highland Tarbat Ness, Ross & Cromarty, 25 August, photo (P. Stronach).
Highland Strathy Point, Sutherland, two, 5 September (D. MacAskill).
Outer Hebrides Rubha Robhanais (Butt of Lewis), Lewis, 15 August, photo (*per* Local Recorder)
Outer Hebrides Ceann an t-Siumpain (Tiumpan Head), Lewis, 26 August (S. Dodd).
Outer Hebrides Rubha Àird a' Mhuile (Rubha Ardvule), South Uist, 3 September, photo (P. Stronach).
Outer Hebrides Rubha Robhanais (Butt of Lewis), Lewis, four, 5 September (P. Stronach).
Outer Hebrides Rubha Robhanais (Butt of Lewis), Lewis, 5 September, photo (P. Stronach *per* Local Recorder).
Orkney Rora Head, Hoy, 9 September (T. Wells).
Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, 10 September, photo (G. Gay, D. Shepherd *et al.*).

Great Shearwater was rarely seen in Scotland until many were observed during 2005–07, with a highest annual count a staggering 8,935 recorded in 2007. Since then, however, no more than six have been recorded in any one year, if 'At Sea' records are discounted; none were seen in 2010, 2012, 2016 and 2019. This underlines the exceptional nature of the influxes witnessed during 2005–07.



Plate 78. Great Shearwater, Tarbat Ness, Ross & Cromarty, Highland, 25 August 2020. © Peter Stronach

(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.)

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 thirteen seen in 2020 was the highest annual count since the huge influx of 2007. Great Shearwater remains a difficult species to see in Scotland, so it is remarkable that one observer saw seven in 2020, including birds from the Outer Hebrides and Highland. The bird seen from Tarbat Ness, Ross & Cromarty, by this observer on 25 August flew past during a powerful north-easterly storm which resulted in it coming close to land and permitting photography (plate 78), a rare event for the species in Scotland. Exceptional numbers of other pelagic seabirds were seen elsewhere along the east coast of Scotland on this day because of the storm, including many Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* (McInerney & Hoey 2021).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

3: 21: 5

Table 9. Accepted records of Cattle Egret in Scotland, 2020, and an additional record for 2012.

- 2020:** **Argyll** Dalvore, Mòine Mhòr, 22 October, photo (D.C. Jardine, J. McLellan).
Clyde Carbars Pool, Motherwell, 25 October, photo (D. Abraham *et al.*).
Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock WWT, 9 August, photo (S. Cooper *et al.*).
Dumfries & Galloway Lantonside Farm, Caerlaverock, 3 September, photo (B. & R. Mearns).
North-East Scotland Loch of Strathbeg, Starnafin Farm, 3–5 September, photo (K. & R. Barnes *et al.* per Local Recorder) (*Scottish Birds* 41: 77); same **North-East Scotland** Loch of Strathbeg, 12–13 November photo (A. Johnston, G. Ruthven).
2012: **Outer Hebrides** Loch Dubh Mhic Guaidhre, near Baile Raghail (Balranald), North Uist, 26 September to 4 October, photo (*per* Local Recorder).

Cattle Egret is very rare in Scotland although since 2007 increasingly more are being found, with birds seen every year since 2013 (Figure

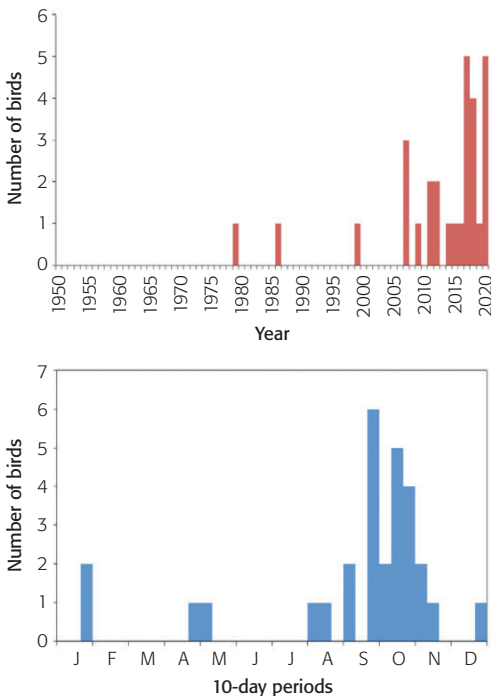


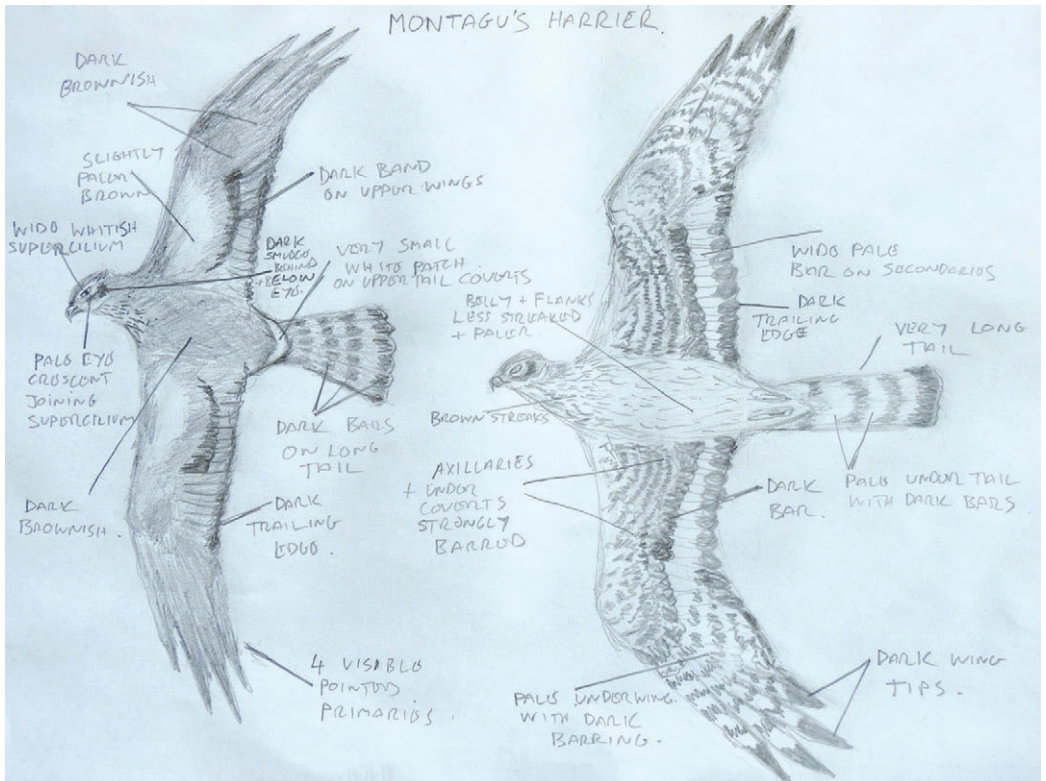
Figure 1. Annual and seasonal occurrence of Cattle Egret in Scotland by 10-day periods, 1950–2020.

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

Observations of this species continue to increase in Scotland, with the five in 2020 the equal highest annual count (Figure 1). The bird at Loch of Strathbeg was the first for North-East Scotland (Barnes & Barnes 2021).

(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. Largely a short-distance migrant.)

Plate 79. Montagu's Harrier, female, second-calendar-year or older, Newmains Farm, Reston Borders, 14 May 2020. © David Graham



Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

45: 6: 2 (excluding young from known Scottish nests)

Table 10. Accepted records of Montagu's Harrier in Scotland, 2020.

- 2020: **Borders** Newmains Farm, Reston, second-calendar-year or older, female, 14 May (D. Graham).
- Upper Forth** Thornhill, adult, male, 28 May (D. Rees).

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 53 birds to the end of 2020 excludes fledged young from these breeding attempts.

The two birds seen in 2020 were the first in Scotland since 2017. Both were brief 'fly-bys' seen by single observers, but were observed



Plate 80. Montagu's Harrier, male, adult, Thornhill, Upper Forth, 28 May 2020. © Darren Rees

well enough to establish identification and allow field sketches to be drawn that were submitted with the descriptions to SBRC (plates 79 and 80). The Upper Forth bird was the first in the recording area since the breeding pair at Cromlix Moor in 1955 (Forrester *et al.* 2007), a gap of 65 years.

(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: 37: 0

Table 11. Accepted record of Black Kite in Scotland, 2008.

2008: Angus & Dundee Ballindarg, near Padanaram, 12 April, photo (S. Green, C. McGuigan *et al.*).

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 hybridization with Red Kite *Milvus milvus*.

Occurrences have increased in recent years; there were 37 during 2007–20 (annual mean 2.6) following just nine in the period 1997–2006 (annual mean 0.9).

No Black Kites were observed during 2020 in Scotland, but we note here a recently submitted and accepted record of an individual from 2008. This becomes the first observation of the species for Angus & Dundee, predating the only other record from 2012 (McGowan *et al.* 2014).

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

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*
0: 1: 2

Table 12. Accepted records of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker in Scotland, 2020.

2020: Shetland Cauldhame, Trondra, Mainland, male, 5 October (P. Bristow, G. Stamp).
Shetland Upper Kergord, Mainland, 9 October (A.J.H. Harrop).

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is an extremely rare bird in Scotland, with just one record, on Shetland in October 2012.

The two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers seen during 2020 in Shetland were exceptional being just the second and third national records. Both were seen briefly, with no photographic images obtained, but were most probably different birds as one was established as a male, while the other was not seen well enough to be sexed with certainty.

It seems highly likely that the three birds seen in Shetland did not derive from the highly sedentary and declining British population (*D. m. comminutus*), but instead originated from northern continental Europe. If so, they would be of the nominate subspecies *D. m. minor*, which would be the first occurrence for Scotland and Britain. However, subspecific identification of this woodpecker necessitates biometrics of a trapped bird or a corpse from one such vagrant.

(Ten or 11 subspecies. Breeds across the Palearctic region from England and Wales to Japan. Northern populations are short distance migrants, with those farther south being sedentary.)

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

83: 19: 3

Table 13. Accepted records of Red-footed Falcon in Scotland, 2020, and an additional record for 2012.

- 2020: **Moray & Nairn** Dorenell wind farm, second-calendar-year, female, 4 June, photo (M. Johnston).
North-East Scotland Ballater, second-calendar-year or older, female, 8 June, photo (G. Rose).
Orkney near Hundland, Papa Westray, second-calendar-year or older, female, 30 May, photo (D. Roche *et al.*).
 2012: **Angus & Dundee** Kinpurney Hill, Newtyle, second-calendar-year or older, female, 11 June, photo (N.L. Tijssen *per* Local Recorder).

Red-footed Falcon is a rare late spring migrant to Scotland, with most sightings coming from Shetland, Orkney and North-East Scotland, with others mainly along the east coast.

The two in 2020 were the first seen in Scotland since 2015, a surprisingly long interval for this species. The Moray & Nairn bird, and the recently submitted and accepted Angus & Dundee bird from 2012, were each first records for their recording areas.

(Breeds from Hungary and the Czech Republic east to China, wintering in southern Africa.)

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

86: 32: 10

Table 14. Accepted records of Woodchat Shrike in Scotland, 2020.

- 2020: **Orkney** North Hill, Papa Westray, 30 May, photo (D. Roche *et al.*).
Orkney The Shunan, Harray, Mainland, male, 7–11 June, photo (A. Forsyth *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Aisgeimis (Askernish), South Uist, male, 28–30 May, photo (B. Neill *per* Local Recorder *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Bragar, Lewis, first-calendar-year, 2–3 October (R.D. Wemyss *et al.*).
Shetland Grutness, Mainland, adult, male, 7 May, photo (A.H.J. Harrop *et al.*).
Shetland Out Skerries, 1 June, photo (J. Turner *per* S. Dunstan).
Shetland Windhouse, Yell, first-calendar-year, 8–23 September, photo (A. Kettle *et al.*).
Shetland Levenwick, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 16–18 September, photo (W.T.S. Miles *et al.*).
Shetland Ham, Foula, first-calendar-year, 20–29 September, photo (D. & G. Atherton *per* Local Recorder).

Shetland Virkie, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 26–27 September, photo (R.M. Fray, P.V. Harvey *et al.*).

Woodchat Shrike is a rare, but now annual since 2011, 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 (Figure 2).

The 12 birds seen in 2020 was the highest ever annual count for this species in Scotland. Some spring birds can be surprisingly difficult to age and sex without detailed images of the open wing; observers should attempt to obtain these to add to their submitted description.

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

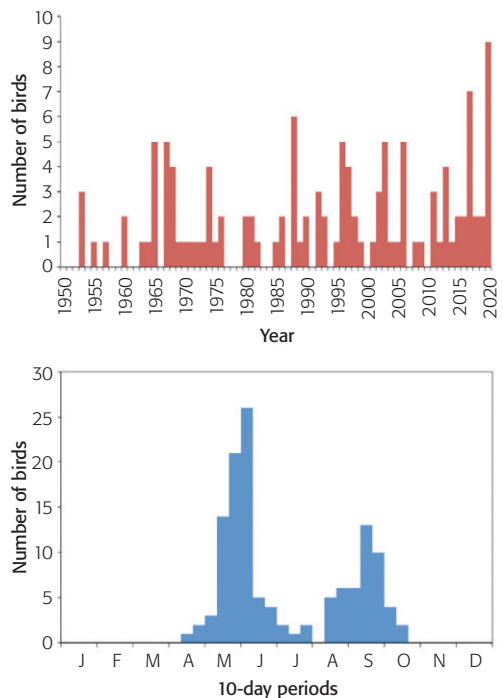


Figure 2. Annual and seasonal occurrence of Woodchat Shrike in Scotland by 10-day periods, 1950–2020.



Plate 81. Woodchat Shrike, male, The Shunan, Harray, Mainland, Orkney, 7–11 June 2020. © Alastair Forsyth

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*
68 (1950–2004): 30: 1

Table 15. Accepted record of Woodlark in Scotland, 2020.

2020: Orkney Twingness, North Ronaldsay, 3 November to 2021, photo (A.E. Duncan *et al.*).

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 during 1993 (Forrester *et al.* 2007). Since 1950 the majority of observations have been on the Northern Isles, with 70% on Fair Isle and Shetland.

With just one bird seen in 2020 this species remains a rare bird in Scotland with almost all

observations on islands. As the last accessible mainland record was during February 2008 at Peffer Sands, Scoughall (Lothian) another mainland bird would be much appreciated by many observers.

(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*
285: 104: 6

Table 16. Accepted record of Short-toed Lark in Scotland, 2020. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 17.

2020: North-East Scotland St Fittick's Park, Nigg Bay, 9 November, photo (M. Lewis *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.

Table 17. Accepted records of Short-toed Lark in the Northern Isles, 2020.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	1	1	25 May	15–19 Oct
Orkney	1	-	5 Jun	-
Shetland	-	2	-	23 Sep–17 Oct

The occurrence at St Fittick's Park, Nigg Bay was the fourth for North-East Scotland but only the second on mainland Scotland since 2010, following the sighting at Tynninghame (Lothian) in 2017.

(Eight 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 Africa, the Middle East and India.)

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*
40: 54: 2

Table 18. Accepted records of Red-rumped Swallow in Scotland, 2020.

2020: **Fair Isle** Aesterhoull & various locations, 28 May to 1 June, photo (D. Parnaby, D.N. Shaw *et al.*).
Shetland North Biggins, Foula, 28 June, photo (D. & G. Atherton *per* Local Recorder).

Red-rumped Swallow is observed in Scotland annually in very small numbers from April through to November, mainly along the east coast and on islands. An increase in frequency over the last 15 years is thought to reflect a northward expansion of the European continental breeding range; around 56% of sightings in Scotland have occurred within this period.

Two individuals of an eastern subspecies, either *C. d. daurica* or *C. d. japonica*, have been observed in Scotland: one on Orkney and then Skye, Skye & Lochalsh, Highland, in June 2011, and the other ‘At Sea’ c. 50 km east of Lybster, Caithness in May 2018 (McInerny & McGowan 2020).

The two occurrences in 2020 were typical of the usual timing and location for Scotland.

(Eight 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.)

Radde’s Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*
46: 30: 11

Table 19. Accepted records of Radde’s Warbler in Scotland, 2020.

2020: **Shetland** Maywick, Mainland, 26–27 September, photo (R. Hughes, N. O’Hanlon *et al.*).
Shetland Skaw, Whalsay, 1–3 October, photo (J.L. Irvine *et al.*).
Shetland Freyers, Foula, 1 October, photo (M.J. McKee, C. Turner).
Shetland Rerwick, Mainland, 2–3 October (P.A. Bloomer, P.V. Harvey *et al.*).

Shetland Virkie, Mainland, 3 October (R. Riddington, R.M. Tallack *et al.*).

Shetland Brake, Mainland, 4 October (P.V. Harvey).

Shetland Lea Gardens, Tresta, Mainland, 9 October, trapped, photo (P.A. Harris, R.J. Nason).

Shetland Isbister, North Roe, Mainland, 9 October, photo (P. & H. Hutchinson *per* Local Recorder).

Shetland Culswick Marsh, Mainland, 26 October, photo (W.T.S. Miles).

Shetland Clickimin, Lerwick, Mainland, 29 October (R.M. Mellor).

Shetland Norwick, Unst, 10 November, photo (D. Cooper).

Radde’s Warbler is a rare, now almost annual autumn visitor to Scotland, with the majority of occurrences in the Northern Isles, principally Shetland, and the remaining few along the east coast (Figure 3).

The total of 11 sightings in 2020 is the highest annual number since the first occurrence of Radde’s Warbler in Scotland in 1962. The previous highest annual total of six has been noted four times, in 1988, 1991, 2001 and 2010.

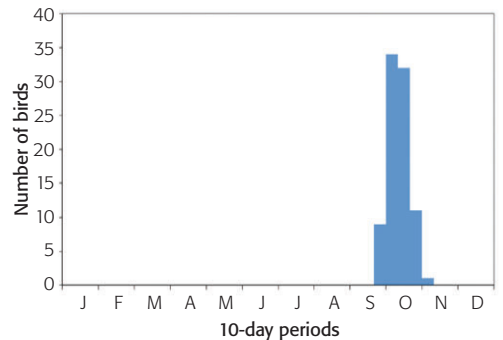
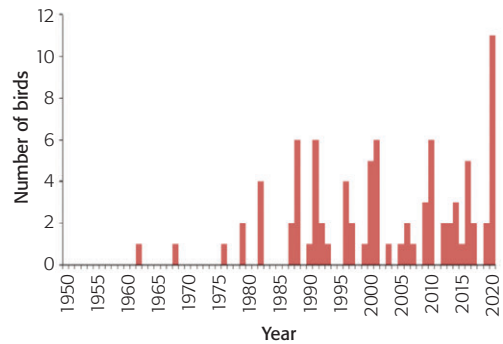


Figure 3. Annual and seasonal occurrence of Radde’s Warblers in Scotland by 10-day periods, 1950–2020.



Plate 82. Raddé's Warbler, Isbister, North Roe, Mainland, Shetland, 9 October 2020. © Rob Hutchinson

The 2020 sighting on Unst on 10 November is the latest date for the species in Scotland. Almost half the occurrences (48.3%) have been in Shetland.

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

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

59: 64: 12

Table 20. Accepted records of Dusky Warbler in Scotland, 2020.

- 2020:** **Argyll** Balephuill, Tiree, 14 October, photo (J. Bowler) (*Scottish Birds* 41: 86–89).
Fife Balcomie Castle, 6 October (G. Robertson).
Highland Redpoint Farm, near Opinan, Gairloch, Ross & Cromarty, 9–10 November, photo (P. Stronach *et al.*) (*Scottish Birds* 41: 86–89).
Outer Hebrides Gleann (Glen), Barra, 5–7 November, photo, audio (B.A. Taylor *et al.*) (*Scottish Birds* 41: 86–89).

Dusky Warbler is a rare 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.

Table 21. Accepted records of Dusky Warbler in the Northern Isles, 2020.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	-	2		14–27 Oct
Orkney	-	-	-	-
Shetland	-	6	-	5 Oct–13 Nov

Most occurrences in 2020 were in the Northern Isles, though there were four sightings in other areas. The observations on Tiree (Argyll) and at Redpoint Farm, near Opinan (Ross & Cromarty) were the first for these recording areas (Bowler *et al.* 2021); the latter is notable as a west coast mainland occurrence. The Fife and Outer Hebrides sightings were third records for both areas.

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

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
157: 123: 19

Table 22. Accepted records of Greenish Warbler in Scotland, 2020. Northern Isles records are summarised separately in Table 23.

- 2020:** **Borders** Mire Loch, St Abbs Head, 26 August, photo (P. Safford).
Fife Fife Ness, 17 August, trapped, photo (C. Broome, W. Cresswell, K.D. Shaw *et al.*).
Highland Tarbat Ness, Ross & Cromarty, 26 August, photo (P. Stronach, B. Swann *et al.*) (*Scottish Birds* 41: 76).
Isle of May second-calendar-year or older, trapped, 25 June, photo (M. Newell *et al.*).
Isle of May first-calendar-year or older, trapped, 13 August, photo (M. Martin *et al.*).
Lothian Barns Ness, first-calendar-year, 22–24 August, photo, audio (M. Cavanagh *et al.*).



Plate 83. Greenish Warbler, Tarbat Ness, Ross & Cromarty, Highland, 26 August 2020. © Peter Stronach

Greenish Warbler is a rare but annual migrant to Scotland, increasingly regular over the past few decades (McInerny & McGowan 2021). It is mostly seen in late August and early September, with smaller numbers in late May and early June; about 70% of sightings have been in the Northern Isles where records are assessed locally.

Table 23. Accepted records of Greenish Warbler in the Northern Isles, 2020.

	Number of birds		Date range	
	Spr.	Aut.	Spr.	Aut.
Fair Isle	1	-	15 Jun	-
Orkney	-	-	-	-
Shetland	2	10	10–26 Jun	19 Aug–9 Sep

The sighting at Tarbat Ness, Ross & Cromarty was only the second occurrence for Highland (Stronach 2021). The bird which lingered for a few days at Barns Ness, was the third occurrence in Lothian.

The mean annual total over the last decade is double that of the previous decade, i.e. 11.8 compared with 5.3.

(Four subspecies. *P. t. viridanus* breeds from the Baltic east through Russia to central Siberia and north-west 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.)

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*
164: 114: 12

Table 24. Accepted records of Arctic Warbler in Scotland, 2020.

2020: **Fair Isle** Lower Leogh, Chapel Plantation & Plantation, second-calendar-year or older, trapped, 31 August to 7 September, photo (S. Arlow *et al.*).
Fair Isle Nether Taft & various locations, first-calendar-year, 1–4 September, photo (D. Gornall, D.N. Shaw *et al.*).
Fife The Patch, Fife Ness, first-calendar-year, trapped, 6–8 October, photo (C. Broome, W. Cresswell, S. Pinder, K.D. Shaw *et al.*).
Shetland The Manse, Foula, 23 August, photo (D. & G. Atherton *per* Local Recorder).
Shetland Spiggie, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 30 August, photo (J. Morton *per* Local Recorder).

Shetland Windhouse, Yell, 1–3 September, photo (A. Kettle).
Shetland Skaw, Unst, 1–2 September, photo (D. Cooper *et al.*).
Shetland Maywick, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 3–4 September, photo (P.V. Harvey *et al.*).
Shetland Camb, Yell, 3 September, photo (A. Kettle).
Shetland Skaw, Unst, 17–18 September, photo (D. Cooper *et al.*).
Shetland Cullivoe & Gutcher, Yell, 29 September to 4 October, photo (R. Kelsh, A. Mears, J. Nangle *et al.*).
Shetland Voe, Mainland, 5–6 October, photo (T. & K. Allison, S.H.M. Butcher *et al.*).

Arctic Warbler is a rare but annual and increasingly regular autumn migrant to Scotland occurring mostly in the Northern Isles and along the east coast (McInerny & McGowan 2021). It is most frequent in September, with fewer seen in late August and October; very small numbers are seen in late June and July; about 90% of observations have been in the Northern Isles.

The 12 sightings in Scotland in 2020 represent the second highest annual total, almost matching the 13 seen in 2016. With one exception, all were in the Northern Isles; the individual trapped at Fife Ness in early October was the third Fife record. The last blank year for Scotland is 2008.

(Breeds from northern Fennoscandia to the Bering Straits and west Alaska, and south to the Ural Mountains, Mongolia and Korea. Winters from Myanmar to Indonesia and the Philippines.)

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*
53: 23: 2

Table 25. Accepted records of Melodious Warbler in Scotland, 2020.

2020: **Shetland** Gord, Fetlar, 22 August, photo (B.H. Thomason *et al.*).
Shetland Burrastow, Mainland, 5 October, photo (P.V. Harvey, R. Riddington, R.M. Tallack *et al.*).

Melodious Warbler is a 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.

Both occurrences in 2020 were in Shetland on typical dates. During the last two decades only two sightings have been made on the Scottish mainland; both were at St Abb's Head, Borders, the first in May 2002 and the second in September 2018.

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

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*
139: 36: 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.

Only two observations were made in Scotland in 2020; one at Holland House, North Ronaldsay, Orkney on 5–7 May and the other at Ham, Foula, Shetland on 2–4 June.

The last Scottish mainland occurrence of Nightingale was at Garthdee, North-East Scotland on 7 May 2007.

(Nominate *L. m. megarhynchos* breeds from Morocco and western Europe through North Africa and southern and central Europe to the Ukraine and Turkey; *L. m. golzii* breeds 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: 74: 10

Table 26. Accepted records of Red-flanked Bluetail in Scotland, 2020.

2020: **Fair Isle** Jivvy Geo, first-calendar-year, 14 October, photo (S. Thompson, D. Parnaby *et al.*).
Fair Isle Gully, first-calendar-year, 16 October, trapped, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).
Orkney Swannay, Birsay, Mainland, first-calendar-year, male, trapped, 7–8 October, photo (K. Fairclough *et al.*).

Orkney Whitehowe, Papa Westray, 3 October, photo (D. Roche *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Creachan Community Woodland, Barra, adult, female, 17–26 October, trapped, photo (S.L. Rivers *et al.*) (*Scottish Birds* 41: 180–184).

Shetland Norwick, Unst, first-calendar-year/female, 27 September (G. Wyatt *et al.*).

Shetland Skaw, Whalsay, 6 October, photo (J.L. Irvine *et al.*).

Shetland Beosetter, Bressay, 6 October (J. Badley, A. Bentley).

Shetland Norwick, Unst, 10 October, photo (D. Cooper *et al.*).

Shetland Sand Lodge, Sandwick, Mainland, 12–17 October, photo (P.M. Ellis *et al.*).

Red-flanked Bluetail is a rare but annual migrant to Scotland, increasingly regular in the last two decades. The vast majority (93%) of sightings in Scotland have been from September to mid-November with a peak in mid-October, and 82% have been in the Northern Isles.

Nine of the ten sightings in 2020 were in the Northern Isles. The exception, a second occurrence for Outer Hebrides, was an individual which lingered for ten days on Barra (Rivers 2021). Since 2016 there have been five sightings on mainland Scotland, all in October on the east coast: Borders (St Abb's), Fife (Crail), Highland (Tarbat Ness) (all 2016), Caithness (Wick) (2017) and North-East Scotland (Ratray Head) (2019).

(Breeds in Finland through Eurasia to Kamchatka and south to Mongolia, China and Japan. Migrates to winter in China and south-east Asia. In recent years its range has expanded into more northern and western European areas.)

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*
105: 103: 15

Table 27. Accepted records of Citrine Wagtail in Scotland, 2020.

2020: **Fair Isle** Boini Mire, Da Water & Field Ditch, first-calendar-year, 4–16 September, photo (A. Penn *et al.*)
Fair Isle Furse, Da Water & Setter, first-calendar-year, 29 September to 8 October, photo (D. Gornall *et al.*) (*Scottish Birds* 41: 354–356).

North-East Scotland Aberdeen beach, first-calendar-year, 6 October, photo, audio, DNA evidence indicated nominate subspecies *citreola* (R. Mavor *et al. per* Local Recorder).

Orkney North Wick, Papa Westray, male, 7 May to 17 June, photo (D. Roche *et al.*).

Orkney Quivals & Lettan, Sanday, adult, 26–29 August, photo (A. Whewell).

Outer Hebrides Cleit (Cleat), Barra, first-calendar-year, 23 September, photo, audio (B.A. Taylor *et al.*).

Shetland Ham, Foula, male, 1–2 June, photo (D. & G. Atherton *per* Local Recorder); same

Fair Isle Da Water, male, in song, 4–24 June, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Shetland Virkie & Boddam, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 12–14 August, photo (G.F. Bell, P.V. Harvey).

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, 18–20 August, photo (D. Cooper *per* Local Recorder).

Shetland Sumburgh & Virkie, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 31 August, photo, audio (A.H.J. Harrop, R. Riddington).

Shetland Swinister Burn, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 2–9 September, photo (G.A. Tyler *per* Local Recorder *et al.*).

Shetland Hillswick, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 4 September, photo (A.H.J. Harrop).

Shetland Grutness & Quendale, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 16 September, photo (A.H.J. Harrop, P.V. Harvey, R. Riddington).

Shetland Sumburgh Hotel & West Voe of Sumburgh, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 23 September (R.M. Fray, K. Kelly).

Shetland Loch of Norby, Mainland, first-calendar-year, 4 October, photo (H. Murphy *per* Local Recorder).

the third record of Citrine Wagtail for North-East Scotland and close scrutiny involving images, audio recording and DNA evidence indicated that it was nominate *citreola*.

Of interest, also, was an occurrence on 1–2 June on Foula, Shetland as the same bird was later sighted during 4–24 June on Fair Isle, where it was heard in song. SBRC considered the submission of another sighting on Fair Isle later in the year to be of particularly high quality and it featured in a short article in *Scottish Birds* (Gornall *et al.* 2021).

(Nominate *M. c. citreola* breeds in Russia from Kola Peninsula to River Khatanga, south to Himalayas; another subspecies in Iran and Afghanistan. Migrates to winter in China, south-east Asia, the Indian subcontinent and the Arabian Gulf.)

Serin *Serinus serinus*

7: 5: 2

Table 28. Accepted records of Serin in Scotland, 2020.

2020: Shetland Scatness, Mainland, second-calendar-year, male, 25–29 May, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*).

North-East Scotland Collieston, second-calendar-year, female, 15–17 June, photo (L. Goodwin, D. Short *et al.*) (*Scottish Birds* 40: 363–365).

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 not being seen in many recording areas.

The 15 sightings in 2020 matched the highest annual total in 2008, reinforcing the increased observation rate in recent years. The mean annual sightings over the last decade was 7.8 birds per year, compared with 6.7 and 4.1 in the two preceding decades.

An observation of particular note was a well-studied individual on Aberdeen beach. This was

Serin is an extremely rare vagrant to Scotland, with just 12 previous records: four on Fair Isle, three on Shetland (Unst and Fetlar), two on the Outer Hebrides, and one each in Lothian



Plate 84. Serin, male, second-calendar-year, Scatness, Mainland, Shetland, 25–29 May 2020. © Roger Riddington

(Edinburgh), Borders (St Abbs), the Isle of May (McGowan & McNerny 2021). Six were males and six females, with birds being found in April (4), May (6), August (1) and November (1).

There were two sightings in 2020. The individual at Scatness was the first for mainland Shetland and the occurrence at Collieston was the first for North-East Scotland, and also the first in June (Godwin & Short 2020). Around a third of sightings of Serin in Scotland have been in the last three years.

(Breeds from the Canary Islands, North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula to Germany, Denmark and the Middle East. Northern populations migrate south, remaining within the breeding range.)

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*
many: 68: 2

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 unsustainable illegal hunting as a gastronomic delicacy and habitat destruction (Jiguet *et al.* 2019).

In 2020 no Ortolan Buntings were seen away from the Northern Isles. Just two were noted, both in Shetland: there was one at Velzie, Fetlar on 3–6 October and another at Skaw, Whalsay on 7 October.

The last time the annual total reached double figures was in 1999 when there were 18 occurrences; since then, single birds have appeared three times, in 2004, 2005 and 2014.

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

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- Nadin, J.S. 2020. Scopoli’s Shearwater, Fife and Lothian, 9–11 August 2020 - first record for Scotland. *Scottish Birds* 40: 370–375.
- Rivers, S.L. 2021. Red-flanked Bluetail, Creachan, Barra, 17–26 October 2020 - second Outer Hebrides record. *Scottish Birds* 41: 180–184.
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Appendix 1

List of records regarded as not proven by SBRC.

2020: Caspian Gull Ravensheugh Sands, Scoughall, Lothian, 27 March; Cory’s Shearwater Barn’s Ness, Lothian, 18 September; Radde’s Warbler Aith, Cunningsburgh, Mainland, Shetland, 4 October; Citrine Wagtail Strathbeg Lagoon, North-East Scotland, 20 August; Parrot Crossbill two, Sullom Plantation, Mainland, Shetland 16 October.

1896: Scottish Crossbill four, Newport, Fife, 7 January; Scottish Crossbill Scotsraig, Fife, 25 December.

Appendix 2

Summary of assessment of records by the Scottish Birds Records Committee (SBRC), the SBRC List, and other committees, 2017–21. 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

18	19	20	21	22	
■	■	■	■	■	Black Brant <i>Branta bernicla nigricans</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Lesser Scaup <i>Aythya affinis</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Alpine Swift <i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
■	■	■	■	■	Stone-curlew <i>Burhinus oediconemus</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>
■	White-billed Diver <i>Gavia adamsii</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Wilson's Petrel <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Cory's Shearwater <i>Calonectris borealis</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Great Shearwater <i>Ardenna gravis</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>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	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>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Radde's Warbler <i>Phylloscopus schwarzi</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Dusky Warbler <i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Greenish Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Arctic Warbler <i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Blyth's Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Marsh Warbler <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Melodious Warbler <i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Western/Eastern Subalpine Warbler <i>Curruca iberiae/cantillans</i> *
■ ■ ■ ■ ■	Dartford Warbler <i>Curruca undata</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 hornemannii</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

* 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 the SBRC Excel spreadsheets with two records removed:
 Short-toed Lark, West Geirinis (Gerinish), South Uist, 1 October 2000;
 Dusky Warbler, Bornish, South Uist, 24–25 October 2004.

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