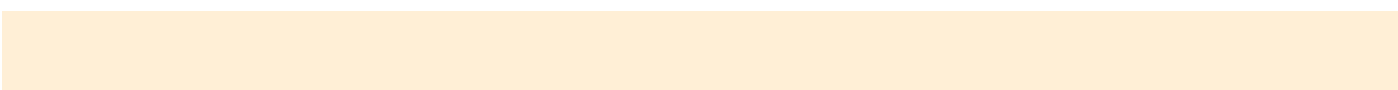


The Flora and Fauna of Westray, Orkney

PART TWO
Non-Breeding Birds



The Flora and Fauna of Westray, Orkney

RED-THROATED DIVER

(*Gavia stellata*)

Annual in small numbers offshore from March to October. Recent records include four off Rapness on 15th April 1998 with five in the same place in late May 1999. These records may well originate from the breeding population on Eday.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER

(*Gavia immer*)

Present in small numbers offshore from October to May, this species is a visitor from Iceland and Greenland. Large flocks of moulting birds collect together in spring and 60 birds in Papay Sound in May 1986 is an example of this. Likewise there were 12 off Pierowall in late May 1999 and an immature bird summered here in that year.

SOOTY SHEARWATER

(*Puffinus griseus*)

There are no documented records for Westray but this summer visitor from the South Atlantic must pass Noup Head in some numbers from late July to mid October. It is seen annually from Mull Head on Papay and the Brough of Birsay so must pass the Noup in between.]

MANX SHEARWATER

(*Puffinus puffinus*)

Very small numbers of this summer visitor to Orkney breed on Hoy. Everywhere else it is a coastal migrant usually seen quickly passing offshore. The most recent records are from 1999 when four were watched from the ferry

off Rapness in late April and 22 passed Noup Head on 21st June. Any seawatching effort from Noup Head in autumn will certainly expand our knowledge of this species' presence in Westray waters. The same comment goes equally for the previous species.

STORM PETREL

(*Hydrobates pelagicus*)

Local name: Stormy Petrel

A summer visitor to Orkney which breeds as close to Westray as Rusk Holm. Can be found offshore in summer with birds often attending working fishing boats. There are a few recent records including 10 seen from the ferry in Rapness Sound on 18th August 1998 and about 35 seen from the Noup on 21st June 1999. These do not tell the full story of this species' presence offshore and more seawatching effort would undoubtedly provide more records.

NORTHERN GANNET

(*Morus bassanus*)

Local name: Solan, Solan Goose

Commonly seen offshore in good numbers in summer and autumn, fewer in spring and scarce in winter. Those in summer most likely come from the nearest breeding colonies on Fair Isle, Foula and Sule Stack. In autumn there is a large offshore passage as birds move south from northern breeding colonies. Frequently recorded off Noup Head, Westside and Weatherness; less commonly elsewhere. Rarely birds come ashore, for example one on the clifftop at Noup Head on 5th May 1994.

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GREY HERON

(*Ardea cinerea*)

Present in small numbers, usually associated with the freshwater lochs and wetlands. There are fewest present in summer though in most recent years there have been sightings of one-two around Burness Loch. Regular sightings in winter 1993-94 of 4-6 birds between Inganess and Rapness indicates the presence of a small wintering population. These most likely originate in Scandinavia.

WHOOPER SWAN

(*Cygnus cygnus*)

Small numbers (up to 50) spend the winter, arriving in October and leaving again around mid-April. These come from Iceland and satellite tracking of north bound migrants has shown that they can make the crossing from Northern Scotland to Iceland in 12 hours!

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE

(*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

The only recent records are of 70 near Hamar on 15th April 1998 and 36 at the south end of the island in late April 1999. These will have been on return migration to Icelandic breeding grounds. This passage species is certainly commoner than these records suggest, especially on their southward migration in late September and into October.

GREYLAG GOOSE

(*Anser anser*)

There are few documented records, though this species has recently been proven to breed on the Rapness Cliffs. There were 90 at the south end of the island in late April 1999 and these were probably returning migrants.

The status in winter is not known but it would be very surprising if this species was absent. Many should be seen migrating south in late September and October. A summering flock of up to 18 was recorded in 1999 though there seems to have been no breeding attempt.

As a wintering and breeding species, the Greylag has increased dramatically in Orkney over the past 20 years.

CANADA GOOSE

(*Branta canadensis*)

One was on the Saintear Loch on 6th August 1996. This species is a scarce but annual visitor in small numbers to Orkney.

BARNACLE GOOSE

(*Branta leucopsis*)

In late April 1999, eight were with the grey geese at the south end of the island. This appears to be the only recent record but it is likely to be found more often than this suggests; particularly during October migration.

BRENT GOOSE

(*Branta bernicla*)

An adult of the pale bellied race was at Tuquoy during April 2002.

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GADWALL

(*Anas strepera*)

In 1984, a pair was on Saintear Loch on 26th April 1984 and one was on Burness Loch on 30th July. A male was seen on Saintear Loch on 9th May and 14th June 1987 and a pair were seen near Fribo on 1st May 1993. These may have been on passage and there is no proof that any breeding attempts have been made. The winter status is not known.

PINTAIL

(*Anas acuta*)

Occasionally seen on the lochs in April and again in autumn. The one winter record was of a single bird on Saintear Loch on 21st February 1995.

GARGANEY

(*Anas querquedula*)

A male was on Swartmill Loch on 26th May 1993. Another male was at the Ayre of Roadmire on 16th May 1997

COMMON POCHARD

(*Aythya ferina*)

There is no documentation on the wintering population on the three larger lochs though it is probably in the order of 100-200 birds. These arrive in September and leave again in April for breeding grounds around the Baltic and northern Russia.

GREATER SCAUP

(*Aythya marila*)

At Rapness on 15th April 1998 there was a flock of seven; four females, three males. In 1999 a single male was present on the Burness Loch from April-mid June. A female was on Loch of the Stack on 22nd October 2000. In all probability this attractive duck is an annual visitor in very small numbers in April-May and September-October.

LONG-TAILED DUCK

(*Clangula hyemalis*)

Arriving in October this winter visitor from Arctic breeding grounds is found all around the more sheltered coasts, especially in the Bay of Pierowall and along the east and south coasts. A maximum count of 81 was made between Inganess and Rapness on 22nd March 1994. Numbers increase in April with counts of 200+ in Rapness Sound on 15th April 1998 and in late April 1999. Adults moulting into summer plumage are present in May and 40 were present in Pierowall Bay late in the month in 1999. Birds move on rapidly after this.

COMMON SCOTER

(*Melanitta nigra*)

The only recent record is of a female/immature on the Loch of the Stack on 22nd October 2000. This species is a scarce passage migrant in the north isles of Orkney, though it winters in small numbers around the Mainland.

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GOLDENEYE

(*Bucephala clangula*)

Probably 50-100 winter on the lochs and around the coast but there is very little recorded. In January 1994, a maximum of six birds were seen between Inganess and Rapness. This appears to be the sole recent record.

SMEW

(*Mergus albellus*)

There are three recent records, all from the Swartmill Loch; a drake in March 1968, a duck there on 26th January 1994, and a drake on 23rd November 1995.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

(*Mergus serrator*)

A possible breeder but better represented outwit this season with small numbers found along sheltered coasts and bays. Through summer 1999 at least 18 adults remained in Pierowall Bay throughout. In winter, possibly also present on the Lochs and with a likely build-up of numbers in April as birds pass through.

MARSH HARRIER

(*Circus aeruginosus*)

Single females were recorded on 19th April 1987 and on 4th September 1988.

HEN HARRIER

(*Circus pygargus*)

This Orkney breeding species is seen annually on Westray. It is possible that one-two may winter and that more may occur during spring and autumn passage, especially in September.

SPARROWHAWK

(*Accipiter nisus*)

Single passage birds have been seen in May or June at various parts of the island in most recent years. This dashing species should be annual on passage in Westray in April and especially May. A small return passage from the Scandinavian forests in which they breed may be detected in September-October.

OSPREY

(*Pandion haliaetus*)

Peak time for Osprey in Orkney is in May and it is very likely that some have passed through Westray, though there is nothing in the literature to support this.

MERLIN

(*Falco columbarius*)

Very little documentation but almost certainly present on passage in April-May and again August-October. At these times, possibly 5-10 birds may be present daily. Some birds may spend the winter on the island also.

In a good year, up to 25 pairs may breed elsewhere in Orkney; including as close as Rousay. Dispersal of local broods and migrating birds moving north to breed (i.e. in Iceland) probably account for most of the occurrences on Westray.

QUAIL

(*Coturnix coturnix*)

A male was heard calling 1996 or 1997 near Swartmill Loch

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GOLDEN PLOVER

(*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Common on spring and autumn passage and presumably also in winter with 204 counted between Inganess and Rapness in January 1994 being the only contemporary information.

In spring, the maximum count was 400 around the Bay of Brough on 27th April. Numbers diminish through May and sightings in June are rare until the end of the month when returning birds start to gather again. Good numbers are present in autumn with 650 around the island on 22nd August 1991, and in August 1996, 950 at Clifton on 5th and 550 at the Ouse on 31st.

GREY PLOVER

(*Pluvialis squatarola*)

Scarce in winter and on spring and autumn passage. A maximum of four were recorded in the Bay of Tuquoy in January 1994. Recent records also from Bay of Pierowall and the Ouse.

KNOT

(*Calidris canutus*)

Small groups winter on Westray with a maximum of 36 on the coast from Inganess to Rapness on 24th-25th November 1993. Spring passage recorded in 1998 with small numbers noted in early May and from late June at the Ouse, Bay of Tafts and Ayre of Roadmire. A similarly light autumn passage recorded from favoured coastal sites in most years.

SANDERLING

(*Calidris alba*)

Low numbers of up to 50 recorded on most sandy bays in May and again on autumn passage from July to September;

especially the Ouse, Ayre of Roadmire and Pierowall Bay. A few spend the winter in the Bay of Tuquoy with 27 seen there in January 1994.



LITTLE STINT

(*Calidris minuta*)

There are no records but this arctic tundra breeder must be present annually, albeit in variable numbers.

CURLEW SANDPIPER

(*Calidris ferruginea*)

Recorded recently from Roadmire but without details.

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PURPLE SANDPIPER

(*Calidris maritima*)

A common visitor from Arctic breeding grounds, first returning in small numbers from mid-July and building up through the autumn; peaking from October. The shoreline survey in winter



1993-94 between Inganess and Rapness found 89 on 24-25th November 1993, 326 in late January 1994 and a total of 413 on 22nd March 1994. The mean total from these three counts (276) exceeds the “nationally important threshold” for this species in Britain.

Elsewhere on the island, this species is present in winter, particularly favouring exposed rocky shores. A survey of the coast in January 1983 found 1072 Purple Sandpipers on Westray.

Perhaps even more than this impressive figure are present in May as wintering birds from further south gravitate north before making the final leg of migration to the breeding areas in Scandinavia, Iceland, Greenland and possibly Canada. By the end of this month, most birds have left and sightings in June are very rare.

DUNLIN

(*Calidris alpina*)

As well as breeding population of a few pairs, Dunlin are present in large numbers on the sandy coasts of Westray during winter, and the coastal survey from Inganess to Rapness in January 1994 found 667 birds; most of these being in the Bay of Tuquoy. As with the previous species there is evidence of a spring passage build-up; e.g. a count of over 1000 at the Ayre of Roadmire in early May 1999.

Away from Aikerness, records are scarce in June though returning migrants are in evidence from July and in increasing numbers to October.

RUFF

(*Philomachus pugnax*)

There appears to be no documented records of this migrant wader on Westray. Ruff appear annually in Orkney, sometimes in large numbers and some of these must turn up on the island. They feed in shallow, muddy pools but will also go on newly cut silage fields.

JACK SNIPE

(*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

This secretive species uses traditional wintering sites year after year. The only such site known on Westray in the Iris bed at Ayre of Roadmire which holds a few birds annually. It is quite possible that there are more undiscovered wintering sites on the island.

Otherwise, Jack Snipe occur on migration, especially in October and can be flushed from any marshy habitat at this time.

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WOODCOCK

(*Scolopax rusticola*)

October is the peak month for Woodcock migration and it is then that they can be found in all sorts of habitats from the tops of the hills to overgrown field edges. The White Moss is also a well known place to encounter this dramatic species as it flushes up at close range. A few birds may attempt to winter as they do elsewhere in Orkney and there is a small return passage in March and April.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT

(*Limosa limosa*)

There are few records of this handsome wader for Westray and most just state its occurrence without information on numbers. The only recent data is of one at the Ouse on 31st August 1996. Elsewhere in Orkney this is an annual passage visitor in both spring (April-May) and autumn (August-October), when it can occur in flocks of 20-50 birds.

This species shows a preference for wet fields and shallow pools whilst on passage though it will also use sandy coastal flats. The birds we see in Orkney breed in Iceland.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT

(*Limosa lapponica*)

This winter visitor from arctic Russia is found in good numbers in the Bay of Tuquoy area where 512 were counted in January 1994. This total makes it Orkney's second most important site for this species after Otterswick/Cata Sand on Sanday. Elsewhere on Westray there are a few sites which hold smaller numbers of wintering or migrant birds, including the Ouse, Sand o' Gill, Aikerness Hill and Bay of Swartmill.



WHIMBREL

(*Numenius heaps*)

A regular spring migrant especially in May when small flocks move through the island on their journey north to Shetland, Faeroes or Iceland to breed; i.e. 6 at Gallo Hill in late May 1997. Returning migrants are in evidence in late July but especially so in August when groups of up to 15 were seen on cut silage fields near Rapness in 1998. Birds move quickly through in September and sightings after the end of the month are rare.

Whimbrel use similar habitats to its' larger relative the Curlew though the two species can be difficult to tell apart. In general, Whimbrel are smaller, stockier and a little darker plumaged with a much shorter bill (beware juvenile Curlew in late summer). The call is diagnostic, a descending series of piercing, short whistles.

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GREENSHANK

(*Tringa nebular*)

An uncommon passage visitor to Orkney from northern European breeding grounds. Spring passage is very thin and not recorded every year in Orkney. Many more birds are recorded in autumn from July to September with peak passage taking place in August. Recent records come from Burness Loch, where six were seen on 19th August 1987 and Ayre of Roadmire, where a single bird was seen on 1st August 1995. Again, more coverage would certainly produce additional records.

GREEN SANDPIPER

(*Tringa corpus*)

The only report is of two at the Noup on 17th August 1993. It is likely that there have been more records than this. Loch edges, small pools and drains are all used by migrant Green Sandpipers and August is the best month to look for them.

WOOD SANDPIPER

(*Tringa gloriola*)

May occur annually but there are no records to date.

COMMON SANDPIPER

(*Actitis hypoleucos*)

This uncommon Orkney breeder must occur at times on Westray.

TURNSTONE

(*Arenaria interpres*)

This arctic breeding wader can be found on Westray in every month of the year though numbers are high in winter with a peak of north bound migrants in spring. The survey of the coast between Inganess and Rapness found 234 birds in November 1993, 322 in January 1994 and 416 in March 1994.

This is not the only island locality for this species and it would be safe to say that there will be few stretches of coastline on Westray which are devoid of Turnstones from October to May. This last month sees many adult birds present in their spectacular full breeding plumage. Their departure for high latitudes also takes place in May with flocks departing to the north west on fine evenings; next stop Iceland, Greenland or even Canada.

During June and July small numbers of non-breeding immatures remain on the island and are soon joined by returning adults and young. The Westray coastline is therefore important on two counts; as a winter home and as a last fuelling stop for migrating birds in spring. Some of these could have spent the winter as far away as western or southern Africa!

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE

(*Phalaropus lobatus*)

There have been several records of this former Orkney breeding bird on Westray; all of single birds on 5th August 1979, 13th-14th August 1982 at Loch of the Stack, 6th July 1983 at the Aikerness Lochs, 20th July 1983, and a female also at the Aikerness Lochs on 14th June 1987.

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POMARINE SKUA

(*Stercorarius pomarinus*)

The only records are of two adults over Pierowall on 3rd May 1989 and one seen on 20th September 1998. Very likely under recorded and seawatching effort from Noup Head in westerly/north-westerly winds during May and August-November would probably produce additional records.

LONG-TAILED SKUA

(*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

One seen off the island on 24th September 1991 appears to be the only record.

LITTLE GULL

(*Larus minutus*)

One was seen on 30th July 1984. The next record came in 1995 when one was seen on 5th March. A report of six at the school on 2nd May 1995 may not be reliable. This continental species is an annual visitor to Orkney in spring, summer and autumn; rare in winter.

ICELAND GULL

(*Larus glaucooides*)

There are numerous records of this Greenland breeding species in spring, including one at Sand o'Gill on 24th April 1991 and two in Pierowall Harbour on 6th May 1993. Many more must arrive on the island from October to March, especially as they habitually follow trawlers, but information is lacking.

GLAUCOUS GULL

(*Larus hyperboreus*)

The most recent records of this uncommon Arctic species were in 1998 when an immature bird was at Rapness on 15th April, with another immature accompanied by an adult were in Pierowall on the same day. Comments for the above species apply equally here. It seems that most Glaucous Gulls visiting Britain come from Iceland, but may also come from as far afield as Bear Island, Spitsbergen and Greenland.



BLACK TERN

(*Chlidonias niger*)

There are two records of single birds, at Saintear Loch on 26th May 1965 and Burness Loch on 22nd April 1987.

COLLARED DOVE

(*Streptopelia decaocto*)

A passage migrant with numbers peaking in June, when small numbers can be readily seen around human habitation. Newly arrived migrants can be seen anywhere from cliff-tops to sandy beaches. Some of these may stay the summer and breeding has been suspected. Elsewhere in Orkney, where this species only arrived in 1962, this is a common resident breeder; especially on the Mainland but also locally on Stronsay and Rousay.

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TURTLE DOVE

(*Streptopelia turtur*)

Single birds recorded in May/June 1985, 1988, and 1989. The only more recent record is of a single bird on 12th September 1995.

CUCKOO

(*Cuculus canorus*)

Recorded most years, though only single birds in May and June, e.g. one near the Old Manse about 6th May 1991. Occasionally calling males are heard. The only possible evidence of breeding comes from the Westside Manse in 2001 when a newly fledged juvenile was seen in summer.

LONG-EARED OWL

(*Asio otus*)

An uncommon migrant, the few records almost certainly underestimating the true status of this nocturnal species as it passes through the island. Elsewhere in Orkney they use daytime tree roosts, especially conifers. Passage takes place from March-May and again September-November with the peaks during April and October.

SHORT-EARED OWL

(*Asio flammeus*)

Noted in most recent years with occasional summer sightings, often either near Fribo or the White Moss. A dead bird, reported as an adult male, was found on 20th June 1993. Otherwise recorded sparingly as a passage migrant in spring and autumn. This is an uncommon breeding species in the rest of Orkney with the majority of pairs in the West Mainland. The bulk of the population leaves the islands in winter.

SWIFT

(*Apus apus*)

This long distance migrant, a non-breeding summer visitor to Orkney, should occur more frequently on Westray than the records suggest. The first birds are usually seen in Orkney in May and June. Numbers increase in July and August but tail off again through September; October records are scarce.

WRYNECK

(*Jynx torquilla*)

One was seen c.1995 at the Westside Manse.

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GREAT-SPOTTED WOODPECKER

(*Dendrocopus major*)

There are two recent records of single birds; 12th October 1988 and near Noup Farm on 17th May 1991. This striking species always looks a bit out of place in the Orkney landscape. As far as is known, all Orkney records refer to immigrants from the Continent which occasionally irrupt from their normal range in large numbers. Peak timing for such an irruption is from late August to October

SHORE LARK

(*Eremophila alpestris*)

This rare visitor to Orkney is represented on the island list by a record of two at Noup Head on 15th November 1981.

SAND MARTIN

(*Riparia riparia*)

Almost certainly under recorded with only two documented records; a single on 15th May 1992 and four at Burness Loch on 3rd June 1998. A summer visitor to Orkney though always uncommon. Best looked for over lochs and areas of fresh water where they feed by catching insects on the wing; especially active in the evening.

WAXWING

(*Bombycilla garrulus*)

On 24th October 1988, up to four were seen on Westray though there are no details of the locality. The next record came in 1995 when one bird was recorded in the last week of the year. It is likely that most of these records came from Pierowall where there are several berry bearing bushes to which Waxwings are irresistibly attracted.

DUNNOCK

(*Prunella modularis*)

Several were seen in Pierowall and at the Noup during a very large arrival of continental migrants on 22nd-24th October 2000 (pers obs). Otherwise there are very few records of this unobtrusive bird.

On passage this species can sometimes be quite abundant but in other seasons, virtually absent. It probably reaches Westray annually in small numbers.

ROBIN

(*Erithacus rubecula*)

Though there is one breeding record, this familiar species is much better known as a seasonal migrant from the Continent in spring and autumn; sometimes appearing in abundance. At these times there are birds around each house and foraging along dykes, ditches and fences. When birds are actually arriving, they can be found anywhere on the island, including along the western cliffs. A large autumn passage can encourage a few to attempt to winter.

These attempts can be successful but it can also be difficult to discern wintering birds from newly arrived migrants in March.

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BLUETHROAT

(Luscinia svecica)

A male at Skaill Farm on 20th May 1998 appears to be the only record.

BLACK REDSTART

(Phoenicurus ochruros)



One was seen on 17th September 1995. There may well have been more records, especially during April-May and September-October.

COMMON REDSTART

(Phoenicurus phoenicurus)

The only recent records of this uncommon passage visitor are of one on 1st- 4th May 1990 and eight at Noup Head on 3rd October 1998. Almost certainly under recorded.

WHINCHAT

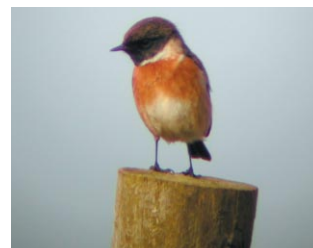
(Saxicola rubetra)

On 20th September 1984, seven were seen on Westray at a time of a strong passage through the islands. More coverage during the spring and autumn migration periods would undoubtedly produce annual records.

STONECHAT

(Saxicola torquata)

The only record seems to be of one at Noup Head on 3rd April 1993. This species is a scarce migrant in the outer north isles of Orkney, despite the fact that over 100 pairs breed elsewhere in the county.



WHEATEAR

(Oenanthe oenanthe)

As well as being a common breeder, large numbers of Wheatears pass through Westray on migration. Many of these, especially in late April through May and late August to October, are of the Greenland race. These are larger than our breeding birds and have a brighter plumage and a more upright stance. Noup Head in spring is a well known place to find these far travelled birds as they prepare for the last leg of a marathon journey from southern Africa.



RING OUZEL

(Turdus torquatus)

This is a passage migrant which typically has a widespread distribution throughout Orkney. Given that scores/hundreds are recorded in the county annually, it is very surprising that there are no documented records for Westray. Passage occurs in April-May and again September-October. A strong Thrush passage on 22nd-24th October 2000, involving many thousands of birds, did not include any Ring Ouzels.

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BLACKBIRD

(*Turdus merula*)

As well as being a common breeder, Blackbirds are also often present as passage migrants en route to Scandinavia, in both spring and autumn. These migrants are slightly larger than our local breeding birds and are typically very wary. On 23rd October 2000, at least 400 were seen all over the island, with a particular concentration around Noup Head.

FIELDFARE

(*Turdus pilaris*)

This common passage visitor is a frequent sight on Westray. Small numbers spend the winter but many more are encountered during the migration seasons. Spring movements are often quite thin and may only involve small flocks which move on rapidly. In autumn there are usually larger numbers involved and at times there seems to be birds everywhere; this is not unusual in October. There is one breeding record for Westray, in 1974.

SONG THRUSH

(*Turdus philomelos*)

A common, sometimes numerous, passage species on migration. A spectacular arrival, rivalling many east coast 'hot-spots' was witnessed on 23rd October 2000. Over the island there were at least 700 birds present during a huge diurnal movement of thrushes. These were moving through Westray in a south westerly direction and their ultimate destination could be as far off as north Africa.

REDWING

(*Turdus iliacus*)

A common migrant, especially in autumn. Given the right weather conditions, large arrivals from Scandinavia can take place any time from late September through October. Migration is less easy to detect in spring when movements tend to be more subtle, involving much smaller numbers of birds. Birds of the Icelandic race are occasionally recorded.

MISTLE THRUSH

(*Turdus viscivorus*)

One was seen in March 2002.

SEDGE WARBLER

(*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Occurs sparsely on spring and autumn passage.

REED WARBLER

(*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

Despite a lack of documentation, this uncommon migrant in Orkney has probably occurred in Westray; most likely during autumn passage in September.

BARRED WARBLER

(*Sylvia nisoria*)

Westray awaits its first record of this uncommon annual autumn migrant.

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LESSER WHITETHROAT

(*Sylvia curruca*)

This migrant species appears in small numbers in Orkney each year with peak periods in late May-early June and again from late August-early October. There are a few undated Westray records.

WHITETHROAT

(*Sylvia communis*)

Comments for the previous species apply here also.

GARDEN WARBLER

(*Sylvia borin*)

Under-recorded on passage and scarcer in spring than autumn, this numerous migrant has been found on a few occasions on Westray. The most recent record was of one at Noup Farm on 23rd October 2000.

BLACKCAP

(*Sylvia atricapilla*)

Seen annually on the island but not in the large numbers recorded along the eastern coastline of Orkney. This species is much more reliable in autumn than spring and the month of October sees the peak of a lengthy passage period from late August to early November.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER

(*Phylloscopus inornatus*)

This tiny Siberian warbler reaches Orkney in small numbers each year from mid September to late October. The first Westray records await.

WOOD WARBLER

(*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*)

There are a few Westray records of this uncommon passage visitor to Orkney. Elsewhere in the county, most records come in May and again from late August through September.

CHIFFCHAFF

(*Phylloscopus collybita*)

A regular and sometimes abundant passage migrant throughout Orkney, though with very few records from Westray. This is undoubtedly related to the amount of coverage the island gets during the peak migration periods of April-May and September-mid November.

WILLOW WARBLER

(*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Though breeding at several sites in Orkney, this is a passage bird on Westray. However, singing males have been heard in Pierowall village in spring. Otherwise this is a migrant species appearing in May and again from late August to early October.

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GOLDCREST

(Regulus regulus)

October sees the peak of this tiny birds migration out of Scandinavia and it appears in good numbers during favourable weather conditions in this month. Spring migration is much thinner, usually during April and they can also be seen in May, September and November.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER

(Muscicapa striata)

Recorded sparingly throughout Orkney on passage in roughly equal numbers in spring and autumn. The few recent records from Westray largely reflect this pattern.

Most records from Pierowall Village, where a pair may have bred in 1999.

PIED FLYCATCHER

(Ficedula hypoleuca)

Yet another grossly under-recorded migrant species, recorded without details occasionally over the past 20 years and said to be commoner than the preceding species. In the rest of Orkney this is a fairly common passage bird in May and from late August to early October. It can occur anywhere; from gardens to along dykes, beaches and around houses.

LONG-TAILED TIT

(Aegithalos caudatus)

This rare visitor to Orkney is represented on the Westray list by a single bird seen on the unseasonable date of 27th June 1974. Most county records of this species occur late in the year, especially October-November.

GREAT TIT

(Parus major)

There is one Westray record of this rare visitor to Orkney, that of a bird which stayed in Pierowall from 22nd to 31st December 1982.

GOLDEN ORIOLE

(Oriolus oriolus)

One spring record of a bird feeding on butterfly chrysalis around the porch at Hornersquoy in 1997 or 1998.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE

(Lanius collurio)

There are at least two records of this spectacular migrant on Westray; at Noup Farm on 8th June 1993 and on 11th May 1994. There have also been some sightings in autumn.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE

(Lanius excubitor)

Has been recorded once at Jericho, but without details.

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ROOK

(*Corvus frugilegus*)

This uncommon passage visitor occurs most years in small numbers on spring migration. The area of the Noup is a favoured haunt (Sam Harcus pers comm).

CARRION CROW

(*Corvus corone corone*)

Uncommon on spring migration, this all black crow is sometimes seen on Westray. Most records are in May and recently from the Noup and Aikerness Hill.

TREE SPARROW

(*Passer montanus*)

There are two records involving three birds; two at Noup Head and one at Pharay's Park on 9th June 1997.

CHAFFINCH

(*Fringilla coelebs*)

This fairly common passage migrant is seen in small numbers most years on Westray. Singing males have been heard in spring recently in Pierowall Village.

BRAMBLING

(*Fringilla montifringilla*)

This migrant is seen most years on Westray, often in company with the preceding species. Spring passage is variable, but autumn occurrences are more reliable, especially during October.

GREENFINCH

(*Carduelis chloris*)

Several recorded in recent years; sometimes quite late in the year.

GOLDFINCH

(*Carduelis carduelis*)

There is one record of a single bird on 20th May 1977. More can be expected as this species has become commoner in Orkney over the past 20 years.

SISKIN

(*Carduelis spinus*)

Despite the lack of documented records, this tiny finch reaches Westray most years. Noted as being especially numerous in autumn 2000.

REDPOLL

(*Carduelis sp.*)

There are a few recent records of this species group. Most probably refer to Common Redpoll (*C.f.flammea*) but a few may have been Lesser Redpoll (*C.f.cabaret*).

CROSSBILL

(*Loxia curvirostra*)

This species appears in Orkney every few years in huge numbers. This appears to be a mass emigration from Scandinavia triggered by a poor crop of their principal pine cone crop. At these times birds are found everywhere, including on Westray. Many of these birds move on quickly. Inevitably a number die as a result of an inability to find suitable food in sufficient quantities.

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BULLFINCH

(*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

Several seen in the late 1990s.

HAWFINCH

(*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*)

There are two recent records; one in the Pierowall Hotel garden on 15th May 1988 and another, locality unknown, on 1st November 1989.

LAPLAND BUNTING

(*Calcarius lapponicus*)

There seems to be only one record, of a single bird on 20th September 1984. More coverage in autumn, especially during north westerly winds, would probably yield more records. The area of the Noup looks particularly suitable for this unobtrusive species on migration.



SNOW BUNTING

(*Plectrophenax nivalis*)

This attractive arctic breeder is present on the island from September-May, with peak numbers, sometimes flocks of several hundred, present in October-December.

CORN BUNTING

(*Miliaria calandra*)

A former breeding bird not recorded for at least 40 years.