



Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2023

December 2024



Chair's introduction

This is the 66th annual report of the British Birds Rarities Committee. The seemingly inexorable increase in the number of species on the British List continues apace, with several records from past years appearing in this report, as well as a plethora of firsts from 2023. These are: Soft-plumaged

Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* and Band-rumped Storm-petrel *Hydrobates castro* (in the case of the latter, the first record identified to species level), both from 2021; Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta stejnegeri*, from 2022; and Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*, Western Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna opaca* and Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*, all from 2023. This report also includes the first acceptable record of Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*, involving a reidentified bird from 2010, the reallocation of Britain's only 'Lesser Short-toed Lark', from Portland, Dorset, in 1992 (Rogers *et al.* 1994), which is now accepted as Asian Short-toed/Mediterranean Short-toed/Turkestan Short-toed Lark *Alaudala cheleensis/rufescens/heinei* following the three-way split (Alström *et al.* 2020), and a new first record of Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*, from 1976.

Taxa appearing in this report with ten or fewer records (all are from 2023 unless otherwise stated):

1st Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta stejnegeri* (2022), Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*, Band-rumped Storm-petrel *Hydrobates castro* (2021), Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* (2021), Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* (1976), Western Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna opaca* and Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*

1st & 2nd Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps* (including one in 2010)

2nd Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*, Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*, 'Amur Wagtail' *Motacilla alba leucopsis*, Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea*

3rd Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum*, Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*

3rd & 4th Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia*

4th Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* (2022)

4th–6th South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*

4th–31st Scopoli's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

5th Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*, Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca*

5th–7th White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi* and 'Iberian Wagtail' *Motacilla flava iberiae* (including two in 2022)

6th Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans*

7th Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

7th–9th American Yellow Warbler *Setophaga aestiva*

7th–10th Tennessee Warbler *Leiothlypis peregrina*

8th Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata*, White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* (2022)

8th–12th Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

9th 'Caspian Stonechat' *Saxicola maurus hemprichii*

10th Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*

8th–11th Turkestan Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides* (one 2019, one 2022)

10th Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*

10th–11th Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica*

This report also sees the long overdue publication of all accepted Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* records up to the end of 2023, taking the total number of individuals to 18. A record of an Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, seen in Lincolnshire, on the Isles of Scilly and in Cornwall in 2021–22 remains in circulation with BOURC, as does that of a Great-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus* from Pembrokeshire in 2023. The identification of a Trindade Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*, which was accepted by BBRC after two protracted circulations, has not been accepted by BOURC; as per both committees' set of standing orders, the submission has been returned to BBRC for another circulation around the Committee's voting members.

First-winter (1CY) male Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*, Flamborough, Yorkshire, October 2023.

It was a year of quality and quantity in all respects; indeed, the autumn of 2023 will be remembered for the greatest arrival of Nearctic landbirds into Britain in recorded history, eclipsing even the great Scilly days of the mid 1980s. The year started in style, with an unseasonal Little Swift *Apus affinis* in Sussex in January. More expected for the time of year were two Baikal Teals *Sibirionetta formosa* and a Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* (followed by another Harlequin Duck in August, then a third in October). In February, a Black-faced Bunting in Shropshire was a huge surprise for local ringers and a Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* in Shetland was the first of three in Britain during the year, an annual total beaten only by the five found in 1980 and the influx of (at least) six in 2021.

Spring began with a Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, which toured St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, in late March, while a Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* in Dorset in

April was the first in Britain since 2016. Rarer in numbers but almost expected nowadays, an Elegant Tern was also in Dorset in April. The biggest shock of the period, however, came with news of a Black-winged Kite in Montgomeryshire in mid April. This proved to be the first of several sightings in 2023, with what was most likely the same bird seen in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex in July. In late April, the Firth of Forth was the place to be, with the relocation of Britain's first Stejneger's Scoter as well as no fewer than four White-winged Scoters.

In early May, a Grey-headed Lapwing was found in Northumberland, before it relocated to Fife, Moray & Nairn and then the Outer Hebrides; three recent records of the species in Europe supported its potential as a vagrant. A Song Sparrow on Bardsey was the second for that island, while three Short-toed Treecreepers *Certhia brachydactyla* in coastal Kent were followed by a fourth in the same county in the autumn. A Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* and an 'Amur Wagtail' on Foula, Shetland, were an eye-catching double in late May and early June, while a Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia subalpina* in Dorset, an all-too-brief sighting of the returning Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* in Cambridgeshire, a 'Steppe Grey Shrike' *Lanius excubitor pallidirostris* on the Ardnamurchan peninsula, Highland, another Little Swift, this time in Lincolnshire, and a presumed returning Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* on Shetland closed out the spring.

Summer 2023 was centred on Scilly and the host of rare seabirds seen from the pelagics there: an influx of Scopoli's Shearwaters was admirably documented, as were Britain's first at-sea records of South Polar Skua. A Red-footed Booby was present in the waters around Bishop Rock Lighthouse for well over a month and, remarkably, was joined by a Brown Booby on one day in late August. A further four Brown Boobies were seen around the British coast, including two wide-ranging birds in the North Sea. A twitchable Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*, a brief Sooty Tern *O. fuscatus* and the returning 'American Black Tern' *Chlidonias niger surinamensis* in Northumberland made 2023 an excellent year for terns, too. The expected summer mega waders were well represented, with a Hudsonian Godwit and two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers *Calidris acuminata*.

An early Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* on the Outer Hebrides in

late August heralded the start of the autumn. Little did we know though, what was to come less than a month later. The tail-end of Hurricane Lee reached Pembrokeshire on 20th September, bringing with it the largest-ever recorded arrival of Nearctic vagrants to our shores. An incredible list was topped by Britain's first Canada Warbler with the roll-call more reminiscent of an autumn in the Azores than in Britain and comprising Bay-breasted Warbler, Philadelphia Vireo, Alder Flycatcher, two Magnolia Warblers, Cape May Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Ovenbird, three American Yellow Warblers, four Tennessee Warblers, five Black-and-white Warblers *Mniotilta varia*, a Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*, three American Cliff Swallows *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*, single Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*, Grey-cheeked Thrush *C. minimus*, Veery *C. fuscescens* and Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*, three Bobolinks *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, at least four Buff-bellied Pipits *Anthus rubescens* (all of which were found on St Kilda, Outer Hebrides), a White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (one of an incredible four seen during the year) and a record total of 23 Red-eyed Vireos *Vireo olivaceus* (nearly double the previous best total of 13 in 1995). A full examination of this remarkable event and the weather leading up to it can be found in Lees *et al.* (2024).

First-winter (1CY) Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia*, St Govan's Head, Pembrokeshire, September 2023.

The autumn had still more to give, however. Britain's first Western Olivaceous Warbler was found in Shetland at the end of October while a varied supporting cast included two Upland Sandpipers *Bartramia longicauda*, two Stilt Sandpipers *Calidris himantopus*, a Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*, a Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, a Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius*, a Two-barred Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*, two Eastern Olivaceous Warblers *Iduna pallida*, an Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, a Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope*, three Amur Stonechats *Saxicola stejnegeri* and a Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*.

Notable influxes in 2023 included new record totals of 32 Lesser Scaups *Aythya affinis* and 17 Great Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, the second-highest annual totals of both Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (19) and Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (27) together with at least 16 Pallid

Swifts *Apus pallidus*. While many of the more regular rarities seemed to be occurring in about average numbers in 2023, there were above-average totals of Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (3 new birds) and Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (8), and in a continuation of recent trends there were 12 Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* and five Isabelline Wheatears *Oenanthe isabellina*. Of the species occurring in lower numbers than usual, perhaps most surprising were just singles of King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (in addition to returning birds), Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (in Yorkshire rather than the more expected Northern Isles), Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* and Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, while five Baird's Sandpipers *Calidris bairdii*, three Semipalmated Sandpipers *C. pusilla*, two Wilson's Phalaropes *Phalaropus tricolor* and one new Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla* were also lower totals than average. Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* and Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* continued their recent run of poor form, with just three records of each. Two big omissions from the report this year are Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* and Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*, both of which usually average 4–5 records annually, along with Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, which has now gone three years without a British record, the longest blank spell since the 1960s.

Notable submissions still in circulation with the Committee include two records of Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* and two of Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*.

After the completion of a review of 'Little Shearwater' records in Britain (*Brit. Birds* 116: 574; Stoddart 2023) and Black-headed/Red-headed Buntings (*Brit. Birds* 116: 595–596 and see Red-headed Bunting below), the Committee had, following the publication of Hellström & Waern (2023), planned to embark on a review of all records of Siberian/Amur Stonechats *Saxicola maurus/stejnegeri* that were not assigned to species. However, with some 430 records currently unassigned to species, work has yet to get under way on what will be a mammoth task.

One piece of work that *has* been undertaken over the past year is a review of all statistics for every BBRC taxon, which have been revisited and, where necessary, corrected. Not all corrections are specifically noted in the report

and thus readers should be aware that there may be some unexplained discrepancies between the statistics given in last year's report and in this year's – in all cases, the figures given in this year's report should be taken as correct, or as close to correct as they can be; for some species, notably those where several subspecies are assessed by BBRC, keeping track of statistics is difficult. Arctic Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni*, for example, represents a particular challenge; records are split between those assigned to subspecies – i.e. 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll' *A. h. hornemanni* and 'Coues's Arctic Redpoll' *A. h. exilipes* – and those simply assigned to species. Furthermore, the inclusion and removal over time of some or all of those three taxa from the BBRC list has left gaps in the data and periods where records were not assessed with the same level of scrutiny. Given the forthcoming lump of Arctic, Common *A. flammea* and Lesser Redpolls *A. cabaret* (Gill *et al.* 2024), the Arctic Redpoll problem is unlikely to be a priority to revisit, but it illustrates nicely one example of why stats may unexpectedly change over the years and why gaps still remain.

The BBRC website (www.bbrc.org.uk) has been updated and sits as part of the broader *British Birds* website. We hope to make many additions to the site over the coming months and years, with an updated submissions form being the first change that has been made. A key addition to the form is that the submitter is now asked to clarify whether the submission refers to a returning bird or a bird that has been seen elsewhere that year. Movements of rarities are often poorly documented in submissions and the Committee often has to rely on knowledge of voting members or correspond with county recorders to link different submissions. It would be hugely beneficial if submitters could assist with this information as part of the submission process.

BBRC is also updating the procedure for seeking new Committee members; an online form is now available (<https://bit.ly/bbrc-nomination>) for anyone interested in joining BBRC and may be completed by prospective new members themselves or others nominating a potential new member. These nominations do not replace the existing process we have for seeking new members, but we hope it will alert us to more people who are willing and able to take on a role on the Committee. BBRC will still be able to nominate suitable candidates and, in the event of there being more than one nomination, then, after consultation with the nominees, a voting process

involving the county recorders and bird observatories would take place, as per our constitution. The next vacancy is planned to arise in the summer of 2025, and in this case nominations for new voting members would need to reach BBRC no later than June 2025. If you are interested in joining BBRC, or know of someone who might be, please get in touch.

This will be my final report as Chair, although I have now taken over the Secretary role, for a short time at least. The Chair role is currently being fulfilled by four of our voting members, each acting as Vice-Chairs with discrete roles.

Last but not least, Louise Bacon stepped down from the BBRC Secretary role in September. The Committee expresses its grateful thanks to Louise for the countless hours she put in over the last two years.

Acknowledgments

BBRC can exist only with the support of the birding community, and our mandate is your continued support. Once again, we wish to express our heartfelt thanks to county and regional recorders and their records committees for the invaluable work that they undertake in supporting BBRC.

BBRC continues to be supported financially by Carl Zeiss Ltd and the RSPB. This support is invaluable in enabling BBRC to function and we remain extremely grateful to both sponsors for their support.

We wish to thank all the observers and photographers who sent details of their rare bird observations to BBRC, either directly or via county recorders. The work of county recorders in chasing down and in many cases submitting records that would otherwise go missed is greatly appreciated. We would also like to thank BirdGuides for their continued support of the Committee by providing unrestricted access to members, and to both BirdGuides and Rare Bird Alert for their help in following up occasional unsubmitted records. Special thanks once again to Steve White for his assistance with scarce migrant statistics, and to Ross Ahmed for his help and diligence in checking through all BBRC statistics. Thanks also go to all those county recorders and other individuals who updated information on earlier sightings following the posting of work-in-progress files on the BBRC website throughout the year. While they may not be acknowledged in the report, their contribution remains

very significant for improving the accuracy of the information provided. We also thank Chris Batty in particular for his help in finalising this year's report, and the following for their support in various ways during the year: Peter Adriaens, Ross Ahmed, Chris Batty, Alan Clewes, Andrea Corso, Pierre-André Crochet, James Eaton, Bob Flood, Magnus Hellström, Joe Hobbs, Steve Howell, Harry Hussey, Richard Johnson, Zbigniew Kajzer, Yann Kolbeinsson, Hans Larsson, Alex Lees, James Lidster, Björn Malmhagen, John Martin, Chris McInerny, Karlis Millers, Killian Mullarney, Keith Naylor, Tor Olsen, Uku Paal, Peter Pyle, Sébastien Reeber, Adam Rowlands, Manuel Schweizer, Thom Shannon, Brian Small, Andy Stoddart, Lars Svensson and Vincent van der Spek, as well as members of the Association of European Rarities Committees. We also thank the *Dutch Birding* team for providing electronic copies of papers from that journal for reference.

Martin Collinson continued in his role as Genetic Consultant for BBRC, and several records that appear here do so as a result of the efforts of Martin and his team at the Wildlife Forensics Lab at the University of Aberdeen. Magnus Robb continued in the role of our Sound Identification Consultant, Reg Thorpe continued as our Reference Website Manager and Archivist, and Brian Small continued as our Museum Consultant. Andy Stoddart completed his tenure as Vice-Chair in early 2024, and his assistance during the past decade has been invaluable.

Finally, this report would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the BBRC voting members. For the report cycle covered here, these were Dawn Balmer, Dave Cooper, Phil Crockett, David Fairhurst, Andrew Holden, Nigel Jones, Michael McKee, Stephen Menzie, Dave Pullan and Roger Riddington.

Paul French

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Systematic list of accepted records

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

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known; (4) dates; (5) if photographed, sound-recorded and/or DNA analysis carried out (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (6) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; and (7) observer(s), in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records that are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. A number of hard-to-identify species can, however, be published as belonging to a 'species pair' or 'species group' while some subspecies are also treated in the same way. A full list of such taxa can be found at www.bbrc.org.uk/about/constitution/appendix-iv-species-pairs
3. The taxonomy, sequence of species and scientific nomenclature follows the *IOC World Bird List* v13.2 (Gill *et al.* 2023). English names follow the

British Birds list (<https://britishbirds.co.uk/resources/british-birds-list>).

4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain (i) to the end of 1949 (these statistics are kindly supplied by Keith Naylor – note that they may vary between reports, as continuing research brings more accuracy to the numbers) and where unknown is denoted by (–), (ii) for the period since 1950 (note here that variation in numbers between reports may relate to updates to the scarce migrants database for those periods when certain species were not considered by BBRC or when records are accepted after the year of publication), but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult, but a consensus view is represented by ‘presumed same’ (counted as the same in the totals); records for which it is less certain whether the birds involved were the same or not are counted as different in the totals. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species recurring at the same, or a nearby, locality after a lapse of time. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee requires firm evidence before more than one is accepted.

5. The status summary is based on the number of individuals that have occurred in the last 30 years, including the current year of the report; for the 2023 Report, data are based on the years 1994 to 2023 inclusive. Returning birds are excluded. The **Status** is defined as: **extremely rare** – total number of birds 0–2 in the last 30 years; **very rare** – total number of birds 3–9 in that period; or **rare** – total number of birds 10–35 in that period. No status is given for taxa where the total number of records is more than 35 for the most recent 30-year period. There are some 290–300 taxa on the British List which are currently assessed by BBRC and the spread across these categories is approximately 100 extremely rare, 80 very rare, 55 rare and 60 others. Those species for which our data are incomplete, for example when many records are still being assessed, or where historical records are still being sought, are termed **uncertain**. Also noted are **influxes, returnees** (if these comprise a significant proportion of each year’s records, e.g. King Eider) and instances of confirmed **breeding**. The **Trend** is based on a polynomial trend-line fitted to the ten-year moving average over the last 30 years (the ten-year average for 1990 is the mean for 1981–90, that for 1991 is the mean for 1982–91 and so

on up to the current report year). Trends are not given for Extremely rare and Very rare taxa, simply because there are insufficient data. A trend is shown for Rare taxa, which typically occur at a rate of around one a year, but of course the data are still sparse at this level and the trend shown is at best tentative. Even for more regular rarities, short-term peaks and troughs will affect the trend statement, and readers should bear this in mind, but in most cases it is a realistic interpretation of how each species is currently faring. However, if there has been a marked change in the trend during the 30-year period concerned (for example, species that have increased noticeably), the term '**recent**' may be used to denote the last 15 years.

6. The breeding and wintering ranges for each species are given in parentheses at the end of each species account.

7. The basic principles of the age criteria used in this report are based on a calendar-year ageing system. Thus, 1CY signifies first calendar-year, i.e. a bird hatched in the current year (mostly 2022 in this report), whereas 2CY signifies a bird hatched in the previous year and thus in its second calendar year, and so on. Adding a '+' effectively denotes 'at least', so that a bird aged as a 2CY+ in 2022 means that it hatched in 2020 or earlier – and is therefore in its second calendar-year at least. The use of 1CY+ is thus equivalent to 'age unknown', since the bird could have hatched in the current year or any year prior to this. Note that where an individual bird is recorded over two calendar years, the age for that individual is given as *that when first reported*. For further details see *Brit. Birds* 109: 568.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (7, 90, 3) *About two per year + returnees; stable*

Argyll Gruinart Flats, Islay, 4CY+, 1st January to 4th April, photo (J. & T. Farooqi *et al.*); same Argyll and Outer Hebrides 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 550).

Cumbria Rockcliffe Marsh, 3CY+, from 2022 to 9th April (N. Franklin *et al.*); presumed same Brownrigg, 15th–17th February (per birding information services); also seen Northumberland; note amended age (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 550).

Moray & Nairn Nairn Bar, 2CY+, 30th September to 7th November, photo (M. Cook, C. McClean, D. McNee *et al.*).

Norfolk Warham Greens then Wells-next-the-Sea, Stiffkey, Binham, Hindringham, Morston, Blakeney, Cley and Glandford, 1CY, 4th November into 2024 (J. R. McCallum *et al.*) (plate 458).

Wells-next-the-Sea, 2CY+, 9th–10th November, photo (M. C. Buckland *et al.*).

Graham Jepson

458. First-winter (1CY) Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*, north Norfolk, December 2023.

Northumberland Budle Bay, 3CY+, 27th September into 2024, photo (C. G.

Knox *et al.*); also seen Cumbria.

2022 Lincolnshire RSPB Freiston Shore then Butterwick Low and RSPB

Frampton Marsh, 3CY+, 9th–20th January, photo (J. Fusiaria *et al.*); presumed

same Lincolnshire 2021 (*Brit. Birds* 115: 555)

2022 Essex Frinton-on-sea, 2CY+, 19th October, photo (P. Brayshaw per Essex Recorder).

Both Norfolk birds were observed together on 9th November at Wells-next-the-Sea.

(Breeds Taimyr Peninsula, Siberia. Migrates SW to winter coastal regions of W Black Sea in Romania & N Bulgaria. Small numbers regularly winter Netherlands, Hungary, Greece & Turkey.)

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

'North American Canada Goose' *B. c. interior/parvipes* (0, 55, 5) About 2–5 per year

Cumbria Rockcliffe Marsh, 6CY+, 15th January to 1st May (N. Franklin *et al.*), presumed same Newton Marsh, 3rd December (N. Franklin *et al.*); presumed same Cumbria 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 550).

Dumfries & Galloway Kirkbride Pond, 1CY+, 20th February, photo (L. Gray).

Highland Balnakeil, 2CY+, 23rd October, photo (P. Stronach); presumed same Tarbat Ness, 25th–26th October, photo (P. Stronach, R. L. Swann).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Banks Marsh, 2CY+, from 2022 to 2nd January, photo (S. J. Darbyshire); same Lancashire & North Merseyside 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 550). RSPB Marshside, 2CY+, 10th September, photo (S. J. Darbyshire).

Hundred End, 1CY+, 21st November, photo (P. Kinsella, M. Nightingale).

North-east Scotland Rattray Head, 1CY+, 8th–9th March, photo (T. Kirkpatrick).

2022 Lancashire & North Merseyside Banks Marsh, 5CY+, 4th–27th March, photo (S. J. Darbyshire *et al.*); same Lancashire & North Merseyside 2021 (*Brit. Birds* 115: 556).

2022 Norfolk Stiffkey and Warham Greens, 2CY+, 26th November, photo (M. C. Buckland).

2022 North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary, 1CY+, 18th October, photo (D. Short, M. Williamson).

2021 North-east Scotland Collieston, 1CY+, 12th October, photo (C. M. Reid, D. Short, V. Short).

2020 North-east Scotland New Deer, 4CY+, 19th–21st December (H. A. Addelee, D. Capon); same North-east Scotland 2020 (*Brit. Birds* 114: 573).
2019 Clyde Libberton, 1CY+, 18th October, photo (S. Black).

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

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii* (0, 75, 1) *About 1–2 per year; stable*

Lincolnshire East Halton, 2CY+, 15th October, photo (L. & M. J. Pilsworth).

Norfolk Brancaster and Holme-next-the-Sea, 2CY+, 26th January to 12th February, photo (J. R. McCallum *et al.*); also seen Northumberland.

Northumberland Earsdon, Hartley and St Mary's, 2CY+, 27th February to 2nd April, photo (A. Curry, M. S. Hodgson, M. Ridsdale *et al.*) (plate web-1); also seen Norfolk; same Northumberland 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 551).

Paul Coombes

Web-1. Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii* with Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, Earsdon, Northumberland, March 2023.

Outer Hebrides Balranald, North Uist, two 5CY+, 13th January to 11th March, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder); presumed same Outer Hebrides 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 551).

Vallay Island, North Uist, 3CY+, 15th–16th October, photo (S. E. Duffield, M. Gillingham); presumed same Outer Hebrides 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 551).

2021 Argyll Colonsay, 4CY+, 10th–11th March, photo (D. C. Jardine); presumed same Argyll 2019 (*Brit. Birds* 113: 589).

(Breeds locally in Aleutian Islands, also in tundra zone of W & N coastal Alaska, USA, & N Canada from Yukon Territory to Southampton & S Baffin Islands, Nunavut. Winters in USA & Mexico in three discrete regions: Washington to N California, New Mexico & NW Texas to N Mexico, & Texas Gulf coast to NE Mexico.)

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* (0, 18, 0) Rare, About one every two years

Bird A

1970 Lancashire & North Merseyside Plex Moss and Formby, 2CY+, 5th December to 17th January 1971, not photographed (contra *Brit. Birds* 115: 557) (M. Jones, F. A. Lowe, H. Shorrocks *et al.* per BOURC). **1971 Lancashire & North Merseyside** Plex Moss, 3CY+, from above to 17th January; presumed same 8th December into 1972 (E. J. Abraham, P. Fearon, M. Jones, P. H. Smith *et al.* per BOURC). **1972 Lancashire & North Merseyside** Plex Moss, 4CY+, from above to 9th January; presumed same 30th November into 1973 (E. J. Abraham, J. G. Hall, P. M. Hall, H. Shorrocks *et al.* per BOURC). **1973 Lancashire & North Merseyside** Plex Moss and Altcar, 5CY+, from above to 16th January; presumed same 31st December into 1974 (E. J. Abraham, J. D. Fletcher, H. Shorrocks, D. R. Williams *et al.* per BOURC). **1974 Lancashire & North Merseyside** Plex Moss, 6CY+, from above to 12th January (E. J. Abraham, D. R. Williams per BOURC). Note revised dates, locations and observers (cf. *Brit. Birds* 88: 558; 115: 557).

Bird B

1985 Angus & Dundee Lunan Bay and Inverkeilor, 3CY+, 26th–27th January (J. G. Steele per M. S. Scott). **1985 North-east Scotland** Meikle Loch, 3CY+, 17th March (J. G. Steele per North-east Scotland Recorder). **1986 Angus &**

Dundee Lunan Valley, 4CY+, 25th January to 8th February (K. Bushby, M. S. Scott, J. G. Steele, M. J. Ware *et al.*). Note revised dates, locations and observers (cf. *Brit. Birds* 87: 570); previously placed in Category E.

Bird C

1988 North-east Scotland Slains, 3CY+, 10th March (J. G. Steele per North-east Scotland Recorder). Note revised age and observers (cf. *Brit. Birds* 87: 570); previously placed in Category E.

Bird D

1991 Moray Lossiemouth, 3CY+, 23rd March to 16th April, photo (*Brit. Birds* 84: plate 170; 87: 570; 112: 621–622). Previously placed in Category D.

Bird E

2001 Norfolk Wells-next-the-Sea then various locations, 1CY, 3rd November into 2002 (A. I. Bloomfield *et al.*). **2002 Lincolnshire** Read's Island, South Ferriby and Winterton, 1CY, 10th November (G. P. Catley *et al.*). **2002 Norfolk** Wells-next-the-Sea then various locations, 2CY, from above to 6th February; presumed same Holkham and other locations in north of county, 1st October into 2003. **2003 Perth and Kinross** Blackford, 3CY, 13th April. Note revised observers (*Brit. Birds* 95: plate 11; 96: 608; 98: 693; 112: 621–622; 116: plate 9).

Previously placed in Categories D and E.

Bird F

2002 Northumberland Budle Bay, 2CY+, 5th October (A. Curry, I. Fisher, M. S. Hodgson, C. G. Knox *et al.*). Note revised observers (*Brit. Birds* 96: 608; 98: 693; 105: 623–625; 116: plate 8). **2002 Dumfries & Galloway** Caerlaverock WWT, 2CY+, 16th October to 19th April 2003. **2002 Cumbria** Cardrunk, Rockcliffe Marsh and Skinburness Marsh, 2CY+, 3rd December to 9th February 2003. Previously in Category D.

Bird G

2002 Norfolk North Norfolk coast, 2CY+, 10th October to 8th January 2003 (R. G. Millington per BOURC, A. I. Bloomfield, I. Haynes *et al.*); presumed same **2003 Lancashire & North Merseyside** Eagland Hill, Pilling and Thurnham, 3CY+, 4th February to 17th March, photo; presumed same returning **2003**

North-east Scotland Meikle Loch, 3CY+, 23rd September to 4th October; presumed same **2003 Lothian** Brownrigg, 3CY+, 11th October; presumed same **2003 Norfolk** North Norfolk coast, 3CY+, from above to 8th January; presumed same returning North Norfolk coast, 3CY+, 13th October to 8th March 2004 (R. G. Millington, A. I. Bloomfield, I. Haynes *et al.* per BOURC). **2004 Norfolk** Waxham then various locations, 4CY, 3rd October to 15th November, photo (A. C. Lees, L. Smith *et al.* per BOURC); presumed same **2004 Perth & Kinross** Vane Farm RSPB, 4CY+, 13th March to 22nd April. Previously in Categories D and E. Note revised locations, ages, dates and observers (*Brit. Birds* 98: 693; 101: 575; 109: 627; 112: 621–622; 116: plate 10).

Bird H

2004 Northumberland Budle Bay and High Hauxley, 2CY, 21st February to 16th March. Previously in Category E. Note revised location and dates (*Brit. Birds* 98: 693).

Bird I

2007 Northumberland Hauxley and East Chevington, 2CY+, 20th–30th September; presumed same **2007 Cleveland** Saltholme Pools, 2CY+, 5th October; presumed same **2007 Norfolk** Holkham, Docking, then various locations, 2CY+, 6th October to 9th January 2008 (per BOURC, J. R. McCallum *et al.*); presumed same **2008 Lancashire & North Merseyside** Stalmine, Pilling and Colloway Marsh, 3CY+, 31st January to 4th May. Previously in Category D. Note revised locations, dates and observers (*Brit. Birds* 101: 575; 102: 598; 105: 623–625; 116: plate 6).

Bird J

2007 Norfolk Warham Greens, Holkham, Berney Marshes RSPB, Burgh Castle, Bradwell and Belton then various locations, 2CY+, 29th September to 31st March 2008 (M. A. Ward *et al.*). **2008 Suffolk** Herringfleet and nearby sites, 3CY+, 13th–14th January, photo. **2008 Lothian** Aberlady Bay, 3CY+, 3rd–4th April. **2008 Perth and Kinross** Vane Farm RSPB, 3CY+, 15th–26th April. **2008 Lancashire & North Merseyside** Catchdale Moss, Martin Mere WWT, Marshside RSPB, then Pilling Lane and various locations in west Lancashire and North Merseyside, 3CY+, 24th September to 5th November (J. W. Bateman, P. Woodruff *et al.* per BOURC). **2008 Greater Manchester** Abram

Flashes, 3CY+, 7th November (R. Thorpe per BOURC). **2008 Norfolk** Warham Greens, Holkham, Berney Marshes RSPB, Burgh Castle, Bradwell and Belton then various locations, 3CY+, from 2007 to 31st March; presumed same Happisburgh, Martham and various locations, 3CY+, 6th December to 24th February 2009; presumed same **2009 Borders** Eyemouth, 4CY+ 25th February, (R. Ahmed); presumed same **2009 Perth & Kinross** Loch Leven, 4CY+, 27th February; presumed same **2009 Forth** Alloa Inch, 4CY+, 9th–10th May. Previously in Category D. Note revised locations, ages, dates and observers (*Brit. Birds* 101: 575; 102: 598; 105: 623–625; 108: 628–629).

Bird K

2007 North-east Scotland Meikle Loch, Kirktown of Slains then various locations, 2CY+, 5th–8th October. **2007 Perth & Kinross** Loch Leven, 2CY+, 20th–23rd October. **2007 Angus & Dundee** Montrose Basin, 2CY+, 23rd October. **2007 Lothian** Aberlady Bay then Torness, 2CY+, 24th–27th October. **2007 Borders** Crailing, 2CY+, 31st October. **2007 Norfolk** Branthill then Burnham Overy and other locations in north Norfolk, 2CY+, 20th November to 18th March 2008 (per BOURC, J. R. McCallum *et al.*). **2008 North-east Scotland** Cove Bay, Rattray Head and Loch of Strathbeg RSPB, 3CY+, 28th–30th March. Prevised locations, dates and observers (*Brit. Birds* 105: 623–625); previously in Category D.

Bird L

2007 North-east Scotland Meikle Loch, Kirktown of Slains then various locations, 2CY+, 5th–8th October. **2007 Perth & Kinross** Loch Leven, 2CY+, 20th–23rd October; presumed same **2007 Angus & Dundee** Montrose Basin, 2CY+, 23rd October. **2007 Lothian** Aberlady Bay then Torness, 2CY+, 24th–27th October. **2007 Borders** Crailing, 2CY+, 31st October. **2007 Norfolk** Docking then various locations, 2CY+, 29th December to 4th January 2008; **2008 Cumbria** Anthorn, Easton and nearby, 3CY+, 10th February to 21st March, photo (per BOURC). Previously in Category D. Note revised locations and dates (*Brit. Birds* 105: 623–625).

Bird M

2010 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock WWT, 2CY+, 17th September to 26th February 2011. **2010 Cumbria** Burgh Marsh and Rockcliffe Marsh, 2CY+, 5th October to 3rd April 2011. **2011 Lothian** Aberlady Bay, 3CY+, 11th October (D.

Allen per BOURC). **2011 Dumfries & Galloway** Caerlaverock WWT, 3CY+, from above to 26th February; presumed same Caerlaverock WWT and Mersehead RSPB, 3CY+, 13th October to 6th March 2012 (M. G. Youdale *et al.* per BOURC). **2011 Cumbria** Burgh Marsh and Rockcliffe Marsh, 3CY+, from above to 3rd April; presumed same Burgh Marsh, Rockcliffe Marsh, and Cardurnock, 3CY+, 14th December to 9th April 2012. Previously in Category D. Note revised locations, dates and observers (*Brit. Birds* 105: 623–625; 106: 637–639; 116: plate 7).

Bird N

2010 Lothian Aberlady Bay, 2CY+, 19th September to 2nd October. **2010 Angus & Dundee** Montrose Basin, 2CY+, 4th–9th October. **2010 Northumberland** Doddington, 2CY+, 8th–16th November. **2010 Norfolk** Burnham Market and nearby coastal areas, 2CY+, 24th November to 16th March 2011 (V. Egan per BOURC, J. R. McCallum *et al.*). **2011 Northumberland** Doddington, 3CY+, 28th March to 2nd April (J. Dean, T. R. Dean *et al.*) previously published as Not Proven (*Brit. Birds* 105: 624) but now accepted. **2011 Highland** Golspie, Udale Bay RSPB and nearby sites, 3CY+, 19th–26th April; presumed same **2011 Borders** West Water Reservoir, 3CY+, 13th October to 5th November (R. Murray). **2011 Norfolk** Holkham, 3CY+, 15th November to 28th January 2012, photo (per BOURC). **2012 Northumberland** East Chevington, 4CY+, 25th–26th February; presumed same Budle Bay, 11th March. **2012 Clyde** Stobwood and Carnwath, 4CY+, 13th–25th March. **2012 North-east Scotland** Rattray Head, 4CY+, 1st–4th April. Previously in Category D. Note revised dates and observers (*Brit. Birds* 105: 623–625; 106: 637–639; 106: plate 379, 108: 628–629; 112: 621–622).

Bird O

2010 Lothian Aberlady Bay, 2CY+, 19th September to 2nd October. **2010 Norfolk** Holkham, 2CY+, 29th November to 19th March 2011. Previously in Category D. Note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 105: 623–625).

Bird P

2014 Borders West Water Reservoir, 2CY+, 31st October; presumed same **2014 Lothian** Wester Broomhouse, Dunbar, 2CY+, 7th–9th December. **2015 Northumberland** West Chevington and Stobswood, 3CY+, 24th January to 8th March. **2015 Forth** Tullibody, Longcarse and Cambus, 3CY+, 11th–24th

March (D. M. Bryant, J. R. Calladine *et al.* per BOURC); **2015 Forth** Skinflats, 3CY+, 14th November, photo (S. Wotherspoon per BOURC). **2015 Clyde** Carstairs Junction, 3CY+, 12th–14th December. **2016 Lothian** Ballencrieff Mains, 4CY+, 3rd–9th April, photo (per BOURC). Previously in Category D; note revised locations, ages and observers (*Brit. Birds* 108: 628–629; 109: 627).

Bird Q

2018 Orkney Kirkness, Dounby, Mainland, 3CY+, 20th–31st March (*Brit. Birds* 112: 621–622). Previously in Category D.

Bird R

2021 Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, 2CY+, 20th–23rd October, photo (A. Shepherd *et al.*); note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 116: 552). **2021 Ayrshire** Fail and Hunterston, 2CY+, 4th November to 17th December, photo (H. Fripp, D. Grant *et al.*, per birding information services). **2022 Caithness** Lieurary, 3CY+, 27th March, photo (R. Hughes, N. O'Hanlon) (*Brit. Birds* 116: 552). **2022 Clyde** Kelvin valley, 3CY+, 23rd January to 15th February, photo (C. McInerny) (*Brit. Birds* 116: 552). **2022 Fife** Pitlessie, 3CY+, 26th February to 1st March, photo (S. J. Pinder *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: 552). **2022 North-east Scotland** Old Porthlethen, 3CY+, 5th–25th March photo (N. Collins, I. Broadbent, H. Addlesee) (*Brit. Birds* 116: 552); presumed same Loch of Skene, 6th March (H. A. Addlesee).

Following the addition of Ross's Goose to Category A of the British List by BOURC in 2022 (BOURC 2023), BBRC has undertaken a review of all records using the rationale and criteria suggested in Batty & McInerny (2023), including that they showed no anomalous plumage features or wear, bore no rings indicative of captive origin, remained wary, associated with other Arctic-breeding geese and departed before the summer. The result of this BBRC review is that 18 individuals have been accepted onto Category A, all of which are listed above with a unique letter for ease of reference.

The records published here encompass *all* sightings of *all* individuals fulfilling the BOURC criteria for Category A and for which submissions had been received – records of Bird A and Bird R have previously been published (*Brit. Birds* 115: 557; 116: 552) but are included for completeness and with the

addition of amended details where relevant. There are a further ten unsubmitted reports of what are believed to involve additional records of some of the 18 individuals listed here, and one record of one additional bird (in Cumbria/Dumfries & Galloway in 1996/97) for which a submission has not been received. The duplicate combinations of locations and dates for individuals K and L and N and O indicate instances where two individuals were present together

Further supporting the promotion of Ross's Goose to Category A on the British List, a male Ross's Goose ringed as a 2CY+ on 4th August 2017 at a moulting ground at Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada, was discovered at Eidsbotn, Levanger, Trondelag, Norway on 18th September 2023 in the company of Pink-footed Geese *A. brachyrhynchus*. It was joined three days later by an unringed Ross's Goose. The two birds were subsequently tracked through Denmark, the Netherlands and into Belgium, where the birds spent the winter, mostly associating with White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons*. In March 2024, the birds left Belgium, being recorded in the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and then Estonia, where they continued to associate with White-fronted as well as Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis*. They were later seen at Engasjyen, Rana, Nordland, Norway, on 9th–10th May 2024, with the ringed male subsequently seen alone with White-fronted and Barnacle Geese at Kuopio, Juankoski, Finland, on 12th–14th May (Ławicki & van den Berg 2023, 2024a,b,c).

Batty & McNerny (2023) suggested that vagrant Ross's Geese in Europe are most likely to be adult birds, lacking the parental guidance they benefit from within their first year, and subsequently meeting and abmigrating with an Arctic carrier species to reach Britain. Of the 18 British records, 15 accompanied Pink-footed Geese and 16 were adults – fitting with the suggested vagrancy patterns, and matching the circumstances surrounding the 2023/24 record of the Canadian-ringed bird.

The capacity of vagrant Nearctic geese to leave the company of their initial carrier species for more favourable feeding opportunities was also highlighted by Batty & McNerny. This opens up the real possibility of wild vagrants switching to the company of feral birds and failing acceptance criteria in the process (Molværsmyr & Fox 2020). No criteria are perfect,

however, but by stipulating that potential vagrants are seen to associate with Arctic-breeding geese, we should ensure that escaped birds content with tame and sedentary company will not be accepted as wild. Conversely, Batty & McInerney also highlighted that an association with Arctic geese does not in itself prove vagrancy; indeed, the Russian Barnacle Goose flyway used by the Canadian-ringed Ross's Goose in spring 2024 had in autumn 2023 hosted a red-ringed (presumably escaped) Ross's Goose at Kouvola, Kymenlaakso, Finland, between 18th September and 16th October and then at Põõsaspea, Estonia, on the latter date.

To complete the dataset, the Committee welcomes submissions of the following:

Bird D: **1991 Moray** Findhorn Bay, 3CY+, 15th–19th March; **1991 Highland** Kinlochbervie, 3CY+, 16th May.

Bird D: **1991 Highland** Kinlochbervie, 3CY+, 16th May.

Bird G: **2004 Angus & Dundee** Montrose Basin, 4CY+, 16th May.

Bird I: **2008 Yorkshire** Ardsley Reservoir, 3CY+, 27th January.

Bird J: **2008** Lothian Aberlady Bay, 3CY+, 3rd–4th April.

Bird K: **2007 Lancashire & North Merseyside** Banks Marsh then Plex Moss, 2CY+, 10th–11th November.

Bird L: **2007 Lothian** Drem, 2CY+, 31st October; **2008 Yorkshire** Staveley, 3CY+, 9th February..

Bird N: **2012 Moray** Easter Newforres, Forres, 4CY+, 23rd–28th April.

Bird P: **2014 Lothian** Aberlady Bay, 2CY+, 22nd–30th September.

Additionally, submissions of sightings of the Ross's Goose at Caerlaverock WWT and RSPB Mersehead , both Dumfries & Galloway, on 18th November 1996 to 19th April 1997 and at Rockcliffe Marsh, Cumbria, on 31st December 1996 to 14th February 1997 would be welcomed by the Committee.

(Breeds on tundra of Canadian Arctic, from Perry River region of Northwest Territories to N Manitoba, including Southampton Island, E to N Ontario. Most migrate across C USA to wintering grounds in S USA. Numbers increasing on Atlantic seaboard of USA & N Mexico.

Baikal Teal *Sibirionetta formosa* (1, 10, 2)

Very rare, last in 2022

Breconshire Llangorse Lake, 2CY+ male, 9th–18th January, photo (J. Lewis *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Misson Springs then Finningley GP, 2CY+ female, 20th–25th January, photo (L. Degnan *et al.*).

Somerset RSPB Greylake, 3CY+ male, 28th December into 2024, photo (R. S. R. Williams *et al.*) (plate 459); presumed same Somerset 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 552).

Graham Jepson

459. Adult (3CY+) male Baikal Teal *Sibirionetta formosa*, RSPB Greylake, Somerset, December 2023.

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

Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors* (10, 292, 4) *About five per year; decreasing*

Cambridgeshire Berry Fen, 2CY+ male, 5th–6th November, photo (R. Thomas, A. D. W. Tongue, P. Whiteman *et al.*).

Lincolnshire RSPB Frampton Marsh, 2CY+ male, 1st–7th May, photo (O. Beacock *et al.* per Lincolnshire Recorder); presumed same RSPB Freiston Shore, 11th–14th May, photo (P. Sullivan *et al.*).

Yorkshire Tophill Low, two (2CY+ male and 2CY+ female), 23rd August to 16th October, male to 25th November, photo (per birding information services).

There are two clear peaks in the arrival dates of Blue-winged Teals in Britain (fig. 1), with the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire birds conforming to the expected pattern. The Cambridgeshire bird, on the other hand, was one of relatively few to have been found during November.

Fig. 1. Arrival dates of Blue-winged Teals *Spatula discors* in Britain, 1950–2023.

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

Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata* (0, 7, 1) *Very rare, last in 2008*

Lincolnshire Covenham Reservoir, 2CY+ male, 26th January, photo (G. P. Langan *et al.*).

There was much debate among the Committee over the provenance of this bird, and whether its association with Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* fulfilled the ‘appropriate carrier species’ requirement for acceptance of rare wildfowl. This was initially viewed negatively – but the same flock also contained Northern Shovelers *Spatula clypeata*, Common Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula*, Goosanders *Mergus merganser* and, perhaps most importantly, Eurasian Wigeons *Mareca penelope*, all of which could have been of Continental – and certainly wild – origin. While Wigeon is often viewed as the

'ideal' carrier species, Mallard may not be as poor a companion as first assumed; there are ringing recoveries of Mallards originating from as far east as the Urals and, while this is not as far as the ringing recoveries from some Wigeons (some of which have originated around the Lake Baikal area), it is perhaps far enough to pick up any west-bound Falcated Ducks.

A small private wildfowl collection close to Covenham Reservoir did not, contrary to opinion at the time, hold any Falcated Ducks, and the bird's departure overnight on 26th/27th January coincided with Wigeons and Eurasian Teals *Anas crecca* also leaving the site.

(Breeds E Siberia from Yenisey River & Baikal region E to Sea of Okhotsk & S to NE China & Hokkaido, Japan. Winters from S Japan to SE China, locally W to Nepal.)

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* x Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (–, 4, 0) Uncertain

2020 Cornwall Devoran, 2CY+ female, 4th–10th August, photo (S. C. Votier *et al.*).

Whether this adult female originated in the Nearctic, was one of the hybrid offspring of the Highland male Black Duck present from 2011 to 2020 (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 114: 575) or the offspring of a different hybrid pair from elsewhere in Europe remains open to conjecture, but it is treated as a new bird. We welcome further documentation of known hybrids, including birds from past years.

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

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (173, 703, 5) *About 8–9 per year; stable or decreasing, but status obscured by reintroductions in Europe*

Cambridgeshire Redmere Middle Reservoir (Cambridgeshire portion), 2CY+ male, 1st–18th October, photo (D. & K. Nation); also seen Norfolk.

Dorset RSPB Lodmoor, 1CY male, 31st October to 9th November, photo, video (T. Brereton *et al.*); presumed same RSPB Radipole Lake, 1st–2nd November, photo, video (J. P. Martin *et al.*) and Abbotsbury Swannery, 8th–13th November, photo, video (S. A. Groves *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Langtoft Pits, 2CY+ male, 17th November (J. R. Jones *et al.*); also seen Nottinghamshire.

Norfolk Ormesby Broad, three (one 2CY+ male and two 1CY+ females), from 2022 to 12th May, one 2CY+ male and one 1CY+ female to 22nd May (D. Lyness, L. Curson, P. Safford *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: 553).

Redmere Middle Reservoir (Norfolk portion), 2CY+ male, 1st–18th October, photo (D. & K. Nation); also seen Cambridgeshire.

Nottinghamshire Holme Pierrepont, 2CY+ female, 18th–19th May, photo (A. Clewes *et al.*).

Misson Springs, Idle Washlands, 2CY+ male, 28th November to 20th December, photo (I. Cowgill *et al.*); also seen Lincolnshire.

Yorkshire Potteric Carr, 2CY+ female, 29th May, video (S. J. Furber, R. J. Scott).

2022 Berkshire Wraysbury GP, 1CY, 23rd–29th September, photo (C. D. R. Heard).

2022 Cheshire & Wirral Woolston Eyes, 2CY+ female, 30th April, photo (D. Owen).

The statistics for Ferruginous Duck have been updated to include all occurrences during the time that the species was classed as a scarce migrant.

(Breeds Poland & Hungary E through Ukraine to Caspian Sea, but distribution patchy. Elsewhere breeds S Spain, Kazakhstan, W Mongolia & Tibetan Plateau. Migratory, most winter E Mediterranean, Black & Caspian Seas, NE Africa & Indian subcontinent.)

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 238, 32)
About 7–8 per year, influxes 2007 (27), 2008 (16), 2021 (16), 2022 (17)

Argyll St Mary's Loch, Ford, 2CY male, 20th–26th March, photo (J. M. Dickson, D. C. Jardine *et al.*).

Avon Chew Valley Lake, 1CY+ male, 22nd November into 2024, photo (C. Craig, R. Mielcarek, J. Wylson *et al.*).

Ayrshire Martnaham Loch, 2CY+ male, 7th–8th April, photo (D. Grant *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Grafham Water, 2CY male, 7th July, photo (R. M. Patient).

Clyde Balgray Reservoir, 2CY female, 25th March to 6th April, photo (J. J. Sweeney *et al.*); same Barr Loch, 7th–17th April, photo (J. J. Sweeney *et al.*).

Cornwall Porth Reservoir, 2CY+ female, 17th–20th March, photo (S. Grose, P. Kemp, S. Rowe *et al.*).

Drift Reservoir, ten (four 1CY males and six 1CY females), 29th–30th October, photo (R. Veal *et al.*); five (three 1CY males and two 1CY females) same Lower Tamar Lake, 29th November into 2024, photo (R. Mudge per Cornwall Recorder).

Dozmary Pool, two (2CY+ male and 2CY+ female), 29th October to 18th November, photo (B. Bosisto, J. Ryan *et al.*).

Devon Slapton Ley, three (two 1CY males and one 1CY+ female), 25th November into 2024, photo (M. Langman *et al.*).

Fife Loch Gelly, 2CY male, 14th–19th April, photo (J. Nadin, G. Sparshott, I. Thompson *et al.*); presumed same Fife 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 554)

Greater Manchester Audenshaw Reservoirs, 2CY+ male, 13th–26th April, photo (R. Adderley, P. Wren *et al.*).

Kent RSPB Lydden Valley/Worth Marshes, 2CY+ male, 4th April, photo (N. Davies *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe, 2CY+ male, 16th–17th May, photo (P. Hyde, G. Williams *et al.*).

Norfolk Colney GP, 2CY+ male, 20th June to 22nd July, photo (R. Chittenden *et al.*).

Northumberland Grindon Lough, 2CY+ male, 6th May, photo (J. Jackson, P. R. Massey).

Pembrokeshire Bosherton Lily Ponds, 1CY female, 31st October to 1st November, photo (D. J. Astins, C. Pickett *et al.*).

Penberi Reservoir, St Davids, 1CY female, 27th November into 2024, photo (S. Jones, C. Ryland *et al.*).

Bosherton Lily Ponds, 1CY male, 8th December into 2024, photo (C. Pickett *et al.*) (plate web-3).

web-3. First-winter (1CY) male Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (left) with Greater Scaup *A. marila*, Bosherton Lily Ponds, Pembrokeshire, December 2023.

Somerset RSPB Ham Wall, 2CY+ female, 14th January to 16th April, photo (S. Davies *et al.*)

Staffordshire Branston GP, 2CY+ male, 3rd–6th May, photo (C. Eccleshall *et al.*); presumed same Uttoxeter Quarry, 7th May, photo (R. Powell).

Belvide Reservoir, 2CY male, 26th May, photo (S. Nuttall *et al.*).

Surrey Staines Reservoirs, 1CY male, from 2022 to 20th February, photo (*Brit. Birds* 116: 555).

The 32 birds in 2023 represent the highest-ever annual total of Lesser Scaup in Britain, surpassing the 27 individuals recorded in 2007 (fig. X). Although most birds in 2023 arrived during the autumn, higher than average numbers were also recorded during the spring, with 13 new individuals. Of the 19 birds during the autumn, ten were in a single flock in Cornwall – the largest flock ever recorded in Britain, the previous record being six on Loch Skerrols, Islay, Argyll, in 2021.

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

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (54, 217, 1) ***About 4–5 per year + returnees; stable***

Cleveland Redcar, 3CY male, from 2022 to 2nd April (per Cleveland Recorder).

Fife Chapel Ness, Earlsferry, 3CY male, 23rd–29th April, photo (M. A. Wilkinson *et al.*); also seen Isle of May, Lothian, North-east Scotland

Isle of May Rona, 3CY male, 21st April, photo (D. Steel); also seen Fife, Lothian and North-east Scotland; presumed same Lothian 2022 (see 2022 Lothian, below).

Lothian Musselburgh, 3CY male, 5th–14th February, photo (J. Leestmans *et al.* per Lothian Recorder); same Port Seton 22nd March (per I. J. Andrews), Morrison's Haven, Musselburgh 26th March (per I. J. Andrews), Port Seton 27th March to 7th April (per Lothian Recorder), Aberlady 9th April (per Lothian Recorder), Musselburgh 11th July to 30th September, photo (I. J. Andrews *et al.*); also seen Fife, Isle of May and North-east Scotland. Presumed same Lothian 2022 (see below).

Outer Hebrides Butt of Lewis, Lewis, 2CY+ male, 27th October to 12th November, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder).

North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary, 3CY male, 1st May to 2nd July, photo (A. & S. Dickinson *et al.* per North-east Scotland Recorder); also seen Fife, Isle of May, Lothian; presumed same Lothian 2022 (see 2022 Lothian, below).

Shetland Gutcher and Linga, Yell, 4CY male, from 2022 to 3rd May (per Shetland Recorder) (plate web-4); presumed same Shetland 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 555).

web-4. Adult (4CY) King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* with Common Eiders *S. mollissima*, Yell, Shetland, March 2023.

2022 Lothian Musselburgh, 2CY male, 16th January, photo (I. J. Andrews *et al.*); presumed same Seafield, Edinburgh, 20th February to 1st March, photo (K. Gillon *et al.*) and Musselburgh, 4th March to 17th November, photo (K. Clements per Lothian Recorder); presumed same Lothian 2021 (see 2021 Lothian, below).

2022 Moray & Nairn Nairn, 15CY+ male, 22nd January to 20th March, photo (D. M. Pullan *et al.*); presumed same North-east Scotland 2022 and Moray & Nairn 2021.

2022 North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary, 15CY+ male, 26th April to 11th May, photo (I. Broadbent, A. Phillips *et al.*); presumed same Moray & Nairn.

2021 Moray & Nairn Burghead Bay then Nairn and Hopeman, 1st January to 25th November, 14CY+ male, photo (R. Somers Cocks *et al.*); presumed same Highland, North-east Scotland and Moray & Nairn 2020 (*Brit. Birds* 115: 560). Spey Bay and Hopeman, 2CY+ male, 23rd October to 24th November, photo

(R. Somers Cocks, M. Cook *et al.*).

2021 Lothian Portobello, 1CY male, 30th November to 3rd December (per Lothian Recorder); presumed same Musselburgh, Port Seton and Scoughall (*Brit. Birds* 115: 560).

'Elvis', the long-returning 15CY+ male on the Ythan Estuary, North-east Scotland, failed to reappear in 2023, although a 3CY male was present there during the spring, having spent the preceding two years at various locations in the Firth of Forth.

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

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* (6, 17, 3) Very rare, last in 2015, 2022

Highland Loch Fleet, 2CY+ male, 5th August, photo, video (D. Bremner).

Orkney Dennishead, North Ronaldsay, 1CY+, 15th October (F. Brady, G. Gay, M. Hellicar *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Traigh Eais, Barra, 2CY+ female, 22nd January to 18th February, photo (B. A. Taylor, K. Taylor *et al.*).

The North Ronaldsay individual is notable in becoming the first accepted seawatch record of a fly-past-only Harlequin Duck.

The individual on Barra, Outer Hebrides, followed hot on the heels of a similarly plumaged individual seen just over 60 km away on Coll, Argyll, on 22nd December 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 556). However, in the absence of any firm evidence linking the two, they are treated as different individuals.

Multiple occurrences of this species in Britain are not unprecedented – there were two in 1965 (a pair), 1987, 1996 and 2015, and three in 2022 – but this is the first time such records have come from two consecutive years (fig. 2). In fact, the eight birds from 2015–23 represent half of the post-1950 records in Britain. The status of the species is rightfully still 'very rare', but it remains to be seen if the recent upwards trend in the number of records will hold.

It has long been hypothesised that vagrant Harlequin Ducks in Britain are more likely to have originated from the migratory population in eastern North America rather than from the more sedentary population in Iceland (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Rogers *et al.* 2005). The upward trend in British records might lend support to the hypothesis, since there are indications that the eastern Canadian population of Harlequin Duck is increasing, following historical lows in the late 1980s (Gutowsky *et al.* 2022).

Further support for the hypothesis might also be provided by the recent spate of August records (one drake in 2023 and two drakes in 2022; fig. X). At first glance, an August arrival date for a bird from North America might seem surprising. However, the results from satellite tracking of birds breeding in Quebec and Labrador, all of which were assumed to winter along the eastern seaboard, has shown that the population consists of two demographically distinct populations. One set of birds does, indeed, move south to winter in areas such as Maine, USA, but the second set of birds moves east to moult and winter off southern Greenland (Brodeur *et al.* 2002). With males from this latter part of the population arriving on their moulting areas between early July and mid August, an August arrival in Scotland seems entirely plausible for a bird that has overshot its moulting areas.

(Atlantic population breeds Iceland, S Greenland, & E Canada from S Ellesmere Island to Labrador & Gulf of St Lawrence. Pacific population breeds NE Russia from Lake Baikal E to Kamchatka & S Sakhalin, Alaska & W Canada S to Oregon, USA. Resident Iceland. Other populations disperse to coasts S of breeding range.)

White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi* (0, 4, 3) *Very rare, last in 2013, 2016, 2017*

Fife Lower Largo, three 3CY+ males, 28th April to 14th May (R. Baatsen, M. Dowie, A. Shepherd, J. Wilson *et al.*) (see also comment below).
Dumbarrie Links, Largo Bay, 3CY+ male, 30th April, photo (P. R. French *et al.*)
Leven, 21st May (J. Wilson *et al.*); presumed same as one of the above birds.
Lothian Musselburgh, 10CY+ male, 1st January to 15th April, photo (I. J. Andrews *et al.*); presumed same Gosford Bay, 2nd–3rd January, photo (A. O'Connor *et al.*); also seen Fife.

2022 Lothian Musselburgh, 7CY+ male, 26th October 2021 to 2nd April, presumed same 25th October to 9th November (I. J. Andrews, C. C. Rodger *et al.*); same Lothian 2021; note revised date and observers (cf. *Brit. Birds* 115: 561)

2021 Lothian Musselburgh, 7CY+ male, 26th October into 2022, photo (I. J. Andrews *et al.*); same Lothian 2020; note revised date and observer (cf. *Brit. Birds* 115: 561).

One of the four birds in Fife is considered to be the regular returning bird from Lothian, although it is unknown which of the four individuals is concerned, hence the apparent discrepancies in the ageing.

(Breeds NW Alaska E to Hudson Bay, & S to NE Washington & North Dakota, USA. Winters along Pacific coast from Aleutian Islands to California & Atlantic coast from Gulf of St Lawrence to South Carolina, with some remaining on Great Lakes.)

Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta stejnegeri* (0, 1, 0) *Extremely rare, first record*

Fife Lower Largo, 3CY+ male, 28th April to 13th May, photo (J. Wilson *et al.*); also seen Lothian; presumed same Lothian 2022.

Lothian Musselburgh, 3CY+ male, 12th August to 23rd September, photo (I. J. Andrews *et al.*); also seen Fife; presumed same Lothian 2022.

2022 Lothian Gullane Point and Ferny Ness, 2CY+ male, 10th–18th December, photo (K. Gillon, C. Scott *et al.*).

Out of kilter with subsequent sightings, the first record of Stejneger's Scoter for the Western Palearctic was a 2CY+ male collected at Le Crotoy, Baie de Somme, France, on 4th December 1886, with the next not occurring until over 110 years later, in Finland in 1997 (Haas 2012). Since then, the species has been recorded once in Ireland and on multiple occasions in Sweden (26), Estonia (10), Norway (9), Poland (8), Denmark (7), Latvia (7), Finland (4), Germany (3), Spain (2) and Iceland (2). The rapid increase in records is striking, with 40 of the above all occurring since January 2020. Indeed, the presence of Stejneger's Scoter has now become a regular feature of Baltic Sea scoter flocks. Such a rapid change in fortune must be at least in part due

to increased observer coverage and awareness – but there is also a strong argument to say the Baltic is becoming a newly established wintering area for the species.

It therefore seemed only a matter of time before the first British record of the species, but it still took the skills of a dedicated pair of scoter-watchers to pull one out of the bag in Lothian in the early winter of 2022. That bird's relatively short stay in the Aberlady area gave the more fleet-footed twitchers time to see it, albeit mostly at unsatisfactory distances. Thankfully, after hope of relocation had almost died, what is presumed to be the same bird was found on the Fife side of the Forth in spring, in a flock of Velvet Scoters *Melanitta fusca*. Along with the Stejneger's Scoter, the area also offered up an incredible four White-winged Scoters, at least four Surf Scoters, huge flocks of Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* reaching as far as the eye could see and the 'usual' Forth fare, including Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica* and Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena*, all making for one of the best winter-birding spectacles of the year.

(Breeds in eastern Asia, from Altai, Russia, to the Kamchatka Peninsula, south to Mongolia; locally in northeastern Kazakhstan. Winters along coasts of Kamchatka, Sea of Okhotsk, and Commander Islands south to Japan, Korea, and eastern China.)

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* (0, 16, 0) ***Rare, about one every 2–3 years***

Northumberland Various localities between Bamburgh and Cocklawburn Beach, 14CY+ male, from 2022 to 27th March (per Northumberland Recorder); presumed same Northumberland 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 557) (plate 460).

460. Adult (14CY+) Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* (right) with Common Scoters *M. nigra*, between Bamburgh and Cocklawburn Beach, Northumberland, March 2023.

2022 Moray & Nairn Lossiemouth, 3CY+ male, male from 2021 to 9th January 2022 (D. M. Pullan *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 115: 561).

(Breeds Siberian tundra from Yana River E to Alaska, & N Canada E to Newfoundland. In North Atlantic, winters along coasts of E USA, N to South Carolina, & inland on Great Lakes. Elsewhere, winters ice-free seas along both coasts of N Pacific Ocean, S to N Japan & California.)

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* (2, 8, 0) Very rare, last in 2017

2022 At sea 120 km E of Duncansby Head, Caithness, 2CY+, 4th June, photo (C. Gouraud *et al.*) (plate 461, web-5).

461. White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*, at sea, 120 km E of Duncansby Head, Caithness, June 2022.

web-5. White-throated Needletail, at sea, 120 km E of Duncansby Head, June 2022.

This bird was found as it circled an astonished tour group aboard the MV *Ortelius*. After a few minutes, the bird crashed onto the deck, was picked up, photographed and then duly released successfully.

(Nominate race breeds W Siberia from region of Tomsk, E through S Siberia to Sakhalin, Kuril Islands, Japan and N China; winters Australia S to Tasmania. Race *H. c. nudipes* breeds Himalayas to N Yunnan, SW China, to Assam, NE India, perhaps also N Burma.)

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 203, 16) About 6–7 per year; increasing, influxes 2004 (16), 2018 (15) and 2022 (71)

Lincolnshire Far Ings, two 1CY, 29th October, photo, video (G. P. Catley, W. Gillatt, D. Wozencroft).

Huttoft Bank, two 1CY+, 29th October, photo (J. P. Siddle, G. Wright *et al.*).

Gibraltar Point, 1CY, 29th October, photo (O. Beaumont *et al.*).

Norfolk West Runton, 1CY+, 21st October, photo (R. J. Fowling, J. Lawrence *et al.*).

Sheringham, 1CY+, 28th October (K. B. Shepherd, S. C. Votier).

Blakeney Point, 1CY+, 3rd November (A. M. Stoddart).

Winterton, 1CY, 10th–21st November, photo (per Norfolk Recorder).

Orkney Noup Head Lighthouse, Westray, 1CY, 3rd–4th November, photo (S. P. Dudley).

Shetland Lerwick, Mainland, 1CY, 23rd October, photo (P. A. Harris, R. J. Nason *et al.*) (plate web-6).

Roger Riddington

web-6. First-winter (1CY) Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*, Lerwick, Shetland, October 2023.

Suffolk RSPB Minsmere, 1CY+, 22nd October, photo (P. & S. Green *et al.*).

Corton, 1CY+, 28th October, photo (J. A. Brown *et al.*).

Beach Farm, Benacre, 1CY+, 31st October (C. A. Buttle).

Yorkshire Easington, 1CY+, 25th October, photo (C. Bushell, P. J. Willoughby, T. J. Willoughby *et al.*).

Bempton, 1CY, 28th October, photo (K. Clarkson, P. M. Scanlan); presumed same Flamborough Head, 29th October, photo (per Flamborough Bird Observatory Recorder) and presumed same Hornsea, 29th October, photo (J. Cooper, J. Lamplough, D. R. Middleton *et al.*).

2022 Borders St Abb's Head, four 1CY+, 29th October (C. R. Hatsell, B. Outram *et al.*); presumed same Lothian.

2022 Cheshire & Wirral Hoylake, 1CY+, 31st October (S. Brown per Cheshire & Wirral Recorder); presumed same Hoylake 27th October; note date extension (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 557).

2022 Cleveland 2022 Cleveland Redcar, 1CY, 30th October, then two (both 1CY) 31st October (G. N. Megson) (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 557).

2022 Isles of Scilly Garrison, St Mary's, two 1CY, 21st–23rd October, 1CY+ 21st October only, photo; note revised dates (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 558).

2022 Kent Foreness, 1CY+, 24th October, photo (S. Mount); presumed same North Foreland, 24th October, photo (J. Carnell) and Foreness, 1CY+, 26th–27th October, photo (S. Mount).

Tankerton/Swalecliffe, Whitstable, 1CY, 1st–4th November, photo (A. Taylor, A. Malone, A. van Orsouw).

2022 Lothian Dunbar area, four 1CY+, 27th October to 2nd November, photo (M. Cavanagh, R. Filipiak, C. Scott *et al.*); also seen Borders.

Port Seton, 1CY, 31st October, photo (M. D. Hodgkin, D. Morrison, K. J. Ritchie *et al.*); note amended observers (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 558).

2022 Northumberland Howick Hall Gardens, three 1CY, 29th October, photo (S. Sexton, D. Langston); same Amble, 30th October (*Brit. Birds* 116: 558).

2022 North-east Scotland Girdle Ness, three 1CY+, 1st November, one to 2nd November, photo (H. A. Addlesee, P. Cruttenden, M. Lewis); one same Girdle Ness, 1st November (*Brit. Birds* 116: 558); note amended number of birds and amended observers.

2022 Sussex Peacehaven, 1CY, 30th October, photo (B. Sanders).

2022 Yorkshire Flamborough Head then RSPB Bempton Cliffs, two 1CY+, 28th October to 2nd November, photo (B. Richards, C.C. Thomas per Flamborough Bird Observatory Recorder).

An additional 11 records from 2022 are published here, along with some corrections and additional dates; those additional 11 birds increase the record-breaking tally of 2022 to 71. Just how much overlap and duplication of

records was involved is, of course, open to interpretation, but the numbers published here and in last year's report represent a reasonably conservative best attempt, taking into account the views of local birders and county recorders.

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

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* (0, 12, 0) Rare, about one every 3 years, recent increase

Shetland Sumburgh Head, Mainland, 3CY+, 2nd July, photo (D. Fairhurst *et al.*), presumed same Boddam, Mainland, 4th–5th July, photo (W. T. S. Miles *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 279; plate 462); presumed same Shetland 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 559).

462. Adult (3CY+) Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*, Boddam, Shetland, July 2023.

(Breeds W Siberia E to Kamchatka & Japan, S to Vietnam. Northern breeders winter throughout SE Asia & S to Australia.)

Little Swift *Apus affinis* (0, 29, 2) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Lincolnshire Alkborough Flats, 1CY+, 29th June, photo (S. & T. Jump).

Sussex Sovereign Harbour, Eastbourne, 2CY+, 2nd January, photo (D. Thorns

et al.).

(In WP breeds locally in S Spain & Morocco. Widespread throughout Middle East from Israel to SE Iran & N along Euphrates River to SE Turkey. Largely resident, but some Middle East populations migratory. Elsewhere, resident or dispersive throughout sub-Saharan Africa & Indian subcontinent to Sri Lanka.)

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (3, 52, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years; stable

Suffolk Easton Farm, Southwold, 2CY, 24th March, photo (B. J. Small *et al.*).

2021 Gloucestershire Eastcombe, 2CY+, 31st March, sound recording (A. S. Perry).

This species last appeared in the 2019 report, but the occasional blank year for what is still a rare species in Britain is not unexpected. The peak months are March and April and both records in this report fall into this period. The Suffolk individual is only the 2nd record for that county, the first having been at Aldeburgh in 1992.

The 2021 bird in Gloucestershire is both the first county record and the first nationally to be accepted based solely on nocturnal sound-recordings. The wailing nocturnal flight-call, recorded over Eastcombe at 04.43 hrs, two hours before dawn, is a call probably unfamiliar to most birders. Magnus Robb described the most frequent nocturnal call as consisting of between one and five wails followed by a chuckle (www.soundapproach.co.uk/nocturnal-flight-calls-great-spotted-cuckoo). The second-commonest call is a series of between five and nine wails, and that is what was recorded in Gloucestershire, with that bird giving nine wails.

(Breeds Spain, Portugal, S France & E to Greece. W Asian population uncommon, breeding discontinuously from C Turkey, Cyprus, Israel & Jordan to N Iraq & SW Iran. Palearctic breeders winter sub-Saharan Africa but range uncertain owing to presence of African populations.)

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* (2,

18, 2) Rare, about one every 2–3 years, recent increase

Orkney Lurand, North Ronaldsay, 1CY, *S. o. meena*, 28th–30th October, photo (M. A. Hellicar *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: 572–573).

Outer Hebrides North Boisdale, South Uist, 2CY+, *S. o. meena*, 27th August to 4th September, photo (R. & P. Safford *et al.*).

2020 Outer Hebrides Undisclosed location, Lewis, 1CY+, *S. o. meena*, 22nd December to 2nd April 2021, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder).

2019 Outer Hebrides Stornoway, Lewis, 2CY+, 2nd–3rd February, photo (S. Woodcock).

1983 Yorkshire Flamborough Head, 2CY+, 26th June (A. M. Allport, D. G. Hobson).

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

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* (0, 4, 0) Extremely rare, previous records 1958, 2008, 2011

2022 Somerset Dunster Beach, 1CY, 16th November, photo (J. Bosley, J. Bryant).

This remarkable record comes courtesy of two builders undertaking work in a chalet park. Their submission made for gripping reading: 'We had a new job here and were starting on a patio replacement for a chalet owner. After a little while, we noticed a strange bird walking around the tiny front garden facing the seafront. Neither of us knew what it was but noticed its huge feet and unusual appearance. I took some pictures and videos of it throughout the day. It spent the entire time calmly walking around our feet until we left at around 3.30 pm. The bird wasn't at all fazed as we used a mini digger and other noisy equipment – it was very tame indeed. It continued to walk around the garden, occasionally going into the hedges, but generally staying out in the open. It was having a good feed on various slugs and worms during the day. James and I even shared some of our sandwiches with it, which it wolfed

down. At one point I left the garden to walk to my van and the bird followed me down the path before, at speed, running next to me!

(Breeds USA from South Carolina to Texas, S through C America & Caribbean to N Argentina. Northern populations migratory, wintering to S of breeding range.)

Baillon's Crake *Zapornia pusilla* (64, 36, 0) *Rare, about one every two years, bred in 2012*

2022 Somerset RSPB Greylake, two (2CY+ male and 2CY+ female), 25th May to 8th June, sound recording (H. Paget-Wilkes).

2022 Yorkshire Undisclosed location, two 2CY+ males, 21st June to 29th July, photo (D. Hobson).

(Locally common breeder from Spain E through Mediterranean Basin to Ukraine, occasionally N to Netherlands. To E breeds warm temperate Asia E to Japan. European breeders migrate throughout S Europe to winter sub-Saharan Africa. Elsewhere, winters Indian subcontinent & SE Asia to Singapore. Other races breed Australasia & southern Africa.)

Little Crake *Zapornia parva* (59, 44, 2) *Rare, about one every two years*

Buckinghamshire Linford Lakes, 1CY, 6th–11th November, photo (K. Sargent, M. S. Wallen *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire RSPB Ouse Fen, 2CY+ male, 14th–24th June, sound recording (R. Grimmett, J. Lindsell *et al.*).

The Little Crake at Linford Lakes was the first record for Buckinghamshire. It proved to be a popular bird during its six-day stay, with special access arranged for non-members and £3,800 raised in the process.

The singing male at RSPB Ouse Fen from 14th–24th June follows recent records from Cambridgeshire of singing females at Eldernell on the Nene Washes during 15th–26th May 2020 and RSPB Ouse Fen on 15th–21st May 2018. Such behaviour qualifies as indicative of possible breeding (Eaton *et al.* 2020, 2022). Observers fortunate enough to find a singing Little Crake should

attempt to make repeat visits to the site to establish the length of the bird's stay and whether more than one bird is present.

(Breeds across temperate steppe region from Austria E through Ukraine & European Russia to W Siberia, C Kazakhstan & NW China. Small numbers occasionally breed to N & W, reaching Netherlands, Finland & Spain. Most winter NE & E Africa, although some W to Senegal.)

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* (0, 0, 1) *First record*

Fife Airdrie Farm, Crail, 3CY+, 11th May, video (A. Mazur per W. Cresswell); also seen Moray & Nairn, Northumberland, Outer Hebrides.

Moray & Nairn Balormie, Lossiemouth, 3CY+, 13th May, photo (J. & M. Cook *et al.*); also seen Fife, Northumberland, Outer Hebrides.

Northumberland Low Newton-by-the-Sea and Long Nanny, 3CY+, 1st–8th May photo (R. Lowe, G. Woodburn *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 224; plate web-7); also seen Fife, Moray & Nairn, Outer Hebrides.

Mark Rayment

000. Adult (3CY+) Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*, Low Newton-by-the-Sea, Northumberland, May 2023.

Outer Hebrides Balemore, North Uist, 3CY+, 26th–29th May, photo (J. Boyle, S. E. Duffield *et al.*); also seen Fife, Moray & Nairn, Northumberland (plate 463).

Dave Stewart

463. Adult (3CY+) Grey-headed Lapwing, Balemore, North Uist, May 2023.

This first for Britain was initially found in Northumberland before moving on to Fife and then Moray & Nairn, giving hope to birders in Caithness, Orkney and Shetland that their counties would be next on this bird's tour of northern Britain; that was until the bird made a surprise move west, arriving on North Uist – much to the delight of birders on the Outer Hebrides! One can only then speculate on its next move; certainly, it was not seen again after 29th May.

Grey-headed Lapwing is a long-distance migrant breeding mainly in northeast China and adjacent areas of the Amur region of far eastern Russia and wintering in south Asia and northern Southeast Asia; a range not dissimilar to

that of Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*. Grey-headed Lapwing already has a track record for long-distance vagrancy, having been recorded in Oman, Iran, Kazakhstan, the Cocos Islands and Australia. Additionally, there has been a recent increase in the number of Grey-headed Lapwings recorded west of their usual wintering range in, for instance, western Nepal and southwestern India (Roshnath 2017). It is currently unclear whether this reflects a population increase and an expansion in the species' range or simply a westward shift in the core wintering area.

The first record of the species from the Western Palearctic came from the Turkish Black Sea in March 2018, and was followed by records from Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands in May–June 2019 and Slovenia and Italy in August 2021.

After the incredulity of the find had been overcome, the identification of the British individual was straightforward. While the species seems genuinely rare in captivity, some concerns were raised about the degree of wear on the bird's central secondaries. Similar plumage wear, however, has been observed in a number of related species in the wild and is apparently the result of retained secondaries that are not moulted during the bird's 'complete' moult.

(Breeds NE China, Inner Mongolia, Amur region, Honshu & Kyushu. Winters N India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam & S China)

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (2, 116, 6) *About three per year; stable*

Carmarthenshire Burry Inlet, 2CY+, 13th June, photo (B. Stewart *et al.*); also seen Gower.

Derbyshire Ogston Reservoir, 2CY+, 12th September, photo (J. Turner, D. Wragg).

Gower Burry Inlet, 2CY+, 13th June, photo (B. Stewart *et al.*); also seen Carmarthenshire.

Lothian Musselburgh, 2CY+, 17th–18th June, photo (K. Gillon *et al.*).

Northumberland Holy Island, 6CY+, 15th–29th August, photo, video (S. Clifton *et al.*); presumed same Northumberland 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 561).

Orkney Westness, North Ronaldsay, 2CY+, 30th June to 1st July, photo (T.

Gale *et al.*). Westness & Laird's Park, North Ronaldsay, 2CY+ 8th July to 11th August, photo (G. Gay *et al.*)

Yorkshire Spurn, 2CY+, 9th July (C. Bushell, A. Hull, J. Spinks *et al.*); presumed same Spurn, 2CY+, 29th July, photo (C. Bushell *et al.*).

2021 Moray & Nairn Findhorn Bay, 2CY, from 2020 to 3rd February, photo (G. McMullins, R. Somers Cocks *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 114: 579).

2019 Yorkshire Easington, 2CY+, 2nd August, photo (C. Bushell, S. A. Webb).

Prior to 2019, there were only three records of this species from Northumberland; it has, however, occurred in all five years since then. Birds in four of those years occurred on Holy Island; a suggestion in the submission of the 2023 sighting that the individual was likely a returning bird caused the Committee to take a critical look at the records. In agreement with local opinion, it was judged that the probability of multiple new birds in consecutive years at one site was low when compared to the likelihood of the bird being a single, returning individual.

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

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (457, 825, 12) About ten per year, recent decrease; removed from BBRC list 1963–2019, post-1950 statistics from 1986 onwards

Cornwall RSPB Hayle Estuary, Carnsew Pool, 1CY, 5th September, photo (R. Veal *et al.*) (plate web-8).

000. First-winter (1CY) Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Hayle Estuary, Cornwall, September 2023.

Kent RSPB Elmley, 2CY+ female, 19th April, photo (B. H. Tristram *et al.* per Kent Recorder).

Pegwell Bay, 1CY+, 26th July, photo (R. Collins, F. Solly *et al.*).

Pegwell Bay, two, 1CY+, 4th August, photo (G. J. Lee, S. Walton *et al.*).

Lincolnshire RSPB Frampton Marsh, 1CY, 18th August, photo (S. Hughes, P. Moore *et al.*).

Gibraltar Point, 1CY, 26th August, photo (B. McGuire).

Norfolk Holkham Gap, 2CY+ female, 20th April, photo (R. Johnson, B. Starmer).

Suffolk RSPB Minsmere, 2CY+ male, 5th–7th May, photo (C. Bradshaw, M. T. Cartwright, M. Wall *et al.*).

Landguard, 2CY+ male, 18th May, photo (R. D. Speirs *et al.*).

Sussex RSPB Medmerry, 2CY+ female, 7th May, photo (S. & S. Hill, A. House *et al.*).

Yorkshire Spurn, 2CY+, 23rd August, photo (C. Bushell *et al.*).

2022 Lincolnshire Tetney Marshes & Theddlethorpe, 2CY+ male, 17th–18th May, photo (D. Arksey *et al.*).

2022 Norfolk Cley Marshes, 2CY+ male, 12th April, photo (P. Morrison, S. Morrison, J. Pritchard).

(Breeds Atlantic coastal regions from Iberian Peninsula N to Netherlands, Germany & Denmark, Mediterranean basin & inland across Central Asia to Japan and coastal China. Winters coastal regions of Mediterranean basin, Arabian Peninsula and S & SE Asia N to S Japan.)

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (8, 41, 2) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Cornwall Cot Valley, 1CY+, 9th October, photo (A. Jones per Cornwall Recorder); presumed same Sennen, 23rd–29th October, photo (M. D. James, I. C. Whitehouse *et al.*) (plate 464).

Yorkshire Kilnsea, 1CY+, 16th September, photo, sound recording (H. Appleyard, C. Bushell, L. Degnan, J. Hedley, A. A. Hutt *et al.*).

A long-awaited first for Yorkshire, the Spurn bird was an all-too-brief fly-through.

(Breeds temperate & subarctic interior North America from SE Alaska through NW & C Canada to Midwest & NE USA. Migrates through interior USA E of Rocky Mountains, Gulf of Mexico & Caribbean to winter South America from S Brazil to Argentina.)

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* (0, 4, 1) *Extremely rare, last in 2015, 2020*

Shetland Grutness/Sumburgh Airport/Pool of Virkie, Mainland, 3CY+ male, 30th July to 20th August, photo (L. Dalziel *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

Britain's first Hudsonian Godwit was a famous returning bird during the early 1980s, which first appeared at Blacktoft Sands in Yorkshire on 10th September 1981, then Countess Wear in Devon through the 1981/82 winter, before reappearing at Blacktoft in April 1983.

The second was seen flying over Collieston, North-east Scotland, in September 1988. It was then a long wait for the third record, a bird at Meare Heath, Somerset, in April 2015. Scotland's second, and Britain's fourth, was a first-winter (1CY) on the Eden Estuary, Fife, from 3rd November 2020.

The 'Hudwit' on Shetland in 2022 was a smart-looking adult, sexed as a male on account of the relatively short bill, and aged as an adult (3CY+) by the good condition of the flight feathers, which would be unmoulted and worn in a first-summer (2CY) bird, even one that had managed a more extensive body moult.

Once thought to be among North America's rarest birds, it has since been found breeding in several highly disjunct areas of Canada and Alaska. Intriguingly, these populations are said to differ genetically as much as is normal between taxa that are generally considered as distinct species,

despite being, so far as is currently known, identical in plumage and structure (Walker *et al.* 2024).

(Breeds locally Alaska, & N Canada from Mackenzie River delta to W Hudson Bay. After breeding, most birds stage in James Bay before non-stop migration flight to wintering grounds in S Chile & S Argentina.)

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* **(15, 269, 5) About 4–5 per year;** ***decreasing/stable***

Anglesey Inland Sea, 2CY+, 31st May to 2nd June, photo (L. Sutton, M. Sutton *et al.*).

Lothian Tynninghame, 1CY, 25th–30th August, photo (K. Gillon *et al.*).

Norfolk Burnham Deepdale, 2CY+, 18th May (S. Roddis *et al.*).

Northumberland Budle Bay, 2CY+, 22nd May, photo (C. Bradshaw, M. A. Eaton, C. & G. P. Knox *et al.*).

Holy Island, 1CY, 30th August, photo (M. & S. Williamson).

Orkney North Wick, Papa Westray, 3CY+ male, 20th May, photo (C. Bell, D. Roche); also seen Shetland; presumed same Shetland & Outer Hebrides 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 562).

Shetland South Ness, Foula, 3CY+ male, 21st May, photo (D. & G. Atherton); presumed same Southpunds, Levenwick, Mainland, 4th June to 1st July, photo (M. Littler, K. Milsom *et al.*), Pool of Virkie and Grutness, Mainland, 2nd July, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*) and Boddam, Mainland, 4th July (P. V. Harvey *et al.*); also seen Orkney; presumed same Shetland & Outer Hebrides 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 562).

The individual seen at various sites in Orkney and Shetland in late spring and summer is presumed to have been a returning bird; in a reprise of its 2022 itinerary, it spent several weeks in an area of mires near Levenwick, Mainland, Shetland, where it was seen occasionally displaying to Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, and it then appeared with other migrant waders at the Pool of Virkie and Grutness before heading south.

Elsewhere, four of the other five records were from east-coast sites between southern Scotland and East Anglia, while there was one record from

Anglesey, the third for that recording area.

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

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (4, 29, 1) Rare, about one every 2–3 years

Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, 2CY+, 10th–12th September, photo (D. Pointon, D. Rumble *et al.*) (plate 465); also seen Yorkshire.

Dan Pointon

465. Adult (2CY+) Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Montrose Basin, Angus & Dundee, September 2023.

Isle of Man Stinking Dub, Langness, 3CY+, 14th August, photo (D. Kelly, M. Pass); same Isle of Man 2022 (see 2022 Isle of Man, below).

Yorkshire RSPB Blacktoft Sands, 2CY+, 25th–27th September, photo (A. Davies, R. Miller, S. Taylor *et al.*); also seen Angus & Dundee.

2022 Isle of Man Stinking Dub, Langness, 2CY+, 29th August, photo (M. Pass *et al.*).

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

Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* (0, 41, 2) *Rare, about one per year*

Dumfries & Galloway RSPB Crook of Baldoon, 1CY, 27th–28th October, photo (P. N. Collin, I. Lang *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch Paible, North Uist, 1CY, 1st–3rd October, photo (G. C. Boner, R. J. Fuller *et al.*).

Given the rarity of first-year birds in Britain and the conducive dates, linking the two sightings in 2022 was discussed. However, the Committee was split and, in the end, the records were accepted as two different birds.

(Breeds North America from NE Alaska to Hudson Bay, Canada. Migrates through interior & E USA to winter C South America from E Bolivia & S Brazil to NE Argentina. Occasionally winters N to Mexico, Caribbean & S USA.)

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (1, 305, 5) *About 5–6 per year; stable*

Argyll Vaul Bay, Tiree, Argyll, 1CY, 21st September to 4th October, photo (Clyde Ringing Group, J. M. Dickson, D. C. Jardine *et al.*).

Lincolnshire East Halton Marshes, 1CY, 14th–15th October, photo (S. Routledge *et al.*).

Northumberland Goswick, Lindisfarne, 1CY, 1st–11th October, photo (R. Ahmed).

Outer Hebrides Allasdale, Barra, 1CY, 7th–19th September, photo, video (B. A. Taylor *et al.*).

North Bay, South Uist, 1CY, 29th–30th September, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder).

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

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (0, 173, 3) About 4–5 per year; stable or increasing

Lincolnshire RSPB Frampton Marsh, 1CY, 2nd–16th October, photo (W. C. Aspin, T. Collett *et al.*).

Orkney North Wick, Papa Westray, 2CY+, 20th–21st May, photo (D. Roche *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Stinky Bay, Benbecula & North Bay, South Uist, 1CY, 18th–30th September, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder).

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

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (5, 291, 7) About 6–7 per year; stable

Cornwall Walmsley Sanctuary, Camel Estuary, 1CY, 22nd October to 13th November, photo (B. Bosisto, P. Davies *et al.*).

Hampshire Fishtail Lagoon, Keyhaven, 2CY+, 6th–10th May, photo (M. Dale, P. Durnell, L. Peterson *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside RSPB Leighton Moss, 2CY+, 16th–18th July, photo (M. Prestwood *et al.* per Lancashire & North Merseyside Recorder).

Norfolk Cley Marshes and Stiffkey, 2CY, 1st January to 15th March, photo (M. C. Buckland *et al.*); same Ken Hill Marsh, Heacham, 6th–17th May (per Norfolk Recorder), Holme, 18th May (per Norfolk Recorder), Burnham Deepdale, 18th May, photo (M. Andrews, J. R. McCallum), Holkham 19th–25th May, photo (A. I. Bloomfield), RSPB Titchwell, 31st May (per Norfolk Recorder), Hickling Broad, 29th June to 1st July (per Norfolk Recorder) and

Cley Marshes, 3rd July to 23rd November (per Norfolk Recorder); same Norfolk 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 564).

Orkney Cleat, Sanday, 2CY+, 10th–22nd April, photo (R. Neave, E. Neave-Webb, T. Wells); presumed same Loch of Swartmill, Westray, 2CY+, 30th–31st July, photo (S. P. Dudley *et al.*) and Cleat, Sanday, 2CY+, 3rd August to 18th October, photo (R. Neave per Orkney Recorder).

Shetland Leiraness, Bressay, 1CY, 9th October, photo (L. Griffiths, R. O'Reilly *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

Sussex Iford Brooks, 2CY+, 24th–31st July, photo (L. Bird, A. Hall).

Cuckmere Haven, Seaford, 1CY, 16th October into 2024, photo (J. Curson, N. Pope *et al.*).

2022 Caernarfonshire Aber Ogwen, 1CY, 9th October, trapped (S. Dodd, J. Hughes, R. Taylor); note amended observers (*Brit. Birds* 116: 564).

2022 Lothian Musselburgh, 1CY+, 13th October, photo (D. Kelly, K. McGowan); note amended observers (*Brit. Birds* 116: 564).

(Breeds Arctic Siberia W to Lena River delta, & coastal tundra of W & N Alaska, E to Mackenzie River, Canada. Migrates through USA to winter coastal S USA to N/C America.)

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (352, 183, 1) *About three per year; stable*

Yorkshire Spurn, 2CY+, 31st May to 3rd June, photo (J. Spinks *et al.*) (plate 466).

466. Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Spurn, Yorkshire, June 2023.

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

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata* (0, 12, 1) ***Rare, about one every two years***

Isles of Scilly Porth Hellick, St Mary's, 1CY, 14th October, photo, video (A. P. Chamberlin *et al.*).

Over the past five years, Wilson's Snipe has become almost annual on the Isles of Scilly – and yet the archipelago maintains its hold on 100% of all British records of the species. Birds frequently stand out as cold-toned compared to the accompanying Common Snipes *G. gallinago*, but careful

checking of the bird's underparts, secondaries and outer tail feathers are required to secure the identification. While the Isles of Scilly's westerly location no doubt puts it in a prime location for receiving vagrant Wilson's Snipes, and the hide at Porth Hellick gives unparalleled views of snipes – and other waders – that come to rest on the pool there, giving observers ample opportunity to study individual birds in great detail, the species must surely be overlooked elsewhere. For those up for the challenge, the second week of October appears to be the peak week for finding the species in Britain, although accepted records have come from as early as the last week of September and as late as the first week of November (fig. 3).

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

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (0, 253, 2) *About two per year; decreasing*

Caithness Dunnett, 1CY, 3rd September, photo (P. Higson, R. Hughes, J. Morris).

Norfolk North Point Pools, Wells, 1CY, 28th September to 9th October, photo (G. Hewson, P. Laurie *et al.*); same North Fen, Stiffkey, 4th–9th October (per G. Hewson).

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

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* (1, 241, 6) *About five per year; increasing*

Borders Birgham Dub, River Tweed, 2CY+, 8th July (S. Turnbull).

Dorset Studland, 1CY, 5th November, photo (P. Morton, M. Wright *et al.*).

East Glamorgan Sully Island Causeway, 1CY, 10th September, photo (M. Meehan).

Isle of May Rona, 1CY, 6th–7th September, photo (C. Pendlebury, D. Steel *et al.*).

Worcestershire Upton Warren, 5th June, 2CY+, photo (G. M. Corfield, M. Wakeman *et al.*)

Suffolk Shingle Street, 2CY+, 4th June (J. Dries); presumed same Corton, 2CY+, 5th June, photo (N. Blacker, J. Brown *et al.*).

2022 Cheshire & Wirral Doddington Pool, 2CY+, 14th May, photo (M. Warner *et al.*).

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

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (5, 33, 1) ***Rare, about one every two years***

Kent Stodmarsh, 1CY, 15th October to 3rd November, photo (S. Hawkins, R. Holmes *et al.*).

(Breeds C & S Alaska E through boreal forest region of Canada to Quebec & Labrador. Migrates throughout USA & winters Caribbean & C America, S to Argentina.)

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (5, 145, 1) ***About one per year; stable or decreasing***

Kent ARC Pit, RSPB Dungeness, 2CY+, 8th July, photo (M. Casemore).

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

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* (8, 305, 9) ***About ten per year; increasing***

Argyll Scallastle Bay, Craignure and West Duart Bay, Mull, 4CY+, 30th July to 21st August, photo (T. de Clermont *et al.*); presumed same Bruichladdich,

Islay, 2nd November, photo (D. Brown); presumed same Argyll 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 567).

Cornwall Hayle Estuary & Marazion Beach, 2CY, 5th April to 20th May, photo (R. Veal *et al.*).

Hayle Estuary and Marazion Beach, 1CY, 24th December into 2024, photo (R. Veal *et al.*).

Hayle Estuary and Marazion Beach, 1CY, 29th December into 2024, photo (T. Wilson *et al.*).

Devon Passage House, Teign Estuary, 3CY+, 9th April, photo (W. Salmon *et al.*).

Highland Ullapool, 3CY+, 31st July, photo (D. F. Daunt).

Bayfield, Portree, 3CY+, 27th–30th October, photo (N. Bennett, R. McMillan).

Kent Oare Marshes, 12CY+, 6th July to 6th September, photo (J. Cantelo *et al.* per Kent Recorder); presumed same Kent 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 567).

Orkney Loch of St Tredwell, Papa Westray, 2CY, 22nd June, photo (D. Roche); presumed same Start Point, Sanday, 6th August, photo (S. P. Dudley).

Outer Hebrides Aird an Runair, North Uist, 3CY, 20th August, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder).

Shetland Loch of Hillwell and Loch of Spiggie, Mainland, 3CY+, 2nd–4th May, photo (H. R. Harrop *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

2021 Denbighshire Rhyl Golf Course, 2CY+, 28th September, photo (M. Duckham, A. Humphreys-Jones *et al.*).

2021 Worcestershire Upton Warren, 2CY, 27th April to 9th May, photo (J. T. Belsey *et al.*); presumed same Leicestershire & Rutland 2021 (*Brit. Birds* 115: 573).

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

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (1, 104, 1) ***About one per year; stable or decreasing***

Dorset Dorchester, 2CY, 13th February, photo (S. Craft *et al.*) (plate 467); same RSPB Lodmoor, 19th March, photo (J. White).

467. First-winter (2CY) Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, Dorchester, Dorset, February 2023.

North-east Scotland Kinnaird Head and Cairnbulg, 4CY+, 4th March to 19th April, photo (P. Shepherd *et al.* per North-east Scotland Recorder); presumed same North-east Scotland 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 568).

Just where the first-winter Ross's Gull in Dorset went to for a month between the two sightings is a mystery. We do, however, know – thanks to analysis of photos – that the same bird relocated to Texel, the Netherlands, on 23rd–26th April.

Birders of a certain vintage may look back on the 1990s as the halcyon days of Ross's Gull in Britain, and the ten-year period 1993–2002 saw over a third of all British occurrences of this delightful, high-Arctic gull (fig. X).

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

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla* (1, 211, 1) About two per year, influxes 2005 (58), 2006 (22); stable

Devon Beesands and Slapton Ley, 3CY, 4th–20th January (M. Darlaston, A. Rennells *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 104).

Isles of Scilly Gugh, 4CY+, 5th–25th May, photo (W. Scott *et al.*); presumed same Isles of Scilly 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 568).

(Breeds along E seaboard of USA from Nova Scotia, Canada, S to Florida & Gulf coast, the Caribbean, & C America to N Venezuela. Southern populations largely resident but N breeders winter within southern breeding range.)

Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* (0, 86, 1) About 2–3 per year; stable

Essex Holland Haven, 3CY+, 23rd June, photo, video (P. Davies, R. Jeffree, M. Rodwell *et al.*).

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

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* (0, 1, 0) Extremely rare, first record 2022

Cambridgeshire Grafham Water, 4CY, 18th June, photo, video (R. M. Patient); presumed same Cambridgeshire 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116) (plate 468).

468. Third-summer (4CY) Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*, Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire, August 2023.

Unlike in 2022, when the bird performed for observers along the dam at Grafham Water, 2023's sighting was brief and relatively distant. Although the bird was documented well, considering the distance, the Committee felt the images lacked the required critical details for subspecific identification and therefore erred on the side of caution and (again) left the bird unassigned to

subspecies.

(Breeds on coasts & islands through much of the southern hemisphere. Winters on a number of subantarctic islands, on the Antarctic Peninsula, on the S coast of Australia & all of New Zealand, on the S coast of Africa & Madagascar, & on the coast of South America as far north as Ecuador & S Brazil.)

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* (0, 34, 1) Rare, about one per year

Highland Fort William, 2CY, 3rd–16th March, photo (S. Morris, M. Slaymaker *et al.*).

2020 Cornwall Penzance, 2CY, 2nd–4th April, photo (M. Ahmad per Cornwall Recorder); also seen Devon, Dorset (*Brit. Birds* 114: 587).

(Breeds S Alaska E across C & N Canada to S Baffin Island, Labrador, Newfoundland & NE coastal region of USA. Many resident, others winter S to S USA & Mexico. Other races breed Mongolia to C Siberia, & NE Siberia.)

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

'Baltic Gull' *L. f. fuscus* (0, 20, 4) Uncertain

Dorset West Bexington, 8CY, 8th April, photo, ringed (A. Barrett, M. J. Morse).

Norfolk Cley Marshes, 2CY, 15th July, photo (M. C. Buckland, E. T. Myers).

North-east Scotland Inverurie, 2CY, 28th January, photo, ringed, found dead (D. Gill per North-east Scotland Recorder).

Northumberland Longhoughton Steel, Boulmer, 2CY, 14th July, photo, video (D. M. Langston).

2021 Oxfordshire Appleford GP, Didcot Landfill and Farmoor Reservoir, four 2CY, 1st July to 28th August, photo (I. Lewington, T. Miller, R. Wyatt *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: 568–569).

The Inverurie bird was found freshly dead, having been hit by a vehicle, and was identified as a 'Baltic Gull' based on its colour rings: it had been ringed as a nestling in Finland in 2022. The Dorset individual was ringed as a chick in Finland in 2016. Perhaps the most remarkable set of sightings, however, are the four birds in Oxfordshire, all unringed and identified by the state of their

moult – a submission worthy of the Carl Zeiss Award 2024 shortlist, as was that for the 2CY in Norfolk (*Brit. Birds* 117: 568–569).

(Race *fuscus* breeds along Baltic coasts of Sweden & Finland, inland to N & E Finland, & N Norway & W Russia. Migrates S across E Europe, Black Sea, E Mediterranean & Middle East to winter coastal E Africa & W Rift Valley Lakes.)

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (53, 340, 5) About 4–5 per year; stable

Cambridgeshire Grafham Water, 3CY+, 27th May, photo (R. M. Patient *et al.*).

Carmarthenshire Burry Inlet, 3CY+, 7th June, photo (B. Stewart *et al.*); also seen Gower.

Cheshire & Wirral RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands (Cheshire & Wirral portion), 3CY+, 19th April, photo (L. Castell, G. Jones *et al.*), also seen Flintshire, Nottinghamshire.

Flintshire RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands (Flintshire portion), 3CY+, 19th April, photo (L. Castell, G. Jones *et al.*); also seen Cheshire, Nottinghamshire.

Gower Burry Inlet, 3CY+, 7th June, photo (B. Stewart *et al.*); also seen Carmarthenshire.

Hampshire Needs Ore Point, 3CY+, 14th June, photo (C. Button).

Nottinghamshire Idle Washland, 3CY+, 22nd April, photo (S. Furber, D. Hursthouse, R. Usher *et al.*); also seen Cheshire & Wirral, Flintshire.

Suffolk Landguard, 3CY+, 30th April (W. Brame, C. Day, N. Odin).

2022 Lothian Gosford Sands, 3CY+, 17th–19th May, photo (J. Boyle, D. Douglas, S. Welch *et al.*).

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

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (23, 340, 19) About 4–5 per year, influxes 1988 (18),

2022 (20); decreasing, now stable

Cambridgeshire Northstowe, 3CY+, 9th June, photo (H. J. Venables *et al.*); also seen Baston Pits, Lincolnshire.

Carmarthenshire Burry Port Beach, Llanelli, 3CY+, 11th May (M. Harper).

Cleveland RSPB Saltholme, 3CY+, 11th–12th June, photo (P. Scanlon *et al.*); also seen Co. Durham.

Co. Durham Hurworth Burn Reservoir, 3CY+, 12th June, photo (J. Olley); also seen Cleveland.

Kent RSPB Dungeness, 3CY+, 27th–28th June, photo (P. & P. Burness *et al.* per Kent Recorder).

Lincolnshire Baston Pits, 3CY+, 8th June, photo (J. R. Jones *et al.*); also seen Cambridgeshire.

Gibraltar Point, 3CY+, 6th July (J. Shaw, K. M. Wilson); presumed same Toft Newton Reservoir, 31st July, photo (G. J. Fenwick, J. Harriman), Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes, 10th July (O. Beaumont) and RAF Woodhall Reserve, 29th August (A. Baldwin).

Norfolk Hickling Broad, 2CY, 17th–23rd May, photo (T. Allwood *et al.*).

Hickling Broad, 3CY+, 27th–29th June, photo (P. J. Heath, L. A. Mundy, J. R. Williamson *et al.*).

Scolt Head Island, 3CY+, 2nd–3rd July (N. M. Lawton).

RSPB Buckenham Marshes and Bargate, 3CY+, 10th July, photo (J. Farooqi, D. Monk); presumed same Potter Heigham, 10th–11th July, photo (per NorfolkRecorder) and Breydon Water, 11th July, photo (per Norfolk Recorder).

Hickling Broad, 3CY, 19th July to 3rd August, photo, ringed (per Norfolk Recorder); also seen Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire.

Breydon Water, 3CY+, 26th July, photo (J. Farooqi, D. Lyness).

Sheringham Golf Course, 3CY+, 29th August, photo (M. Clements).

Northamptonshire Hollowell Reservoir, 3CY+, 18th July, photo (J. Cook).

North-east Scotland Girdle Ness, 3CY+, 30th July (M. Lewis).

Northumberland East Chevington, two 3CY+, 11th July, video (A. & J. Thompson *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Idle Washlands, 3CY, 17th July, photo, ringed (I. Cowgill *et al.*); also seen Norfolk and Yorkshire.

Orkney North Hill, Papa Westray, 3CY+, 7th July, photo (C. Hill).

Suffolk RSPB Minsmere, two, 3CY+, 9th July (D. Adelson).

Yorkshire Bawtry, 3CY+, 17th July, photo, ringed (P. Palmer) (plate web-9); also seen Norfolk and Nottinghamshire.

Phil Palmer

000. Adult (3CY+) Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*, Bawtry, Yorkshire, July 2023.

2022 Cleveland RSPB Dorman's Pool then RSPB Saltholme, Greatham Creek and Seaton Snook, 3CY+, 29th June to 18th July (C. Prescott); note corrected dates and location (previously reported as River Tees, 29th June to 19th July) (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 570–571).

Greatham Creek and RSPB Saltholme, 3CY, 12th–19th July, colour-ringed (per Cleveland Recorder); also seen Yorkshire; note corrected dates and location (previously reported as River Tees, 14th–17th July) (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 570–571).

2022 Essex Frinton-on-Sea, 3CY+, 22nd July (P. Brayshaw per Essex Recorder).

2022 Norfolk Nogdam End, 3CY+, 19th May, photo (P. Noakes); same Potter Heigham and Breydon Water 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 570).

Potter Heigham and Hickling, 3CY+, 5th–25th July (P. J. Heath *et al.*).

2022 Nottinghamshire Idle Washlands, Misson Springs, two 3CY+, 25th June to 2nd July, photo (I. Cowgill, D. Hursthouse, B. Usher *et al.*).

Netherfield Lagoons, 3CY+, 20th July, photo (M. Cluff per A. Hall); same Nottinghamshire 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 570).

2021 Lincolnshire Baston Pits, 20th–21st June, 3CY+, photo (J. R. Jones *et al.*); also seen Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire; note corrected site name.

2021 Yorkshire Southfield Reservoir, two 3CY+, 19th June to 2nd July, photo, ringed (J. Carr *et al.*); Finnish-ringed individual also seen Lincolnshire, Carmarthenshire, Staffordshire 2021; Swedish-ringed individual also seen Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire 2021.

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

Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans* (0, 5, 1) ***Very rare, last in 2021***

Dorset RSPB Lodmoor, 3CY+, 24th April, photo (G. Barlow *et al.*).

(Breeds in colonies on Pacific coast of California, USA, & Gulf of California, Mexico. After breeding disperses N along Pacific coast S Washington. Most winter South America S of Ecuador.)

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* (1, 24, 1) ***Rare, about one every two years***

Caernarfonshire Hafan-y-Môr, 2CY+, 6th–9th August, photo (J. Slattery *et al.*).

(Tropical seas. West Indies & Atlantic population breeds Banc d'Arguin,

Mauritania, Pagalu, Gulf of Guinea & widely throughout Caribbean S to offshore N Venezuela. Other populations breed from Red Sea & Arabian Gulf locally through Indian Ocean to SE China, Philippines, & N Australia. Northern populations migratory, wintering at sea to S of breeding areas.)

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* (10, 12, 1) *Very rare, last in 2020*

Cornwall Pendeen Watch, 3CY+, 31st July, photo (P. Marshall, M. Nash).

2020 Anglesey Cemlyn Bay, 6CY+, 13th June (I. Rothwell-Jones, D. Stanley, D. Wilde per Anglesey Recorder); also seen Ayrshire, Northumberland and Suffolk; same as Cleveland, Co. Durham, Norfolk, Northumberland and Yorkshire 2019 (*Brit. Birds* 113: 608).

2020 Northumberland Low Newton-by-the-Sea, Embleton, Howick, 6CY+, 28th July (G. Woodburn); also seen Anglesey, Ayrshire, Suffolk (*Brit. Birds* 115: 576); same as Cleveland, Co. Durham, Norfolk, Northumberland and Yorkshire 2019 (*Brit. Birds* 113: 608).

(Breeds on oceanic islands in tropical Atlantic, Indian & Pacific Oceans, S Red Sea & throughout Caribbean. Outside breeding season disperses widely throughout tropical oceans.)

Bridled/Sooty Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus/fuscatus* (–, –, 1) *Uncertain*

Cumbria RSPB St Bees Head, 2CY+, 5th July, photo (N. Campbell, D. Shackleton).

This new 'either/or' category acknowledges the occasional identification difficulty between these two species, which are distinctive as a pair but can be hard to separate when seen at range.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 21, 1) *Rare, about one every two years*

Dorset Lytchett Bay, Poole Harbour, 2CY, 23rd April to 3rd May, photo (S. F. Smith, J. Whittall *et al.*) (plate web-10); same Brownsea Island, Poole Harbour, 23rd April to 16th May, Hengistbury Head, 4th May, photo (C.

Chapleo *et al*), RSPB Lytchett Fields, 15th July, photo (I. H. Alexander, S. Robson), and RSPB Arne and Brownsea Island, Poole Harbour, 21st July to 11th November (per birding information services); also seen Hampshire, Somerset.

Graham Jepson

000. Second-winter (2CY) Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, Poole Harbour, Dorset, November 2023.

Hampshire Hill Head, 2CY, 30th May, photo (A. Robjohns); also seen Dorset, Somerset.

Somerset Sutton Bingham Reservoir, 2CY, 6th April, photo (P. G. Akers *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 192); also seen Dorset, Hampshire.

(Breeds C Canada, Midwest USA, & E coast USA from Maryland to Texas. Winters coastal S USA, S to Mexico.)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (19, 211, 2) About 4–5 per year, influx 2009 (25); stable

Cleveland Longnewton Reservoir, 3CY+, 1st June, photo (S. C. Bell *et al.*).

Kent Marden, 1CY, 24th–29th September, photo (M. Lopez, A. Pavey).

2022 Angus & Dundee Forfar Loch, 2CY, 16th–23rd October, photo (S. Ritchie, J. Squire *et al.*).

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

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

'American Black Tern' *C. n. surinamensis* (0, 9 0) *Very rare, last in 2020*

Northumberland Long Nanny, 5CY+ female, 1st June to 6th July, photo (I. Fisher *et al.* per Northumberland Recorder) (plate 469), same East Chevington Pools, 8th–11th July, photo, video (P. Sanders *et al.*); same Northumberland 2022.

469. Adult (5CY+) female 'American Black Tern' *C. n. surinamensis*, Long Nanny, Northumberland, June 2023.

This individual was regularly seen bringing fish and displaying to Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* in 2020 and 2021 and was therefore considered likely to be male; but on its return in 2024, it laid an egg in a mixed pairing with a male Arctic Tern, proving that it was actually female (Eaton *et al.* 2024).

(Race *surinamensis* breeds widely throughout temperate interior Canada & N USA. Migrates through interior & coastal USA to winter Panama to N South America, S to Peru & Venezuela.)

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* (0, 3, 3) Very rare, last in 2002

Cornwall St Ives Island, 2CY+, 13th October, photo (T. Murch, P. Nason).

Isles of Scilly At sea, 10 km south of St Mary's, 2CY+, 31st July, photo (R. L. Flood *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 316).

At sea, 5 km SW of Bishop Rock, 2CY+, 25th August, photo (R. L. Flood, S. Slade *et al.*).

(Breeds on Antarctic coasts. Winters at sea in the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans)

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (1, 52, 3) Rare, about one every 2–3 years

Borders St Abb's Head, 1CY+, 3rd November, photo (C. Hatsell, D. Lewis *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley Beach, 2CY+, 29th June (G. Fellows, J. R. McCallum).

Shetland Tinga Skerry, Yell Sound, 2CY+, 13th February, photo (P. V. Harvey, W. T. S. Miles, R. Riddington) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 167; plate 470).

470. Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia*, Yell Sound, Shetland, February 2023.

In Shetland, the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group staff and volunteers have carried out repeat transects of some inshore waters every winter since 1978 to monitor numbers of wintering seabirds. Despite the thousands of miles covered, this is the first Brünnich's on one of these boat counts, further reinforcing the fact that, even in winter at 60°N, Brünnich's Guillemot is a really rare bird. Since the bird was in full winter plumage in mid February, the observers felt that it was mostly likely a first-winter (2CY); supporting this notion, the bill was not especially deep or heavy, and the underside of the feet appeared a slightly fleshy purple (rather than blackish), but it is difficult to be completely certain about the age.

(Breeds Greenland, Iceland, Svalbard, NE Norway & Novaya Zemlya. Outside Europe, breeds on islands off N Siberia into Bering Sea, S to Kuril, Komandorskiye, Aleutian & Pribilof Islands. Also W Alaska & N Canada from Baffin Island to Hudson Bay, Labrador coast & W Greenland. Winters among open leads in pack ice or at sea from Barents Sea S to N Norway, S

Greenland, & along Labrador coast S to NE coastal USA. Other populations winter N Pacific, S to N Japan.)

Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica* (0, 9, 2) Very rare + returnees, last in 2021

Fife Leven, 2CY, 24th–30th January, photo (G. Robertson, G. Sparshott *et al.*).

Shetland Brough, Fetlar, 3CY+, 18th May, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: 574–575; plate 471).

Brydon Thomason

471. Adult (3CY+) Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica*, Brough, Fetlar, Shetland, May 2023.

A revision of our stats made us realise we had been counting the original sighting in Mounts Bay, Cornwall, in 2007 as different from all subsequent sightings there in 2009–18. This has now been corrected, meaning that the overall total, taking into account the two birds in 2023, is one less than last

year. Additionally, those missing years mean that the age of the Mounts Bay bird also needs amending – it was a 15CY+ when last seen in February 2019.

(Breeds NE Siberia from lower Indigirka River E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, & N North America from Alaska E to Hudson Bay & S Baffin Island. Winters North Pacific Ocean, in Asia S to Japan & E China, & North America S to Baja California & Sonora, Mexico.)

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* (1, 37, 1) rare, about one every 1–2 years, increasing

Cornwall Godrevy Point and St Ives, 5th January, 3CY+, photo (A. Lingard, P. Nason, D. Oats *et al.*).

There were no substantiated reports of the previously returning adult at RSPB Bempton Cliffs, Yorkshire, in 2023.

(Breeds islands of S Chile, Falkland, South Georgia and South Sandwich, Crozet, Heard, Kerguelen, Macquarie, Antipodes, Snares and Campbell groups, disperses widely across all southern oceans from N of Antarctic Convergence to Tropic of Capricorn.)

Band-rumped Storm-petrel *Hydrobates castro* (0, 1, 0) Extremely rare, first record

2021 At Sea Maritime area FitzRoy, c. 285 km SW of Bishop Rock, Isles of Scilly, 3CY+ 'Grant's Storm-petrel', 16th–17th November, GPS-tagged (per M. Gil-Velasco, J. Bécares, M. Illa, C. Morey) (*Brit. Birds* 116: 232–234).

Prior to the acceptance of this bird, there were five British records of Band-rumped/Monteiro's/Cape Verde Storm-petrel *Hydrobates castro/monteiroi/jabejabe* – all seen in the field and all unassigned to species. The 2021 record becomes the first to be assignable to species (and, indeed, subspecies – it belonged to the winter-breeding population, known as 'Grant's Storm-petrel' (see also Menzie 2024)), while this is the first time that a species has been added to the British List solely on the basis of a remotely tracked record.

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

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* (0, 1, 0) *Extremely rare, first record*

2021 Cleveland Cowbar, 1CY+, 1st July, (I. Boustead, I. Kendall, H. Mitchell, J. Money); also seen Co. Durham, Northumberland and Yorkshire.

2021 Co. Durham Whitburn, 1CY+, 1st July, photo (M. V. Newsome *et al.*); also seen Cleveland, Northumberland, Yorkshire.

2021 Northumberland Brown's Bay, Cullercoats, 1CY+, 1st July (A. Jack, M. Kirby); same St Mary's Island, 1st July (A. Curry), Church Point, Newbiggin, 1st July, photo (N. F. Osborne, G. Sorrie *et al.*) (plate 472), Low Hauxley, 1st July, photo (I. Fisher *et al.*), Coquet Island, 1st July (per birding information services), Cullernose Point, Craster, 1st July (M. A. Eaton *et al.*), Beadnell Point, 1st July, photo (G. Woodburn), Annstead Point, Seahouses, 1st July, video (R. Ahmed, T. Hendry, G. Knox) and Stag Rocks, Bamburgh, 1st July (K. W. York); also seen Cleveland, Co. Durham and Yorkshire.

472. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*, Church Point, Newbiggin, Northumberland, July 2021.

2021 Yorkshire Flamborough Head, 1CY+, 1st July, photo (A. M. Allport, P. Buxton, B. Richards); same Long Nab, Burniston, 1st July (N. W. Addey) and Old Nab, Staithes, 1st July (M. Rowbottom); also seen Cleveland, Co. Durham, Northumberland.

Soft-plumaged Petrel is one of the rarest seabirds on the Western Palearctic list, with just two previous records, from locations about as far apart as they could be within the region, with one from the Gulf of Aqaba, Israel, in March 1997 and one from Varangerfjord, Norway, in June 2009 (Hobbs 2024). This rarity, combined with the relative regularity that the very similar Zino's/Fea's/Desertas Petrels are seen in British waters, meant that, when a large *Pterodroma* with dark underwings was seen flying north past Flamborough Head at 09.33 hrs on 1st July, the observers understandably reported it as a 'Fea's-type'. This being a great bird in its own right, observers further north along the coast were quick to make it to the usual seawatching

spots, and the bird was tracked north all the way to Stag Rocks, Northumberland, before disappearing towards the outer Firth of Forth.

As with many seabirds, it remained just too far away at most sites for critical plumage analysis in the field – but, thankfully, a series of photographs taken at Church Point, Newbiggin, Northumberland, were put online... and they appeared to show a complete breast-band. Retrospective analysis of photographs taken at Flamborough also showed the bird to be a Soft-plumaged Petrel. Those birders who made the dash to the coast to connect with what would have been a great bird suddenly found themselves with an upgrade to a first for Britain!

(Breeds on subtropical to subantarctic islands of S Indian and South Atlantic oceans, from Tristan da Cunha and Gough (SC Atlantic) to Maatsuyker I. (S of Tasmania), Macquarie (far SE of Australia) and Antipodes (SE of Stewart I., New Zealand). Ranges to waters of S Australasia, S Africa, S of Madagascar and SE South America.)

Fea's/Desertas Petrel *Pterodroma feae/deserta* (0, 13, 1) Very rare, last in 2022, but also see Zino's/Fea's/Desertas Petrel

Isles of Scilly At sea, c. 6.0–8.5 km east of St Mary's, 1CY+, 15th August, photo (C. G. Batty, T. Carter, P. Ellis, D. Pointon *et al.*) (plate 473).

473. Fea's/Desertas Petrel *Pterodroma feae/deserta*, at sea, Isles of Scilly, August 2023.

The Isles of Scilly bird – seen and photographed by multiple observers aboard the RMV *Scillonian III* – represents one of the best-documented Fea's/Desertas Petrels in British waters. Acknowledging the challenge that identification of these two species presents, it is accepted here as an either/or. However, work on the at-sea identification of the species pair is ongoing and a substantial publication on the subject is expected within the next year or two. Consequently, this bird – and other similarly well-documented birds in British waters – may see a recirculation around the Committee in the not-too-distant future.

(Fea's Petrel breeds Cape Verde Islands. Desertas Petrel breeds Bugio, Desertas Is.)

Zino's/Fea's/Desertas Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae/deserta* (0, 96, 7) About two per year; stable or increasing

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, 1CY+, 12th September (G. Icton, M. N.

Sidwell); also seen Co. Durham.

Co. Durham Hendon, 1CY+, 12th September, photo (P. Anderson); presumed same Lizard Point, Marsden, 12th September (A. Armstrong); also seen Cleveland.

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 1CY+, 30th July, photo (M. T. Elliott, S. Rogers *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

Porthgwarra, 1CY+, 1st August, photo (M. J. McKee *et al.*).

Porthgwarra, 1CY+, 2nd August, video (P. Aley, M. Nash *et al.*)

(www.michaelmckee.co.uk/videos/video.asp?ID=85).

Pendeen Watch, 1CY+, 25th August, photo, video (S. Rogers *et al.*).

Devon Start Point, 1CY+, 19th August, photo (M. Darlaston).

Orkney Dennis Head, North Ronaldsay, 1CY+, 5th September (P. E. Hales, C. Scott).

2022 Cornwall Porthgwarra, 1CY+, 21st August (S. Rogers *et al.*).

2022 Isles of Scilly At sea, near Wolf Rock, 1CY+, photo, 17th October, photo (J. Garside, G. Gordon, L. Gregory).

2021 Co. Durham Whitburn, 1CY+, 1st September (K. Lawrence *et al.*); also seen Yorkshire and Northumberland (*Brit. Birds* 115: 579).

2021 Northumberland Sharpness Point, Tynemouth, 1CY+, 27th August (I. Johnson, M. Kerby); also seen Co. Durham and Yorkshire (*Brit. Birds* 115: 579).

Snab Point, 1CY+, 1st September (I. Robson per Northumberland Recorder); also seen Co. Durham and Yorkshire (*Brit. Birds* 115: 579).

2021 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 1CY+, 18th October (D. Shepherd).

(Breeding Zino's Petrel confined to C mountains of Madeira. Fea's Petrel breeds Cape Verde Islands. Desertas Petrel breeds Bugio, Desertas Is.)

Scopoli's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (0, 3, 28) Extremely rare, last in 2020

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 2CY+, 28th July, photo (M. J. McKee, N. R. Rogers *et al.*). Porthgwarra, 2CY+, 30th July, photo (M. J. McKee).

Devon At sea, 5 miles east of Scabbacombe Head, 2CY+, 26th August, photo (W. Coulson, M. Langman *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly At sea, 2CY+, 28th July, photo (R. L. Flood, R. Stonier *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 318; 117: plates 372 & 434).

At sea, 2CY+, 30th July, photo (R. L. Flood *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 373).

At sea, 2CY+, 30th July, photo (R. L. Flood, S. Viles *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 374).

At sea, 2CY+, 30th July, photo (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood, G. Jepson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 375).

At sea, 2CY+, 31st July, photo (I. Bollen, R. L. Flood, R. Hewham, R. Stonier *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 376).

At sea, 2CY+, 31st July, photo (R. L. Flood, R. Stonier *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 377).

At sea, 2CY+, 6th August, photo (R. L. Flood *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 378).

At sea, 2CY+, 7th August, photo (R. L. Flood *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 379).

At sea, 2CY+, 7th August, photo (R. L. Flood, S. Reid *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 380).

At sea, 2CY+, 8th August, photo (R. L. Flood, S. Holloway *et al.*).

At sea, 2CY+, 11th August, photo (R. L. Flood, S. Reid *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 381).

At sea, 2CY+, 16th August, photo (R. L. Flood, S. Slade *et al.*).

At sea, 2CY+, 17th August, photo (M. Cluff, N. Dargue, R. L. Flood, *et al.*).

At sea, 2CY+, 19th August, photo (J. Cassidy, R. L. Flood *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 382).

At sea, 2CY+, 20th August, photo (R. L. Flood, A. Hall, R. Stonier *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 383).

At sea, 2CY+, 20th August, photo (R. L. Flood, R. Stonier *et al.*).

At sea, 2CY+, 22nd August, photo (I. D. Broadbent, R. L. Flood *et al.*).

At sea, 2CY+, 23rd August, photo (R. L. Flood, C. & S. Williams *et al.*).

At sea, 2CY+, 26th August, photo (R. L. Flood, N. Osborne *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 384).

At sea, 2CY+, 27th August, photo (A. Griffiths, J. Sample *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 385).

At sea, 2CY+, 27th August, photo (R. L. Flood, A. Mills *et al.*).

At sea, 2CY+, 27th August, photo (R. L. Flood, T. Wilson *et al.*).

At sea, 2CY+, 27th August, photo (A. Griffiths *et al.*).

At sea, Wolf Rock, 2CY+, 14th September, photo (M. T. Elliott, M. J. McKee *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 386).

At sea, 2CY+, 15th October, photo (R. L. Flood, B. Reed *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 387).

For a species with just three previous records, 28 in a single year (in fact, 28 in just four months of a single year) is quite some jump. Certainly, identification of this cryptic species, which was split from Cory's Shearwater *C. borealis* in 2015, remains a challenge – but with seemingly every *Calonectris* seen from the Isles of Scilly pelagic scrutinised by some of the best in the business, the exceptional numbers seen in British waters in 2023 must be at least partly representative of a genuine surge in numbers rather than a sudden unlocking of confidence in identifying the species. Indeed, when events around the species' usual haunts are taken into account, the influx is perhaps not surprising – 'the Mediterranean is empty' is how one Spanish seabird researcher described the rather dire state of things there during summer 2023. Atypically warm sea temperatures forced many seabirds north of their usual foraging grounds, and this displacement was obvious from the number of rare seabirds found in Britain – both from the Mediterranean, as with Scopoli's Shearwater, and from farther afield, as with the two species of booby recorded in Britain during 2023 (see below).

Bob Flood's excellent submission – which pulled together an analysis of all of the birds involved, and which formed the basis for Flood & Gutiérrez (2024) – certainly made the Committee's job straightforward when it came to assessing the records. Indeed, the submission was a worthy runner-up in the 2024 Carl Zeiss Award (*Brit. Birds* 117: 573–574).

(Breeds widely throughout W & C Mediterranean but local in E. Disperses widely outside breeding season, including North Atlantic, where distribution poorly known.)

Barolo Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* (3, 51, 3) *Rare, about one per year; recent review*

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 1CY+, 17th July, photo (N. R. Rogers).

Pendeen Watch, 1CY+, 5th October (A. Bayly, P. Combridge, D. K. Parker).

Devon Lundy, 3CY+ male, 8th–24th June, photo, sound-recorded, trapped, DNA analysis (J. Parker *et al.*) (plate 474).

474. Adult (3CY+) Barolo Shearwater *Puffinus baroli*, Lundy, Devon, June 2023.

With knowledge gained during the 'Little Shearwater' review (Stoddart 2023), the Committee felt confident in accepting both of this year's seawatching records as Barolo Shearwater. The Lundy record was considerably more straightforward to assess, with the bird photographed after being caught for ringing, sound-recorded and DNA sampled. This is the third record of a territorial male in the Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* colony on Lundy – records in 2010 and 2011 were accepted as a single, returning male, but analysis of the song of the 2023 bird indicated subtle but consistent differences (Magnus Robb pers. comm.), suggesting it was a new bird rather than the 2010/11 bird returning after more than a decade of absence. It is, perhaps, tempting to speculate that the Lundy bird may be responsible for the two Cornish sightings as well.

Two specimens from November 1869, alleged to have been collected in Portsmouth Harbour, Hampshire, were assessed by the Hampshire Ornithological Society's rarities committee but doubts surrounding their provenance resulted in the record not being accepted (Bond 2024); thus, the number of pre-1950 records remains at three.

(North Atlantic range restricted to warmer waters of Madeira, Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands & the Azores. Outside the breeding season found at sea near breeding sites within North Atlantic.)

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (22, 268, 5) About seven per year; stable or increasing

Hampshire New Forest, 2CY+, 22nd–28th August, photo (per Hampshire Recorder).

Kent Pegwell Bay and Sandwich Bay, 2CY, 11th–13th August, photo (F. Solly *et al.*); same Capel Fleet, Isle of Sheppey, 14th–19th August (per bird information services).

Lincolnshire RSPB Freiston Shore then RSPB Frampton Marsh, 1CY, 11th August to 2nd October, photo (K. Oliver *et al.*); also seen Norfolk.

Norfolk RSPB Snettisham, 1CY, 22nd August, photo (P. C. Gwilliam); also seen Lincolnshire.

Suffolk Butley, 1CY, 9th August (G. Riley).

Woodbridge, 1CY+, 20th August (S. Mayson).

2022 Sussex Brighton, 2CY+, 21st June (I. J. Whitcomb).

2021 Yorkshire Easington and Kilnsea, 1CY, 8th–9th August, photo (A. Bunting *et al.*); also seen Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire (*Brit. Birds* 115: 579–580).

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

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* (0, 1, 1) *Extremely rare, one record in 2016*

Isles of Scilly Bishop Rock Lighthouse and surrounding waters, 2CY white morph, 7th August, then 14th August to 15th September, again 8th, 11th and 22nd October, photo (R. L. Flood *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plates 319 & 374; plate 475).

Graham Jepson

475. First-summer (2CY) white-morph Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*, Bishop Rock Lighthouse,

This is the first 'free-flying' record of this species in Britain; the only previous record, from Sussex in 2016, concerned a bird found on a beach and subsequently taken into care. Initially encountered during a pelagic trip, the 2023 individual was refound a week later roosting on Bishop Rock Lighthouse, where it delighted boat-loads of visiting birders. Remarkably, on 28th August, a Brown Booby was also present on the same lighthouse!

The species has a wide breeding distribution across tropical oceans. The stage of primary moult on the Bishop Rock Lighthouse bird allowed the Committee to deduce that it was around 14–15 months old, suggesting a hatching date of around May/June 2022 and thus ageing the bird as a 2CY.

(Breeds on islands in Caribbean Sea & tropical Atlantic, Pacific & Indian Oceans. Resident or dispersive.)

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* (0, 7, 5) ***Extremely rare, increasing, last in 2022***

Borders Eyemouth Golf Course, 3CY+ female, 1st September (P. Burns); presumed same Eyemouth, 25th September (P. Dean, M. Holling) and 30th September (G. Paterson); also seen Cleveland, Co. Durham, Kent, Norfolk, Northumberland, Yorkshire.

Cleveland Cowbar, 3CY+ female, 6th September, photo (N. A. Preston, M. N. Sidwell); presumed same South Gare, North Gare and Seal Sands, 6th–24th September, photo (T. Burton, N. A. Preston, A. J. Wheeldon *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 375; plate 476) and Hartlepool Headland then South Gare, 2nd November (T. Francis *et al.*); also seen Borders, Co. Durham, Kent, Norfolk, Northumberland, Yorkshire.

476. Adult (3CY+) female Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, South Gare, Cleveland, September 2023.

Co. Durham Hendon, Sunderland, 3CY+ female, 6th September, photo (P. Anderson, D. Charlton, T. Middleton); also seen Borders, Cleveland, Kent, Norfolk, Northumberland, Yorkshire.

Cornwall Newlyn, 3CY+, 18th November (L. Proctor per Cornwall Recorder).

Devon Berry Head, 2CY+, 29th September, photo (R. Hughes *et al.*).

Fife Fife Ness, 1CY+, 17th August, photo (D. C. Jardine, G. & R. McNab, K. Simpson); same Kinghorn, 5th September (K. Gibb, D. Morrison *et al.*); also seen Highland, Lothian.

Highland Tarbat Ness, 1CY+, 18th August, photo (A. F. McNee, A. C. Williams); also seen Fife, Lothian.

Isles of Scilly Bishop Rock Lighthouse, 3CY+ male, 28th August, photo (M. Thomas *et al.*) (plate web-11).

web-11. Adult (3CY+) male Brown Booby, Bishop Rock Lighthouse, Isles of Scilly, August 2023.

Kent Grenham Bay, 3CY+ female, 8th October (M. Wilson); also seen Borders, Cleveland, Co. Durham, Norfolk, Northumberland, Yorkshire.

Lothian Cramond Island, 1CY+, 17th August and 5th–19th September, photo (M. Auld, M. Griffin); also seen Highland, Fife.

Norfolk Sheringham, Cley, 3CY+ female, 19th August, photo (R. Lee, K. B. Shepherd); also seen Borders, Cleveland, Co. Durham, Kent, Northumberland, Yorkshire.

Northumberland Annstead, Beadnell, 3CY+ female, 25th September (M. Eaton); presumed same Holy Island, 25th September, photo (O. M. Bailey), and Budle Point, 25th September (C. G. Knox, G. P. Knox); also seen Borders, Cleveland, Co. Durham, Kent, Norfolk, Yorkshire.

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, 3CY+ female, 3rd September (B. Richards *et al.*), same Filey Bay, 3CY+, 4th–5th September, photo (per birding information services), and Long Nab, Burniston, 6th September (N. Addey, K. Wimbush); also seen Borders, Cleveland, Co. Durham, Kent, Norfolk, Northumberland.

With the first accepted record of Brown Booby in Britain coming as recently as 2019, the rapid rise in the species' occurrence has been startling. Including this year's birds, the cumulative total now stands at 12 individuals.

While the lion's share of 2023's warm-water seabirds – including Scopoli's Shearwaters and the single record of Red-footed Booby – came, as might be expected, from waters off southwest Britain, the majority of the year's sightings of Brown Booby came from the North Sea coast.

(Breeds on oceanic and offshore islands in tropical seas including the Caribbean Sea, Atlantic Ocean, Red Sea & Indian Ocean to W & C Pacific. Distribution outside breeding season uncertain, probably dispersive within breeding range.)

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (253, 288, 1) About 3–4 per year, occasional breeding; stable

Warwickshire Ladywalk Nature Reserve, 2CY+ male, 6th–8th June, video (C. Waring *et al.*).

(Widespread but local in Europe N to 53°N. To E, breeds to 60°N in European Russia, & E to Kazakhstan & NW China. Migratory, wintering mainly E Africa, S from Sudan & Ethiopia. Other populations largely resident or dispersive in sub-Saharan Africa & Madagascar.)

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (64, 119, 8) About three per year; stable or increasing

Cornwall Dobwalls, Liskeard, 2CY+, 26th April, photo (C. & J. Duffy); presumed same Lethyep, 29th April to 5th May, photo (P. Hambly *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

RSPB Marazion Marsh, 1CY, 10th October (T. Mills); presumed same Splattenridden Farm, Lelant, 15th–31st October, photo (J. Munday).

Lancashire & North Merseyside RSPB Leighton Moss, 2CY+, 24th May, photo (J. Lazenby per RSPB).

Outer Hebrides South Lochboisdale then Smercleite, South Uist, 1CY+, 20th–

29th October, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder).

Somerset RSPB Ham Wall, 1CY, 5th October to 2nd November, photo (RSPB per A. Mears).

Suffolk Livermere Lake, 2CY+, 15th August, photo (D. E. Balmer, P. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Sussex Combe Valley CP, 2CY+, 14th–17th May, photo (T. Ensom, S. Richardson *et al.*).

Yorkshire Filey Dams, 2CY+, 26th May, photo (J. Harwood); presumed same Potter Brompton Carr, 28th–31st May, photo (C. G. Bradshaw *et al.*).

With eight records, 2023 was an above-average year for Squacco Herons in Britain; the previous ten years have produced 33 records, with annual totals varying between one and ten. This year's record at RSPB Leighton Moss was the first in Lancashire & North Merseyside since one at Banks in 1930. The Livermere Lake record is just the third in Suffolk since 1912, with other records coming from Minsmere in 2007 and Felixstowe Ferry in 2009.

(Breeds Mediterranean basin from S Spain to Black Sea & E to Kazakhstan, with large population in Danube Delta. Northern populations migratory, wintering N tropical Africa. African population largely resident.)

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (0, 1, 0) *First record*

Essex St Osyth Marsh, 1CY+, 21st–22nd July, photo (E. Thorn per birding information services); same Norfolk and Suffolk, presumed same Montgomeryshire.

Montgomeryshire Glan-mule, 1CY+, 18th April, photo (L. & M. Owen); presumed same Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk.

Norfolk Brayden Marshes, Horsey, 1CY+, 17th–20th July, photo (A. Postle *et al.* per birding information services) (plate 477), and Trimingham, 18th July, (R. J. Lowe *et al.*); same Essex and Suffolk, presumed same Montgomeryshire.

477. Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Brayden Marshes, Horsey, Norfolk, July 2023.

Suffolk Felixstowe Ferry/King's Fleet, 1CY+, 20th–21st July, photo (C. Holden *et al.*); same Essex and Norfolk, presumed same Montgomeryshire.

Black-winged Kite must surely have been among the most hotly tipped next first for Britain for many years. As time went on, so the chances of one turning up seemingly increased. Records came from northern France, the Channel Islands, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, all giving the impression that the species' arrival in Britain was imminent; but British birders waited, and they waited... and they waited. As with so many raptors, the relatively short hop across the Channel just seemed to be too far.

Sightings from Skagen, Denmark, gave some glimmer of continued hope, though – several birds logged there were later found in Sweden, having made a minimum sea crossing of around 60 km; nothing compared to the mere 32 km separating Britain from France.

On 19th April 2022, it looked as though it might finally have happened: a Black-winged Kite had reportedly been photographed in Cleveleys, Lancashire & North Merseyside. Whispers swirled that the bird might have been an escape... but those rumours were soon quashed when news emerged that the photograph had been taken in Angola!

Almost a year to the day later came another tantalising teaser that the species might – finally – have reached Britain: a report of a probable, seen from a vehicle on the A14 at Kirton, Suffolk, on 16th April 2023. There was no further sign of the bird reported from the A14, however, and that sighting was ultimately found Not Proven (see Appendix 5). Once again, it looked like another false start for the species in Britain.

Birders only had to wait a further two days, however, to have the frustration of the earlier report turn into, well, even more frustration, other than for the two lucky finders. Martyn and Laura Owen had found – and videoed – a Black-winged Kite by the side of the A489 in Newton, Montgomeryshire. The footage, although low quality, showed everything needed to identify the bird. Now, all the British birding community needed was for it to be refound – and for it to hang around. Despite much searching in the area, however, the bird could not be relocated.

Three months later and most birders had resigned themselves to the fact that Black-winged Kite was staying off their British list for yet another year; then, remarkably, a bird was sighted on Brayden Marshes between Hickling Broad and Horsey Mere, Norfolk, on 17th July. Much to everyone's relief, it remained in the area until 20th and even had a quick sojourn to Trimmingham on 18th, before moving to Suffolk, where it was seen on 20th–21st, and then Essex, from 21st to 23rd July.

The identification of the bird was relatively straightforward, and the only likely confusion species would, for a sighting in Britain, concern escapes. This bird's black wing-tips and white underwing, however, easily ruled out Letter-winged Kite *Elanus scriptus*, a species native to Australia, which shows a thick, black line running along the length of the under forewing. Black-shouldered Kite *E. axillaris*, also native to Australia, and White-tailed Kite *E. leucurus*, found in the Americas, are both more similar to Black-winged Kite

but show, amongst other small differences, extensively dark underwing primary-coverts. Photographs from Norfolk and videograbs from Wales showed that the underwing primary coverts on the British bird were white.

Three subspecies of Black-winged Kite are recognised by Gill *et al.* (2024): nominate, across Europe, Africa and western Arabia; *vociferus*, on the Indian Subcontinent and, increasingly, in Jordan and Israel; and *hypoleucus*, in Southeast Asia and the Malayan Peninsula. The last two subspecies are occasionally separated as 'Asian Black-shouldered Kite'. Although a nominate bird was the most likely to occur in Britain, by virtue of both distance to the nearest breeding populations and other vagrant records in northern Europe, the presence of breeding *vociferus* as close as the Levant meant that this taxon needed to be eliminated. Thankfully, separation is fairly straightforward as the dark coloration extends along the underside of the secondaries in *vociferus*, while in nominate birds this area is white and contrasts with the black underside of the primaries. The underside of the secondaries was white in the British bird, confirming its identification as a nominate-race individual.

Views within both BBRC and BOURC differed as to whether the Welsh record in April and the East Anglian record in July concerned the same individual. On the one hand, the sightings were some 340 km apart and separated by three months. However, the majority view was that the bird could easily have remained undetected somewhere in western Britain before tracking back east and then south in late summer. Furthermore, having waited so long for the first record, two birds arriving within such a relatively short space of time would be unlikely. Perhaps the pattern of future arrivals will change that view but, for now, the majority of voters on both BOURC and BBRC considered all accepted sightings of Black-winged Kites in 2023 to be of the same bird.

Discussions around the age of the bird highlighted just how little is known about moult and ageing in this species. This is exacerbated further by the fact that the species can seemingly breed at all times of year, at least in the southern parts of its range, although whether European birds are truly breeding year-round or the literature on the subject has become muddled with data on the species from Africa is not totally clear. Details of moult were not apparent in the videos of the kite when it was in Wales but photographs from East Anglia showed that the bird was in active moult and had two old, worn,

brownish outer primaries. Closer examination of photographs also shows a number of inner secondaries that appeared to show a pattern typical of juvenile, rather than adult feathers. In all likelihood, the bird was a young one – but, until such times that our grip on variation in the moult of this species is further understood, the final decision on this erred on the side of caution and it was aged as a 1CY+, i.e. age unknown.

(Nominate race breeds across S & W Europe and Africa; races *vociferus* & *hypoleucus* in Levant, Indian subcontinent and SE Asia.)

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* (0, 6, 0) ***Very rare, last in 2022***

2022 Yorkshire Walshaw Moor, 4CY, 29th April, photo (P. Higginson-Bell); same Highland 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 575).

This first for Yorkshire was judged to be the same individual that was seen in Highland in 2021 and 2022. Its presence in Yorkshire on 29th April and subsequently in Highland from 24th May is a reminder that even birds the size of an eagle can go undetected for long periods of time in Britain.

(Breeds NW Africa N to N France, & E through C Europe to Estonia & S to Balkans. To E, breeds E through Turkey & Israel to Caucasus Mountains, Iran & India, also European Russia to Urals, S Siberia, C Asia, W China & N Mongolia. Winters Africa S of Sahara, Iran, India & occasionally to Indochina & Malay Peninsula.)

Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius* (0, 10, 1) ***Very rare, last in 2018***

Cornwall Goonhilly Downs, The Lizard, 1CY male, 28th September to 16th October, photo (E. O'Connor *et al.*) (plate 478).

478. Juvenile (1CY) male Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius*, Goonhilly Downs, The Lizard, Cornwall, October 2023.

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

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (2, 154, 27)
About four per year, influxes 2011 (29), 2022 (14); recent increase

Argyll Machir Bay, Islay, 2CY, 1st January, photo (J. & T. Farooqi); presumed same Argyll 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 576).

Avon Weston-super-Mare, 1CY, 25th October (M. Ponsford).

Carmarthenshire WWT Penclacwydd, 1CY female, 10th December into 2024, photo (B. Beck *et al.*); also seen Gower and Pembrokeshire.

Cornwall Carn Brea, St Just, 1CY female, 11th–14th October, photo (A. J.

Harris *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, 1CY, 19th–20th October, photo (T. J. Davis, T. Jones *et al.*).

Dorset Pentridge and Wyke Downs, 1CY, 9th–19th October, photo (J. Phillips *et al.*); also seen Wiltshire.

Fife Barnsmuir, Crail, 1CY, 2nd September, photo (W. Cresswell, K. Shaw, J. Wilson); also seen Isle of May.

Gower Crofty, 1CY female, 30th November (F. Ryan per G. Harper); same Llanrhidian Marsh, 30th November into 2024 (per birding information services); also seen Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire.

Hampshire Martin Down, 1CY male, 18th–22nd September, photo (C. Spence, J. Spence, M. Thomas).

Highland Inverness area, 3CY+ male, 12th June to 26th July, photo (B. Etheridge, A. Phillip, A. B. Ritchie); paired with female Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* (see also Pallid x Hen Harrier).

Isle of May Lighthouse, 1CY, 1st–2nd September, photo (D. Steel *et al.*); also seen Fife.

Isles of Scilly St Martin's then St Mary's and Tresco, 1CY female, 13th–14th October, photo (C. Townend *et al.*).

Kent RSPB Dungeness, 1CY male, 3rd–15th October, photo (M. Casemore *et al.* per Kent Recorder).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 2CY male, 1st May, photo (S. Ainsworth *et al.*); presumed same Anderby Creek, 6th May (J. P. Siddle) and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes, 8th May, photo (D. Nicholson); also seen Yorkshire. Gibraltar Point, 2CY+, 10th May (J. Virgin, R. K. Watson, K. M. Wilson).

Lothian Aberlady Bay, 2CY, 4th–5th May, photo (I. J. Andrews, K. Gillon, A. Simmons).

Norfolk Warham Greens, 1CY female from 2022 to 31st March, photo (M. C. Buckland, G. Hewson, M. Roxby *et al.*) (see also 2022 Norfolk, below); presumed same East Hills and Warham Greens, 28th October into 2024, photo (A. Banwell, M. C. Buckland *et al.*).

Horsey, 2CY male, 6th May, photo (M. J. Saunt).

Edgefield, 2CY male, 6th May (A. M. Stoddart); also seen Suffolk.

Winterton, 2CY male, 10th May, photo (S. Offord per Norfolk Recorder).

Happisburgh, 1CY, 11th November (J. Lansdell, A. Wilkinson).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 2CY female, 1st–4th May, photo (T. Gale, G. Gay *et al.*); presumed same Papa Westray, 13th–14th May, photo (D. Roche *et al.*)

and Dykeside, Westray, 24th May (S. P. Dudley).

Sanday, 1CY, 1st–5th October, photo (A. Whewell *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, 1CY female, 23rd November, photo (R. Brown, G. Eagle); also seen Carmarthenshire, Gower.

Shetland Boddam then Noss, Mainland, 1CY, 3rd–4th September, photo (P. V. Harvey, H. Moncrieff *et al.*).

Tingwall, Mainland, 1CY male, 21st–22nd September, photo (D. Fairhurst, J. Hunt *et al.*).

Spiggie, Quendale, Bigton and Sandwick, Mainland, 1CY male, 23rd September to 4th October, photo (D. & J. Bridges, L. & R. Ingleston *et al.*).

Shropshire Long Mynd, 2CY female, 12th–19th May, photo (per Shropshire Recorder).

Suffolk Walberswick, 2CY male, 6th May, photo (J. Gearty); also seen Norfolk. East Lane, Bawdsey, 2CY male, 7th May, photo (C. Clark, I. Taylor).

Orfordness, 2CY male, 11th May, photo (D. Crawshaw, K. Langley, M. C. Marsh).

Sussex Cuckmere Haven, 1CY, 5th September, photo (C. J. R. Barfield, L. Pitcher).

Wiltshire Morgan's Hill, Calne, 1CY male, 2nd–5th October, photo (N. Adams *et al.*); also seen Dorset.

Yorkshire Spurn Point, 2CY male, 2nd May, photo (R. Hunton, T. Wright, N. Pickering); also seen Lincolnshire.

Stone Creek, 1CY, 22nd–23rd October, photo (T. Ellery, J. A. Hanlon, P. Hutchins *et al.*).

2022 Dorset St Aldhelm's Head, 2CY female, 17th September, photo (P. Saunders).

2022 Norfolk Morston Saltmarshes then Cley Marshes and Stiffkey, 1CY female, 29th–31st October (M. Roxby *et al.*); same Warham Greens, 1st November into 2023, photo (M. C. Buckland, G. Hewson *et al.*).

2022 Yorkshire Easington and Kilnsea, 2CY+ female, 11th September, photo (T. D. Jones *et al.*).

2021 North-east Scotland Cabrach, 2CY, 31st May to 20th June, photo (M. Grant, A. Sinclair per North-east Scotland Recorder).

2019 Clyde Undisclosed location, South Lanarkshire, 1CY male, 12th–26th October, photo (D. Smith).

2011 Devon Plymouth, 1CY, 3rd November, photo (S. C. Votier).

A total of 27 Pallid Harriers is the second-best tally on record for the species in Britain, only just behind the 29 birds seen in 2011 (fig. 4). Indeed, following that influx just over a decade ago, the species has become an almost-expected year tick for most British birders rather than the near-mythical rarity it once was. This is in sharp contrast to Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus*, which has dropped from a rare breeder to a scarce migrant in Britain in just a few short years. If the current trends for both species continue, it may well be that future BBRC reports are reporting on records of Montagu's Harriers rather than Pallid Harriers. That switch in reporting status is a little way off just yet though – despite only nine Montagu's Harriers being logged in Britain in 2022, that was the first year in the decade for which figures have been published that fewer than ten individuals were recorded. Indeed, it was as recently as 2019 (Eaton *et al.* 2021) that the species was still breeding in Britain, while in 2013 an estimated 53 migrant birds were logged. However, if numbers as low as those in 2022 continue for another decade, Montagu's Harrier may well end up in the BBRC report.

Pallid Harrier, in contrast, is much closer to coming off the BBRC list – especially following this year's bumper total. The 2014–23 average sits at 11.3 birds per year, *just* above the Committee's threshold of ten birds per year, while four of the last ten years have recorded a total greater than ten, again putting the species above BBRC's threshold of fewer than ten records in at least seven years. While the Committee may choose to err on the side of caution and retain assessment of the species for the time being (especially given the increasing challenge of hybrids – see below), the notion that any lightly built ringtail harrier in Britain these days is most likely Montagu's until proven otherwise is certainly no longer the case.

One of the more remarkable aspects of this year's arrival was the fact that between 1st and 11th May there were at least six different 2CY males between Spurn and Orfordness. Photographs proved that all were different, which is a very different conclusion from the one that undoubtedly would have been reached without such documentation.

(Breeds from Ukraine E through Russia to c. 100°E, & S to Kazakhstan & NW China. Occasionally breeds Finland. Migratory, wintering throughout much of

E & C Africa, & Indian subcontinent.)

Pallid x Hen Harrier *Circus macrourus x cyaneus* (0, 3, 2)

Highland Undisclosed location, two pulli, ringed, photo (per D. M. Pullan); one also seen Loch Gynack and Insh Marshes, 17th September to 12th November, photo (A. Samuels, P. Stronach *et al.*).

The successful breeding (albeit in a mixed pair) of Pallid Harrier in Britain has been on the cards for some time now. Up to and including 2021, there had been five reports of displaying male Pallid Harriers (Eaton *et al.* 2023); just one of these birds, a 3CY male on Orkney in 1995, got any further in the breeding process – it paired with a female Hen Harrier, which laid a clutch of eggs. The clutch was, however, preyed upon (*Brit. Birds* 89: 496; Ogilvie *et al.* 1998).

Elsewhere in western Europe, pure pairs of Pallid Harriers have bred successfully in recent years in the Netherlands, France and Spain, and there have also been breeding attempts in mixed pairs with Montagu's Harriers (Réglade *et al.* 2022). In northern Europe, there are multiple records of Pallid Harriers breeding in mixed pairs with Hen Harriers. Consequently, the challenge of identifying hybrid Pallid x Hen Harriers is not a new one; as Pallid Harrier shifted its range into Finland, so mixed pairings became more common, and some of these hybrids were known to migrate southwest along the flyway that took them into western Europe. Indeed, there are already three accepted records of hybrid birds in Britain. As is often the case with hybridisation events, mixed pairings between Pallid and one of the other 'grey' harriers are commonest on the periphery of the species' range. As the number of Pallid Harriers breeding in Finland has increased, so the relative proportion of mixed pairings has decreased, meaning that finding a pure bird is still statistically more likely than finding a hybrid. That said, we may be at the very start of that curve in Britain right now and, if Pallid Harriers are set to colonise Britain as they did Finland, this seems unlikely to be the last brood of hybrid young we will see documented in these reports.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

'Dark-breasted Barn Owl' *T. a. guttata* (1, 13, 0) *Uncertain*

1998 Isle of May Isle of May, 2CY+, 22nd April to 14th June, photo (D. Hemsley, J. M. Wilson *et al.*).

(Race *guttata* mostly resident to N & E of nominate race, from Netherlands & Denmark, E to W Russia & S to Bulgaria, largely E of the 3°C January isotherm. Intergrades with nominate race are frequent towards W & S limits of its range.)

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* (193, 242, 0) *About three per year; stable*

Fair Isle Homisdale, 6CY+ male, 22nd May to 2nd June, photo (A. Penn *et al.*) (plate web-11); also seen Shetland.

Alex Penn

web-12. Adult (6CY+) male Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus*, Fair Isle, May 2023.

Shetland Ronas Hill, 6CY+ male, 12th January into 2024, photo (W. T. S. Miles *et al.* per Shetland Recorder); also seen Fair Isle; same Shetland 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 577).

2022 Orkney Eday, 2CY+ male, 17th–18th April, photo (R. Neave, M. Thomson).

2021 North-east Scotland Ben Macdui/Loch Etchachan, 3CY+ male, 19th–21st September, photo (K. Gibb *et al.*); same Moray & Nairn 2021 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 577).

2021 Moray & Nairn Ben Macdui, 3CY+ male, intermittently 27th August to 22nd December (I. Francis, P. Szota *et al.*); same as North-east Scotland; note amended last date (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 577).

1994 Outer Hebrides North Rona, 2CY+, 5th–15th October, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder).

1975 Outer Hebrides Brue, Lewis, 6CY+ male, 1st February, ringed (per Outer Hebrides Recorder); same Fair Isle 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 66: 344).

The 1975 bird was found dead and had been ringed on Fair Isle in 1972 as a 3CY+ male (*Brit. Birds* 66: 344; *Fair Isle Bird Observatory Report 1972*).

Information on the ringing recovery comes from the online ringing report (Robinson *et al.* 2023).

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

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (177, 133, 1) About 1–2 per year; stable

Outer Hebrides Vatersay, 1CY, 13th–14th September, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder).

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

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* (1, 10, 1) *Very rare, last in 2019*

Shetland Ham, Foula, 2CY+, 10th June, photo (D. & G. Atherton) (plate web-13).

Donna & Geoff Atherton

web-14. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*, Ham, Foula, Shetland, June 2023.

(Nominate race breeds Egypt & Middle East, N to S Turkey, Armenia, Uzbekistan & S Kazakhstan, E through Iran to NW India. Race *chrysocercus* breeds SE Morocco & Algeria, also W Africa. Winters Africa S of Sahara.)

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (9, 12, 1) *Very rare, last in 2020*

Isles of Scilly St Mary's, multiple sites, 3CY+ male, 23rd–27th March, photo

(R. L. Flood *et al.*) (plate 479).

Graham Jepson

479. Adult (3CY+) male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, March 2023.

(Fragmented breeding range throughout Mediterranean basin from Portugal, Spain & Morocco E to Ukraine, Turkey & Caspian Sea, then E to E Kazakhstan, NW China & W Mongolia. Winters sub-Saharan Africa.)

Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum* (0, 2, 1)
Extremely rare, previous records in 2008,
2010

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, 1CY male, 20th–29th September, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (D. Woollard *et al.*) (plate 480).

480. First-winter (1CY) male Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum*, Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, September 2023.

This is the third British record of this difficult-to-identify North American flycatcher. The previous records were in 2010 on Blakeney Point, Norfolk, and in 2008 at Nanjizal, Cornwall. However, this is – perhaps surprisingly – the first record that has been confirmed by DNA.

(Breeds S Canada from S British Columbia E to Nova Scotia, & NE USA from Michigan SE to New Jersey. Winters S America, mainly Colombia to Peru, but E to Venezuela & S to Argentina.)

***Empidonax* flycatcher *Empidonax* sp. (0, 0, 1)**

Caernarfonshire Pen Cilan, Abersoch, 1CY+, 23rd–24th September (N. J. & V. E. Phillips).

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (0, 172, 23) ***About 3–4 per year; increasing***

Argyll Glebe House, Tiree, 1CY, 26th September to 3rd October, photo (J. M. Dickson, H. Douglas, D. C. Jardine *et al.*).

Cornwall Land's End, 1CY+, 21st September, photo (M. T. Elliott *et al.*).

Nanquidno, 1CY+, 22nd September, photo (N. R. Rogers, J. M. Walters).

Devon Lundy, Milcombe Valley, 1CY, 20th–26th September, photo, trapped (L. Marriner, B. Maxted *et al.*).

Prawle Point, 1CY, 22nd September, photo (P. M. Mayer).

Lundy, Milcombe Valley, 1CY, 9th October, photo, trapped (A. Croudace, L. Marriner, J. Parker).

Dorset Portland Bill, 1CY, 23rd–24th September, photo, trapped (M. Cutts *et al.*).

East Glamorgan Sker, 1CY+, 21st September, photo (N. Donaghy *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Holy Vale, St Mary's, 1CY+, 21st–22nd September, photo (J. M. Turton).

Pool Road, Tresco, 1CY+, 21st September (J. & T. G. Davies).

St Martin's, 1CY+, 25th September (R. A. Filby, K. Hardy *et al.*).

Bryher, 1CY+, 25th September, photo (R. Hathway *et al.* per Isles of Scilly Recorder).

Barnaby Lane, St Agnes, 1CY+, 28th September to 1st October (S. Buckle, A. Cleave, E. Stirzaker); presumed same Browarth, St Agnes, 2nd–10th October (P. Wright *et al.*).

Bryher, 1CY+, 16th October, photo (T. Carter *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Eoligarry, Barra, two 1CY, 21st–26th September, photo (B. A. & K. Taylor *et al.*).

North Loch Eynort, South Uist, 1CY+, 23rd–25th September, photo (J. B. Kemp, L. Kemp, A. Kennedy).

Castlebay, Barra, two 1CY, 23rd September to 1st October, photo (B. A. & K. Taylor).

Nask then Castlebay, Barra, 1CY+, 25th–26th September, photo (B. A. Taylor).

Eriskay, South Uist, 1CY+, 25th September (P. S. Crockett, I. Gordon).

Yorkshire RSPB Bempton Cliffs, 1CY, 30th September to 2nd October, photo (F. X. Moffatt *et al.*).

Spurn, 1CY, 2nd October, photo, trapped (S. J. Harris *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 237).

There has been a gentle upwards trajectory in the number of records of this

species in Britain (fig. 5), mirroring an increase in the North American population. Of the 23 in 2023, 18 were found in the wake of Hurricane Lee, between 20th and 26th September (Lees *et al.* 2024). It is remarkable to consider that this one week alone eclipsed the prior highest *annual* total of 13 from 1995.

The Outer Hebrides and the Isles of Scilly both accounted for six birds during 2023, while three in Devon and two in Yorkshire were particularly noteworthy records.

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

Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus* (0, 1, 1) *Extremely rare, one record in 1987*

Outer Hebrides Castlebay, Barra, 1CY+, 23rd September, photo (I. N. Ricketts, B. A. & K. Taylor) (plate 481).

481. Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*, Castlebay, Barra, Outer Hebrides, September 2023.

Britain's first Philadelphia Vireo was discovered on Tresco, Isles of Scilly, on 10th October 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 572–574). That bird was hot on the heels of the first for the Western Palearctic, in Ireland in October 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 474–477). Despite this species always being destined to be a mega rarity, few would have imagined that British birders would have to wait almost 40 years before the next bird.

The autumn of 1987 was, like that of 2023, a landmark year for American landbirds – but, in many ways, the two records are poles apart, from a cultural as well as a geographical standpoint. Dick Filby and John Brodie Good, who found the individual on Tresco in 1987, estimated that around 1,000 birders saw that bird during its four-day stay, and those readers old enough to remember October on Scilly in the 1980s will recall (fondly or otherwise) the

monumental crowds that a major rarity could attract within hours of discovery. Compare and contrast the melee on Tresco with the scene on Barra, another beautiful island but at the opposite end of Britain: just three observers saw the star bird of a remarkable cast of American vagrants on the island that autumn.

(Breeds Canada. Winters Mexico and Central America.)

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

'Steppe Grey Shrike' *L. e. pallidirostris* (0, 28, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Highland Achateny, Ardnamurchan, 2CY male, 29th June to 4th July, photo (K. Lappin, J. Mastin, P. Stronach *et al.*).

(Breeds C Asia from lower Volga E to S Mongolia & extreme NW China, S to N Iran & N Pakistan. Winters to S & W of breeding range from Sudan, N Ethiopia & Somalia through Arabian Peninsula to W Iran.)

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (20, 191, 2) About 2–3 per year; stable

Argyll Smaull Farm then Braigo, Sanaigmore, Islay, 1CY, 9th October to 1st November, photo (J. M. Dickson, P. R. Roberts, A. Rudd *et al.*); also seen Cornwall.

Cornwall Caradon Hill, 1CY, 26th September to 7th October, photo (S. Sanderson *et al.*); also seen Argyll.

Outer Hebrides South Galson, Lewis, 2CY+, 8th September, photo (A. Gouldstone, F. Rennie, E. Stobart).

Close inspection of the photos enabled the Committee to be confident that the Cornish and Argyll birds were one and the same. This involved a movement of around 600 km in a north/north-northwest direction.

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

Turkestan Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides* (0, 9, 2) Very rare, last in 2022, but also see Daurian/Turkestan Shrike

Fair Isle Schoolton, then roaming, 2CY+ male, 22nd September to 13th October, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (G. Lynch *et al.*) (plate web-13).

Sussex West Rise Marsh, 2CY+ female, 30th May, photo (D. Thorns *et al.*).

2022 Yorkshire RSPB Bempton Cliffs then Wandale Farm, Bempton, 2CY+ male, 27th June to 27th August, photo, DNA analysis (T. D. Charlton *et al.* per Flamborough Bird Observatory Recorder).

2019 Shetland Levenwick, Mainland, 2CY+ male, 28th–29th September, photo, DNA analysis (J. Cooper, A. Crossley, K. Hall, C. Walker *et al.*); previously accepted as Daurian/Turkestan Shrike (*Brit. Birds* 113: 618).

These shrikes remain stubbornly difficult to identify in anything other than adult male plumage and, even then, some birds may show an apparent mix of characters of Turkestan and Daurian Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*. Thankfully, this year's adult male on Fair Isle was a classic Turkestan, as was the widely appreciated male at Bempton in 2022. A female in Sussex shows just enough in the photographs to be identifiable with a sufficient degree of certainty.

A change in views on the interpretation of DNA evidence within the Committee has led to the acceptance of the 2019 Levenwick individual. While it's undoubtedly the case that the DNA of this complex remains, well, complex, it seems counterintuitive to accept birds that look like Turkestan but for which we have no DNA evidence, while being overly cautious with birds that look the part but have ambiguous DNA. Martin Collinson commented on the DNA of the 2019 Levenwick individual and this year's Fair Isle bird: 'The main problem is that Daurian and Turkestan Shrikes both hybridise and share DNA with each other and also with Red-backed Shrikes *L. collurio*. We are preparing a paper for British Birds on the subject. The Fair Isle and Levenwick birds both fall in a genetic clade that is almost completely composed of Turkestan Shrikes from Kazakhstan, but also contains a Daurian from the Mongolian hybrid zone and some Red-backed Shrikes. So, given the plumage characteristics, both birds look genetically good for Turkestan, but with all sorts of caveats.'

The adult male in Yorkshire in 2022 was almost certainly the same one present in Bergen, Noord-Holland, the Netherlands, on 14th May 2022 (Gelling *et al.* 2023).

(Breeds C Asia from N Kazakhstan to Afghanistan & Pakistan. Winters SW Asia, Arabian Peninsula and E Africa.)

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* (0, 43, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years, increasing

Fair Isle Auld Haa, 1CY, 8th November, photo (T. Hyndman, D. & S. Parnaby).

Records of this species have undergone a meteoric rise over the past two decades, from mega to expected annually, with nearly half of all records having occurred since 2018.

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

Asian Short-toed/Mediterranean Short-toed/Turkestan Short-toed Lark *Alaudala cheleensis/rufescens/heinei* (0, 1, 0,) Extremely rare, one record

1992 Dorset Portland, 2CY+, 2nd May (I. R. Dickie, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 88: 527).

BBRC and BOURC have completed a review of the sole British record of 'Lesser Short-toed Lark' following the taxonomic shifting sands that split that species into three: Asian Short-toed, Mediterranean Short-toed and Turkestan Short-toed Lark. The review found that it was not possible to assign the record to any of the three new species and thus it no longer appears on the main part of the British List, instead now appearing in Appendix 4 of the List (*Ibis* 164: 909–910). An account of the sighting is given in Dickie & Vinicombe (1995).

American Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* (0, 13, 3) Rare, about one every three years

Devon Lundy, 1CY+, 29th September (C. Baillie).

Isles of Scilly Porthcressa, St Mary's, 1CY, 20th–21st September, photo (R. Hathway *et al.* per Isles of Scilly Recorder) (plate 482).

Graham Jepson

482. First-winter (1CY) American Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*, Porthcressa, St Mary's, September 2023.

Kent North Foreland, 2CY+, 19th–21st September, photo (J. Carnell *et al.*).

(Breeds North America from W Alaska, E across Canada to Nova Scotia, & throughout USA except SE & S, to S Mexico. Migrates to winter South America from Brazil to Chile & Argentina.)

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (1, 177, 3) About 3–4 per year; increasing

Devon Lundy Island, 1CY, 3rd–10th September, photo (A. Croudace, L. Marriner).

Isles of Scilly Longstone then Carreg Dhu, St Mary's, 1CY, 11th–12th September, photo (W. Scott *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, 1CY, 23rd August, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (A. Corvin-Czarnodolski, R. Dobbins *et al.*).

2022 Shetland Quendale, Mainland, 1CY, 10th–22nd September, photo, sound recording (A. Ellison *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

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

Western/Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli/orientalis* (0, 87, 2)

Cornwall Rose Valley, Morvah, 1CY+, 6th September, photo (A. Bayly, P. Combridge).

Devon Soar, 1CY+, 17th August (P. Aley, S. Cox).

(Western Bonelli's, see above. Eastern Bonelli's breeds E Mediterranean, from Bosnia-Herzegovina to S Bulgaria & Greece, E to S Turkey. Winters NE Africa from Sudan to Ethiopia.)

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 197, 7) About seven per year, influx 2003 (28); stable

Avon Compton Dando sewage works, 2CY+, 16th January to 12th March, photo (J. Aldridge *et al.*) (plate web-14).

000. Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, Compton Dando sewage works, Avon, January 2023. Mark Rayment

Devon Clennon Lakes, 1CY+, 6th–13th December (M. Langman *et al.*).

Kent Pencester Gardens, Dover, 1CY+, from 20th December 2022 to 29th March, photo (R. Rackcliffe, I. Searle *et al.*).

Enbrook Park, Sandgate, 2CY+, 11th February to 9th April, photo (M. Fitch, I. Roberts *et al.*).

Elmstone, 2CY+, 22nd February to 25th March, photo (X. Taylor *et al.* per Kent Recorder).

Norfolk Brancaster, 2CY+, from 2022 to 21st January (per Norfolk Recorder) (see 2022 Norfolk below).

Weybourne Camp, 1CY+, 22nd–27th November, sound recording (J. R. McCallum) (*Brit. Birds* 117: 569).

Shetland Tresta, Fetlar, 1CY+, 14th–21st November, photo (P. Macklam *et al.*).

Yorkshire Long Lane, Filey, 1CY+, 26th October, photo (M. J. Pearson *et al.*).

2022 Borders St Abb's Head, 1CY+, 21st–25th November, photo (C. R. Hatsell *et al.*).

2022 Norfolk Brancaster, 1CY+, 29th November 2022 into 2023 (per Norfolk Recorder).

2022 Sussex Eastbourne, 2CY+, 14th January to 18th April (M. Kenya *et al.*

per Sussex Recorder).

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

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (0, 85, 1) About 2–3 per year; recent increase

Gloucestershire Staple-edge Wood, 2CY+ male, 14th–23rd May, photo, sound recording (G. J. Conway *et al.*).

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

Two-barred Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus* (0, 10, 1) Very rare, last in 2021

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, 1CY, 27th–30th October, photo (R. Little, C. Piner *et al.*).

(Breeds SE Siberia from Baikal region & N Mongolia to Ussuriland, S to NE China. Winters S China to Indochina & C Thailand.)

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (9, 330, 17) About five per year; stable

Cleveland RSPB Saltholme, 2CY+ male, 5th–24th June, photo (A. Jones *et al.*).

Isle of Man Calf of Man Bird Observatory, 2CY+, 4th June, photo, trapped (C. Ferguson, A. Sapsford).

Kent Allhallows Marsh, 2CY+ male, 26th May to 20th June, photo (R. J. Knight *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside WWT Martin Mere, 2CY+ male, 21st May,

photo, video, sound recording (M. Bridge *et al.* per Lancashire & North Merseyside Recorder).

Norfolk RSPB Titchwell, 2CY+ male, 11th May (T. Girling *et al.* per Norfolk Recorder).

Pensthorpe, 2CY+ male, 14th May to 16th June, photo (N. Parsons).

RSPB Cantley Marshes, 2CY+ male, 14th May (M. Eldridge *et al.* per Norfolk Recorder).

RSPB Strumpshaw Fen, 2CY+ male, 25th May (per Norfolk Recorder).

Nottinghamshire Holme Lane, Langford, 2CY+ male, 4th June, photo (N. Crouch *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory, 2CY+, 12th June, photo, trapped (R. A. Duncan).

Lurand/Observatory, North Ronaldsay, 2CY+, 14th–16th June, photo (T. Gale *et al.*).

Somerset RSPB Ham Wall, 2CY+ male, 28th April to 10th June, photo (A. Mears *et al.*).

Suffolk RSPB Boyton Marshes, 2CY+ male, 11th May, photo (S. Abbott *et al.*).

RSPB Minsmere, 2CY+ male, 20th May, photo (D. Baskett).

Worcestershire Camp Lane Pits, Grimley, 2CY+, 22nd May, photo (J. Toogood).

Yorkshire Sammy's Point, Easington, 2CY+, 7th May, photo (R. J. Swales, J. M. Turton).

Hartendale Gutter, Flamborough, 2CY+, 7th May, photo (G. Burgon, R. Little *et al.*).

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

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (39, 1374, 3) About ten per year, recent decrease; ex BBRC 1983–2014

Cornwall Nanjizal, 1CY, 11th September, photo, trapped (J. F. Ryan, M. Wallace, K. A. Wilson).

Suffolk Landguard, 1CY, 30th August, photo (W. J. Brame *et al.*).

Sussex Beeding Brooks, 1CY, 10th–13th September, photo (J. Wilkinson *et al.*).

2019 Cornwall Nanjizal, 1CY, 7th September, photo, trapped (J. F. Ryan, K. A. Wilson).

The Aquatic Warbler is the rarest songbird in Europe, and the only one of the continent's breeding species classified as Globally Threatened. It has recently undergone a serious decline in numbers and now its strongholds are to be found in Belarus, Ukraine and Poland. Its breeding distribution is fragmented because of habitat constraints, as it is a habitat specialist requiring lightly flooded short grasslands, with tussocks for nesting and occasional song posts within this habitat.

British records now tend to be concentrated in southern coastal counties whereas historically the species was recorded irregularly as far north as Shetland. Indeed, since Aquatic Warbler rejoined the BBRC list in 2015, the only records away from south coast counties have been singles in Somerset, Breconshire, Gwent, Suffolk, Fair Isle and Isle of May. Ringing has shown that many birds use Brittany and the Loire Estuary regions in France as staging posts before their southerly migration to the wintering grounds in the Djoudj National Park in Senegal and the Inner Niger Delta in Mali. As they start this migration, southeasterly winds often push a few towards the British coastlines.

This species is very rare in spring, with most records occurring in the autumn, within a four-week peak from the second week in August until the second week of September. All the records above fell into this period. A relatively high proportion of Aquatic Warblers are found by ringers working in reedbeds in the south-coast counties; adults tend to occur in late July/early August, with first-year birds predominating later. Three birds in 2023 is now the average as the European population began decreasing at the start of the millennium and BBRC recommenced assessing records in 2015. If the European population starts to recover, we will undoubtedly see more records but, in the meantime, this species remains a rare visitor.

(Breeds locally NE Germany, Poland, Belarus & Russia E to S Urals, with isolated population in Hungary. Entire population migrates along North Sea

and Atlantic coasts to winter in N tropics of W Africa.)

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (1, 126, 1) *About 3–4 per year; increasing*

Isles of Scilly Porth Hellick, St Mary's, 1CY, 28th October, photo (K. Webb *et al.*).

2022 Borders St Abb's Head, 1CY, 31st August, photo (P. Safford); previously incorrectly published as Lothian (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 583).

(Breeds Black Sea coast from N Bulgaria & Danube Delta E to Ukraine. To E, breeds widely across steppes of S Russia & SW Siberia, Kazakhstan, NW China & W Mongolia, S to Uzbekistan & N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata* (1, 187, 6) *About five per year; stable*

Cornwall Porth Joke, 1CY+, 5th September (B. Bosisto).

Fair Isle Gully, 1CY, 30th August, photo, trapped (A. Penn *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 1CY, 18th August, photo (C. H. Mills, A. Myers *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: 570).

Orkney Howar then Haskie, North Ronaldsay, 1CY, 19th–21st August, photo (T. Gale *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, 1CY, 25th August, photo (J. Clark, A. H. J. Harrop, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington).

Suffolk Landguard, 1CY, 18th August, photo (W. J. Brame, T. Holland, N. Odin, E. Patrick *et al.*) (plate web-15).

web-15. First-winter (1CY) Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata*, Landguard, Suffolk, August 2023.

(Breeds E Finland, E to C Russia & W Siberia to Yenisey valley, C & N Kazakhstan to W Mongolia & W Xinjiang province, China. Winters N & peninsular India, S to Karnataka.)

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida* (0, 23, 2) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Shetland Quendale, Mainland, 2CY+, 7th–9th June, photo (D. Pointon *et al.* per Shetland Recorder) (plate web-16).

web-16. Adult (2CY+) Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*, Quendale, Mainland, Shetland, June 2023.

Yorkshire Long Nab, Burniston, 1CY, 26th–27th September, photo (N. Addey, C. G. Bradshaw, S. Hey *et al.*).

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

Western Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna opaca* (0, 0, 1) First record

Shetland Skibberhoull, Whalsay, 1CY, 20th–21st October, trapped, DNA, photo (J. L. Irvine *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 418; plate 483).

483. First-winter (1CY) Western Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna opaca*, Skibberhoull, Whalsay, Shetland, October 2023.

Britain's first Western Olivaceous Warbler is a terrific reward for the finder, John Lowrie Irvine, one of two long-time birding stalwarts on the often-underrated Shetland island of Whalsay. Discovered late in the day on 20th October, the bird showed well – yet the separation of Eastern Olivaceous and Western Olivaceous in a vagrant context is rarely straightforward, especially when it's your bird and you have to make what is potentially a very big call. Confusing the picture on that first afternoon was the suggestion that the bird was pumping its tail on at least one occasion. Partly as a result of that, it was initially (and cautiously) identified as an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler.

There was some debate about the identification that evening, both online and among local birders and a handful of Shetland birders decided to head to Whalsay the next morning. The bird was still present, the views were extraordinarily good and it was soon clear that the bird was *not* pumping its tail. Other aspects of this bird that were apparent in the field (and may be

useful for those on the lookout for Britain's second) included: the distinctly brownish (rather than colder, greyer) hues to the 'milky tea' upperparts, the lack of a wing panel, a quite obviously rounded tail and the lack of any vocalisations. Furthermore, the bird's bill looked big – but then Eastern Olivaceous can look big-billed too; photographs that showed the bill sides of the Whalsay bird being marginally convex rather concave were difficult to judge entirely accurately off the back of the camera in the field, although they look more convincing in retrospect. The evidence all seemed to be pointing tentatively in the same direction and yet it was also clear that a first record for Britain would surely need more hard evidence than photographs and video.

As a consequence, once the necessary landowner permission was obtained, the bird was trapped and measured by Phil Harris, Paul Harvey and Roger Riddington. The biometrics alone appeared conclusive: three measurements – tail, tarsus and bill width – were beyond the range of Eastern; while four other measurements (including tail roundedness) were equal to the top end of the range for Eastern. A loose feather found during the ringing process conveniently provided the opportunity for Martin Collinson's team at the University of Aberdeen to confirm the identification genetically as well. Upon release, the bird resumed its routines almost immediately and remained just as obliging for the rest of the day, albeit in deteriorating weather – and then departed overnight.

Western Olivaceous Warbler breeds as close as southern Spain, yet this is a genuinely rare bird in northwest Europe. There are just two previous records for the region: on 25th September 1993 in Sweden and on 5th–15th November 2022 on Helgoland, Germany (Wegst *et al.* 2023).

(Breeds E & S Spain, also NW Africa in Western Sahara, much of Morocco, and E along coastal range and N mountains in Algeria and Tunisia (S to S slopes of Atlas) apparently to coastal NW Libya; winters in W Africa from Senegambia E to W Chad.)

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Helopsaltes certhiola* (1, 63, 3) About 1–2 per year; stable

Isle of May North Plateau, 1CY, 7th October, photo (C. R. Hatsell *et al.*).

Shetland Isle of Noss, 1CY+, 18th September, photo (J. G. Brown, J. Clark, S. Reay). Ham, Foula, 1CY+, 20th September, photo (D. & G. Atherton).

Perhaps surprisingly, this is the first record for the Isle of May and just the 12th record for an east-coast site away from the Northern Isles.

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

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (7, 168, 5) *About four per year; stable*

Fair Isle Quoy, 1CY, 18th September to 9th October, photo, trapped (A. Penn *et al.*).

Setter, 1CY, 24th September, photo, trapped (G. Platt *et al.*).

Orkney Upper Linnay, North Ronaldsay, 1CY+, 18th September, photo (G. Woodbridge *et al.*).

Gue Park, North Ronaldsay, 1CY+, 8th October, photo (G. Gay *et al.*).

Shetland Undisclosed location, Unst, 1CY, 19th September, photo (B. H. Thomason).

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

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 50, 1) *About 1 per year; stable*

Shetland Brae Community Woodland, Mainland, 1CY+, 30th September to 3rd October, photo (D. Bradnum, J. Lowen, P. Moore, P. Saunders *et al.*).

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

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (11,

872, 9) *About eight per year, breeding; recent decrease, now stable*

Cambridgeshire Burwell Fen, 2CY+ male, 14th–26th May, photo (C. Zöckler *et al.*).

Cleveland Haverton Hole, 2CY+ male, 18th–25th June (J. Regan *et al.*).

Devon Otter Estuary, 2CY+ male, 31st May to 3rd June, sound recording (C. Townend, S. Waite).

Dorset Lower Avon Valley, 4CY+ male, 23rd April to 1st May, photo, video (O. Frampton); presumed same Dorset 2022 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 584).

Gloucestershire WWT Slimbridge, 2CY+ male, 13th April (M. J. McGill).

Kent RSPB Stodmarsh, 2CY+ male, 17th April to 31st May, photo (B. A. Ryan).

Norfolk RSPB Strumpshaw Fen, 2CY+ male, 16th–26th May, sound recording (D. Lyness, D. Monk *et al.*).

Somerset RSPB Ham Wall, 2CY+ male, 8th–13th April (J. Adams, R. Nairn, S. Stuart).

Yorkshire RSPB Blacktoft Sands, 2CY+ male, 20th–29th May (P. A. Buxton, M. Pilsworth, S. Taylor *et al.*).

Leven Carrs, 2CY+ male, 7th June, sound recording (H. Witts).

2022 Essex East Tilbury, two, 2CY+ male, 2nd–10th May, photo (P. Wood *et al.*).

2022 Norfolk Hickling Broad, 2CY+ male, 26th April to 21st May (P. J. Heath, B. W. Jarvis).

2022 Staffordshire Belvide Reservoir, 2CY+ male, 3rd–5th May, photo, trapped (Belvide Ringing Group *et al.* per Staffordshire Recorder).

2021 Norfolk RSPB Surlingham Church Marsh, 2CY+ male, 2nd June (J. Bradley).

With nine records, 2023 was an average year for Savi's Warbler. The previous ten years have produced 98 records, with annual totals varying between five and 15. All records relate to singing males between early April and late June, with most birds holding territory. Confirmed breeding is rarely documented since the secretive nature of this species makes detecting the presence of females very difficult. The last confirmed breeding was in 2019, on Anglesey, where a pair was present between 14th June and 25th July and seen carrying faecal sacs. The Rare Breeding Birds Panel collates records of birds present

for five days or more, so repeated visits to establish the length of stay and to look for any telltale signs of breeding activity are encouraged.

(Nominate race breeds Iberia N to S Scandinavia, & E through E Europe, Russia & Ukraine to Black Sea coasts, & winters W Africa from Senegal to N Nigeria. Eastern race *fusca* breeds C Asia to NW China & W Mongolia, & winters NE Africa.)

Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca*

'Central Asian Lesser Whitethroat' *C. c. halimodendri* (0, 11, 2) *Uncertain*

Isle of May Low Light bushes, 1CY, 11th–15th October, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (A. Lauder, S. Pinder, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

Norfolk Holme Bird Observatory, 2CY, 2nd–21st January, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (S. Barker *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: 278–279).

The Holme bird was, perhaps surprisingly, the first confirmed record of this subspecies for Norfolk.

(Breeds arid regions of C Asia from NE Caspian Sea, through Kyzyl Kum Desert in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan & S Kazakhstan to SE Russia Altai & NW Mongolia. Winters SE Iran, S Afghanistan, Pakistan & NW Punjab, India.)

Sardinian Warbler *Curruca melanocephala* (0, 86, 0) *About one per year; decreasing*

Sussex Lancing, 1CY+ male, from 3rd November 2022 to 17th January, photo (D. Livingstone).

(Largely resident or dispersive throughout Mediterranean basin, from NW Africa & Iberia to S France, N Italy & E to W Turkey & Israel. Some winter N Africa from Sahara S to Mauritania & S Libya.)

Western Subalpine Warbler *Curruca iberiae* (1, 30, 7) *Uncertain*

Borders St Abb's Head, 2CY+ male, 6th May, photo (A. Kerr, B. Watson).

Dorset Portland Bill, 2CY+, 20th May, photo, DNA analysis, trapped (J. Henderson *et al.*).

Fair Isle Plantation then Gully, 2CY+ male, 22nd May to 4th June, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (A. Penn *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 128).

Setter, 2CY male, 22nd May, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (S. Arlow *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plates 138–140).

Orkney Ancum, North Ronaldsay, 2CY male, 20th–21st May, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (M. Hine *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, 2CY male, 24th June, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (R. Brown, G. Eagle) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 129).

Shetland Quendale, Mainland, 2CY male, 12th–21st May, photo (P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

2022 Cornwall Housel Bay, 2CY+ male, 14th April, photo (T. Blunden, D. Collins per Cornwall Recorder).

Although Western Subalpine Warbler is these days considered monotypic, small but consistent differences in DNA exist between populations in North Africa (formerly named as *inornata*) and Europe. Collinson *et al.* (2024) found that all genetically sampled vagrant Western Subalpine Warblers in northern Europe were from the European population, including the Portland Bill, Skokholm and both Fair Isle birds listed in this report. Totals for Western Subalpine Warbler are from 2015 onwards, with the exception of one earlier record, from 1989.

The stats given for Western Subalpine Warbler and Eastern Subalpine Warbler should be considered provisional. A brief spell when Eastern Subalpine Warblers but *not* Western Subalpine Warblers were assessed by BBRC has likely skewed the statistics somewhat. A review of all records of ‘Subalpine Warblers’ in Britain is long overdue – though such a review is unlikely to be a quick task. See also the comment under Western Subalpine/Moltoni’s/Eastern Subalpine Warbler, below.

(Breeds Iberian Peninsula, S France & NW Italy, Morocco, N Algeria, Tunisia & NW Libya.)

**Moltoni’s Warbler *Curruca subalpina* (1, 14, 1)
Very rare, last in 2022 (3)**

Dorset Portland Bill, 2CY+ male, 12th May, photo, DNA analysis, sound recording, trapped (M. Cade, J. Henderson, N. Hopper *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 130).

A DNA sample from this bird showed that it is from the population breeding on the Mediterranean islands. Two other British records have been shown to come from this same population (Fair Isle in 2015 and Duncansby Head, Highland, in 2018), while a further two (Fair Isle in 2014 and Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, in 2022) have been shown to originate from the population breeding in mainland Italy (Collinson *et al.* 2024).

(Breeds Mallorca, Corsica, Sardinia & Ligurian Apennines, Italy. Wintering area unknown.)

Eastern Subalpine Warbler *Curruca cantillans* (1, 117, 4) *Uncertain*

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, 2CY male, 30th May, photo, trapped (E. Betteridge, P. Massey, E. & S. Stansfield).

Cleveland Rockhole Quarry, Boulby, 3CY+ male, 6th June, photo (J. Birch, M. A. Blick, M. N. Sidwell *et al.*).

Shetland Clickimin, Lerwick, Mainland, 2CY male, 13th–21st May, photo (A. C. Johnson *et al.*).

Sumburgh, Mainland, 2CY+ male, 2nd June, photo (P. Cunningham *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

Although DNA samples were not taken from any of the birds recorded in 2023, genetic results from 21 past British records of Eastern Subalpine Warblers have shown that both subspecies – nominate birds from southern Italy and *C. c. albistriata* from the Balkans, Greece and Turkey – have reached here but there is a clear bias towards the occurrence of *albistriata*, with 18 of the 21 birds sampled being a genetic match for that subspecies and just three being a match for the nominate race. Eastern Subalpine Warbler totals include those published as such from the 2011 report onwards and those published as 'probably *albistriata*' or 'showing characteristics of *albistriata*' in earlier reports (*Brit. Birds* 105: 598–599).

(Race *cantillans* breeds S Italy & Sicily; race *albistriata* breeds SE Europe from

Slovenia & Croatia S to Greece, Aegean Islands, Crete & W Turkey. In winter, ranges poorly known owing to identification issues.)

Western Subalpine/Moltoni's/Eastern Subalpine Warbler *Curruca iberiae/subalpina/cantillans* (1, 767, 7) Uncertain

North-east Scotland Sandhaven, 2CY+ male, 14th May, photo (H. Richardson per North-east Scotland Recorder).

Shetland North Harrier, Foula, 2CY+ female, 13th May, photo (D. & G. Atherton).

Norwick, Unst, 2CY female, 22nd May, photo (D. Cooper *et al.*).

Out Skerries, 2CY+ female, 18th June, photo (D. Brown *et al.*).

Wester Quarff, Mainland, 1CY, 1st–7th October, photo (D. Pointon *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

The 'Subalpine Warblers' continue to be one of the most complex groups on BBRC's species list to deal with – not only in terms of the identification of females and autumn birds but also in terms of how the statistics are dealt with. Some birds cannot be identified beyond the species group 'Western Subalpine/Moltoni's/ Eastern Subalpine Warbler'; however, the identification of others may be possible to narrow down to just two of the three. A bird for which the tail is seen well and R5 (the second-outermost tail feather) shows a clearly blunt white-tip (rather than a pointed white-wedge) may well be possible to assign to Western or Moltoni's, while a bird that is heard to call (but not recorded for later analysis) may give itself up as Western or Eastern. Consequently, the statistics for these multiple sets of 'either/or' have become somewhat confusing. Until a thorough review is undertaken, and the situation is disentangled, the Committee has decided to combine statistics for all groups and pairs of 'Subalpine Warbler'; these are given above under the heading of 'Western Subalpine/Moltoni's/Eastern Subalpine Warbler).

Western/Eastern Subalpine Warbler *Curruca iberiae/cantillans*

Devon East Prawle, 2CY+ male, 14th May, photo (P. M. Mayer).

Lincolnshire Saltfleet Haven, 2CY+ male, 6th May, photo (I. Kingswood).

2022 Norfolk Blakeney Point, 2CY+ male, 5th–6th June, photo (J. P. Morris *et al.*).

In an effort to simplify what has become a rather complex set of statistics, all records of unidentified 'Subalpine Warblers' will be included in the statistics for Western Subalpine/Moltoni's/Eastern Subalpine Warbler (above), though certain records will continue to be published as more specific 'either/or' pairs where evidence allows.

(For all three species, see above)

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

'Northern Treecreeper' *C. f. familiaris* (11, 25, 11)

Uncertain but possibly more common than statistics suggest

Fair Isle Tineside, 1CY+, 20th October, photo (A. Penn).

Highland Tarbat Ness, 1CY+, 29th–30th October, photo (P. Stronach, R. L. Swann).

Northumberland Holy Island, 1CY+, 29th–31st October, photo (A. C. Lees *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: 570–571).

Holy Island, 1CY+, 4th November, photo (S. Maxwell).

Shetland Wester Quarff, Mainland, 1CY+, 5th–6th October, photo (per Shetland Recorder).

Valyie, Norwick, Unst, 1CY, 19th–20th October, photo (D. Cooper, I. Johnson, M. Kerby, D. Watson *et al.*) (plate web-17).

Helendale, Lerwick, Mainland, 1CY+, 21st October to 10th November, photo (T. J. Wilson *et al.*).

Aith, Mainland, 1CY+, 24th–30th October, photo (J. Hunter per Shetland Recorder).

Lerwick, Mainland, 1CY, 24th–26th October, photo, trapped (B. Harris, R. M. Mellor *et al.*).

Frakkafield, Mainland, 1CY+, 26th October, photo (D. Pointon per Shetland Recorder).

Kergord, Mainland, 1CY, 28th October to 16th November, photo, trapped (P. A. Harris, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington).

2014 Fair Isle South Light, 1CY+, 9th October, photo (D. M. Pullan, J. Toole *et al.*).

2010 Fair Isle South Raeva, 1CY+, 8th–10th October, photo (A. Mears, P. Pearson *et al.*).

In theory, this report currently presents accepted records of either of the two European subspecies of Treecreeper. Broadly, nominate *familiaris* ('Northern Treecreeper') occurs in Fennoscandia, eastern Europe and northern Russia as far east as western Siberia, whereas *C. f. macrodactyla* ('Continental Treecreeper') occurs in central Europe (and *C. f. britannica* in Britain & Ireland). So far so good. However, there is a degree of intergradation between the two continental subspecies and, in addition, variation in nominate *familiaris* is clinal, with progressively paler/greyer/whiter birds to the east (*BWP*). Indeed, there is some debate over whether the current separation of nominate *familiaris* and *macrodactyla* is even valid (e.g. Pons *et al.* 2015); given the difficulties of field identification, the lack of genetic differences between the three subspecies mentioned so far and the absence of a ringing recovery, *macrodactyla* is yet to be admitted to the British List. In practice, therefore, the BBRC report is limited to presenting records of the more striking examples of nominate *familiaris*. In the Northern Isles, where Treecreeper is a vagrant, all records are highly likely to involve nominate *familiaris*, which is occasionally irruptive whereas the other two subspecies are essentially sedentary.

In autumn 2023, there were record numbers of Eurasian Treecreepers in Shetland, which matched the situation for many other essentially irruptive species originating in the Nordic countries – there were notably high numbers of Great Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos major*, Bohemian Waxwings *Bombycilla garrulus*, tits and others. Inevitably, there were some reports of Northern Treecreeper elsewhere along the east coast of Britain, although reliable identification in areas where *C. f. britannica* occurs is typically less straightforward. Decent photographs of a putative Northern helps the assessment process no end, but in the field a gleaming white supercilium and flanks allied to an extensive 'shawl' of whitish spotting across the nape, mantle and scapulars ('dusted in snow') are typically the first things to catch the eye.

(Breeds Scandinavia N to 70° N in Norway, & Russia between c. 60° N & 51° N, E to Yenisey River. Mainly resident but some winter to S of breeding range, reaching C Europe.)

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (0, 37, 4) Rare, about two every year

Kent Fan Bay, South Foreland, 2CY+, 7th April, photo (J. Partridge).

Bockhill, 2CY+, 8th April, photo, sound recording (J. & P. Chantler, R. Heading, N. Jarman).

Dungeness, 2CY+, 5th May, photo (D. Bunney, O. J. Leyshon).

Dungeness, 1CY+, 16th October, photo, trapped, video (O. J. Leyshon).

(Mostly resident S Spain N to Denmark & E to Poland, W Ukraine & Greece. Elsewhere, resident in mountains of N Africa, W Turkey & W Caucasus.)

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (0, 49, 1) Rare, about two per year; stable

Outer Hebrides Castlebay, Barra, 1CY, 9th–10th October, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder).

2022 Isles of Scilly Racket Town Lane, Tresco, 1CY+, 6th–13th October, photo (H. Netley, S. Ricks *et al.*); note amended observers (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 585).

(Breeds S Alaska & Canada E to S Labrador & Newfoundland, S to N California, New Mexico, Great Lakes & West Virginia. Migrates across E USA to winter from Mexico S to NW Argentina.)

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (0, 66, 1) Rare, about one per year, influx 1986 (12)

Isles of Scilly Lower Moors and Rocky Hill Lane, St Mary's, 1CY, 26th October to 4th November, photo (N. Glenn, E. Mudd *et al.*) (plate web-18).

000. First-winter (1CY) Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*, Lower Moors, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, October 2023.

Grey-cheeked Thrush is still the most frequent *Catharus* on paper, but that number hides a continuing downward trend, and this is the first record since 2018. Indeed, since 2000, there have been 27 Grey-cheeked and 31 Swainson's Thrushes. The arrival of 12 in 1986 is now a distant memory for some, and a historical quirk for others!

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

Veery Catharus fuscescens (0, 11, 1) Very rare, last in 2015

Shetland Lunna, Mainland, 1CY, 29th September to 3rd October, photo (M. Barlow, S. Holmes *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 376; plate 485).

485. First-winter (1CY) Veery *Catharus fuscescens*, Lunna, Mainland, Shetland, October 2023.

The first British record of Veery occurred in 1970, at Porthgwarra, Cornwall. The 11 records have predominantly occurred in the north, with one in Highland, one in the Outer Hebrides, two in Orkney and now four in Shetland. Elsewhere in Europe, it remains remarkably rare, with just four records (in the Azores, Ireland, Norway and Sweden).

Two of the 12 British records have been in spring, with a singing bird on Orkney from 30th May to 9th June 2015, and one trapped and ringed on Lundy, Devon, on 14th May 1997. The others have undertaken a more expected autumn arrival, with birds being found between 22nd September and 16th November.

The Lunna bird chose to feed in a small line of Sycamores *Acer pseudoplatanus* with a backdrop of a mossy stone wall. It delighted observers and photographers for five days, allowing a close approach as it fed on worms and other invertebrates.

(Breeds Canada from S British Columbia E to Newfoundland, S through USA E of Rocky Mountains to N Arizona & Georgia. Winters N South America from Colombia to NW Brazil.)

White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea* (24, 77, 2) ***About 3–4 per year; increasing***

Orkney May Cottage, Papa Westray, 1CY+, 18th October, photo (D. Roche *et al.*).

Shetland Gorie, Bressay, 1CY, 4th–10th October, photo (G. & K. Clements *et al.*).

(Race *aurea* breeds European Urals & E across Siberia from Yenisey River to Ussuriland, S to N Mongolia, extreme NE China, Korean Peninsula & Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan & S Japan to Indochina & C Thailand. Nominate race resident or altitudinal migrant in Himalayas, SW China & Taiwan.)

Siberian Thrush *Geokichla sibirica* (0, 15, 0) ***Very rare, last in 2022***

2022 Orkney Stripes, Papa Westray, 2CY+ male, 27th September, found dead, photo (D. Roche, J. Wilson *et al.*).

What an incredible triple for Papa Westray this would have been, coming after the Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius* of 2021 and just a few weeks before 2023's White's Thrush. Tragically, it wasn't to be, with this stunning adult male being found freshly dead having hit a window.

(Breeds C & E Siberia from Yenisey & Lena Rivers, S to NE Mongolia, & E to NE China, Amurland, Sakhalin, & N Japan. Winters C Burma, Indochina & Thailand S to Singapore, Sumatra & Java.)

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (0, 28, 1) ***Rare, about one every 2–3 years***

Orkney Old Nisthouse, Mirbister, Mainland, 1CY, 7th October, photo (A. & L. Forsyth, A. Leitch).

(Breeds Siberia from Yenisey River E to Sea of Okhotsk & Kamchatka, & S to Lake Baikal, N Mongolia & Amurland. Winters S China, Taiwan, Indochina & Thailand S to Singapore, Sumatra, Philippines & N Borneo.)

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis* (1, 94, 3) *About 2–3 per year; stable*

Nottinghamshire Undisclosed location, near Newark-on-Trent, 2CY+ male, 9th–11th January, photo (N. Bonser, K. M. Rainford).

Yorkshire Easington, 1CY female, 8th October (J. M. Turton).

Tophill Low, 2CY+ male, 10th December into 2024, photo (R. J. Boland, M. Linnington *et al*) (plate web-19).

Ian Smith

web-19. Adult (2CY+) male Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*, Tophill Low, Yorkshire, December 2023.

1993 Isles of Scilly Telegraph, St Mary's, 1CY female, 15th October (P. Higson, J. R. Hough, P. Kinsella); presumed same St Martin's, 13th–14th

October (*Brit. Birds* 87: 503–571).

Although the Easington bird was observed relatively briefly, and no details of the tail were given, all of the features noted were compatible with Black-throated Thrush and no hybrid features were seen. Clearly, there remains a possibility that there was red present in the tail – but, following our policy on hybrids (giving the benefit of the doubt unless clear indications of hybridisation are noted), this bird was accepted. Some hybrids may slip through the net, but currently we believe that not throwing the baby out with the bathwater is the best approach.

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

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (1, 234, 2) About 4–5 per year; stable

Cornwall Nanjizal, 1CY, 3rd September, photo (R. Veal, K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

Shetland Scousburgh, 2CY, 13th May, photo, trapped (J. N. Dymond, P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

2022 Caernarfonshire Bardsey, 2CY+, 2nd June, video (S. Stansfield *et al.*).

(Breeds C & E Europe from S Scandinavia & Baltic countries to Romania & Ukraine, & E through temperate Russia to S Siberia. Winters E Africa, from S Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

'White-spotted Bluethroat' *L. s. cyanecula/namnetum* (15, 5, 9) Unknown; post-1950 stats from 2021 onwards

Cheshire & Wirral Woolston Eyes, 2CY+ male, 15th July, photo (K. Foster, M. Miles *et al.*).

Gloucestershire WWT Slimbridge, 4CY+ male, 30th April to 10th September, photo (M. McGill *et al.*) (plate web-20); presumed same Gloucestershire 2022.

web-20. Adult (4CY+) male 'White-spotted Bluethroat' *Luscinia svecica cyanecula*, WWT Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, July 2023.

Norfolk Marrams, Blakeney Point, 2CY+ male, 2nd April (J. R. McCallum).

Watch House, Blakeney Point, 2CY+ male, 2nd–5th April (J. R. McCallum *et al.*).

The Hood, Blakeney Point, 2CY+, 2nd–3rd April (J. R. McCallum *et al.*).

Winterton Dunes, 2CY+ female, 3rd April, photo (E. Burdett, J. Farooqi, D. Lyness).

Sheringham, 2CY+ male, 3rd April, photo (A. I. McElwee).

Weybourne Camp, 2CY+ female, 4th–5th April (J. R. McCallum *et al.*).

Fairway, Blakeney Point, 2CY+ female, 4th April (J. R. McCallum).

Northumberland Spittal Bay, Newbiggin, 2CY+ male, 2nd April, photo (A. McLevy).

There was a remarkably localised arrival in early April 2023, with records restricted to Norfolk, except for one outlier, in Northumberland. The records of females are accepted pragmatically, as per BBRC guidelines, as our

analysis showed that confirmed records of nominate 'Red-spotted Bluethroat' *Luscinia svecica svecica* have not occurred in Britain earlier than 18th April (*Brit. Birds* 114: 292). Any Bluethroat seen before mid April is, therefore, considered to be White-spotted. That date may even stretch to 25th April for birds away from the northeast and Northern Isles.

The Committee is aware of further records from 2023 – including on Blakeney Point – for which submissions have not been received; submissions of records for any birds where there is reasonable evidence that they are White-spotted – males in spring, or females and unsexed birds (such as the bird at The Hood, Blakeney Point, on 2nd–3rd April, which was seen only in flight) that are found during the aforementioned date range – are welcomed.

(Breeds locally in Iberia & western Europe & across northern & central Eurasia, extending to Bering Straits & Alaska. Race *cyaneola* breeds coastal NW Europe east to Moscow area, winters S & SW Europe & N Africa.)

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* (0, 17, 1) Rare, about one every 2–3 years

Shetland Hametoun, Foula, 1CY female, 30th–31st October, photo (D. & G. Atherton).

(Breeds European foothills of Ural Mountains, & Siberia from Ob River E to Anadyr & Kamchatka, & S to N Mongolia, Ussuriland, NE Hokkaido & NE China, also isolated population on E slopes of Tibetan Plateau. Winters from Nepal E through Himalayan foothills to NE India, Burma & N Indochina to C Thailand, S China & Taiwan.)

Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* (0, 6, 0) Very rare, last in 2021

1976 Yorkshire Spurn, 1CY, 19th October, photo, trapped (F. Gribble, N. Machin *et al.*).

This record represents a new first for Britain, preceding the previous first in 2003. The discovery of a new first record of Taiga Flycatcher for Britain was allied to the discovery of some grainy but still good-quality slides of a bird in

the hand at Spurn in October 1976. (The youngest readers of this report may need to google the word 'slides', also known as 'transparencies'; and having done so they might also be entertained by imagining what an expensive, tiresome and generally unrewarding process bird photography used to be, especially for birds in the field!) In the case of Niall Machin's precious mementos of a day at Spurn in the mid-seventies, members of BBRC and then BOURC were suitably convinced that the colour representation of the images was sufficient to be certain of the identification and this record now formally precedes the two records in 2003 (one in April at Flamborough Head, Yorkshire, followed by one in October in Shetland). That there have been just three others since 2003 (in Shetland in September–October 2009, in Co. Durham in October 2020 and in Yorkshire in October–November 2021) is perhaps surprising. After the events of 2003, many were predicting that Taiga Flycatcher might become a regular vagrant in Britain, but it has remained a top-drawer prize for east-coast patchworkers.

(Breeds Siberia from Ural Mountains E to Sakhalin & Kamchatka, S to N Altai, Baikal region, N Mongolia & Amurland. Winters from NW India, E to S China & S to Malay Peninsula.)

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (1, 56, 2) Rare, about one per year; stable or increasing

Fair Isle South Raeva, 2CY+ male, 9th June (D. Nesbit, D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Orkney Cursitter, North Ronaldsay, 2CY female, 7th–8th June, photo (*Brit. Birds* 117: 571), trapped (G. Gay *et al.*).

(Breeds E France, S Germany, Italy & Baltic islands of Gotland & Öland, E through C & E Europe to European Russia W of Urals. Winters E & C Africa, from Tanzania to Zimbabwe.)

Amur Stonechat *Saxicola stejnegeri* (0, 11, 3) Very rare, last in 2022

Fair Isle Boini Mire, 1CY+ female, 9th–12th October, photo (A. Penn *et al.*).

Orkney Ancum, North Ronaldsay, 1CY+, 9th–12th October, photo (G. Gay *et*

al.)

Shetland Norby, Mainland, 1CY+ female, 5th–6th October, photo, DNA analysis (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington, R. M. Tallack *et al.*).

The Fair Isle and North Ronaldsay sightings represent the first accepted records without DNA analysis, although it is fair to say that most of the previous sightings were initially identified as Amur Stonechat in the field, using DNA as a confirmatory backup.

(Breeds from C Siberia to E to Sakhalin, S to NE Mongolia, NE China & N Japan. Winters NE India & S China, S to Malay Peninsula, Taiwan, Philippines & Borneo.)

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*

'Siberian Stonechat' (*sensu stricto*) *S. m. maurus* (1, 17, 3) *Uncertain*

Shetland Scatness, Mainland, 2CY male, 8th May, photo (M. D. Warren *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

Hamnavoe, Lunna Ness, Mainland, 1CY male, 2nd–15th October, photo (plate web-21), DNA analysis (C. Smith *et al.*).

web-20. First-winter (1CY) male Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus maurus*, Hamnavoe, Lunna Ness, Mainland, Shetland, October 2023.

Yorkshire Northcliff Marsh, Flamborough, 1CY+ female, 19th–25th October, photo, video (J. A. Beaumont, R. Little, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

2022 Shetland Spiggie, Mainland, 1CY+, 31st October, photo, DNA analysis (P. A Harris, K. Kelly, R. Riddington).

More than 430 records remain assigned to Amur/Siberian Stonechat. Not so long ago, it was considered that Siberian Stonechat was the default 'Eastern Stonechat' to reach Britain. However, as the statistics for 2023 show – with three Amur and three Siberian (plus one Caspian) – that is probably far from the case. Unfortunately, many records of Amur/Siberian Stonechat are likely to remain just that owing to a lack of documentation of critical plumage aspects, such as rump coloration and documentation of uppertail-covert streaking; nonetheless, expect the statistics for both of these species to shift significantly within the coming years.

(Nominate *maurus* breeds Russia & W Siberia, NW Mongolia & N China, S to Tien Shan Mountains, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Winters Iran to N India. Race *hemprichii* breeds from W & N Caspian Sea region to lower reaches of Volga & Ural Rivers. Migrates SW to winter SW Asia, Arabian Peninsula & NE Africa. Other races occur in Caucasus region, Himalayas & W China.)

'Caspian Stonechat' *S. m. hemprichii* (0, 8, 1) Very rare, last in 2021

Cleveland Hunley Golf Course, Brotton, 2CY+ male, 26th–28th October, photo, DNA analysis (I. Kendall *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 419; plate 486).

486. Adult (2CY+) male 'Caspian Stonechat' *S. m. hemprichii*, Hunley Golf Course, Brotton, October 2023.

(Race *hemprichii* breeds from W & N Caspian Sea region to lower reaches of Volga & Ural Rivers. Winters NE Africa.)

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 57, 5) About 2–3 per year; recent increase

Cleveland South Gare, 1CY+, 10th October, photo (N. A. Preston, M. N. Sidwell *et al.*).

Cornwall Kelsey Head, Holywell Bay, 2CY+ male, 22nd January to 19th March, photo (G. & L. May *et al.*).

Dorset Swyre Head, 1CY+, 2nd December, photo (M. Joyce, J. Leaver, J. Plant).

Norfolk West Runton, 2CY+, 21st–23rd April, photo (N. Wright, K. & M. Young-Powell *et al.*).

Suffolk Easton Bavents, Southwold, 1CY+, 26th September, photo (B. J. Small *et al.*).

2020 Anglesey Carmel Head, 2CY+ male, 30th August, photo (M. Sutton).

(Breeds Black Sea coast from E Greece N to Ukraine & SW Russia, & E from

Turkey through Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China, S to Iran & N Pakistan.
Winters Africa from N Sahel zone to E Africa, & Middle East to S Iran, Pakistan
& NW India.)

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (9, 165, 0) *About 4–5 per year; stable or increasing*

2022 Sussex Goring-by-Sea, 2CY male, 20th March (S. P. Simpson *et al.*).

This was the first year without a Desert Wheatear since 2009, and there have been only five blank years since near-annual records began in 1984.

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

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (2, 89, 4) *About 2–3 per year; stable*

Angus & Dundee Montrose, 1CY female, 20th October, photo (D. Pointon, S. Ritchie).

Shetland North Dale, Unst, 1CY+ male, 9th–11th October, photo (D. Cooper, R. J. Fairbank *et al.*).

Burrafirth, Unst, 1CY female, 26th October, photo (D. Cooper, A. Kettle).

Suffolk North Denes, Lowestoft, 1CY male, 22nd October, photo (plate 487) (A. C. Easton *et al.*).

487. First-winter (1CY) female Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Montrose, Angus & Dundee, October 2023.

(Breeds E Romania & Bulgaria, E through S & E Ukraine, S Russia, S Siberia, Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China, E to Gulf of Bohai. Winters NE & E Africa, & SW Arabian Peninsula.)

Pied/Eastern Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka/melanoleuca* (—, —, 1) Uncertain

2019 Lancashire Fluke Hall, Pilling, 2CY+ female, 1st–16th September, photo (P. Ellis, P. G. Slade *et al.*) (plate 488).

488. Adult (2CY+) female Pied or Eastern Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka/melanoleuca*, Fluke Hall, Pilling, September 2019.

We have had to create several new 'either/or' categories in recent years to allow for taxonomic changes and subsequent identification difficulties, but this is the first time we have had to use this particular one. It will likely not be the last time it's used! The record of the 'Fluke Hall Wheatear', as it has become known, has been in circulation since its submission back in 2019. It is a salutary example of how a bird can show incredibly well and still defy an absolute identification. There will be an article on this bird in a forthcoming issue of *British Birds* to lay out the identification problems in detail, but, in brief, opinions varied considerably between the European birders we approached for help. We were also increasingly aware that the main feature used to identify this at the time as Eastern Black-eared was coming into question. This pertained to the presence of a small white mark halfway along the lower mantle feathers, visible on photos and video when the bird was preening. At the time of the sighting, this was considered diagnostic of Eastern Black-eared Wheatear (Svensson 1992, 2023). However, recent work by Brian Small in the Natural History Museum at Tring has shown that to be

unreliable. There was already uncertainty surrounding the usability of this feature following work carried out on other species in Sweden on the effects of lighting and our ability to see these marks from different angles (Stephen Menzie pers. comm.), but finding that this white mark was also present on Pied Wheatear skins at Tring turned the case on its head. Indeed, when that feature is excluded, the bird's appearance becomes easier to reconcile with Pied Wheatear, and this tallies with the fact that P1 is shorter than the primary coverts. The voting reflected this, with six members of the Committee favouring acceptance as Pied, while the remaining four were happy treating it as an either/or. Given that these broad categories reflect uncertainty, it was felt best to publish as either/or for now with a view to possibly revisiting the record in the future.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

'Black-bellied Dipper' *C. c. cinclus* (12, 242, 4) About 2–3 per year; stable or decreasing

Fair Isle Easter Lothar, 1CY, 20th–29th October, photo, trapped (S. Langlois, A. Penn, G. Platt).

Shetland Skaw Burn, Unst, 1CY+, 3rd November (S. J. McElwee).

Burn of Njugals Water, Scalloway, Mainland, 1CY+, 5th–22nd November, video (P. Gear, P. V. Harvey, D. Pointon).

Kirkhouse Burn, Voe, 1CY+, 21st November, photo (P. A. Harris).

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

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

'Iberian Wagtail' *M. f. iberiae* (0, 6, 1) Uncertain

Moray & Nairn Balormie, Lossiemouth, 2CY+ male, 24th May, photo, sound recording (H. Farquhar).

2022 Isles of Scilly Little Porth, St Mary's, 2CY+ male, 13th–16th April, photo, sound recording (R. Dawson *et al.*).

2022 Yorkshire Kilnsea, 2CY+ male, 16th May, photo (A. A. Hutt *et al.*).

(Breeds Iberian Peninsula, Balearic Islands and Morocco, and sporadically

SW and S France E to Camargue. Presumed to winter with other *flava* wagtails in sub-Saharan Africa.)

'Ashy-headed'/'Iberian'/'Black-headed Wagtail' *M. f. cinereocapilla/iberiae/feldegg*

2022 Shetland Bakkasetter, Brake and Quendale, Mainland, 1CY+, 1st October, sound recording (R. M. Fray, A. H. J. Harrop, P. V. Harvey).

The 'buzzy' calls allowed this bird to be assigned to one of the three southern taxa of Western Yellow Wagtail, collectively known as 'Southern Wagtail'.

(Race *cinereocapilla* breeds Sardinia, Italy, Sicily, SW Slovenia, NW Croatia, also SW Morocco, intergrading with *iberiae* in S France & NE Spain; *feldegg* breeds Balkans & Greece E through Turkey to E Kazakhstan & Afghanistan S to Iran. Winters W and C Africa from Mali to Nigeria, E to Lake Chad)

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis* (1, 27, 1) Uncertain

Isles of Scilly Longstone, Parting Carn and Tremelethen, St Mary's, 1CY, 3rd–11th December, photo, sound recording (W. Scott *et al.*).

Suffolk Carlton Marshes, 4CY+, male, from 2022 to 2nd May 2023, photo, sound recording (A. C. Easton, B. J. Small, J. Wylson *et al.*).

2022 Caithness Loch of Wester, 1CY, 22nd November to 14th December, photo, sound recording (G. Dunbar *et al.*).

2022 Shetland Walls, Mainland, 1CY+, 26th–27th September, photo, sound recording (G. Etherington *et al.*).

2022 Suffolk Carlton Marshes, 4CY+, male, 3rd November into 2023 (A. C. Easton, B. J. Small, J. Wylson *et al.*); presumed same Suffolk 2021 (*Brit. Birds* 116: 591).

2021 Northumberland Prestwick Carr, 5th January to 28th March photo (per I. Fisher); presumed same Northumberland 2020.

2020 Northumberland Prestwick Carr, 6th November, photo (G. Sorrie); presumed same Northumberland 2019 (*Brit. Birds* 113: 640).

Both the Northumberland and Suffolk birds are assumed to be returnees to their respective sites, as both were sufficiently well photographed for

comparisons to be made. A sound recording was extracted from some video of the Suffolk bird.

(Four races breed E Siberia from upper Yenisey to Kamchatka, S to N Mongolia, NW & NE China & N Japan, also W and N Alaska, USA, and N Yukon, Canada. Winters E and SE Asia, Philippines, Indonesia & N Australia.)

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

'Amur Wagtail' *M. a. leucopsis* (0, 1, 1) Extremely rare, one record in 2005

Shetland Ham, Foula, 2CY+ male, 30th May to 3rd June, photo (D. & G. Atherton) (plate web-21).

D. & G. Atherton

web-21. Adult (3CY+) male 'Amur Wagtail' *Motacilla alba leucopsis*, Ham, Foula, Shetland, June 2023.

Eighteen years have elapsed since the first for Britain was found in Durham, that bird also being a spring 2CY+ male. At that time, both males and females were considered quite straightforward to identify in adult-like plumage, albeit a cautionary caveat was applied that care must be taken to eliminate an aberrant Pied Wagtail. Since then, the identification of Amur Wagtail in the Western Palearctic has not gone undisputed with, for example, Shirihai & Svensson (2018) stating 'some (or all?) of these [European records of *leucopsis*] could be aberrant Pied Wagtails *M. a. yarrellii*... A cautious and restrictive approach when dealing with wagtail races is called for more than with most other groups of birds.' Whilst BBRC is of the opinion that the Foula individual showed no anomalous characters, according to Rowlands (2010), a White Wagtail resembling 'Amur Wagtail' at Rockanje, the Netherlands, in May–November 2020 was considered not to show a full set of characters to allow acceptance as Amur Wagtail by the CDNA, leaving the true identity of that individual open (Ebels 2024). (Breeds E Mongolia S to Tibetan Plateau & E throughout C & E China, N to Amur River & S to Hong Kong. Northern population winters to S of breeding range from E Nepal to Yangtze valley & S to C Thailand.)

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (22, 1290, 3) *About three per year; ex BBRC 1983–2014*

Isles of Scilly Golf Course, St Mary's, 2CY+, 9th–20th April, photo (K. Webb per Isles of Scilly Recorder).

Norfolk Happisburgh, 1CY+, 16th September, photo (J. Lansdell).

Happisburgh, 1CY, 8th October, photo (J. R. Appleton, J. Lansdell).

The decline of Tawny Pipit continues apace. Anyone birding in the 1980s and early 1990s would surely have greeted with incredulity the news that, in the 2020s, you are statistically more likely to find a Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* in Britain than a Tawny Pipit (though, of course, there remains a north/south bias to the records of these two species, respectively); and yet that is the situation we find ourselves in, a sorry reflection on the decline of Tawny Pipit in northwest Europe, having now ceased to breed in the Netherlands and western Germany, while it has almost disappeared from Denmark and Sweden (Keller *et al.* 2020).

(Breeds NW Africa, S & C Europe N to Estonia, E to NW Mongolia, NW China, N Iran & N Afghanistan. Winters S edge of Sahara from Senegal to Sudan, Arabian Peninsula & NW Indian subcontinent.)

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (11, 601, 10) *About ten per year; stable or decreasing; ex BBRC 2006–2014*

Devon Lundy, 2CY+, 26th May, sound recording (T. Jones *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Longstone, St Mary's, 1CY+, 5th October (W. Scott).

Tresco, 1CY+, 12th October (M. Bolton, L. Lock, P. St Pierre).

Horse Point, St Agnes, 1CY, 23rd–24th October, photo, video (L. Harman *et al.*).

Northumberland Longhoughton Steel, Boulmer, 1CY+, 9th October, photo (D. M. Langston).

Orkney Bewan, Papa Westray, 2CY+, 23rd May (D. Roche).

Ancum, North Ronaldsay, 1CY+, 31st October to 14th November, photo (G. Gay *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Brevig, Barra, 1CY+, 4th October, sound recording (K. Gillon, C. Scott *et al.*).

Shetland Quendale, Mainland, 1CY+, 19th September, sound recording (P. A. Harris, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington).

Sussex Climping Beach, 1CY, 30th October, photo (B. Akinola).

2022 Yorkshire Metlands Farm, Bempton, 1CY+, 29th September (R. Cope).

(Breeds N Norway, N Sweden & N Finland then E across N Russia to Chukotskiy Peninsula & S to Kamchatka, occasionally W Alaska. Winters across N & C equatorial Africa, N Indian subcontinent, S China & SE Asia.)

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

'American Pipit' *Anthus rubescens rubescens* (1, 63, 4) *About 4–5 per year; recent increase*

Outer Hebrides St Kilda, Village Glen, 1CY+, 21st–26th September, photo (W. T. S. Miles, C. Nisbet).

St Kilda, Village Glen, 1CY+, 23rd September to 2nd October, photo (W. T. S. Miles, C. Nisbet).

St Kilda, Mullach Sgar, 1CY+, 23rd–30th September, photo (W. T. S. Miles, C. Nisbet).

St Kilda, Mullach Sgar, 1CY+, 30th September to 5th October, photo (W. T. S. Miles, C. Nisbet).

2022 Devon East Prawle, 1CY+, from 30th December 2021 to 29th January, photo (P. M. Mayer *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 115: 604).

As expected, all of this year's records concerned 'American Pipit' – though the pending split of Buff-bellied Pipit into American Pipit and 'Siberian Pipit' *A. (rubescens) japonicus* (see Birch *et al.* 2024 for details on separating the two taxa) will give birders an extra hurdle to be aware of when submitting a Buff-bellied Pipit record in future. In truth, many of the autumn birds, most of which are found somewhere along Scotland's northwestern seaboard, are relatively straightforward to identify as American and there are – to date – no accepted records of Siberian Pipit in Britain.

In such a landmark year for American passerines, a multiple arrival of Buff-bellied Pipits on St Kilda probably went under the radar for many observers, but it was still a notable event in itself. The two named observers documented the arrival superbly and exhaustively, with multiple photos of each individual, including two photographed in the same field of view. The second bird on 30th September was considered by Will Miles and Craig Nisbet to have been different from one on 4th–5th October, although the photographic support for separating those two with complete confidence was less strong and the Committee has opted for a cautious treatment of these two as the same bird.

(North American race *rubescens* breeds W Greenland, N & NW Canada, & Alaska, winters W & S USA, Mexico & C America. Asian race *japonicus* breeds NE Siberia W to Baikal region, winters N Pakistan & NW India to S & E China, S Korea & S Japan.)

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* (0, 15, 0)

1985 Foulness, Essex, 21st September; previously accepted (*Brit. Birds* 79: 580), but now withdrawn by observer.

(Largely resident, from Canary Islands, SE Spain & deserts of N Africa, E through Middle East to S Iran & Pakistan. E populations dispersive, some wintering E to deserts of NW India.)

Arctic Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni* (0, 247, 5)

Fair Isle Skinners Glig, 1CY+, 25th October, photo, video (A. Penn).

Orkney Westray, 2CY+, 19th May (S. P. Dudley).

Shetland Kergord, 2CY+, 19th February, video (D. Leask, D. & E. Morrison per Shetland Recorder).

Ham, Foula, 1CY+, 12th October, photo (D. & G. Atherton).

South Ness, Foula, 1CY+, 21st October, photo (D. & G. Atherton).

2022 Orkney Moclett, Papa Westray, 1CY+, 28th September, photo (J. Ford).

St Boniface, Papa Westray, 1CY+, 12th October, photo (J. Ford, N. Renton, D. Roche).

The year 2023 was an unremarkable one for both Arctic Redpoll taxa. The distribution of 'Coues's Arctic Redpolls' in Britain is typically much less biased towards the Northern Isles than that of Hornemann's Arctic Redpolls, and a Coues's remains a realistic target in flocks of Mealy Redpolls *A. flammea* right the way down the east coast, particularly in the last three months of the year. The identification criteria are well known (and the pattern of the undertail-coverts and rump remain the most reliable of these) but the practicalities of obtaining good views among a large flock of redpolls moving through wooded areas is often the greatest challenge for birders.

While this report was being compiled, IOC confirmed the long-rumoured 'redpoll lump' (with both Lesser Redpoll and Arctic Redpoll becoming plain old Redpoll) (Gill *et al.* 2024)). It thus appears that this report will be the last to contain Arctic Redpoll as a species. If statistics of the two Arctic Redpoll taxa (currently configured as *A. h. hornemanni* and *A. h. exilipes*) in Britain are combined, they will be comfortably in excess of that required for a national rarity, though the two subspecies continue to (just about) hold their status as national rarities individually.

To some extent, Arctic Redpoll identification has always been a mixed bag,

with everything from glorious, gleaming Hornemann's the size of a House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* to grubby-looking individuals of both taxa that are more or less identical to the respective Common Redpoll. Realistically, many birders may no longer have the stomach for the time and effort needed at the more subtle end of the spectrum. However, the concept of 'identifiable forms' is alive and well in many areas, especially for the dedicated patchworker, and continued documentation of the rarer forms (and not just the snowballs) still has considerable value.

(Circumpolar Arctic race *exilipes* breeds on tundra of Arctic Eurasia, Alaska & Canada, from N Scandinavia E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, Russia, & N Alaska to Hudson Bay. Disperses erratically to S of breeding range in winter, regularly reaching NW Europe.)

'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll' *A. h. hornemanni* (12, 214, 5) About 4–5 per year, influxes 2009 (22), 2012 (30), 2022 (36); recent increase

Shetland Eshaness, Mainland, 1CY+, 7th October, photo, video (J. Bruce, R. Twigg).

Norwick, Unst, two, 1CY+, 9th October, photo (D. Cooper, R. Fairbank *et al.*).

Norwick, Unst, 1CY+, 10th–14th October, photo (G. Wyatt *et al.*).

Baltasound, Unst, 1CY+, 17th October to 2nd November, photo (I. Johnson, M. Kerby, D. Watson *et al.*) (plate web-22).

000. 'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll' *A. h. hornemanni*, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland, October 2023.

2022 Shetland Gorie, Bressay, 1CY, 18th October, photo, trapped (G. & K. Clements per Shetland Recorder).

(Race *hornemanni* breeds Ellesmere & Baffin Island, Canada, & N Greenland S to Scorsby Sound. Disperses erratically to S of breeding range in winter, irregularly reaching NW Europe.)

'Coues's Arctic Redpoll' *A. h. exilipes* (12, 734, 10) About ten per year, plus influxes 1990/91 (76), 1995/96 (459)

Cleveland Dorman's Pool, 2CY+, 13th–16th March, photo (M. Blick, M. N. Sidwell *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 1CY+, 24th October, photo (A. M. Stoddart).

Northumberland Fontburn Reservoir, 1CY+, 3rd December into 2024, photo (M. A. Eaton, N. Osborne).

Orkney Shooting Gallery, North Ronaldsay, 1CY, 27th–28th October, photo (T.

Gale *et al.*).

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, 2CY+, 8th–10th January, photo (B. H. Thomason).

Houbie, Fetlar, 1CY+, 20th October, photo (L. & M. Sutton).

Feall and North Dale, Unst, 1CY+, 20th–21st October, photo (D. Cooper, B. Kay, C. Ward).

Bellister, North Nesting, Mainland, 1CY+, 21st October, photo (R. M. Fray).

Brake, Mainland, 1CY male, 1st November, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*)

Yorkshire Spurn, 1CY male, 25th October, photo (M. L. Denton, I. W. Smith, P. Smith *et al.*).

2020 Shetland Norwick, Unst, 1CY+, 18th–22nd October, photo (D. Cooper, L. & M. Sutton); note revised dates and observers (cf. *Brit. Birds* 114: 619).

(Breeds tundra zone of N Eurasia, Alaska & N Canada, from N Scandinavia E through N Russia to Chukotskiy Peninsula, & N Alaska E to Hudson Bay. Disperses erratically to S of breeding range in winter; some regularly reach NW Europe.)

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 64, 1) About 1–2 per year; stable or decreasing but influx 2016 (nine)

Orkney Holland, Papa Westray, 2CY+ male, 29th April to 2nd May, photo (D. Roche *et al.*).

(Breeds Siberia from W Urals to upper Kolyma River, S to SE Kazakhstan, Mongolia, lower Amur River & Sakhalin. Isolated population breeds C China. Winters S of breeding range from Turkestan E through Himalayan foothills to C & E China, N of Yangtze.)

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (19, 619, 8) About ten per year; stable or decreasing

Fair Isle Haa, 2CY+ male, 30th May to 1st June, photo (A. Penn *et al.*).

Observatory, 2CY+ male, 16th June, photo, trapped (A. Penn *et al.*).

Airstrip, 1CY+, 22nd September, photo (G. Platt).

Isles of Scilly St Martin's, 1CY+, 11th–12th October, photo, sound recording

(F. Aarts, J. A. Lidster, G. Mensink *et al.*).

Orkney Nouster, North Ronaldsay, 1CY male, 16th September, photo (S. J. Davies *et al.*).

Shetland Wester Quarff, Mainland, 1CY+, 27th–28th September, photo (C. Balchin, M. Ponsford, A. D. W. Tongue *et al.*).

Durigarth, Mainland, 1CY+, 1st October, (P. A. Harris); presumed same Bigton, Mainland, 3rd October, photo (D. & J. Bridges) and Hoswick, 4th October, photo (R. Gilbert *et al.*).

Ronas Voe, Mainland, 1CY+, 8th October, photo (M. Kerby).

2021 Isle of May Main Light, 2CY+ male, 21st–22nd May, photo (M. J. Quintin *et al.*).

(Breeds N Eurasia from Sweden & Finland, E across N Russia to E Siberia & Kamchatka, & S to Baikal region. Migrates SE to winter E China, Korean Peninsula & S Japan.)

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (8, 229, 1) *Recent sharp decline to about one every five years*

Devon Lundy, 1CY, 25th September, photo (L. Marriner).

That Yellow-breasted Bunting continues to turn up in Britain is remarkable, given the catastrophic decline across its range, including being lost entirely from its former European breeding areas in Finland and Ukraine (Keller *et al.* 2020). The species maintained a decadal average in Britain of around six birds per year through the 1970s, 80s and 90s, but numbers dropped sharply during 2000–10, with 2007 being the first blank year for the species in several decades (fig. 7). Since then, there have been more blank years than years with records; a remarkable turn of events for a species that used to be an expected autumn vagrant in Britain.

The September date of 2023's record is typical for birds in Britain, with 188 of the 237 records being found in that month; most of the rest have occurred in August (25) or October (13). The 2023 bird's location, however, is less than typical. Shetland and Fair Isle between them account for considerably more than half of Britain's records of Yellow-breasted Bunting, with all bar a couple

of dozen of the remaining records coming from counties bordering the North Sea. This bird is just the fourth record for Devon and only the 15th for the southwest region.

(Breeds widely across Russia & Siberia E to Kamchatka, S to NE China & NE Hokkaido. Winters E Nepal through Himalayan foothills to NE India, & widely throughout SE Asia.)

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps* (0, 1, 1) *Very rare; two accepted wild records*

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, 1CY male, 19th October to 29th November, photo (J. Beaumont, S. Gillings *et al.*) (playe 489).

Andrew Jordan

489. First-winter (1CY) male Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*, Flamborough, Yorkshire, October 2023.

2010 Shetland Housay, Out Skerries, 1CY male, 2nd–8th October, photo (M. J. McKee, C. Turner, M. F. Walford *et al.*); previously accepted as Black-headed Bunting *E. melanocephala* (*Brit. Birds* 104: 624, plate 338).

One of the most surprising and yet anticipated events of the year was the ultimate acceptance of Red-headed Bunting to Category A. Its rocky road to Cat A has been many years in the making, with several papers published on the likely status of various individuals (e.g. Vinicombe 2007). The 2010 individual was initially accepted as a female Black-headed Bunting (Hudson *et al.* 2011), a decision that remained unchallenged by anyone until April 2021 when BBRC was contacted by Tor Olsen and the Norwegian Rarities Committee (NSKF). They were undertaking a review of Norwegian birds prompted by a trapped bird in October 2017 that had been initially identified as an adult female but which subsequent DNA analysis proved was a 1CY male. This had given fresh impetus and new knowledge to the ageing and sexing of females and immatures, and subsequent research as part of their review had thrown up a small number of other records from around northwest Europe of birds they considered to be 1CY Red-headed Bunting but were currently accepted as Black-headed Bunting by the relevant national committees. This individual from Out Skerries was the only one from Britain highlighted by their review. Using their criteria in re-evaluating this record, it was clear to BBRC that the NSKF identification as Red-headed Bunting was correct, and a mistake had indeed been made. This episode prompted a long overdue review of all female/1CY Black-headed Buntings, the results of which were published in last year's report, while a full paper on the review will appear in a forthcoming issue of *British Birds*. Redemption came for one former BBRC voting member, who accepted the Skerries bird as Black-headed Bunting back in 2011, when he was shown pictures of a recently discovered but as yet unidentified Red/Black-headed Bunting at a 'MigWeek' talk at Flamborough on the evening of 21st October 2023. With the then ongoing bunting review in mind, the identification of the bird in the photos progressed quickly to Red-headed Bunting through the course of the evening. Thankfully, the bird put in an extended stay at Flamborough and even managed to moult from its initial rather scruffy appearance to having red feathers come through on the lores and throat. The Out Skerries bird may not have the honour of being Britain's first for too long, since BBRC has also accepted a 1CY from the

Isles of Scilly in October and November 1994, with this record now being passed to BOURC for their deliberation.

(Breeds C Asia from Volga & Ural Rivers E to E. Kazakhstan, NW China, E Afghanistan & NW Pakistan. Winters W & C India, S to Karnataka.)

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* (0, 9, 1) *Very rare, last in 2022*

Shropshire Loppington, Wem, 2CY male, 5th February, photo, trapped (K. & M. George, J. P. Martin).

In a year with so many sensational rarities, Britain's tenth Black-faced Bunting trapped in Shropshire in early February is surely one of the most unpredicted records of the year.

(Nominate race breeds Siberia from Ob River E to Sea of Okhotsk, S to Baikal region, Russian Altai, N Mongolia, Amurland, N Korean Peninsula & extreme NE China. Winters Japan, Taiwan, South Korea & S China, S to N Indochina, NE India & W to Nepal. Other races breed Sakhalin to Japan, & C China.)

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (0, 56, 3) *Rare, about two per year*

Norfolk Holt, 2CY+, 6th May, photo (N. Bird).

North-east Scotland Rattray Head, 2CY male, 9th–11th May, photo (A. Carroll *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 246).

Orkney Loch of Hundland, Birsay, 2CY+ female, 30th April, photo (K. & J. Johnson per Orkney Recorder).

(Breeds North America from N Alaska & N Canada, S to S California, N Texas & N Georgia. British records of forms previously recognised as Slate-coloured Junco breed throughout N & E of range, S to Georgia. Northern populations migratory, wintering to S of breeding range.)

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys* (0, 12, 4) *Very rare, last in 2021*

Cornwall Rosudgeon, 2CY+ male, *Z. l. leucophrys*, 2nd–11th December, photo

(D. Szlitkus *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

North-east Scotland Girdle Ness, 2CY+ male, *Z. l. leucophrys*, 10th June, photo (A. Brighten, R. Duncan, A. Whitehouse *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 281).

Shetland Houbie, Fetlar, 1CY, 8th–11th October, photo (L. & M. Sutton *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 421; plate web-22).

web-22. First-winter (1CY) White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*, Houbie, Fetlar, Shetland, October 2023.

Sussex Seaford Head, 2CY+, 'Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow' *Z. l. gambelii*, 22nd–29th April, photo (N. Pope *et al.*) (plate 490).

490. Adult (2CY+) 'Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow' *Z. l. gambelii*, Seaford Head, Sussex, April 2023.

(Breeds C & N Alaska E across N Canada to Labrador & N Newfoundland, & S through Rocky Mountains to C California & N New Mexico, USA. Winters from SW Canada S throughout much of S USA, & S to C Mexico.)

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* **(2, 56, 1) Rare, about 1–2 per year; increasing**

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, 2CY+ male, 4th June, photo, trapped (E. J. Betteridge, S. Stansfield, J. Tragen *et al.*).

Cheshire & Wirral Kingsmead, 1CY+ female, from 2022 to 18th March, photo, video (M. Barlow per birding information services) (*Brit. Birds* 116: 596).

(Breeds North America from SE Yukon E to Newfoundland, S to Great Lakes & N USA to New Jersey. Winters SE USA, from Massachusetts S to Florida, Texas & into N Mexico & California.)

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia* (0, 9, 1) ***Very rare, last in 1994, 2018, 2020***

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, 2CY+, 9th May, photo (E. J. Betteridge, S. Stansfield *et al.*).

This is the second record for Bardsey, following one there on 5th–8th May 1970.

(North America from Aleutian Islands, S Alaska E to Newfoundland & S to California & Georgia, USA, and S to central Mexico. Pacific coast breeders resident, northern breeders winter S of breeding range from S Ontario, Canada, and throughout lower US states to N Mexico.)

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 33, 3) ***Rare, about one every 1–2 years***

Isles of Scilly St Agnes, 1CY, 25th September, photo (K. & M. Young-Powell per W. Scott); presumed same Porth Hellick and Airfield Lane, St Mary's, 29th September to 5th October, photo (T. Dobson, J. Mercer *et al.*) (plate 491).
Airfield Lane, St Mary's, 1CY, 30th September to 7th October, photo (W. Scott *et al.*).

491. First-winter (1CY) Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, October 2023.

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, 1CY, 21st September, photo (R. Brown *et al.*).

Three constitutes the joint-highest annual record total alongside the trio of 2008, but these were the first Bobolinks this decade and the first in Scilly since that record year. It is not surprising that Scilly played host once again, given that 14 of the previous 33 records come from the archipelago. The Committee was satisfied by photographic comparison that the St Agnes individual relocated to St Mary's. Most remarkably, it was then joined by a second bird, the first time two Bobolinks have been seen together in Britain.

The Skokholm record is only the fourth for Wales, but the second for that island – the first was present on 13th–14th October 1999.

(Breeds widely across S Canada & N USA, S to NE California & New Jersey. Winters Peru to S Brazil & N Argentina.)

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* (1, 26, 1)

Very rare, last in 2022

Fife Undisclosed location, 1CY female, 5th October to 4th November, photo (R. Boyd).

(Breeds S Canada from C Alberta E to C Nova Scotia, S throughout E USA from N Texas to W South Carolina. Migrates to winter from S Mexico to Colombia & Venezuela.)

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* (0, 6, 1) *Very rare, last in 2013*

Highland Kilmory, Isle of Rum, 1CY+, 23rd September, photo (S. Morris).

Found by a patch birder, this bird must surely qualify as the best species ever found during a Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* census! Initially flushed from the observer's feet, it flew only a short distance before landing in the open; knowing exactly what he had found, the observer did extremely well in steadying himself to obtain some images, all the more so as the encounter only lasted around a minute. This is the seventh Ovenbird for Britain, and the seventh county to record one. The 2023 record is the earliest so far, and the only one from September; previously there have been five records in October, while one bird found in December lingered into February.

(Breeds Canada from SE British Columbia E to Newfoundland & S throughout C & E USA to N Alabama & South Carolina. Winters from Florida & N Mexico S to Panama & West Indies.)

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* (1, 16, 5) *Very rare, last in 2020*

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, 1CY female, 21st September, photo, trapped (E. J. Betteridge *et al.*).

Bardsey, 1CY female, 23rd September, photo, trapped (S. Stansfield *et al.*).

Bardsey, 1CY male, 27th September to 1st October, photo, trapped (E. J. Betteridge, S. Stansfield *et al.*) (plate 492).

492. First-winter (1CY) male Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*, Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, October 2023.

Cornwall Nanjizal Valley, 1CY female, 4th–6th October, photo, trapped (G. M. Ashwell *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Abbey Gardens, Tresco, 1CY+, 21st September (J. Davies).

In any exceptional year for American passerines Black-and-white Warbler would be on the list of expectations but the five in 2023 is a new annual total, bettering the four in 1996. The first birds occurred on Bardsey and Tresco on 21st September with the Bardsey bird being trapped and ringed. Two days later, the finder of the bird on Bardsey could be forgiven for initially thinking he had refound the first trapped bird before realising that it was in fact a new – and unringed – bird. The fact that Bardsey then scored a third bird, four days later, which was also trapped and ringed, is another remarkable statistic from this memorable autumn. Almost two weeks after the first sightings, a bird was trapped in Nanjizal Valley in Cornwall. The relatively high fat score for this bird suggests that it wasn't a new arrival and had perhaps made

landfall further north with the initial influx.

The Tresco bird was the third record for that island and the eighth for the Isles of Scilly, while the Nanjizal bird was the third record for Cornwall and the first since 1983. The Bardsey records were the first for that island with the only previous Welsh record being a bird on Skomer in 1980.

(Breeds Canada from SW Nunavut E to Newfoundland & S to Texas & Georgia. Migrates through E USA to winter from N Mexico to Florida & Bahamas, S through West Indies to N South America.)

Tennessee Warbler *Leiothlypis peregrina* (0, 6, 4) *Extremely rare, last in 2020, 2022*

Outer Hebrides St Kilda, Village Glen, 1CY+, 15th–18th September, photo (W. T. S. Miles, C. Nisbet *et al.*).

Nask, Barra, 1CY+, 21st–23rd September, photo (B. A. Taylor, K. Taylor).

Creachan Community Wood, Barra, 1CY+, 24th–27th September, photo (B. A. Taylor, K. Taylor *et al.*).

Shetland Houbie, Fetlar, 1CY, 28th–29th September, photo (J. J. Sweeney *et al.*).

Little did the intrepid crew who chartered a boat to St Kilda in mid September to see the Tennessee Warbler there know that there would be a further three individuals arriving in the Scottish islands over the next two weeks! Being the first birders to successfully twitch St Kilda and seeing their quarry in such iconic surroundings would, nonetheless, have made it an incredible experience.

(Breeds across S & C Canada. Migrates through E USA to winter in Central & N South America & Caribbean.)

Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina* (0, 2, 1) *Extremely rare, records in 1977, 2013*

Isles of Scilly Veronica Farm/Green Bay, Bryher, 1CY female, 10th November to 4th December, photo (S. Reid *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 236) (plate 493).

493. First-winter (1CY) female Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*, Veronica Farm/Green Bay, Bryher, Isles of Scilly, November 2023.

Almost exactly ten years after the Baltasound bird of 2013, Britain's third Cape May Warbler graced the seaweed and pittosporum of Bryher, showing incredibly well at times during its 25-day stay.

(Breeds Canada from E British Columbia & N Alberta, E to Nova Scotia, and N USA from North Dakota to NE New York & S Maine; winters W Indies.)

Northern Parula *Setophaga americana* (0, 15, 1) *Very rare, last in 2010*

Isles of Scilly St Martin's, 1CY female, 23rd–26th September, photo (M. Anderson *et al.*) (plate 494).

494. First-winter (1CY) female Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*, St Martin's, Isles of Scilly, September 2023.

An incredible 11 of the 15 previous records occurred in the 13-year period from 1982 to 1995. Since then, Northern Parula has become one of Britain's most sought-after vagrants, with just a single record on Tiree, in 2010. This year's bird was the first on the Isles of Scilly in 28 years and much appreciated during its three-day stay.

(Breeds Canada from SE Manitoba to Nova Scotia, & throughout E USA S to N Florida. Winters E & S Mexico S to Nicaragua & West Indies, some remaining S USA.)

Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia* (0, 2, 2) Extremely rare, records in 1981, 2012

Gower Baglan Bay, Britton Ferry, 1CY+, 24th–29th September, photo (G. Lewis *et al.* per Gower Recorder).

Pembrokeshire St Govan's Head, 1CY, 20th–26th September, photo (T. Phelps *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: plate 377; 117: 572, plate 433; plate 495).

Andrew Jordan

495. First-winter (1CY) Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia*, St Govan's Head, Pembrokeshire, September 2023.

The incredible events of autumn 2023 will no doubt be told around birding campfires for many a year to come, but the first indication that something special was happening for many came with the discovery of this year's first Magnolia Warbler late on 20th September, in Pembrokeshire. There had already been a Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca* in Co. Kerry earlier that day followed quickly by American Cliff Swallows on the Isles of Scilly and Co. Clare, a Red-eyed Vireo on Lundy and a soon-to-be-confirmed Alder Flycatcher on Skokholm, but when news broke of the third Magnolia Warbler for Britain, on the mainland no less, there was a tangible intake of breath among the

nation's birders. Despite the species having occurred twice before, the sightings were either a long time ago (the first was on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, on 27th–28th September 1981) or unobtainable to the masses (the second was seen only for a single afternoon on Fair Isle on 23rd September 2012), and Magnolia Warbler had certainly retained its air of indomitability on the list of top blockers. It was not to end there, however, and, as if to illustrate just how crazy 2023 was, a second Magnolia Warbler was discovered four days later a mere 75 km east of St Govan's Head. This one eschewed the scenic coastal valleys in favour of a derelict industrial estate but was greatly appreciated by those who could not make it to Pembrokeshire.

(Breeds from C British Columbia E to Newfoundland, and S in USA to Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan to C West Virginia, NE Pennsylvania and NW New Jersey. Migratory, winters from C Mexico through C America to Costa Rica and West Indies).

Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea* (0, 1, 1) *Extremely rare, one record in 1995*

Pembrokeshire Ramsey Island, 1CY, 21st–26th September, photo (D. Astins. A. Perry, N. Stephens *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 234; plate 496).

496. First-winter (1CY) Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea*, Ramsey Island, Pembrokeshire, September 2023.

In birding, it's often not the potential firsts that get us most excited, it's those species that have occurred just once or twice and were seen by virtually no one. Bay-breasted Warbler is an example of this, as its only occurrence in Britain prior to the Ramsey bird was at Land's End in October 1995. Seen only by the finders, it was nonetheless videoed and thus passed forever into birding folklore (Ferguson 1997). It was always considered an unlikely vagrant, indeed Robbins (1980) put it in his lowest category along with Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*, Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana*, Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos* and White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotricha leucophrys* (although it is worth noting that several species he considered more likely vagrants are yet to turn up and would certainly raise a few eyebrows if they did). However, since the Cornish bird, the vagrant hotspot of Corvo, Azores, has seen four records up to 2020, and then a fifth was found there a few weeks after the Pembrokeshire bird. News of the Ramsey bird broke on 21st, but the inclement weather meant there were no

boats to the isle until 23rd and a stressful period of waiting ensued for those sufficiently quick-fingered to book on a Saturday boat. It was to prove the only day it was twitchable, and despite being outranked by the Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis* found nearby on 23rd, those lucky enough to see it may look back on it with more fondness than they do the Canada. Indeed, 23rd September will go down in birding legend as one of the all-time crazy days, when birders on their way to catch a boat for the Bay-breasted Warbler would have been incredulously looking at breaking news that they had just driven past a Canada Warbler!

(Breeds North America in eastern and central Canada and extreme northern United States. Winters in northeastern South America, the Caribbean, and southern Central America.)

Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca* (0, 4, 1) *Extremely rare, last in 1988, 2009, 2022*

Shetland Geosetter, Mainland, 1CY male, 26th September, photo (W. Carter *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 116: 378; 117: plate 235; plate 497).

497. First-winter (1CY) male Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca*, Geosetter, Mainland, Shetland, September 2023.

(Breeds E Canada from C Saskatchewan to Nova Scotia, & NE USA from C Minnesota to Massachusetts, S through Appalachian Mountains to SW South Carolina & NW Georgia. Winters from Guatemala S to Peru & Venezuela.)

American Yellow Warbler *Setophaga aestiva* (0, 6, 3) *Very rare, last in 2004, 2005, 2017*

Argyll Kilmoluaig, Tiree, 1CY male, 27th September to 3rd October, photo (T. de Clermont, J. M. Dickson, D. C. Jardine *et al.*).

Shetland Ham, Foula, 1CY+, 5th–11th September, photo (D. & G. Atherton *et al.*).

Hoswick, Mainland, 1CY male, 12th–23rd October, photo (J. Allen, T. Perrins *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 117: plate 233; plate 498).

498. First-winter (1CY) male American Yellow Warbler *Setophaga aestiva*, Hoswick, Mainland, Shetland, October 2023.

American Yellow Warbler is the most widespread of the *Setophaga* warblers in North America and, following the 'perfect storm' of the fast-tracking Hurricane Lee, the odds were good that at least one of these golden balls would grace this side of the pond. However, to have three in a year is unprecedented, and neither of the Shetland birds were associated with Hurricane Lee, either arriving well before in the case of the Foula bird or well after for the Hoswick sighting.

There have been two previous records of American Yellow Warbler in England and Wales (on Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, in August 1964 and Portland, Dorset, in August 2017) but the Scottish islands have had the remainder, with birds in

Shetland (November 1990 and September 2005), North Ronaldsay, Orkney (August 1992) and Barra, Outer Hebrides (October 2004).

The autumn migration of eastern populations of American Yellow Warbler is among the earliest of any New World wood-warbler, getting under way by mid to late July in much of the eastern part of the breeding range (Lowther *et al.* 1990). August records in Britain correlate well with this. In Europe there have now been over 30 records.

(Breeds North America from NW Alaska E to Newfoundland, S through Mexico & C America to N Peru & Galapagos. N populations migratory, wintering C Mexico to C Peru & N Brazil.)

Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis* (0, 0, 1) *Extremely rare, first record*

Pembrokeshire Stack Rocks, Castlemartin Ranges, 1CY male, 23rd–25th September, photo (T. Phelps *et al.*) (plate 499).

499. First-winter (1CY) male Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*, Stack Rocks, Castlemartin Ranges, Pembrokeshire, September 2023.

To find an American passerine in Britain is one of the great dreams of many birders. To find an American warbler is the pinnacle of that dream. When Toby Phelps set eyes on this year's first Magnolia Warbler, he must have felt like he was standing on top of that mountain. Incredibly, his autumn was not over, and just three days later and 5 km to the west, he fully set the autumn alight by finding Britain's first Canada Warbler. Outside of birding, no one will really appreciate the magnitude of this. It is a feat that may never be repeated. One thing it does prove is that the best place to find an American passerine is close to where one has already been found. The conditions that bring one individual can just as easily bring two, three or more, and while Hurricane Lee and the associated arrival of Nearctic passerines is unprecedented, the more adventurous among us may do well by 'hitting the valleys' as soon as a Red-eyed Vireo is found nearby.

(Breeds C Canada to SE Canada and NE, E, NC USA. Winters Panama to N South America.)

Appendix 1. Records of former BBRC species, removed from the list prior to 2023

1998 Kumlien's Gull *L. g. kumlieni* Greenside Quarry Tip, Kendal, Cumbria, 14th–18th February.

Appendix 2. Records where identification accepted, but origin is uncertain or known not to be wild

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

Lancashire & North Merseyside Banks Marsh and Hundred End, 2CY+, 2nd–7th December, photo (S. J. Darbyshire *et al.*); same WWT Martin Mere, 9th December into 2024 (per birding information services).

Oxfordshire RSPB Otmoor, 2CY+, 3rd June, photo (M. Savage).

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii*

Northumberland Budle Bay, 1CY+, 31st October, photo (R. Ahmed, C. Knox).

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

Gloucestershire Frampton-on-Severn and WWT Slimbridge, 5CY+, from 2022 to 31st December and into 2024 (S. Hodges *et al.*).

2022 Gloucestershire WWT Slimbridge and Frampton-on-Severn, 4CY+, trapped and ringed, from 2021 to 31st December and into 2023 (per birding information services).

2021 Gloucestershire Frampton-on-Severn and WWT Slimbridge, 3CY+, 19th April 2021 into 2022 (N. Goatman, S. Wills *et al.* per birding information services); note amended dates (cf. *Brit. Birds* 116: 598).

2018 Caithness Loch of Mey, two 2CY, 3rd–4th May; previously placed in Category D (*Brit. Birds* 112: 621).

2017 Lothian Gladhouse Reservoir, 3CY+, 22nd–23rd April and 26th May; previously placed in Category D (*Brit. Birds* 112: 621).

2011 Northumberland Seahouses, Dunstan Hill and Holywell Pond, two 2CY+, 26th September to 27th November; note revised dates (cf. *Brit. Birds* 105: 623–625).

2004 Cheshire & Wirral Frodsham, 3CY+, 15th February to 11th May (*Brit. Birds* 98: 963).

2001 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 1CY, 29th–31st October (*Brit. Birds* 100: 104).

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*

Cumbria Lake Windermere, 3CY+, 23rd April, photo (A. Cooper).

Kent Swale Reserve then Oare Marshes, 1CY+, 8th December into 2024, photo (P. J. Sharp *et al.*).

Wiltshire Bowood Estate, 2CY+, 16th–26th September, photo (J. Hutchinson).

Baikal Teal *Sibirionetta formosa*

North-east Scotland Tarlair Swimming Pools, Macduff, 2CY+ male, 10th May,

photo (R. Mullen).

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

Cambridgeshire Oakington, 2CY+ female, 22nd June to 20th August, photo (S. L. Cooper *et al.*).

Berry Fen, 2CY+ female, 25th–26th November, photo (G. Hirons, A. D. W. Tongue).

Norfolk Hickling Broad, 2CY female, 22nd May to 29th June, photo (T. Allwood, P. J. Heath *et al.*).

Surrey Walton Reservoir, 2CY+ female, 5th–10th April, photo (D. M. Harris, M. Lawford, D. Spragg).

2022 Oxfordshire Grimsbury Resr, 2CY+ male, 2nd September, photo (G. Blockley).

Ferruginous Ducks present a particular problem. There is no doubt that they are an expected annual vagrant, but they are also kept in and escape from wildfowl collections. To compound this, there was a reintroduction project in Lower Saxony, Germany, between 2012 and 2019. A total of 798 Ferruginous Ducks were released, all of them ringed (many or all of them also with a yellow colour ring), and breeding in the wild was confirmed. See, for example, <https://bit.ly/48N96YT>. Clearly, birds that were released by this project cannot be counted as wild, but any of their offspring hatched in the wild would be unringed and counted as wild.] However, it seems that the number of successful breeding attempts was low, and a long-term population establishment is unlikely (B. Fischer pers. comm.). Our stance is to accept birds that are seen to be fully winged, unringed and arrive and depart at conducive times of year and, importantly, are not suspected of being local escapes. The birds in the list above all failed at least one of those hurdles, with the Cambridgeshire records suspected to come from a collection near Dernford Reservoir (per Cambridgeshire Recorder). Ringed birds are considered most likely escapes or from the reintroduction project.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

Cornwall Loe Pool, Helston, two, 1CY+ male and female, 6th November (I. Maclean).

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*

1993 Cornwall Menheniot, Liskeard, 2CY+ male, 6th–7th June, photo (R. M. Normand, K. Pellow *et al.*).

1993 Devon Dawlish Warren, 2CY+ male, 14th–25th May photo (K. Pellow *et al.*).

1993 Suffolk Ipswich, 2CY+ male, 6th–14th May (E. W. Patrick, B. J. Small *et al.*).

1992 Yorkshire Spurn, 19th–20th May, 2CY+ male, trapped (B. Richards *et al.*)

Appendix 5. Records found Not Proven

2023 North American Canada Goose Balephetrish, Tiree, Argyll, 6th March. Nr RSPB Campfield Marsh, Cumbria, 6th April. RSPB Marshside, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 30th September. Budle Bay, Northumberland, 3rd–6th October. Noup Head, Westray, Orkney, 3rd June. **Blue-winged Teal** Silverlake, Dorset, 5th December. Brand's Bay, Studland, Dorset, 6th December. **Ferruginous Duck** Landguard, Suffolk, 1st November. **Lesser Scaup** Northam Burrows CP/The Skern, Devon, 27th October into 2024. River Witham, Fiskerton, Lincolnshire, 5th February. **Pallid Swift** Weir Wood Reservoir, Sussex, 23rd October. Loch Buie, Mull, Argyll, 27th October. **Pacific Swift** RSPB Ham Wall, Somerset, 5th May. RSPB Ham Wall, Somerset, 8th May. **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* at sea, c.10 km southwest of Land's End, Cornwall, 21st August. **Barolo Shearwater** Elie Ness, Fife, 17th August. **Barolo/Boyd's/Audubon's Shearwater** Peninnis Head, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 16th August. **Brown Booby** Lossiemouth, Moray & Nairn, 9th September. **Short-toed Eagle** Ambleside, Cumbria, 22nd May. **Black-winged Kite** Burwell Fen, Cambridgeshire, 17th April. Stratton Hall, Levington, Suffolk, 16th April. **Pallid Harrier** Machir Bay, Islay, Argyll, 29th January. East Lomond Hills, Fife, 15th September. Kessingland, Suffolk, 23rd October. **Upland Sandpiper** Yeovil, Somerset, 28th October. **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius hudsonicus* Milford-on-Sea, Hampshire, 9th April. **Great Snipe** North Roe, Mainland, Shetland, 3rd October. North Denes, Lowestoft, Suffolk, 20th October. **American Herring Gull** Alkborough Flats, Lincolnshire, 30th January. Stornoway, Outer Hebrides, 24th–27th February. **'Baltic Gull'** Epney,

Gloucestershire, 16th September. Hunstanton, Norfolk, 21st April. Carrycoats Hall, Northumberland, 11th August. **Caspian Tern** Summer Leys, Northamptonshire, 23rd July. **Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis* Taw Estuary nr Appledore, Devon, 17th–19th July. **Tufted Puffin** *Fratercula cirrhata* Porthoer, Caernarfonshire, 29th September. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** South Raynham, near Fakenham, Norfolk, 27th August. **'Dark-breasted Barn Owl'** *Tyto alba guttata* Woolley Firs, Berkshire, 13th August. **Snowy Owl** Balnabruach, Portmahomack, Highland, 8th October. **Lesser Kestrel** North Foreland, Kent, 15th May. **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* Dornoch, Highland, 9th March. **Philadelphia Vireo** Castlebay, Barra, Outer Hebrides, 1st October. **American Cliff Swallow** Sker, East Glamorgan, 22nd September. **'Northern Long-tailed Tit'** *A. c. caudatus* Church Stretton, Shropshire, 25th December. **Booted Warbler** Garrison, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 17th September. **Lanceolated Warbler** Geosetter, Mainland, Shetland, 1st October. **'Northern Treecreeper'** Swarzie Geo, Fair Isle, 25th September. **Black-throated Thrush** Porth Meudwy, Caernarfonshire, 23rd October. **Red-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* Innisidgen, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 19th October. **Isabelline Wheatear** Dorney Common, Buckinghamshire, 22nd September. **'Black-headed Wagtail'** *M. f. feldegg* Cley Marshes, Norfolk, 8th May. **Eastern Yellow Wagtail** Weybourne Camp, Norfolk, 23rd September. Landguard, Suffolk, 30th September. **'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll'** Hill of Clibberswick, Unst, Shetland, 10th October. **'Coues's Arctic Redpoll'** Sandwick beach, Ness, Mainland, Shetland, 15th October. Skaw, Whalsay, Shetland, 12th November. **Black-and-white Warbler** Paisley, Clyde, 20th December.

2022 'North American Canada Goose' Longhaugh Pools, Clyde Estuary, Clyde, two, 30th October to 6th November. **Blue-winged Teal** Marlow, Buckinghamshire, 28th March to 29th April. **Pallid Swift** Burdale Quarry, Yorkshire, 1st November. **Pallid Harrier** Titchfield Haven NNR, Hampshire, 13th April. **'Azorean Yellow-legged Gull'** *Larus michahellis atlantis* The Mere, Ellesmere, Shropshire, 10th–11th November. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** RSPB Bempton Cliffs, Yorkshire, 17th April. **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra* North Foreland, Kent, 21st October. **'Iberian Wagtail'** Abberton Reservoir, Essex, 29th April.

2021 Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* Snab Point, Northumberland, 29th August. **Brünnich's Guillemot** Hendon, Sunderland, Co. Durham, 28th

November. St Agnes Head, Cornwall, 26th November. Bradwell-on-Sea, Essex, 5th December. Snab Point, Northumberland, 28th November. Cullercoats, Northumberland, 29th November. **Little Egret x Western Reef Heron** *Egretta garzetta x gularis* South Ferriby & Worlaby, Lincolnshire, 14th July 2020 to 16th November (*Brit. Birds* 117: 544–549). **Savi's Warbler** Hen Reedbeds, Suffolk, 20th May to 5th June.

2020 Eastern Yellow Wagtail Sand Voe, North Roe, Shetland, 5th October.

2019 'Coues's Arctic Redpoll' Budby, Nottinghamshire, 29th January.

2018 Kelp Gull Portland Bill, Dorset, 29th July.

2011 Ross's Goose Easter Gallovie, Dulnain Bridge, Highland, 14th October to 16th November.

2001 White-winged Scoter Isle of Bute, Clyde Islands, 9th–11th April.

1995 Red-throated Pipit North-east Scotland, 9th September.

1994 Soft-plumaged Petrel Flamborough Head, Yorkshire, 18th September.

1987 Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Saltford, Avon, 3rd September.

1958 Broad-billed Sandpiper Rye Meads and Broxbourne Sewage Farms, Greater London, 27th July to 19th August.

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