

**A Natural History Audit
for the Island of Westray, Orkney
Commissioned by the Westray Development Trust**



Researched and compiled by Martin Gray

May 2002

The Flora and Fauna of Westray, Orkney

INTRODUCTION

I cannot remember a time in my life when I wasn't interested in wildlife. Many interests waxed and waned but natural history, and birds especially, became a constant. Under the guiding influence of several active local naturalists, I too began to observe and record whatever I came across. Now, nearly 30 years later, I'm still doing it.

Why?

The information gathered is going to be, you hope, of use to somebody, sometime. You are contributing to a mine of historical and contemporary data which can give us the insight we seek to the complexities of all the biological forms which live alongside us. These are fine sentiments, but this is where I personally become a little uncomfortable with the notion of exactly how and by whom, and in whose name all this information is to be used.

Now a very hackneyed phrase, we are the stewards of the environment we inherit. This I have a fundamental belief in. I also know that it is a dynamic system, and change is a normal part of that system. There are

statutory and charitable bodies which are involved in influencing change and they use

the data in front of them to try to achieve the best compromise among interested parties.

The "sometime" is now, and I strongly believe that the "somebody" should include a de-centralised interest group. I intend no disrespect but my personal opinion is that those closest to the ground must know, value and appreciate the resources within their custodianship the best.

My intention with this project has been to deliver to the Westray community an audit of the flora and fauna of the island to date.

I have great faith that this document will be used to the advantage of the Westray community, to their common good, and to the benefit of the vast wildlife resource in their safe-keeping.

Nelson Gray
May 2002