

First WP Records - 1800 to 2025

Joe Hobbs

Version 1.2

First Records for the Western Palearctic 1800 to 2025

by

Joe Hobbs

Version 1.2
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Cover: Mourning Warbler, Lighthouse Valley, Corvo, Azores, September 2023.
Photo: © Vincent Legrand.

Introduction

Beginning with the oldest, this note gives details of the first occurrences of species in the Western Palearctic (BWP Borders) from 1800 to 2025 that were published or reported in a national rare bird report, the standard literature or more recently posted online. The vast majority of early records were either shot, obtained, caught or trapped; regardless of the terminology used that meant they ended up as a prize in someone's trophy cabinet, thankfully a practice no longer regarded as the norm.

The emphasis is placed on describing the narrative surrounding the discovery and highlighting those individuals involved. Species descriptions, if mentioned, are limited to the main points of interest only. Full and detailed descriptions may be found in a relevant field guide or family monograph or are invariably an integral part of the finder's note and these are cited when known.

Please note

I made a start on compiling this note as a 'lockdown' project in 2020. Following each update, I've discovered records that I missed as well as earlier occurrences of some that were already included and have made whatever changes were required to put the record straight in subsequent updates. I have no doubt this will continue to be the case going forward.

Western Palearctic records colour-coding

Full species found on land **are printed in this colour**, well-marked subspecies **are printed in this colour**. Records where the bird's provenance is questioned for some reason (usually indicating they are assigned to Category D or E) **are printed in this colour**, records of full species made at sea out of sight of land **are printed in this colour**, records of well-marked subspecies made at sea out of sight of land **are printed in this colour**, records not identified to species level **are printed in this colour**, first records for the European mainland, rather than the WP, **are printed in this colour** and records that are pending (i.e., not yet assessed) **are printed in this colour** and those where a rare bird committee is not established but the record is or appears to be authentic (e.g. an online finders account, birding journal article, photo, museum specimen etc.) **are printed in this colour**. Quotes taken directly from notes, papers or personal comments **are printed in this colour**.

References etc.
Some suggested reading and a list of those field guides mentioned in the note can be found on pages 288 & 289. References begin on page 289, a list of abbreviations used begin on page 307.

Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks are indicated by this colour.

Dutch Birding

Most grateful thanks to Dutch Birding for hosting this, and others notes I have compiled, on their website, now and in the past.

Taxonomy

Scientific nomenclature follows the IOC World List version 12.1 (January 2022), with some changes following subsequent updates. It is anticipated that AviList 2025 will replace the IOC as the world taxonomic authority for birds, which will inevitably mean that some scientific names quoted in these pages **will differ** to AviList when the change over is made.

A close thing in 2022, twice!

In 2022, two species discovered in southern Algeria came very close to being added to the Western Palearctic list, but each was found marginally outside the WP boundary at 21°N. At Timiaouine, Bordj Baji Mokhtar province, a Northern Grey-headed Sparrow was observed on 13th October (Boulaouad *et al*. 2023), and a Chestnut-bellied Starling was in the Tawendert region on 24th November (Soukkou *et al*. 2023). Both observations were made by members of the Algerian Wildlife Watching Association (AWWA). Timiaouine is at 20°26'N and Tawendert is at 20°38'N.

Western Palearctic

The boundaries of the Western Palearctic observed in this note are those as defined by the Birds of the Western Palearctic (BWP). In the North Atlantic to 30°W longitude (with an additional 25 mile wide corridor to 32°W centred about 39°N in order to include Flores and Corvo), incorporating the eastern Atlantic Ocean islands (Azores, Madeira, Canaries, Selvagens Islands and Cape Verde Islands), islands at Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania), North Africa south to the northern borders of the Sahel at about 21°N (including the Tibesti massif), all of Europe including Russia as far east as the Ural Mountains, the area between the Black and Caspian seas, Middle East, Iraq, Kuwait and extreme northern Saudi Arabia.

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Sincere apologies if I have failed to mention anyone I should have.

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Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* 78
Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* 112
Taiga Merlin *Falco columbarius columbarius* 101
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Thayer's Gull *Larus glaucoides thayeri* 160
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Thick-billed Warbler *Arundinax aedon* 75

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Tricoloured Heron *Egretta tricolor* 147
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Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus* 207
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Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus* 273
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Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* 94
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White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis* 235
White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* 23
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White-winged Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera leucoptera* 254
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Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* 19
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First Western Palearctic Records 1800 to 2025

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

About 1801 England: Male, Devon, October (D'Urban & Mathew 1892, Montagu & Rennie 1831), shot.

This bird was shot at the beginning of October somewhere on the coast of Devon in southwest England. When examined it was clearly emaciated, weighing only three ounces and a quarter, probably the result of having just crossing the Atlantic. The specimen is housed in the Natural History Museum.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*

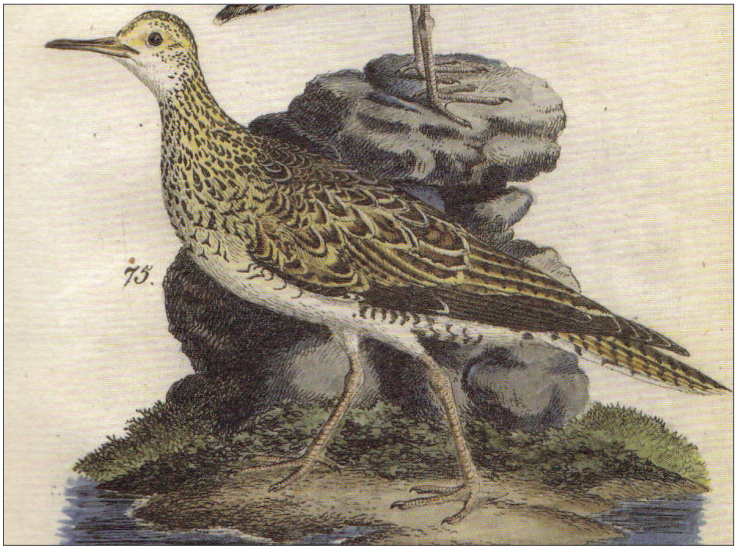
1804 England: River Frome, near Puddletown, Dorset, during Autumn (D'Urban & Mathew 1892), shot.

While hunting Pheasants amongst the high banks, between the broad ditches of some rich water meadows about a half-mile from the River Frome, Mr. Cunningham of Puddletown shot this bird as it rose. Cunningham sent the specimen to Col. George Montagu for his collection, mistakenly describing it as Common Bittern.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*

Before 1811 (possibly 1805) Germany: Juvenile male, River Werra, Hessen, exact date and year not known (Naumann & Naumann 1811), shot.

The carcass was sent to Herr von Minckwitz in Silesia. Johann Friedrich Naumann very likely examined and sketched the specimen during his visit there in 1805 and his drawing is included in the 5th supplement to Naumann's *Natural History of the Land and Water Birds of Northern Germany* (Pic. 001).



Pic. 001.
Upland Sandpiper, illustration by Johann Friedrich Naumann of the (presumed) River Werra individual.

Pics. 002–003.
American Robin, Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna.
Photos: © Alice Schumacher / NHM Vienna.





American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

1820 (presumed to be) Austria: Adult female, Aspang, Bucklige Welt, December (Albegger 2022, Alexander & Fitter 1955), collected.

The specimen is housed in the Natural History Museum, Vienna (Pics. 002-003).

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*

1823 Germany: Immature male, Ahlsdorf, Sachsen-Anhalt, 30th September (Ringleben 1969), collected.

This thrush was collected near Ahlsdorf by Freiherr von Seyffertitz. The carcass was sent to the German pastor and ornithologist Christian Ludwig Brehm, who described it as *Turdus seyffertitzii* (syn. *obscurus* Gmelin) and he arranged to have the specimen mounted. There is a possible earlier record somewhere in or near Brandenburg, Germany sometime before 1822.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*

1825 Ireland: Near Youghal, Cork, during Autumn (Thompson vol. I, p. 365), shot.

This bird was mentioned by Robert Ball (of Youghal, County Cork) in a note to the *Field Naturalists' Magazine* of October 1832. Ball stated that while he was in Youghal, a neighbour's butler brought him the bird to examine not long after it was shot and while it was still warm.



Pic. 004.
Hermit Thrush,
Naumann Museum, Köthen.
Photo: © Stefan Fischer.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

1825 Germany: Male, near Kleinzerbst, Köthen, Saxony-Anhalt, 22nd December (*Isis von Oken* 1826, pp. 520-521), caught.

This Nearctic thrush was taken near the home of Johann Friedrich Naumann, who added the specimen to his collection. Naumann is acknowledged as one of the founders of scientific ornithology in Europe and the author of *Naturgeschichte der Vögel Deutschlands* (1820-1844) and *The Eggs of German Birds* (1818-1828). The specimen is currently housed in the Naumann Museum, Köthen (Pic. 004).

Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius*

1825 Scotland: Westhall, Monymeal, Fife, 31st December (Fleming 1828), shot.

Shot while it perched on a wall near a pigeon house (presumably a dovecote?). The feathers were reported to be quite fresh and entire, like those of a wild bird. The specimen was presented to Dr. John Fleming by the Rev. A. Esplin who was the schoolmaster at Monymeal.

This is the only one of four British records listed by Alexander & Fitter (1955) that occurred before 1830, after which they state it was notorious [that] many Passenger Pigeons were brought over and turned loose in Britain and further remarked this would not invalidate the 1825 record. Indeed it was accepted by the BOU List Committee in 1883, however in 1915 the record was binned by Howard Saunders (Secretary of the BOU from 1901 to 1907 and the first secretary and treasurer of the British Ornithologists' Club). The species became extinct in the wild about the start of the 20th Century and is not on any Western Palearctic list.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Calidris subruficollis*

1826 England: Near Melbourn, Cambridgeshire, September (Saunders 1889, Yarrell 1843), shot.

Early in September 1826 and while in the company of Dotterel, this Nearctic wader was shot. The carcass came into the possession of Mr. Baker of Melbourn, who preserved the skin. It was later purchased by John Sims on behalf of William Yarrell.

Pic. 005.
Yellow-browed Bunting, Natural History Museum, Lille.
Photo: © Christophe Hildebrand.



Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*

1827 France: First-winter male, Lille Castle, Nord, during Autumn (Jiguet 2007), caught.

This bird was captured behind the castle at Lille, near the Belgian border in north-eastern France. The specimen is housed at the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle de Lille (Pic. 005).

Some doubts about the location (Lille Castle) were expressed by Johann Friedrich Naumann, who suggested it could have been caught in Germany, rather than in France. However, a thorough examination of the museum's catalogues have shown this to be erroneous and with no validity whatsoever. Consequently, the record was accepted by the Comité d'Homologation National (French Rarities Committee) in 2007. This predates the previously accepted first WP record at Tongeren, Belgium in October 1966 by 139 years.

American Northern Hawk-Owl *Surnia ulula caparoch*

1830 At sea/England: Sea area Plymouth, English Channel, March (Yarrell 1843), captured.

The hawk came aboard a collier that was on passage to Waterford (in southern Ireland), while the vessel was a few miles off Looe, Cornwall. It was in such a state of exhaustion that it was easily captured by hand and held until the ship reached Waterford. On arrival, Capt. Stacey presented the bird to an unamed individual, with whom it lived for a few weeks. It later came into the possession of Dr. Robert J. Burkitt (general practitioner and amateur ornithologist), eventually donated to the Museum at Trinity College, Dublin.

Howard Saunders subsequently visited the museum and he identified the bird to the North American form (*The Field*, 7th December 1878, vol. LII, p. 732).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

1830 England: Female, Breydon (or Broad) Water, near Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 17th October (Yarrell 1843), shot.

This sandpiper was on its own when taken, its call having attracted the attention of the shooter. The carcass was preserved by J. Harvey and soon after passed into the possession of J.D. Hoy, who sent it to William Yarrell for his inspection. When John James Audubon visited London, Yarrell showed it to him, and Audubon immediately confirmed it was a Pectoral Sandpiper.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

1833 Sweden: Adult male, Karesuando, Torne lappmark, date not known (Nilsson 1858), shot.

Holboell's (Red-necked) Grebe *Podiceps grisegena holboellii*

1835 Sweden: Kullen, Skåne, 7th January (Ahlén 1961), collected or found dead?

While examining skins at the Zoological Museum in Lund, southern Sweden, Ingemar Ahlén discovered a 19th Century specimen of Holboell's Grebe (the far-east Asian and North American form of Red-necked Grebe) in the museum's collection.

The bird was 'found' at Kullen in Skåne (southwestern Sweden), which is located on a peninsula that juts far out into the Kattegat (the body of water to the south of the Skagerrak between Jutland and the west coast of Sweden). Measurements taken were compared with 38 specimens of the nominate form, which proved beyond any doubt the bird at Kullen was an example of Holboell's Grebe.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

1836 Northern Ireland: Belfast Lough, Antrim or Down, April (Thompson vol. II, p. 297), killed.



Pic. 006.
White-rumped Sandpiper, Ulster Museum, Belfast.
Photo: © Stuart McKee.

William Thompson (a member of the Belfast Natural History Society and author of the *Natural History of Ireland* [1849-1856] in four volumes) was of the opinion this record was based on circumstantial evidence because he claimed in the *Annals of Natural History* (1836) that the specimen could not be located. This would appear to have been an oversight on his part as it is on display at the Ulster Museum, Belfast (Pic. 006).

A White-rumped Sandpiper was killed near Stoke Heat, Shropshire, England some time before 1839, however whether it was previous to the Belfast Lough individual is not known (Palmer 2000).

Baikal Teal *Sibirionetta formosa*

1836 France: Five, Épervans, Saône-et-Loire, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, November (Mayaud 1936), obtained.

It would appear these birds were part of an invasion of this far-east Asian dabbling duck to Europe at a time before known introductions to European wildfowl collections had taken place (BWP I).

American Wigeon *Mareca americana*

1837/38 England: Male, location not known, during Winter (Palmer 2000), shot.

The carcass was discovered in Leadenhall Food Market, London, where it was purchased by Mr. Bartlett, who thought it was a variety of Eurasian Wigeon. A female of the species was said to have accompanied it but this cannot be confirmed.

The specimen later came into the collection of John Henry Gurney Sr. (amateur ornithologist and one time Member of Parliament for King's Lynn). American Wigeon is the New World counterpart to Wigeon.

Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata*

1839 Austria: Male, Lake Neusiedl, near Apetlon, Burgenland, September (von Pelzeln 1871), shot.

Shot by Mr. Kopp, a local surgeon. Published by August Edler von Pelzeln as *Querquedula falcata*. The mounted specimen is on display in the Natural History Museum, Vienna (Pic. 007).

This predates all Falcated Duck records likely to be genuine vagrants to the Western Palearctic listed in BWP I (p. 484).



Pic. 007.
Falcated Duck, Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna.
Photo: © Alice Schumacher / NHM Vienna.

Pics. 008–009.
Grey Catbird, Institut für Vogelforschung, Wilhelmshaven.
Photos: © Jochen Dierschke.





Grey Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*

1840 Germany: Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 28th October (Gätke 1895), shot.

This Nearctic passerine was shot by the bird collector Oelrich Aeuckens, better known as Oelk. Using an intermediate and a certain amount of subterfuge, a rival collector on Helgoland named Reymers acquired it.

Six years later and after much trouble and pressure, Heinrich Gätke (German ornithologist and artist who lived on Helgoland from 1841) obtained the specimen from Reymers (Pics. 008-009). When Oelk saw it, he remarked that he had shot one like it some years ago and sold it to a stranger, at which point Gätke told him it was the same bird and related the whole story. The specimen is currently housed in the Landesmuseum, Hannover.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

About 1840 England: Male, Hurstbourne Park, near Whitchurch, Hampshire, date not known (Saunders 1899), shot.

Arthur Fellowes of Burwood, Rotherfield, Sussex stated that he had in his possession one of these birds [i.e. a Green-winged Teal] in excellent preservation his father had shot more than 40 years ago (ca. 1840), adding that the white crescent on the wing is very apparent and well defined (Fellowes 1880). As Green-winged Teal was not known in captivity prior to 1898, it is safe to assume this was a genuine vagrant.

Green-winged Teal will loose its status as a full species once AviList's unified global checklist of birds is adopted.

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*

1843 Germany: Near Prödel, Saxony-Anhalt, 5th August (Naumann 1850), collected.

Found in a state of exhaustion next to a puddle in a field near Prödel. It was captured and taken alive to the local pastor, Herr Gueinsius, who preserved it and sent the specimen to J.F. Naumann for his inspection. Naumann speculated it had followed the course of the River Elbe from the North Sea to reach Prödel.

Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus*

1843 Germany: Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 4th October (Gätke 1895), collected.

Taken by the bird collector Reymers who offered it to Gätke, but as he had yet to become a serious collector, declined to pay the high asking price, something he later came to regret. Instead it passed into the hands of Brandt at Hamburg, and its fate thereafter was unknown to Gätke, as Brandt was very careful not to announce where he got his specimens from or where or who they went to.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

1843 Italy: Near Genoa, Liguria, during Autumn (Arrigoni Degli Oddi 1929), collected.

The specimen is preserved at La Specola Museum, Florence.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

1845 Germany: Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 6th October (Portofée & Dierschke 1999), taken.

Before he could be entrusted with powder and gunshot, the fowler Claus Aeuckens became an expert marksman with rounded pebbles he carried in a hunting-bag. On Monday, 6th October 1845, he brought down a small bird in this manner as it flew along a Helgoland cliff-face. Even though the blow completely crushed the bird against a rock, he realised it was unusual enough to bring Gätke a complete and intact wing to inspect. Gätke had no idea what the species was and suggested it might be from something like a Goldcrest, but Aeuckens was adamant it was a warbler. Gätke preserved the wing and made an accurate drawing of it and a few years later he thought he had solved the riddle when he first examined a Yellow-browed Warbler, but upon closer inspection found the measurements differed.

It would be over 30 years before the puzzle was finally solved, when during the Summer of 1879, Eugen von Homeyer (founder member of the German Ornithological Society, who served as its president from 1876 to 1883) came on a visit. He brought with him a skin, collected by Benedict Dybowsky in Siberia, that was labelled *Reguloides* (syn. *Phylloscopus*) *proregulus.* Immediately upon seeing this, Gätke realised the wing Aeuckens brought him back in 1845 came from the same species.

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*

1846 England: Great Horkesley, Essex, 6th to 8th July (Newman 1846), shot.

This bird was shot by Peter Coveney at about 21:00 on Monday, 8th July 1846. He had first noticed it on the evening of the 6th, when it was hawking insects at a great height over a small wood and neighbouring trees. Coveney heard it crying out as it fell and discovered it was only wounded when he found it lying prone. It was clinging so tightly to clover that when to tried to pick it up it pulled stalks from the ground.

The specimen was set up by Mr. Hall of City Road, Colchester for Mr. Catchpool, who sent it to Edward Newton on 17th July. Newton later returned it to Catchpool, this after it had been critically examined and identified by a triumvirate of eminent ornithologists; William Yarrell, Henry Doubleday and W.R. Fisher. This far eastern swift is sometimes known as Needle-tailed or Spine-tailed Swift.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

1847 Germany: Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, May (Gätke 1895).

As he was taking aim at a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Claus Aeuckens noticed a small sandpiper close by it running about. Disturbed, it promptly took off, soaring quite low above him with light beats of the wings. Aeuckens described it to Gätke as having white on the underside, with many black spots in form like the small roundish black spots of the Missel Thrush [sic.]. Although Spotted Sandpiper was unknown to him, Aeuckens was certain it was something rare. At that time he possessed only an old and simple musket, and had not a second shot for the bird.

A possible earlier record was also at Helgoland in the late 1830s. This bird was shot in May by a small pond on the Upper Plateau by the local gunner, Hans Tonnies. It was described as quite similar to the common species, but having a small round black spot upon each of the white feathers of the underside. Despite the convincing description it was not identified to species.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

1847 Finland: Uusimaa, Helsinki, 5th June (Palmgren 1935), shot.

While auditing the bird collection at the Finnish Museum of Natural History in Helsinki, Pontus Palmgren found a specimen labelled Tringa Minuta, Helsinki 18 5/6 47 (i.e. indicating a Little Stint collected on 5th June 1847), but which Palmgren recognised was in fact an example of the Nearctic Least Sandpiper, the smallest of all the wading birds (Pic. 010).



Pic. 010.
Least Sandpiper, Finnish Museum of Natural History, Helsinki.
Photo: © Courtesy of Luomas, available from http://id.luomus.fi/KS.KL11319

Palmgren noted the label was glued to the base, a practise used by the museum between 1837 and 1851 and therefore consistent with the year collected. He discounted the possibility it was mounted on a base previously used for a Little Stint and further established that all stint specimens preserved in the museum were collected in Finland, greatly reducing the possibility of some mix up when the label was first attached. In addition, he found two Turnstone specimens whose labels were identical to the Least Sandpiper's and both were shot on the same date at Isosaari, an island in the Gulf of Finland about five miles to the southwest of Helsinki. Palmgren concluded therefore, that the label was a genuine misidentification and the bird was collected in Finland.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

1847 Germany: Probably a first-winter, Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 20th December (Gätke 1895), killed.

Having examined this plover's carcass, Heinrich Gätke stated he found the plumage to be very much faded, that it appeared to be a young autumn bird and was from the season of the year from which it was captured. The specimen was preserved in Gätke's collection. At that time and until it was raised to full species status in 1986, American Golden Plover was treated as one of two forms of Lesser Golden Plover.

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

1848 Northern Ireland: Adult winter male, River Lagan near Belfast, 1st February (Thompson vol. III, p. 317), shot.

Details of this bird's capture were published in the *Annals of Natural History* (1848, vol. I, p.192). The gull was shot on a tidal part of the River Lagan somewhere between Ormeau Bridge and the Botanic Gardens. William Thompson of Belfast saw the carcass prior to skinning and he took a detailed description and a full set of measurements (reproduced in Thompson vol. III, pp. 318-319). The specimen is currently housed in the Ulster Museum, Belfast (Pic. 011).

In this instance the species is not named after the French military and political leader Napoleon Bonaparte. Instead it is his nephew that is honoured, the ornithologist and diplomat, Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte (1803-1857), who spent eight years in America.



Pic. 011.
Bonaparte's Gull,
Ulster Museum, Belfast.
Photo: © Stuart McKee.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*

1848 England: Adult, near Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, September (Gurney 1849, Seebohm 1893), shot.

John Henry Gurney Sr. purchased a Pectoral Sandpiper specimen that was shot during the last week of September 1848 by a man named Wilmot at a beach area known as the Denes, near Great Yarmouth. Some time later Gurney presented the specimen to the Norfolk and Norwich Museum. In about 1893 the specimen was examined by Henry Seebohm, who realised it was actually a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, a species that breeds across tundra regions of northeastern Asia. After a time, Gurney had come to doubt the authenticity of the bird, suspecting it had been imported and not shot locally, but Seebohm was happy to accept Wilmot's account.

Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*

1850 England: Female, Southacre, near Swaffham, Norfolk, March or April (Palmer 2000), killed.

This bird was first noticed by a boy as it flapped from one furze-bush to another, eventually becoming entangled, whereupon the young lad grabbed it. Despite its obvious fatigue it bit his captor who promptly killed it! By a coincidence, Mr. Newcome of Hockwold, near Brandon, Suffolk was hawking in the general area at the same time and his falconer, John Madden, noticed the boy with the dead bird and bought it for Newcome, who arranged for the specimen to be set up (Pic. 012).

About one year later Newcome was persuaded to send it to William Yarrell (author of *A History of British Birds*) who was unable to identify it with any described species, consequently realising it had to be a new species for Britain. The renowned ornithologist John Gould also saw it while it was with Yarrell and he recognised it as one he had encountered during a crossing the Atlantic, but had no idea if it had ever been formally described.*



Pic. 012.
Black-capped Petrel, Norwich Castle Museum.
Photo: © Phil Palmer.

In July 1852 Edward Newton saw a specimen in the Museum of the Zoological Society, which he considered was the same as the Southacre bird and that was confirmed following correspondence with Mr. Bartlett at the Museum, who further added that the species had been figured in No. 416 of the *Planches Coloriées*†, under the name *Procellaria hæsitata*.

Newton suggested Capped Petrel as the vernacular name which, apart from the addition of the qualifier 'Black', persists to the present day. For a full account of this fascinating story see Newton (1852).

* This statement was somewhat puzzling as Bartlett informed Newton that Mr. Gould himself had described the identical specimen, in a paper read before the Society, as *Procellaria rubritarsi*. However, despite Bartlett's assertion no reference to this could be found in the Society's proceedings.

† Volume V of *Nouveau Recueil de Planches Coloriées D'Oiseaux*.

Pallas's Rosefinch *Carpodacus roseus*

1850 Hungary: Male, Buda, 1st December (Haas *et al*. 2013), captured.

Caught alive somewhere in the hills outside of Buda, that part of the Hungarian capital situated on the west bank of the River Danube. It was taken into captivity but unfortunately died soon after. Identification was provided by the Hungarian ornithologist Salamon Janos Petényi. The specimen was housed at the Hungarian Natural History Museum in Budapest, however during the 1956 Uprising the Museum's building was destroyed by fire and the specimen lost.

The record predates the earliest confirmed imports of this species by western European collectors (probably to Germany) in 1878. The record was accepted by the MME Nomenclator Bizottság (Hungarian Rarities Committee) as a genuine vagrant.

American Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

1851 Germany: Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 6th November (Gätke 1895), shot.

It was the bird's call that first attracted the attention of a native gunner, who realising the species was unknown to him, promptly shot it. The second record for the WP was also taken on Helgoland, almost seven years later in May 1858. Both specimens are currently housed in the Landesmuseum, Hannover (Pic. 013).



Pic. 013.
First (lower) & second **American Pipits**, for the WP, Institut für Vogelforschung, Wilhelmshaven.
Photo: © Jochen Dierschke.

Following the release of IOC World List version 14.2 (August 2024), both New World forms of Buff-bellied Pipit (*rubescens* & *alticola*) now comprise the polytypic American Pipit, while the Eastern Palearctic *japonicus* has become the monotypic Siberian Pipit (see page 81).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

1854/55 England: Misson, Nottinghamshire, during Winter (Saunders 1889), shot.

Killed by wild-fowlers sometime during the winter of 1854-55. The carcass was sent to the Doncaster taxidermist Hugh Reid for setting up. It was later sold to Sir W.M.E. Milner of Nun Appleton, North Yorkshire. Milner added it to his collection and later exhibited it in London during the spring of 1855. The skin is currently preserved at Leeds Museum.

Eskimo Curlew *Numenius borealis*

1855 Scotland: Probably a female, Cairn-mon-earn, Durris Forrest, Grampian, 6th September (Melling 2010, Pellow 2014), shot.

This bird was standing on a stone cairn above Durris Forest when it was shot by W.R. Cusack of Durris House (Pic. 014). Appearing reluctant to fly, it made an easy target for Cusack who got as close as 20 yards. It was first noticed by his gamekeeper, who mistakenly called out there was a Golden Plover close-by. The carcass was sent for preservation to Mitchell, a taxidermist in Aberdeen. It was examined by J. Longmuir who identified it as an Eskuimaux Curlew (Longmuir 1855). An earlier record of two at Woodbridge, Suffolk in 1852 was rejected following a review by the BOURC.

This species is most likely extinct. It formally bred across Arctic tundra regions of northwestern Canada and Alaska and wintered on South American grasslands. Although there have been subsequent claims, it has not been reliably recorded since the late 1980s. The most recent confirmed sightings were a bird photographed at Galveston Island, Texas, USA in 1962 and a specimen collected at Barbados in 1963. No confirmed records on the wintering grounds have been made since 1939. Formally abundant, its decline appears to be a combination of widescale hunting and habitat loss.



Pic. 014.
Eskimo Curlew,
privately preserved.
Photo: © Keith Pellow.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Helopsaltes* certhiola*

1856 Germany: Juvenile, Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 12th/13th August (Gätke 1895), caught.

Caught at the glasses of the [Helgoland] lighthouse during the night of 12th/13th August. Sometime later Gätke acquired it for his collection.

When the Zoologist Johann Heinrich Blasius visited in 1858 he admitted there were two specimens in Gätke's collection that he could not put a name to. One was an Arctic Warbler (then known as Eversmann's Warbler) and the Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler was the other. Gätke replied more in the form of a question that [the second of these] might be *S.* [*Sylvia*] *certhiola* and during the course of their conversation they agreed that was the case. Blasius described the Pallas's Gropper as the jewel of [Gätke's] collection.

* Along with five other grass warblers (including Gray's Grasshopper Warbler), Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler was reassigned to the genus *Helopsaltes* from *Locustella,* this following the release of IOC World List, version 8.2.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

1857 Germany: Male, Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 25th June (Gätke 1895), obtained.

Heinrich Gätke reported the plover was a fine male in perfect plumage. He took a full set of measurements, which allowed him rule any possibility it was a European Golden Plover. At that time and until it was raised to full species status in 1986, Pacific Golden Plover was treated as one of two forms of Lesser Golden Plover

Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythropthalmus*

1858 Italy: Lucca, Tuscany, date not known (Salvadori 1872), collected.

The specimen was preserved at the Regio Museo (Royal Museum) of Pisa.



Pics. 015–016.
Black-throated Green Warbler, Institut für Vogelforschung, Wilhelmshaven.
Photos: © Jochen Dierschke.

Black-throated Green Warbler *Setophaga virens*

1858 Germany: First-winter male, Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 19th October (Gätke 1895), shot.

This New World warbler was taken by a boy using a blow-pipe. The specimen is currently preserved in the Landesmuseum, Hannover (Pics. 015-016).

Blue-winged Teal *Spatula discors*

1858 Scotland: Probably a male, Upper Nithsdale, Dumfries and Galloway (then part of Dumfriesshire), date not known (Saunders 1899), shot.

Writing in *The Naturalist* (vol. viii, 1858, p.168), W.G. Gibson stated, without naming the month that, a specimen of the Blue-winged Teal (*Attas discors*) was shot here a few weeks ago. The specimen was acquired by Sir William Jardine for his collection and subsequently by Edinburgh Museum (now part of National Museums Scotland). The date is sometimes erroneously quoted as January 1863.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*

1859 England: Knapp Mill, near Christchurch, Dorset, April (Sclater 1862), killed.

In 1862, John R. Wise (author of the *History and Scenery of the New Forest*) brought P.L. (Philip Lutley) Sclater (lawyer and zoologist who was Secretary of the Zoological Society of London from 1860 to 1902), a mounted specimen of a Plover enclosed in a glass case. Wise told Sclater it belonged to Mr. Tanner and was undoubtedly killed in the New Forest (a large tract of unenclosed pasture land, heathland and forest in southern England). Sclater immediately identified it as a Killdeer and asked Wise to provide more details.

Weis reported the bird was shot by Mr. Douding, a Salmon Association of Christchurch keeper, in a potato field near Knapp Mill on the River Avon (then part of the historic county of Hampshire), about one mile from Christchurch. It was taken to the Christchurch taxidermist William Hart for setting up, who later sold it to Tanner. The species was not added to the British List until 1912.

The year is sometimes erroneously given as 1857 (Saunders 1899). Killdeer is an onomatopoeic rendition of the bird's plaintive *kill-dee* call.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*

1860 Faroe Islands: Adult female, Mykineshólmur (or Mykines), Spring (Salomonsen 1935).

This albatross visited the large Gannet colony at Mykineshólmur (the most westerly of the main Faroe Islands) for 34 years from 1860 until 11th May 1894, on which date it was shot. During all this these years it departed the colony every autumn with the Gannets, regularly returning with them in the spring. It was always on its own and was never known to find a mate. There are earlier records of albatross in the Western Palearctic that were not identified to species.

Black-browed Albatross is circumpolar in the southern oceans. In the south Atlantic it breeds in the Falkland Islands and at South Georgia. It is by far the most numerous vagrant albatross occurring in the Western Palearctic.

Pic. 017.
Parakeet Auklet,
Naturhistoriska Museet,
Stockholm.
Photo: © Hans Bister.



Parakeet Auklet *Aethia psittacula*

1860 Sweden: Adult, Lake Vättern, Småland, December (Sealy & Carter 2012), taken alive.

This was the first occurrence of a north Pacific Alcid in the Western Palearctic. It was captured alive sometime during December at Lake Vättern, a freshwater lake near Jönköping in southern Sweden.

In his 1880 list of North American birds, J.J. Dalgleish erroneously referred to it as a Crested Auklet and this error was repeated by Ridgway (1919). However, a painting of the bird published in the *Journal of the Swedish Sportsmen's Association* left no doubt it was a Parakeet Auklet. The mounted specimen is housed at the Naturhistoriska Museet, Stockholm (Pic. 017).

Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*

1863 Israel: Nahal Keziv (Wadi Quarn), Upper Galilee, 8th December (Ebels 2002), collected.

This owl was collected by the parson-naturalist and explorer, the Rev. Henry Baker Tristram, one time Canon of Durham Cathedral, who has about 20 species named in his honour. Tristram was a founder and original member of the British Ornithologists' Union, a fellow of the Royal Society, Secretary to the Governor of Bermuda from 1847 to 1849 and although an early supporter of Darwinism, would later come to reject it. The specimen (Accession Number NML-VZ T285) is part of the Henry Tristram collection that is housed at the World Museum, part of National Museums Liverpool (Pics. 018-019).

Pics. 018-019.
Brown Fish Owl, World Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool.
Photos: © National Museums Liverpool (World Museum – NML-VZ T285) / Antony Parker.





Sora *Porzana carolina*

1864 England: River Kennet, near Newbury, Berkshire, October (Eyre 1865), shot.

H.S. Eyre (of Newington, near Sittingbourne, Kent) shot a Carolina Crake (an alternative name) on the banks of the River Kennet. The specimen was later exhibited at a meeting of the Zoological Society on 14th February 1865 by Alfred Newton, the Professor of Comparative Anatomy at Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*

1866 Azerbaijan: Adult female, Pisarevka, Poltava, May (Snow & Perrins 1998).

This is a first European record. Historically a winter visitor in small numbers to Iraq.

Willet *Tringa semipalmata*

Before 1867 France: Near Abbeville, Somme, date not known (Dubois & Yésou 1986), collected.

Willet is polytypic; the nominate eastern form breeds along Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts and the western *inornata* breeds on prairie lands from south-central Canada to mid-western USA. Some have suggested these are better treated as two full monotypic species. The Abbeville specimen was not identified to subspecies and as its whereabouts is not known, further investigation is not possible.



Pic. 020.
'Western' Willet,
Vendée, September 1998 (left).
Photo: © Laurent Spanneut.

Pics. 021–022.
'Eastern' Willet,
Mølen and Omlidstranda,
October 1992 (below).
Photos: © Håkon Heggland.





The first record for the Western Palearctic that could be attributed to 'Eastern' Willet was at Mølen and Omlidstranda, Larvik, Vestfold, Norway (Pics. 021-022) from 14th October 1992 to 23rd March 1993 (Sonbø 1993). The first 'Western' Willet was an immature at Lagune de la Belle Henriette, La Faute-Sur-Mer, Vendée, France (Pic. 020) from 12th to 13th September 1998 (Siblet & Spanneut 1998).

Striped Crake *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*

1867 Algeria: Juvenile, near Biskra, northeastern Algeria, January (Heim de Balsac & Mayaud 1962), collected.

A sub-Saharan species. The specimen's whereabouts is not known.

Black-headed Lapwing *Vanellus tectus*

1869 Israel/Jordan: Male, Wady El Arabh, Arava Valley, date not known (Shirihai 1996), collected.

This bird was shot by J.K. Lord in the Arava Valley, on or near the present-day frontier between Israel and Jordan. To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic. A 19th Century claim from Egypt is considered to be unreliable (BWP III). The specimen is preserved at the Natural History Museum, Tring (Registration number, NHMUK 1896.7.1.184), (Pics. 023-024).





Pics. 023–024.
Black-headed Lapwing, Natural History Museum, Tring.
Photos: Mark Adams, © Natural History Museum, London.

Pic. 025.
Kumlien's Gull, Natural History Museum, Tring.
Photo: Mark Adams, © Natural History Museum, London.



Kumlien's Gull *Larus glaucoides kumlieni*

1869 Scotland: Third-winter female, Breckness, near Stromness, Orkney, 24th November (BOU 1998), killed.

The specimen (Pic. 025) was discovered in the Natural History Museum, Tring (Registration number, NHMUK 1897.11.10.11). It was incorrectly labelled as an Iceland Gull, but on closer inspection it could be seen that the tips of the outer primaries (10-8) had brown immature markings on the outer webs and pale adult Kumlien's type 1-2 markings on the inner webs. Following a review by the BOURC in 1997 it was re-identified as Kumlien's Gull, which was subsequently added to the British List as a subspecies of Iceland Gull.

The specimen's original label states Iceland Gull, female, not quite adult. Breckness, Nov 24/69 and the corresponding NHM register entry from the time states Larus leucopterus, female adult, Orkneys, 24.11.69. It seems that when this specimen was given a more up to date label in 1986, the identification was translated to Larus glaucoides glaucoides, and 'Breckness' mis-transcribed as 'Brackness', a location in Scalloway, Shetland. In fact Breckness (or Breck Ness) is about two miles from Stromness on the neighbouring island group of Orkney. Further evidence it was collected at Breckness and not Brackness is that it was obtained from the well known 19th Century Orkney collector Edward Hargitt (Prys-Jones 2000).

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*

Before 1870 Scotland: River Clyde, Lanarkshire, date or year not known (Palmer 2000).

In a letter to *Ibis* (the peer-reviewed quarterly journal of the BOU, first published in 1859), Robert Gray recalled how he had made inquiries throughout almost every county regarding the occurrence of the rarer species during preparatory work on the *Birds of Scotland** (Gray 1870). These included a Green-rumped Tattler (an obsolete name for Solitary Sandpiper) that was shot some years previously by William Gordon of Airdrie, somewhere on the banks of the River Clyde.

Gordon was never able to identify the bird, but following his death in August 1870 his entire collection was brought to Robert Gray in Glasgow and it was he who identified it as a Solitary Sandpiper. Gray later exhibited the specimen at a meeting of the Glasgow Natural History Society, informing them he had received a communication from Francis McCulloch, taxidermist of Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, confirming the bird was shot in Lanarkshire.

* Presumably the *Birds of the West of Scotland* published in 1871.

American Goshawk *Accipiter atricapillus*

1870 Ireland: Adult female, Galtee Mountains, Tipperary, February (Ussher & Warren 1900), shot.

The specimen was originally acquired for the collection of Sir Victor Alexander Brooke (Anglo-Irish naturalist and Baronet of Colebrooke Estate, Fermanagh). Some time later it was donated to the Natural History Museum, Dublin, where it remains.

The three Nearctic races of Northern Goshawk were raised to full species status as the polytypic American Goshawk, following the release of IOC World List version 13.2 in July 2023 based on marked differences in vocalizations [sic], morphology, and mitochondrial and genomic DNA divergence.

Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*

1874 Egypt: Date or location not known (Haas & Ławicki 2018), collected.

The skin is housed at the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, USA. Abyssinian (or Senegal) Roller, breeds across the Sahel region and southwestern parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Southern populations are sedentary, however birds in the northern part of its range are short-distance migrants.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

1876 Germany: Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 24th October (Gätke 1895).

Heinrich Gätke's garden on Helgoland was separated from his neighbour by a high wooden paling. He enjoyed peering through chinks in the fencing in order to observe birds, unaware of his presence, just a few feet away. On one such occasion he noticed a small warbler he described as a very vividly coloured Reed Warbler in autumn plumage. It reminded him of Siberian Chiffchaff, which he had seen at least six times, but the call was different and on hearing it Gätke at once recognised it as the eastern Sylvia fuscata. A long thorn-hedge in his neighbour's garden with houses situated behind prevented him getting a clear view of the bird and to his great annoyance made it impossible to get a shot off. Instead, he had to be satisfied with watching it for ten minutes through the fence at distances from two to twenty paces, after which it disappeared into the thorn-hedge and was never seen again. Thus, as far as can be told, it was the first time a first Western Palearctic record managed to survive the experience!

Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*

1877 France: Adult, Le Crotoy, Saint-Valery-sur-Somme, Baie de la Somme, 29th June (Mayaud 1936), killed.

The specimen is part of the Marmottan collection at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

1878 Ireland: Pair, Cork Harbour, December (Ussher & Warren 1900), shot.

Both these birds were shot by Sir Ralph William Frankland Payne-Gallwey (author, engineer, historian, ballistics expert and artist) during a severe frost just off East Ferry in Cork Harbour. He had previously observed them in the company of Red-breasted Mergansers, but on that occasion found it impossible to approach them without spooking them. Earlier records in Britain were rejected following a review by the BOURC (BOU 2001).

Yellow-eyed Stock Dove *Columba eversmanni*

1881 Russia: Adult, near Orenburg, 12th May (BWP IV), shot.

When this bird was shot by N.A. Zarudy it was in the company of Stock Doves. On three or four subsequent occasions that spring he noticed more Yellow-eyed (or Pale-backed) Stock Doves with Stock Doves. He found it easy to pick them out on account of their white rump.

Orenburg is very close to the Eastern Palearctic border and the museum label does not clearly indicate the precise location the specimen was taken. However, Arkhipov *et al*. (2010) make a very convincing case that it was in Europe and therefore within the Western Palearctic. The specimen is housed in the Zoological Museum, St. Petersburg.

Siberian Northern Shrike *Lanius borealis sibericus*

1881 Norway: Hamar, Innlandet, 5th November (Collett 1892), shot.

Following DNA-sequencing of a sample taken from the specimen the sub-specific identification was verified. The specimen is preserved at the Zoological Museum, Oslo (Pic. 026).

The IOC recognise five subspecies of Northern Shrike. The nominate form is native to North America, with the remainder found throughout much of Asia. The first American Northern Shrike (*Lanius borealis borealis*) for the Western Palearctic was a first-winter bird found at Lighthouse Valley, Corvo, Azores on 18th October 2014, that wandered the island until 30th October (see page 240).



Pic. 026.
Siberian Northern Shrike, Zoological Museum, Oslo.
Photo: © Andreas Gullberg.

Pic. 027.
Daurian Jackdaw, Finnish Museum of Natural History, Helsinki.
Photo: © Courtesy of Luomas, available from http://id.luomus.fi/KS.KL2697



Daurian Jackdaw *Coloeus dauuricus*

1883 Finland: Adult, Uusikaarlepyy (Nykarleby), Ostrobothnia, May (Stjernberg 1999), shot.

Shot early in May 1883 by Mr. Weckman. The specimen was acquired by the Finnish Museum of Natural History, Helsinki soon after and is preserved there as a mounted specimen (Pic. 027).

American Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica*

Before 1883 Italy: Lentini near Syracuse, Sicily, date or year not known (Baccetti *et al*. 2021), collected.

The specimen is part of a collection collated by the Sicilian naturalist and traveller Alessandro Rizza that is preserved at the Classic Lyceum 'T. Gargallo' in Syracuse, Sicily.

It was reported to be included in the museum catalogue in the section listing Italian specimens of Allen's Gallinule (Arrigoni Degli Oddi 1929), but was not found. The specimen was subsequently identified as *P. martinica* by Andrea Corso and Renzo Ientile (Corso & Ientile 1994). The identity is not in question, however they raised some questions regarding the bird's origin.

Dwarf Bittern *Ixobrychus sturmii*

1886 Canary Islands: Adult male, La Laguna, Tenerife, October (Bannerman 1963), collected.

Taken in the vicinity of San Cristóbal de La Laguna in the northeast of Tenerife. The specimen is housed in the Instituto Cabrera Pinto de La Laguna (Pic. 028). The record was not published by the Comité de Rarezas (Spanish Rarity Committee) until their 2005 report (Dies *et al*. 2007).

Pic. 028.
Dwarf Bittern, Instituto Cabrera Pinto de La Laguna, Tenerife.
Photo: © Juan Antonio Lorenzo.



Stejneger's Scoter *Melanitta stejnegeri*

1886 France: Adult male, Le Crotoy, Baie de Somme, 4th December (Jiguet & la CAF 2007), taken.

The mounted specimen was discovered by Frédéric Jiguet (Chairman of the Comité d'Homologation National and Professor in Conservation Biology at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris) during a visit he made, along with Jean-Marc Pons, to the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris to examine specimens in the Marmottan collection of birds that were mostly acquired at the end of the 19th Century in the Baie de Somme.

Included in the collection were 11 Velvet and 13 Surf Scoters that were obtained from local hunters, all taken between 1869 and 1888. It was while studying these that Frédéric noticed one showing a prominent bulb at the base of the bill, i.e. a male Velvet Scoter of the subspecies *stejnegeri* (since raised to full species status as Stejneger's Scoter). The label stated the bird was caught alive on Saturday, 4th December 1886 at Le Crotoy in northern France. It has been accepted by the CHN (French Rarities Committee) as a Category B record (Pics. 029-030).



Pics. 029–030.
Stejneger's Scoter,
Muséum National d'Histoire
Naturelle, Paris.
Photos: © Frédéric Jiguet.





Pics. 031–032.
South Polar Skua, American Museum of Natural History, New York.
Photos: Courtesy of © AMNH Department of Ornithology.

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*

1889 Faroe Islands: Juvenile female, location not known, 24th September (Boertmann *et al*. 1986), collected.

The specimen (Pics. 031-032) is preserved at the American Museum of Natural History, New York. It was acquired from Natural History Museum, Tring where it had been part of the Rothschild Collection.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

1889 England: Adult, Hay Bottom, near Penrice, St. Austell, Corwall, 27th October (Mathew 1890), shot.

Late in 1889, Murray Mathew noticed a small heron that he did not recognise on display in Mr. Foot's taxidermist shop in Bath, Somerset. Upon enquiring, he learned it was shot the previous autumn in Cornwall. Some time later, Mathew visited the South Kensington Museum of Natural History, and after examining their collection of heron skins, realised it was a Common Green Heron of the United States.

More details were provided by James Edmund Harting (editor of *The Zoologist* from 1877 to 1896), who was brought the specimen for his inspection by Sir Charles Graves-Sawle (one time Member of Parliament for Bodmin). Sir Charles told Harting it had been shot by his keeper William Abbott while he was trying for the proverbial early Woodcock on some low-lying ground at Hay Bottom. Realising it was unusual, Abbott brought it to Sir Charles who promptly sent it to Foot for setting up. It was exhibited at a meeting of the Linnean Society on Thursday, 17th April 1890 (Harting 1890a). On the basis of this record, Green Heron was initially added to the British List, later removed, then finally added once and for all in 1971.

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*

1890 Scotland: First-winter male, Balta Sound, Unst, Shetland, 23rd September (BOU 2003), caught.

Andrew Anderson caught this bird at Balta Sound while it was clearly in a state of exhaustion, so much so that it died five days later on 28th September. The carcass was forwarded by H. Dykes Lloyd to James Harting, who identified it as a Baltimore Oriole. Harting expressed some concerns regarding its provenance, as he was aware the species is so frequently imported to England from New York as a cage bird (Harting 1890b). Although it was well documented it was initially dismissed as an escape or an import, possibly as a consequence of Harting's comments. It would be over 100 years before finally recognised as a genuine vagrant by the BOURC.

In 2001, Sean Farrell found the first Baltimore Oriole for Ireland, the 26th record for the Western Palearctic, and very appropriately it was found near the west Cork fishing village of Baltimore!

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*

1893 England: Adult male, Holderness House, Hull, East Yorkshire, January to 13th February (BOU 2011), shot.

Early in 1893, this Nearctic sparrow was observed in G.W. Jalland's garden, where it fed in the company of other birds. Jalland shot it on 13th February, later sending the carcass to the taxidermist Philip Loten at Easington, Durham for setting up.

It was subsequently seen by John Cordeaux of Eaton Hall, Retford and Mr. Hewetson of Leeds. Cordeaux published a description in both the *The Naturalist* (1893a) and *The Zoologist* (1893b) where he named it a White-throated Bunting, on the basis that it is a true Bunting, and in no way deserving the trivial name of 'Sparrow', which the Americans apply to so many of their finches and buntings. Cordeaux had no doubt it was a wild bird, however the species was not admitted to the British List at the time and the record not accepted until 2010.

American Goldfinch *Spinus tristis*

1894 Ireland: Keem Bay, Achill Island, Mayo, September (Carmody & Hobbs 2015), shot.

This finch was shot by J.R. Sheridan of Dugort, Achill Island, who realised he had a similar one in his collection that he had shot on a visit to North America in 1873. Sheridan sent the carcass to A.G. More (English ornithologist and one time Keeper of the Natural History Division, Dublin) and he confirmed the identification as American Goldfinch (Sheridan 1894).

In an addendum to Sheridan's note, James Edmund Harting (as editor of *The Zoologist*) upon examining the bird stated ... and from the much worn appearance of the wing and tail-feathers - the latter especially being much abraded - we are decidedly of opinion that it had been not long previously in captivity. The specimen is lost so a re-examination of its condition is not possible. Doubts regarding the provenance of this bird means it has never been treated as a genuine vagrant and the species was assigned to Category D1 of the Irish List. The nominate form is found from southern Canada to the Carolinas and winters south to central Mexico, so it has some vagrancy potential, however it is not on any Western Palearctic national list.

Lesser Moorhen *Paragallinula angulata*

1895 Madeira: Male, Santo Amaro, near Funchal, 29th January (Matias 2009), obtained.

On Friday, 1st June 2007, Rafael Matias visited the Museu do Jardim Botânico do Funchal. His attention was drawn to the mounted specimen of a small rallid, recalling a tiny Common Moorhen [...], but clearly an adult Lesser Moorhen. On this occasion he could only peer at it in the display cabinet where the specimen's red plastic label stated, Corvo do charco, 29–01–1895, (i.e. indicating a Black Crake). On a return visit in September he was able to examine it out of the case and could see that the original museum tag read *Limnocorax niger* (Gm.) male, S. Amaro 26.1.95! Matias therefore concluded he was holding what was presumed to be the first and only Black Crake for the Western Palearctic, whose whereabouts at the time was unknown, but presumed lost. Matias had no doubts the specimen he was holding was the supposed Black Crake, but in reality a Lesser Moorhen, and he set about putting the record straight.

The specimen was originally part of a collection preserved at a seminary in Funchal (Museu do Seminário do Funchal) that was set up by Padre Ernesto João Schmitz. On receipt of the bird Schmitz considered it might be a Spotted Crake, but a few years later he (mistakenly) added Black Crake (*Zapornia flavirostra* after IOC v.12.1) to his list of the birds of Madeira stating, the first and only time this bird was collected was on the 26.1.1895. It was a male and was caught in S. Amaro (Schmitz 1899).

Pic. 033.
Broad-billed Roller, Natural History Museum, Tring.
Photo: Mark Adams, © Natural History Museum, London.



Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*

1897 Cape Verde Islands: Juvenile male, Ilha do Maio, Sotavento Islands, 22nd November (Alexander 1898), collected.

Lieutenant Boyd Alexander (British Army officer, explorer and ornithologist) was on his second visit to the Cape Verde Islands in 1897 (for the purpose of collecting eggs), when he (or perhaps one of his party) killed this bird near some ruined huts that were close to the shore on Ilha do Maio, the most easterly of the Sotavento islands. The specimen (Pic. 033) is housed at the Natural History Museum, Tring (Registration number, NHMUK 1911.12.23.566).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

1898 England: North Cotes, Lincolnshire, 1st October (Saunders 1899), shot.

The specimen was exhibited at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club on Wednesday, 19th October 1898. It was shot by G.H. Caton Haigh near North Cotes, Lincolnshire on the 1st of the month, not long after a period of persistent easterly gales. Caton Haigh was in the habit of diligently 'working' the hedge-rows which border the long sea-banks on the Lincolnshire side of the [River] Humber for migrants in the autumn and this practise had paid dividends in the past, especially in September 1896 when he found and shot the first Greenish Warbler for Britain at the same location. On this occasion what attracted his attention was a strange and particularly powerful note, which prompted Caton Haigh to thoroughly beat out the hedge, which had the effect of flushing the owner of the loud voice, a bird about the size of a Wood-Wren that ultimately proved to be an immature Radde's Warbler.

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

1899 Azores: Female, Flores, March (Matias *et al*. 2018), collected.

The specimen is preserved at the Museu Carlos Machado, Ponta Delgada, São Miguel. There are two earlier Irish records that haven't passed the wild bird test so far, however that might just reflect the general consensus of the time that trans-Atlantic vagrancy was unlikely, although some have suggested that both had escaped from the same cage. One was shot at Annsbrook, Meath, in October 1845 and the other was shot (probably) on the River Cloghoge, Wicklow in November 1845 (Ussher & Warren 1900).

Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*

Near the end of the 19th Century France: Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, Bouches-du-Rhône (Dubois *et al*. 2008), collected.

The whereabouts of the specimen is not known. An earlier record near Fréjus, Var, France in about 1845 is no longer accepted by the CAF.

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis*

1900 Azores: Santa Maria, date not known (Le Grand 1983), collected.

The whereabouts of the specimen is not known. Least Bittern is the Nearctic counterpart to Little and Yellow Bitterns.

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*

1901 Italy: Isola d'Elba, Tuscany, 2nd November (Alexander & Fitter 1955), collected.

The specimen was initially housed in the Portoferraio Museum on Elba. The date has sometimes been incorrectly reported as 2nd December.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

1901 Denmark: Birkendegaard, Kalundborg, during Autumn (Lerche 1901), shot.

Henning Scheel illustrated the specimen while the skin was at Lerchenborg Manor House (two miles south of Kalundborg) and this work is reproduced in Schiøler (1931). Subsequently it was preserved at the Esbjerg Seminariums and is mentioned in that institute's catalogue, but could not be found there when it was searched for (Christensen & Rasmussen 2015).

Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*

Before 1903 Azores: Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, sometime before 1903, collected (Bannerman & Bannerman 1966, Robb *et al*. 2022).

The specimen is preserved at the Museu Carlos Machado, Ponta Delgada, São Miguel.

Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*

1905 Egypt: Two pairs, El Shallal, south of Aswan on the River Nile, January or February (Russell 1905, Snow & Perrins 1998).

Both pairs were observed in flight along the River Nile during January or February 1905. The provenance of 19th Century claims from Egypt is not fully established.

Dark-eyed (Slate-coloured) Junco *Junco hyemalis*

1905 Ireland: Loop Head, Clare, 30th May (Barrington 1906), shot.

At 09:00 on Tuesday, 30th May 1905, J. Watson noticed this bird perched on an outhouse at Loop Head (west coast of Ireland). About one hour later and after it had moved closer to the lighthouse, Watson shot it. Although he did not recognise the species, he instinctively realised it was rare and sent it to Richard Barrington of Fassaroe, Bray, Wicklow (author of the *Migration of Birds as Observed at Irish Lighthouses and Lightships*), who was away when it arrived. In Barrington's absence, his wife Lena took up the identification challenge and compared it with every description of European finch and bunting she could find, but to no avail.

It puzzled Edward Williams also (of Williams & Son, Taxidermists of Dame Street, Dublin), who suggested a melanistic Chaffinch, but Barrington demurred. In June 1905, Richard Barrington took the specimen with him to the fourth International Ornithological Congress that was taking place in London, where it was identified by David Seth-Smith (one time editor of the *Avicultural Magazine* and the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*) as the North American Snowbird (an alternative name) and North American representatives present agreed. The mounted specimen is on display in the Natural History Museum, Dublin (Pic. 034).



Pic. 034.
Dark-eyed Junco, Natural History Museum, Dublin.
Photo: © Brian McCloskey.

Barrington could not rule out the possibility of assisted passage, but was of the opinion that it was probably a genuine vagrant. However, in the Natural History Museum's 1924 *List of Irish Birds*, A.R. Nicholls placed the record in square brackets indicating there was some doubt it had arrived naturally. This was finally put to bed by Major Robert Ruttledge (first editor of the *Irish Bird Report*) in the 1960 report stating there is irrefutable evidence for acceptance of the bird as a genuine vagrant and the chance of such [assisted] passage is no longer regarded as a valid reason for exclusion. We now place the species on the Irish List without reserve.

Eastern Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica japonica*

1905 Russia: Male, Nakholmen, Pasvik River, Murmansk Oblast, 31st May (Collett 1906), collected.

The Pasvik River flows north from Lake Inari, Finland to enter the Barents Sea near the Norwegian town of Kirkenes. For most of its journey it marks the border between Norway and Russia.

This bird was first observed in flight over the Russian side at Vaggetem, but strong winds ensured its capture was not successful. Two hours later it was seen 15km further north on the Norwegian side of the Pasvik River by Hans Thomas Lange Schaanning, who was undertaking a journey along the river. It was finally captured by Schaanning in a small hut where it had taken refuge at Mörsäri, on the Russian side of Lake Salmijävri's south shore, 40km north of Vaggetem where it was first seen.



Pic. 035. Easter Red-rumped Swallow,
Zoological Museum Oslo.
Photo: © Bjørn Olav Tveit.

The specimen (Pic. 035) was acquired by the Christiania Museum (since renamed the Zoological Museum, Oslo). It was later examined and measured by Dr. Jan Lifjeld and Bjørn Olav Tveit who found its set of characters does indeed place the bird within the Asiatic group and is such a good match for *japonica* in both plumage and biometrics that there can be little doubt that it is an example of the Far Eastern form (Tveit 2011).

Following the release of IOC World List 14.2 (August 2024), eastern forms of Red-rumped Swallow and Striated Swallow *C. striolata* were lumped as Eastern Red-rumped Swallow .

Sandhill Crane *Antigone canadensis*

1905 Ireland: Near Castlefreke, Galley Head, Cork, 11th to 14th September (Ruttledge 1980), shot.

This bird was shot as it fed near the shore at Galley Head. It had spent a few days previous on some nearby marshy ground. The carcass was set up as a mount by F.R. Rohu who stated it was in a very spent condition and presumed this was the result of a very long flight. While Rohu was serving as lightkeeper at the Old Head of Kinsale Lighthouse, Cork, he had found and shot the first Rufous Bush Robin for Ireland on 23rd September 1876.



Pic. 036.
Sandhill Crane,
Natural History Museum,
Dublin.
Photo: © Nigel Monaghan.

Furthermore, it was established the bird had not come from Woburn Park, Bedfordshire, England, where all Sandhill Cranes were pinioned. Nichols (1907) opined that it is difficult to imagine such a bird crossing the Atlantic Ocean unaided, but despite this reservation, he noted the specimen's feathers were clean and showed no signs of abrasion from captivity.

In 1970 and thanks to arrangements made by Dr. Colm E. O'Riordan (then Keeper of the Natural History Division, Dublin), the specimen was examined by Derek Goodwin and Dr. David W. Snow at the British Museum, who concluded there was no evidence of captive origin and assigned the specimen to the nominate form (Ruttledge 1971), and later Ruttledge (1980) stated that all the facts point to its having been a genuine wild bird. The mounted specimen is on display in the Natural History Museum, Dublin (Pic. 036).

For a comprehensive review of Sandhill Crane records in the Western Palearctic see de Vries & König (2025).

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

1906 England: Near the Abbey, Tresco, Isles of Scilly, 16th September (Saunders 1907), shot.

The Isles of Scilly is an archipelago located about 30 nautical miles off the south-western tip of Cornwall. Overall there are about 150 islands but only five are inhabited, the largest of which is St. Mary's (ca. 2.5 square miles), followed by Tresco, St. Martin's, St. Agnes and Bryher. The islands have become synonymous with rare birds, particularly during autumn migration, a time of year that attracts an annual influx of birders hoping to add to their personal lists.

This bird was shot by Capt. (later Major) Arthur Dorrien-Smith (Lord Proprietor of the Isles of Scilly from 1918 to 1920) at the Little Pool near the Abbey. The specimen was exhibited by A.F. Griffith on behalf of Capt. Dorrien-Smith at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club. It is preserved in the Isles of Scilly Museum (Pic. 037).



Pic. 037.
Greater Yellowlegs,
Isles of Scilly Museum,
Hugh Town, St. Mary's.
Photo: © Isles of Scilly Museum.

Pic. 038.
Oriental Pratincole,
National Museums Scotland,
Edinburgh.
Photo: © Bob McGowan.



Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*

1908 Scotland: Adult female, Eilean Mòr, Flannan Isles, Outer Hebrides, 13th July (McInerny *et al*. 2024), shot.

This bird was obtained by R. Anderson, the lightkeeper at Flannan Isles Lighthouse (a small island group situated approximately 18 nautical miles west of the Isle of Lewis). Anderson forwarded the carcass to the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh (now part of National Museums Scotland), where it was identified as a Collared Pratincole by William Eagle Clarke.

The specimen became part of a 2023/2024 review of 26 mainly 19th Century records of Collared Pratincole. When measurements were taken and features noted, it was realised they were more consistent with the much rarer Oriental Pratincole, e.g. the depth of the tail fork and the length of the tarsus. To settle the matter genetic analysis was carried out and the results confirmed it was an Oriental Pratincole and a first for the Western Palearctic (Pic. 038).

This recently discovered record, replaces the previously indicated first record that was first observed between Dunwich and Walberswick, Suffolk, England from 22nd June to 8th July 1981 and later on at Old Hall Marshes, Essex from 6th August to 11th October (Burns 1993).

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*

1910 Germany: First-winter female, Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 5th November (Hough 1994, Weigold 1911), shot.

This bunting was shot by Hugo Weigold (German zoologist and pioneer bird-ringer at Helgoland's Bird Observatory) in a small Helgoland garden that was situated between houses. Weigold described it as small and inconspicuous and called a thrush-like zi.

Although he was unable to identify the bird, Weigold realised it was a bunting and the short wing length led him to suspect Black-faced, a species that breeds from southern Siberia to northern China (Pics. 039-040). The carcass was sent to Prof. Georg Anton Reichenow in Berlin who confirmed Weigold's suspicions, identifying it as a young female of the species.

Pics. 039–040.
Black-faced Bunting, Institut für Vogelforschung, Wilhelmshaven.
Photos: © Jochen Dierschke.





Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*

1911 Scotland: Adult female, Village Bay, St. Kilda, 29th September (Clarke 1912), shot.

William Eagle Clarke noticed this wader in a pool on the rocks fringing the bay on St. Kilda, an island in the North Atlantic situated about 40 miles west-northwest of the Outer Hebrides. Realising it was something uncommon he promptly shot and collected it.

Earlier records at Rye Harbour, East Sussex in October 1900 and at Hunstanton, Norfolk in September 1903 were later dismissed due to their association with the Hastings Rarities scandal (Palmer 2000).

Crested Auklet *Aethia cristatella*

1912 At sea/Iceland: Adult (probably a female), in position 66°48'N, 012°55'W (about 45 nautical miles east-northeast of Langanestá, Norðurland Eystra, Iceland), August (Hørring 1933, Sealy & Carter 2012), collected.

This bird was shot sometime between 12th and 20th August 1912 by Capt. Ole Andreas Christiansen, the Faroese owner-master of the schooner *Otaria*, this while the boat was fishing to the northeast of Iceland.

When Capt. Christiansen first noticed the bird it was flying low over the water in the schooner's wake. Christiansen thought it was a Puffin, but soon realised it was a species completely unknown to him. It settled on the sea, eventually making its way closer to the *Otaria,* causing him to think it would like to come on-board. The carcass was sent to P.F. Petersen at Nólsoy (Faroe Islands) to be set up (Pic. 041). The mounted specimen is currently housed in the Universitetets Zoologiske Museum, Copenhagen, where the identification was most likely made.

Pic. 041.
Crested Auklet, Universitetets Zoologiske Museum, Copenhagen.
Photo: © Joakim Engel.



Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri*

1912 At sea/Denmark: Adult female, The Skagerrak, 18th September (Flood *et al*. 2020), shot.

While undertaking research work for a paper on the identification of Barolo and Boyd's Shearwaters (Flood & van der Vliet 2019), museums housing specimens of these formally lumped shearwaters (when known as Macaronesian Shearwater and for a long time before that as subspecies of Little Shearwater) were either visited or sent a request by the authors for specimen photographs. The Natural History Museum of Denmark (in Copenhagen) housed an adult female specimen labelled 'Barolo Shearwater' that was collected on Wednesday, 18th September 1912 in the Skagerrak (the body of water to the north of the Kattegat, between Jutland, the southeast coast of Norway and the west coast of Sweden, that connects the North and Baltic Seas).

Jan Bolding Kristensen (of the Copenhagen Museum staff) sent Robert Flood (who, along with Ashley Fisher, is joint author of the *Multimedia ID Guides to North Atlantic Seabirds*) photographs of the specimen that was originally labelled as Manx Shearwater when first acquired, changed sometime later to Barolo. Examining the photographs, Robert was not convinced it was a Barolo Shearwater and arranged to examine it first hand with the help of the Natural History Museum, Tring, were it was loaned.

Pics. 042–043.
Shearwater Specimens (left to right):
Barolo, Boyd's, Audubon's & Manx Shearwaters (all preserved at the Natural History Museum, Tring, apart from the Audubon specimen, which is at the Natural History Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen). Photos: © Robert Flood.





Pic. 044.
Audubon's Shearwater, Natural History Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.
Photo: © Robert Flood.



Measurements taken were outside the range of Barolo (too large) and Manx Shearwater (too small), while the plumage suggested it was either Boyd's or Audubon's Shearwaters. The tail appeared relatively long, although damage to the tail-feathers made accurate measurements difficult and it proved impossible to examine the underwing as both wings were clasped tight to the body (Pics. 042-043).

J. Martin Collinson (Professor of Genetics at the Institute of Medical Sciences, University of Aberdeen) undertook DNA analysis of a sample taken from the toe-pad and determined it was an Audubon's Shearwater, a species that breeds throughout the Caribbean. Furthermore, measurements taken and those parts of the plumage that could be examined were found to be consistent with Audubon's Shearwater (Pic. 044).

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*

1912 Germany: Wadden Sea at Simonsberg, near Husum, Schleswig-Holstein, 5th October (Paulsen 1925, Radomski 2009), killed.

The mounted specimen is on display in the Nordfriesisches Museum, Ludwig-Nissen-Haus, Husum, Schleswig-Holstein (Pic. 045).

(Von) Schrenck's Little Bittern *Ixobrychus eurhythmus*

1912 Italy: Adult female, near Bra, Provence of Cuneo, Piemonte, 12th November (Haas & Crochet 2012, Salvadori 1912-13), collected.

This bird was taken by a hunter near Bra in northwest Italy. He sent the freshly dead carcass to Carlo Bainotti for setting up. Before Carlo began the process, he forwarded the bird to Tommaso Salvadori to be identified.

Pic. 045.
Brown Noddy, Nordfriesisches Museum, Husum.
Photo: © Klaus Günther.





Pic. 046.
Schrenck's Little Bittern,
Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali di Torino.
Photo: © Giovanni Boano.

Salvadori (one time Vice-Director of the Royal Museum of Natural History, Turin) was initially stumped, but eventually recalled he had seen an illustration of one in Leopold von Schrenck's (the Russian zoologist and ethnographer after whom the bird is named) *Reisen und Forschungen im Amur-Lande* (Band I (1858), Taf. XIII). The illustration was incorrectly annotated as *Ardetta cinnamomea* (possibly indicating Cinnamon Bittern?), which probably explains Salvadori's initial confusion. The original museum labelling stated it was a first-winter bird, however upon dissection it was discovered to be a female and very probably an adult. The mounted specimen is currently housed in the Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali di Torino (Pic. 046).

There is an earlier claim of one at either Brandenburg or Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany in the 1890s but it has not been accepted as a genuine vagrant by the DAK.

Gray's Grasshopper Warbler *Helopsaltes* fasciolata*

1913 France: First-winter female, Creac'h Lighthouse, Ile d'Ouessant, Finistere, 26th September (Lowe & Ingram 1930).

The Creac'h Lighthouse has the most powerful light in Europe, its main beam is visible to a distance of 32 nautical miles. The lighthouse is at the northwestern tip of Ile d'Ouessant (or Ouessant or Ushant), which is 16 nautical miles west-northwest of Pointe de Corsen, Finistère Peninsula, the westernmost point of mainland France. During the night of Thursday/Friday, 25th/26th September 1913, a number of birds met their end colliding with the light.

In the morning, Monsieur Duchène (the head lightkeeper at Creac'h), spent some time checking the previous night's casualties. One in particular caught his attention, and after he examined it, became convinced he recognised the species, declaring (incorrectly as it turned out) that it was an infrequent visitor to the light. This statement led Collingwood 'Cherry' Ingram (who saw action with the British Army in France during WWI and was a member of the British Ornithologists' Union for 81 years!) to erroneously assume the bird was an immature Great Reed Warbler (perhaps because of its large size?) and he labelled it as such.



Pic. 047.
Gray's Grasshopper Warbler, Natural History Museum, Tring.
Photo: Mark Adams, © Natural History Museum, London.

Fortunately, Dr. Claude Ticehurst (surgeon and naturalist whose collection of 10,000 skins was bequeathed to the Natural History Museum, London) spotted the error and correctly labelled the specimen as Gray's Grasshopper Warbler, a migratory grass warbler that breeds in southern Siberia, northeastern China and Korea. When compared to other Gray's Grasshopper skins preserved at the British Museum (some of these were collected in the Celebes by Dr. Charles Hose and some in the Malay Archipelago by Charles Darwin's compadre, Alfred Russel Wallace), the measurements and plumage details were found to be an exact match. This specimen (Pic. 047) is preserved at the Natural History Museum, Tring (Registration number, NHMUK 1929.10.7.1).

* Along with five other grass warblers (including Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler), Gray's Grasshopper Warbler was reassigned to the genus *Helopsaltes* from *Locustella,* this following the release of IOC World List, version 8.2.

Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*

1913 Iceland: Vík í Mýrdal, V-Skaft, 25th October (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), found dead.

Found dead by Jón Ólafsson. The skin is housed in the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik. When received it was in such a bad state it could not be set up.

The first live and second Western Palearctic record was also in Iceland, a female collected by Jóhann Jónasson at Bessastaðir á Álftanesi, Gullbringusýsla on 21st October 1948.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*

1920 England: Female or immature, Great Pool, Tresco, Isles of Scilly, 7th January (BOU 2001), shot.

In 2000, the BOURC undertook a review of all 17 records of Bufflehead occurring in Britain prior to 1958. The review was undertaken following the receipt of new information concerning the previously accepted first British and Western Palearctic record, i.e. an adult male shot at (almost certainly) Breydon Water, near Great Yarmouth, Norfolk on the east coast of England in about 1830. It is worth noting that Bufflehead was not known to have been imported to European collections until 1936. Despite this, the review rejected all but one of the 17 records examined. The sole survivor was a bird shot at Tresco on Wednesday, January 1920, which then became the first for Britain and the Western Palearctic. The specimen is on display in the Isles of Scilly Museum, Hugh Town, St. Mary's.

An earlier record near Trstené na Oravě (then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now in modern day Slovakia) on 15th March 1885 is assigned to Category D by the Slovenské Faunistická Komisia (Slovak Rarity Committee).

Indian House Crow *Corvus splendens*

1922? Egypt: Suez, date not known (BWP VIII).

The native range of House Crow (aka Grey-necked, Ceylon or Colombo Crow) is from the Indian subcontinent east to extreme southern China. The species is known for its habit of hitching a ride on ships and this would appear to be how it established populations in and around various port cities, principally on the shores of the Indian Ocean.

House Crow was first noticed at Suez in or before 1922, where it had presumably arrived on ships transiting the Suez Canal, thereafter spreading to other parts of Egypt and further along the Red Sea coast. A population of about 35 became established at the Hook of Holland in the 1990s, but their numbers are much reduced now.

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana*

1926 Finland: Adult male, Kökar, Åland islands, Gulf of Bothnia, 16th May (Reunanen 2012), shot.

Kari Kaunisto (when a doctoral student at Turku University) and Ari Karhilahti (the Conservator at Turku Zoological Museum) were undertaking an inventory of specimens at the University of Turku Zoological Museum, this in advance of adding their details to a database. While checking the mounted specimens they came across one that was labelled 'Common Scoter' that did not look quite right for that species of sea duck (Pics. 048-049). Indeed, when the specimen was presented to members of the Turku Zoological and Botanical Society in 1927 it was described in a memo as odd-looking.

Features noted included the yellow globule on the bill extending squarely to the forehead, a powerful upper mandible with a hook-like claw, a sturdy neck and a yellowish eye-ring, all suggesting Black Scoter (previously treated as a subspecies of Common Scoter, since raised to full species status). It was submitted to the Finnish National Rarities Committee who accepted the record and published it in their 2012 report (Lehikoinen *et al*. 2013).



Pics. 048–049.
Black Scoter, University of Turku Zoological Museum.
Photos: © Kari Kaunisto.

This recently confirmed identification predates the previously accepted first Western Palearctic record on the fresh water canal at Brielle, Netherlands from 26th to 28th December 1954 (Kist & Swaab 1955), on which date it was found dead by a young birder named Jan Ochtman. The next day, Jan cycled all the way from Rotterdam to Leiden (a distance of about 20 miles) to present the bird to the museum, where it continues to reside. Indeed, in the absence of a photograph it is very likely this second Western Palearctic record would have been lost to ornithology without the heroic actions of Jan Ochtman.

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor*

1927 England: Female, Tresco Abbey, Tresco, Isles of Scilly, 17th September (Witherby 1929).

Shot by Major Arthur Dorrien-Smith, who also took the first Greater Yellowlegs for the WP at the same location in 1906 (see page 47). The carcass was examined by the BOU List Committee, who determined it was an example of the nominate form.

On behalf of Major Dorrien-Smith, Dr. Percy R. Lowe (one time Chairman of the BOC) exhibited the specimen at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, London on Wednesday, 9th November 1927. The specimen is housed in the Isles of Scilly Museum, St. Mary's. The date is sometimes quoted as 11th September.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

1927 Azores: First-year female, Terceira, 24th October (Bannerman & Bannerman 1966), collected.

The whereabouts of the specimen is not known.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

1930 France: Lampaul-Ploudalmézeau, Finistère, 15th September (Mayaud 1936), killed.

The whereabouts of the specimen is not known.



Pic. 050.
Pied Crow, Museo Civico di Storia Naturale Giacomo Doria, Genoa.
Photo: © Enrico Borgo.

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

1931 Libya: Adult male, Jalo Oasis, Al Wahat, 24th April (Batty 2010, Ghigi 1931), collected.

Pied Crow is widespread throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa. Many present day records, especially those far removed from Mediterranean regions, are placed in Category D or E. The specimen is housed in the Museo Civico di Storia Naturale Giacomo Doria, Genoa (Pic. 050).

Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor*

1932 Germany: Adult male, Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 15th October (Drost 1933), shot.

The carcass was examined by Rudolf Drost (German ornithologist, honorary member of the British Ornithologists' Union and former director of the Helgoland Observatory [Vogelwarte Helgoland], who conducted extensive studies on bird migration there), but despite his best efforts he was unable to identify the specimen to any species (Pics. 051-052).

It was sent instead to Prof. Erwin Stresemann (one time editor of *Journal für Ornithologie*) in Berlin and he determined it was a Tickell's Thrush, a species that breeds in the Himalayas. Despite being a short distance migrant at best, a thorough examination of the plumage ruled out the possibility of previous captivity, consequently the species is assigned to Category B of the German List. To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic.





Pics. 051–052.
Tickell's Thrush, Institut für Vogelforschung, Wilhelmshaven.
Photos: © Jochen Dierschke.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

1933 Azerbaijan: Three, near Lenkoran on the Caspian Sea coast, June (Snow & Perrins 1998), collected.

Breeding was confirmed as one of these was found in a nest.

Spectacled Eider *Somateria fischeri*

1933 Norway: Adult, Vardø, Troms og Finnmark, 12th December (Johnsen 1937), shot.

This bird was reported to be alone and not at all shy when it was shot in the harbour at Vardø (in the extreme northeastern part of Norway). The carcass came into the hands of Hans Nilsen who set it up, but he was unable to identify it to species. Nilsen sent it to Bergen in August 1935 where it was bought by the Museum. With reference to several published descriptions it was identified and aged as a male [Spectacled Eider] in incomplete breeding plumage.

Assuming it bred near the western limit of its range (possibly near the mouth of the River Lena in Siberia?) would suggest it departed the breeding grounds around mid-September at the latest. Perhaps it was tempted west seeking open and ice-free waters where it could feed, eventually reaching Vardø sometime in the early winter? The specimen is housed at the University Museum of Bergen (Pic. 053). Previous versions of this note incorrectly aged this bird as a second-winter male, it was an adult.



Pic. 053.
Spectacled Eider, University Museum of Bergen.
Photo: © Terje Lislevand.

Pics. 054–055.
African Skimmer, The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, Israel. Photo: © Amos Belmaker.
Black-and-White Warbler, National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh. Photo: © National Museums Scotland.





African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*

1934 Israel: Two, Yarqon River, near Tel Aviv, during Summer (Shirihai 1996), collected.

Although both skimmers were collected, just one specimen is preserved at the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, (previously known as Tel Aviv University Zoological Museum), catalogue number SMNH-AV.748 (Pic. 054). The whereabouts of the second is not known.

African Skimmer was added to the Western Palearctic breeding fauna in 1989 (breeding was suspected to have taken place in 1987 also) when about 15 pairs were discovered breeding at Abu Simbel on the Red Sea coast in southern Egypt and in 1990 the same number were present (Snow & Perrins 1998).

Black-and-White Warbler *Mniotilta varia*

1936 Scotland: Juvenile male, Vaster, near Tingwall, Shetland, October 1936 (Forrester & Andrews 2007).

This New World warbler was found dead in Hendry Anderson's garden soon after a period of stormy weather. The exact date is not recorded but it was about the middle of October 1936. The location is often erroneously quoted as Scalloway, which is about six miles further north. The skin is housed at National Museums Scotland's Collection Centre, West Granton Road, Edinburgh (Pic. 055).

Pic. 056.
Scarlet Tanager remains, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.



Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*

1936 Iceland: Leifsstaðir, Kaupangssveit, Eyjafjarðarsýsla, November or December (Ólafsson 1993), found dead.

This bird was found dead by Aðalsteinn Helgason, either at the end of November or early in December 1936. It's been mistakenly referred to as a Greenfinch in some sources. The remains are preserved in the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 056).

The first live and second Western Palearctic record was a female trapped in a Heligoland-type Wall Trap at Copeland Islands Bird Observatory, Down, Northern Ireland on Saturday, 12th October 1963 that at first glance was mistaken for a Greenfinch. During processing it was very aggressive and once released shot off out of sight and was never seen again. The Copeland bird was initially accepted as Scarlet Tanager, however sometime later the description and details were critically examined by North American authorities, who concluded that the possibility of confusion with the closely related Summer Tanager could not be ruled out and the record was downgraded to 'Tanager species'. Later still, it was reassessed jointly by the NIBRC and the IRBC and reaffirmed as Scarlet Tanager.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

1937 Norway: Male, Utsira, Rogaland, 8th October (Schaanning 1939), shot.

Hans Schaanning shot this pipit on the island of Utsira, just over two square miles in area, located about 11 nautical miles off the southwest coast of Norway. The island lends its name to two sectors in the Shipping Forecast.

Pic. 057.
Olive-backed Pipit, Stavanger City Museum.
Photo: © Tomas Aarvak.

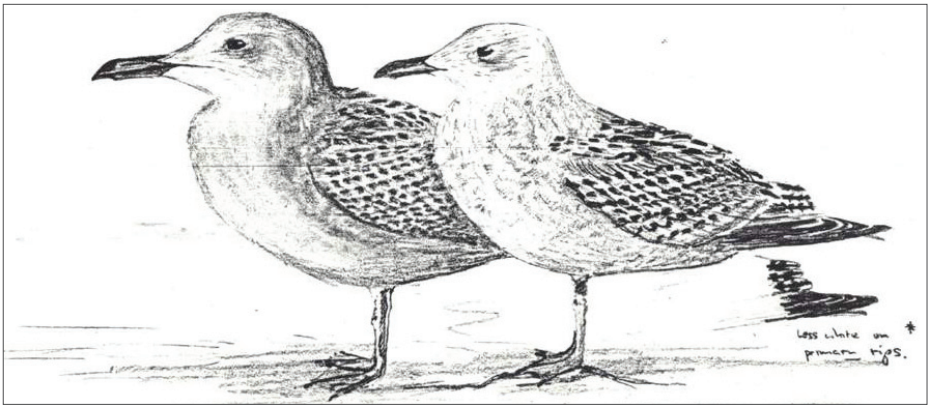


It was discovered in the island's only conifer plantation, where it was foraging alone on the ground. It reminded Schaanning of a Tree Pipit when first observed, however that impression was soon dispelled once he examined it in the hand and a full set of measurements taken, which confirmed it was the closely related Olive-backed Pipit (Pic. 057). The specimen is preserved in the Stavanger City Museum.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*

1937 At sea: Second-winter, in position 46°30'N, 014°00'W (approximately 345 nautical miles west-northwest of Cape Finisterre, Spain), November (Gross 1940), captured.

This gull came aboard a ship in the Atlantic Ocean and was captured by the crew. The signature on its leg-ring read 'Gull Banding Project', which was sponsored by the Linnaean Society of New York. It transpired the bird was ringed as a chick on Kent Island, Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick, Canada in August 1936, a distance of approximately 2,600 nautical miles from where it was captured.



Pic. 058.
Field-sketch made by © Jim Wilson of **American Herring Gull** (left), alongside a Herring Gull, Cobh, Cork, November 1986.

The first to be found on land was an immature bird at Cobh (south of Cork City), Ireland from 16th November to 16th December 1986 that was found by Cork birder Jim Wilson (who would later find the first Thayer's Gull for the WP, see page 160). While on holiday in New York in September 1988, Jim had the opportunity to study large numbers of American Herring Gulls. It was at that point, he realised he had seen a similar bird at Cobh a couple of years previous. Comparing notes taken on both sides of the Atlantic convinced Jim the gull at Cobh was in fact an American Herring Gull and it was accepted by the IRBC as the first Irish and second for the Western Palearctic (Pic. 058). American Herring Gull was previously part of the Herring Gull complex, now treated as a full species in its own right.

Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*

1937 Netherlands: First-winter female, Meyendel, Wassenaar, Zuid-Holland, 5th November (Junge & Koch 1938), trapped and collected.

On Friday, 5th November 1937, a fairly nondescript bird was trapped at the Wassenaar Ringing Station. Although clearly a bunting it could not be identified to species, but its overall condition ruled out the possibility of previous captivity. Reference was made to the available literature using what few clues its appearance provided, such as the yellow wash to the lower breast and belly as well as the reddish-brown rump, upper tail feathers etc. A combination of features that eliminated most European species, although Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola* remained a possibility, however a more detailed description would be needed to confirm that.

At this point the bird was donated to the National Museum of Natural History in Leiden, where it was compared to several *aureola* skins and although there were some similarities it was clearly not that species. Attention next turned to a description of a Chestnut Bunting (a south Siberian bunting) caught in Belgium in October 1928 (Dupond 1935), which along with a 19th Century Chestnut Bunting in France, had been assigned to Category D by the respective national committees. Comparing the bird with the written description conclusively proved it was a Chestnut Bunting (Pic. 059).



Pic. 059.
Chestnut Bunting,
Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden.
Photo: © Edward J. van IJzendoorn.

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*

1942 Morocco: Male, Taghjicht, Western Anti-Atlas, 10th May (Thévenot *et al*. 2003).

Historically, Namaqua Dove, was an abundant resident across much of sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Arabia. Since (about) the mid-20th Century it has undertaken a mainly northern expansion of its range. For a comprehensive account of this change in status, see Łukasz Ławicki's note in *Dutch Birding* (Ławicki 2020).

Red Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca iliaca*

1944 Iceland: Male, Laugarholt í Bæjarsveit, 5th November (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), collected.

Shot (or possibly found dead) by Björn J. Blöndal. This bird had spent time in a farm garden where it fed on rowan berries and was also observed to visit one of Iceland's famous geothermal streams. The specimen is housed in the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik and is identified to the eastern form *iliaca* (Pics. 060-061). An earlier record at Liguria, Italy in 1936 was judged to be ship assisted.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

1945 Azores: First-winter, Horta, Faial, 4th November (Cooke 1947), killed.

This bird was ringed as an immature at Gull Island, five miles west of Penetang, Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, Ontario, Canada on 10th June 1945, about 2,650 miles from Horta, the minimum distance travelled by the gull in the intervening five months.



Pics. 060–061.
Red Fox Sparrow, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photos: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

African Fish Eagle *Icthyophaga vocifer*

1947 Egypt: Adult, Abu Handel, south of Aswan, 1st November (Snow & Perrins 1998), shot.

The specimen is housed in the Giza Zoological Museum (Goodman & Meininger 1989).

Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumenifer*

1951 Israel: Hula Valley, May (Shirihai 1996), collected.

The location of the specimen is not known.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

1951 Iceland: Heimaey, Vestmannaeyjar, 16th September (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999). It is not known if this bird was found dead or was collected?

Vestmannaeyjar (usually anglicised as the Westman Islands) is an archipelago that lies about eight nautical miles off the southwest coast of Iceland. Heimaey is the largest and only inhabited island in the group. Ornithologically speaking it is best known for hosting immense seabird colonies, but has also gained a reputation as a happy hunting ground for vagrants, including some Western Palearctic firsts such as this Red-eyed Vireo. The specimen is housed in the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 062).

Red-eyed Vireo is by far the most numerous Nearctic passerine recorded in the WP, with an overall total of (at least) 620 individuals published to date.



Pic. 062.
Red-eyed Vireo,
Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*

1951 Iceland: Juvenile male, Akureyri, Eyjafjarðarsýsla, 27th October (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), found dead.

Found dead by Kristján Geirmundsson. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pics. 063-064). The first live and second for the WP was an adult male in song at Robbenoordbos, Wieringermeer, Netherlands from 8th June to 15th July 1983.

Pics. 063–064.
Indigo Bunting, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photos: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.





African Silverbill *Euodice cantans*

1952 Algeria: Tamanrasset, 6th May (BWP VIII), collected.

Also known as Warbling or Black-rumped Silverbill. The whereabouts of the specimen is not known.

East Siberian Merlin *Falco columbarius insignis*

1952 Italy: Juvenile female, Stupinigi, near Turin, December 1952 (Fulco & Liuzzi 2023), collected.

Although collected at Stupinigi in December 1952 it would be some considerable time before correctly identified. The mounted specimen is part of the Admetos Rolando Barberis collection held at the Parco del Po Piemontese (Piedmont Po Park) in Bosco Marengo (northwest Italy). The specimen (originally labelled as a female Kestrel, later re-identified as a Merlin), attracted the attention of Andrea Corso (Italian ornithologist from Sicily and author of *Avifauna di Sicilia*) during a raptor identification course held at Po Park in 2008. Differences in appearance and ground colour, when compared with those Merlins normally encountered in Italy and the rest of Europe, suggested it could belong to an Asian subspecies.

After a while the authors (Corso & Boano 2024) were in a position to review the descriptions and illustrations of all [Merlin] subspecies in the relevant literature as well as studying museum skins, in particular concentrating on the ratio of tail bands. As a result of their comprehensive and thorough investigations the authors satisfied themselves the specimen was without any doubt one of the eastern taxa i.e. *insignis* or *pallidus*. Of these (and while keeping in mind that *pallidus* can not be completely ruled out) the best fit was *insignis* (Pics. 065-068), and it has been accepted as such by the Italian Ornithological Commission. It is the first WP record.





Pics. 065–068.
East Siberian Merlin,
Piedmont Po Park, Bosco Marengo.
Photos: © Giovanni Boano.
The *insignis* is mounted between a pair of *Fc. aesalon* (below).





Pygmy Sunbird *Hedydipna platura*

1953 Chad: Males and females, Zouarké, Tibesti, March (Guichard 1955).

In 1953, K.M. Guichard and A.J. Wood (both members of the Desert Locust Survey team) made numerous extensive journeys to the Fezzan (in southwestern Libya) and one visit to Tibesti (in far northwestern Chad).

At Zouarké (a small village in the Tibesti Mountains situated within the WP) they found Pygmy Sunbirds of both sexes in March 1953. The males were in full breeding plumage and were busily chasing females. They were only seen at Zouarké, where it proved to be not uncommon and showed a marked preference for the vicinity of *Calotropis procera*, a plant it is known to favour in other parts of its range.

Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*

1953 Scotland: Female, Loch a' Phuill, Tiree, Inner Hebrides, 10th July (Walbridge *et al*. 2003), captured.

At 10:30 on Friday, 10th July 1953, John Graham captured an exhausted bird in a fish-landing net at Loch a' Phuill in the southwest of Tiree. Sadly the bird died later the same day at 20:00. Graham described it as a big bird with an all-white head and an albatross beak. At the time it was identified as Magnificent Frigatebird, which remained unchallenged for 50 years.

Pic. 069.
Ascension Frigatebird, National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh.
Photo: © National Museums Scotland.



The carcass was donated to Edinburgh Museum (now part of National Museums Scotland) to be set up as a study-skin and is preserved at National Museums Scotland's Collection Centre, West Granton Road, Edinburgh (Pic. 069). Birds found before the establishment of the British Birds Rarity Committee (BBRC) in 1958 became part of an on-going review, which included a reassessment of the Loch a' Phuill frigatebird. The review was undertaken in 2002 and was principally conducted by Grahame Walbridge with Robert (Bob) McGowan conducting a close examination of the skin at NMS, Edinburgh. Contrary to expectations, they found the features and measurements taken were incompatible with Magnificent Frigatebird!

Hoping it would ultimately reveal the identity of the Tiree bird, the characteristics and measurements of all five frigatebird species was investigated. Somewhat surprisingly, the results determined it could only be attributed to Ascension Frigatebird. The bulk of its population breeds on Boatswainbird Islet, just off the northeast coast of Ascension, in the tropical south Atlantic and as far as anyone knew never wandered further than the west coast of Africa. Remarkably, a second Ascension Frigatebird has been recorded in the Inner Hebrides at Bowmore on Islay in July 2013.

Ant Chat *Myrmecocichla aethiops*

1954 Chad: Yebbi Bou, Tibesti, date not known (BWP V, Haas 2012), collected.

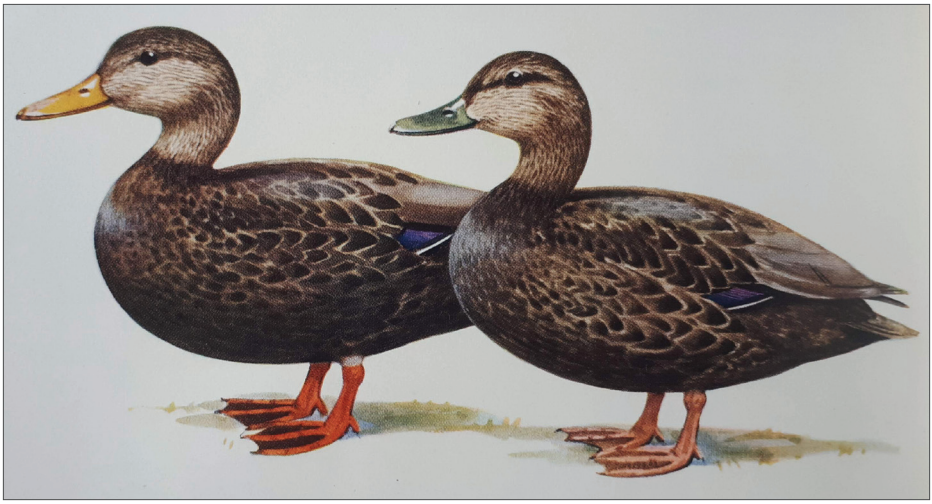
Ant Chat is a locally common sub-Saharan species. Normally sedentary, it is known to migrate northwards from time to time during rainy seasons. The whereabouts of the specimen is unknown. Also known as Northern Ant-eating or Anteater Chat.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

1954 Ireland: Adult female, Listrolin, near Mullinavat, Kilkenny, February (Kennedy 1955), shot.

While on a visit to Flanagan's Poultry Shop at 18 Broad Street, Waterford, Frank Hudson noticed the rather unusual plumage of a duck labelled 'Mallard'. Hoping to purchase it, he was informed the bird was already sold. However following some negotiations with the purchaser an interchange was agreed and he acquired it. On 12th February, Hudson forwarded the carcass to the Natural History Museum, Dublin, where the Rev. P.G. Kennedy S.J. and P.E. Dunn identified it as a Black Duck, a dabbling duck native to eastern North America.

Pic. 070.
Male & female **American Black Duck,** with the Listrolin bird depicted on the right,
British Birds vol. 49(2), Plate 1.
Painted by Sir Peter Scott for *British Birds* magazine.
Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.



Owing to its condition, the taxidermist was unable to sex it so the skin was sent to Sir Peter Scott (founder of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust at Slimbridge and son of Antarctic explorer Robert Falcon Scott), who confirmed their identification and determined it was an adult female. Sir Peter painted a reconstruction of the bird alongside a male of the species for *British Birds* magazine (Pic. 070).

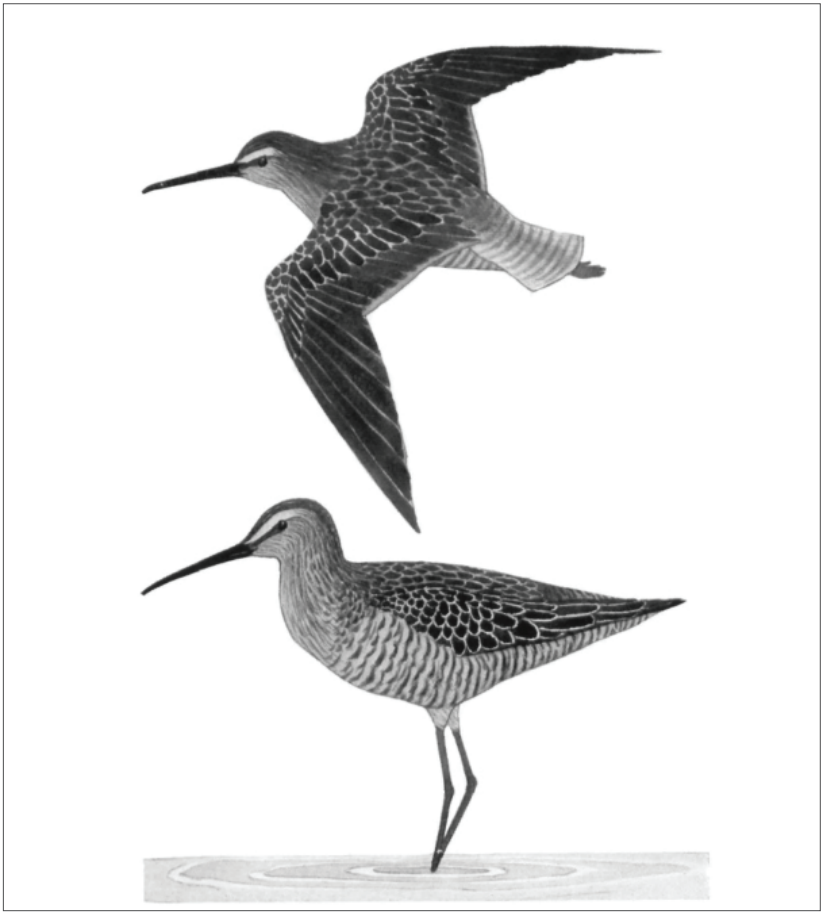
The bird was shot by a farmer named Croke from Listrolin early in February 1954. Frank Hudson paid a visit to Croke, who showed him the marsh adjoining the stream where he took the bird. Croke said there were two similar ducks that rose together and he brought both down, however one of these was just winged and escaped. The other was the bird he brought to Flanagan's shop on Friday, 5th February 1954, where it was received by Harry London, a shop assistant. London had considerable experience at handling wildfowl and realised the duck was not an ordinary Mallard and pointed this out to Croke. Despite Croke's assertion that there were two birds present the second is discounted in the records.

Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*

1954 England: Adult, near Kilnsea, East Yorkshire, 31st August to 4th September (Chislett 1955).

Spurn is a narrow sandy tidal island on the east coast of England that extends into the North Sea. A bird observatory has been in operation there since the late 1940s. While staying at the observatory, Peter Waterton and Edward E. Jackson noticed an unusual wader on marshy ground just north of Kilnsea on Tuesday, 31st August 1954. Both headed back to the Obs, returning about an hour-and-a-half later with Ralph Chislett, G.H. Ainsworth and R.F. Dickens, but despite searching the area, the bird was not refound.

Pic. 071.
Sketches of the Kilnsea **Stilt Sandpiper** by John Cudworth, *British Birds* vol. 48(1), Plate 32.
Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.



However, over the following four days it was seen on and off by a number of birders at ranges down to 12 yards. Its flight was described as rather like Redshank and while landing and taking off its legs were trailed behind. On one occasion when it took off it was heard to call, *tchoowk, tchoowk, tchoowk-tchoowk*, likened to a Knot by R.F. Dickens. It preferred to feed in deep water, often submerged up to its belly and it swam frequently. One feature particularly remarked on was the strongly barred underparts, a feature suggesting either Wandering Tattler or Stilt Sandpiper (Pic. 071). Ralph Chislett collated the various observer's notes and drawings and on the whole they favoured Stilt Sandpiper. Chislett then consulted Roger Tory Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds*, A.C. Bent's *Life Histories of North American Shorebirds* and P.A. Taverner's *Birds of Canada,* after which Stilt Sandpiper became the clear favourite and subsequent examination of skins in the British Museum and elsewhere finally clinched it.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*

1954 Scotland: Near Rosyth Dockyards, Fife, 11th September to 5th October (Hamilton & Macgregor 1955).

On the afternoon of Saturday, 11th September 1954, Frank Hamilton and Keith Macgregor were birding near two shallow fresh water pools that were separated by a raised bank, in an area of reclaimed ground between North Queensferry and the docks at Rosyth. From behind the bank they saw a noticeably pale wader which was feeding beside a party of Ruff that immediately excited [their] curiosity. Its overall paleness and feeding action caused them to suspect a phalarope in winter plumage. Further scrutiny revealed yellow legs, a white rump and tail and the absence of a wing-bar; it was clearly something most unusual. A full description was taken by Frank, Keith and some others and once reference was made to Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds*, D.G. Andrew identified it as a Wilson's Phalarope.

To begin with, the bird fed at the pool's edge, chasing down insects that it picked off the ground and tops of weeds with quick side to side movements of the head. Later during its stay it spent a great deal of time swimming and apparently obtained its food from the bottom of the pool. It was also observed to spin very fast on a spot in a manner characteristic of the species. Apart from one time when it uttered a loud nasal *aangh* when threatened by a Redshank, it remained silent. When seen in flight, it appeared very grey overall with a bullet-shaped body and legs projecting slightly beyond the tail. It was present for three-and-a-half weeks and was last seen on 5th October, attracting at least 60 birders to the site during this time. Some earlier British records have been discredited (Dixon 1955, Palmer 2000).

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*

1954 Iraq: Adult, west of Baghdad, 8th October (BWP II).

Dr. Jeffery G. Harrison (editor of the *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* from 1952 to 1961) was driving along the Baghdad road between Habbaniya and Feluja when he saw a Bateleur Eagle fly across the path of his Land Rover. He immediately recognised the species, stating it was quite unmistakable as it sailed serenely over, without any sign of fear or trace of a wing beat as it crossed our path.

Harrison described it as predominantly a black-bodied eagle, with long, round-ended wings and a short paler tail, while the red at the base of the bill and the red feet were plainly visible, as was the white under the wing. The occurrence coincided with a definite migration of large hawks moving south-easterly down the Euphrates. He was aware the bird was well to the north of its usual range but Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen (author of *Birds of Arabia*) pointed out that as the species is a reptile-eater, there are plenty of reptiles in the desert to support it on such a journey (Harrison 1955).

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

1954 England: First-winter male, Lundy Island, Devon, at least 4th to 5th November (Whitaker 1955), trapped.

Lundy Island is situated near the entrance to the Bristol Channel, about 12 nautical miles north-northeast of Hartland Point, Devon. It is just over 1,000 acres in area, about three miles long and just over a half-mile across.

In 1969 Lundy Island was purchased by the British philanthropist Sir Jack Hayward, who donated it to the National Trust. Nowadays it is managed by the Landmark Trust on behalf of the National Trust.

On Thursday, 4th November 1954, what initially appeared to be a Chiffchaff was observed entering Lundy's Helgoland Trap, but that impression was soon dispelled once extracted, as it was something quite unfamiliar to those present. Its most striking feature was a brilliant canary-yellow chin contrasting sharply in the malar region with the ear-coverts and lores, which were black, mottled with grey. It was taken to the island's laboratory, where it was measured and a full description taken, then held overnight and released the following day. The general impression was that of a small round-winged *Phylloscopus*, although when released some of its movements just above the ground in thick bramble and grass cover were reminiscent of a Wren. Unable to name it, the description was sent to Wilfrid B. Alexander (among a great many other distinctions, a founder member of the BOU), who identified it as the Common Yellowthroat of North America.

Myrtle Warbler *Setophaga coronata*

1955 England: Old School House, Newton St. Cryes, Devon, 4th January to 10th February (Smith 1955), when found dead.

Early in January 1955 a period of severe weather brought three inches of snow to Exeter and the surrounding area. On Tuesday, 4th January, Mrs. D. Cook put food on her bird table at the School House, Newton St. Cryes (four miles from Exeter) and remembers hearing an unusual bird-note on the afternoon of this date. The following day her son David noticed a strange bird which he was unable to identify but he heard it make the same unusual bird-note. As it was still present on the 8th, Dr. D. Cook contacted F. Raymond Smith in the hope he might be able to identify it. Smith visited the Cooks on the 11th and got excellent views at distances down to three feet. Along with his son, Smith visited the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter. Suspecting it was an American warbler they browsed the pages of Audubon's *Birds of America* and examined the museum's collection of North American wood warbler skins, where they discovered an almost identical male specimen in winter plumage! There could be no doubt about it, the School House bird was a Myrtle Warbler (sometimes known as Yellow-rumped Warbler).

During its stay it established a territory based around the Cook's bird table and would chase away most other birds coming near it, especially Blue Tits. As time moved on it extended its territory to about 50 yards. Its preferred roost was in a small Holly Tree about 80 yards from the bird table, where it would chase off any Blue Tits encountered before retiring. On 10th February, David Cook noticed that it appeared to be off colour and later on that day he found it lying dead underneath a tree only a few yards from the bird-table.

A bird that was possibly a Myrtle Warbler came aboard the eastbound RMS *Empress of France* on 10th September 1954 in the North Atlantic when the ship was approximately 345 nautical miles east of the Straits of Belle Isle (the body of water that separates the Labrador Peninsula from the island of Newfoundland). It remained aboard until (at least) 13th September when the ship came within sight of the Irish coast. As the bird was not definitively identified to species it can only be recorded as 'Nearctic wood warbler sp.'.

Pic. 072.
Male & female **Ring-necked Duck**, with the Slimbridge bird depicted on the right, *British Birds* vol. 49(2), Plate 1.
Painted by Sir Peter Scott for *British Birds* magazine.
Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.



Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

1955 England: Adult male, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, 12th to 14th March (Scott 1955).

WWT (Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust) Slimbridge was established by the artist and naturalist Sir Peter Scott in November 1946. The reserve is roughly midway between Bristol and Gloucester in southwest England and covers about 2,000 acres of reed, salt marsh and wetland lagoons.

During the afternoon of Saturday, 12th March 1955, Philippa Scott saw a male Ring-necked Duck settle on a pond about 15 yards in front of her Slimbridge home. It reappeared the following afternoon when it was watched by Hugh Boyd and her husband, Sir Peter. It was last observed on the 14th in flight over the Orchard Pen. It later transpired that Bernard King also saw it on the 12th. The possibility it was an escape from captivity was considered very remote as it is so rare in captivity that no one keeping them would allow their specimens to fly and, as far as anyone knew, the species had never been successfully reared in any European collection. Therefore and in all likelihood, it was a genuine vagrant from North America (Pic. 072).

Ring-necked Duck is the Nearctic counterpart of Tufted Duck, in whose company it is often found. A male of the species was discovered for sale in Leadenhall Food Market, London in 1801. It was supposedly taken somewhere on the Lincolnshire Fens (eastern England), but that has never been verified and the record is discounted.

Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus*

1955 Scotland: Fair Isle, Shetland, 27th to 31st May (Williamson & Thom 1955).

Fair Isle, with an area of just under 2,000 acres, lies about halfway between mainland Shetland and Orkney. It is the most remote of the United Kingdom's inhabited islands and a region in the Shipping Forecast takes its name. In the late 1940s George Waterston (who had first visited in 1935) bought the island and established the Fair Isle Bird Observatory. Waterston owned the island from 1949 until 1954, when it was acquired by the National Trust for Scotland.

Kenneth Williamson (the Observatory's first director) and Ms. Valerie M. Thom (author of *Birds in Scotland* and *Scottish Birds*), along with some others, disturbed six Whimbrel that were in an area of close-cropped grassland. As they flew off, Thom remarked that one was without a white rump and was very obviously smaller. During that day and the next they kept track of this flock, often at very close quarters, eventually concluding the odd one out was an example of the Nearctic form *hudsonicus*. The bird remained on Fair Isle until the end of the month, but it proved very difficult to approach once the nominate birds had departed on 29th May, and when disturbed would take long flights that usually came to an end on close-cropped pasture, although on very rare occasions it headed for weed-covered rocks dotted along the shoreline.

At various times Hudsonian Whimbrel has been treated as a form of Whimbrel or as a full species, which is its current status following IOC version 14.1. The provenance of some earlier records in Iceland (1854) and Spain (1872) is not altogether clear but these are not included by Bosanquet (2000) in his list of Western Palearctic Hudsonian Whimbrel records.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*

1955 Western Sahara: Two, Sbayera, 7th June (Valverde 1957).

Hooded Vulture is a sub-Saharan and mainly sedentary species. However immatures and other non-breeders [are] somewhat dispersive and some movements are in response to rains (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001).

Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*

1955 Chad: Tibesti, 9th September (BWP IV), collected.

The record is most likely to involve the subspecies *pica* which is found (among other places) across sub-Saharan Africa, however black morph birds of the subspecies *serratus* winters north to Chad (as well as other African countries), (Erritzøe *et al*. 2012). The location of the specimen is not known.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*

1955 France: Female, Ile d'Ouessant, Finistere, 17th September (Etchécopar 1995), captured.

The Société Ornithologique de France et de L'Union Française organised two ringing camps at Ile d'Ouessant during 1955, one in August and a second in September. The highlight was a Northern Waterthrush trapped on Saturday, 17th September 1955. It was often observed on the ground, running but not hoping like Thrushes. The specimen is housed at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris.

Thick-billed Warbler *Arundinax aedon*

1955 Scotland: Fair Isle, Shetland, 6th October (Williamson *et al*. 1956), trapped.

Fleeting glimpses of a bird at Lower Leogh (near the South Lighthouse on Fair Isle) revealed, among other features, a long rounded tail and a rufous rump, which suggested Great Reed Warbler. When flushed it would quickly dive back under cover, never revealing much of its appearance. Therefore, it was decided the best chance of identifying it was to trap the bird and examine it in the hand. A mist-net with a portable catching-box was assembled and the warbler was gently chivvied from a turnip rig to a ditch where it entered the net and was caught.

Once examined in the hand it became obvious that any resemblance to a Great Reed Warbler was purely superficial and once the pages of H.E. Dresser's *Manual of Palearctic Birds* and Ernst Hartert's *Die Vögel der Paläarktischen Fauna* were consulted, it was confidently identified as a Thick-billed Warbler, a species that breeds in eastern Asia. Once released it skulked about the garden in front of the Helgoland Trap for a short while before flying off towards the hillside above the Obs and was never seen again.

American Black Tern *Chlidonias niger surinamensis*

1956 Iceland: Adult male, Hafurbjarnarstaðir, Miðnes, 10th June (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), collected.

Collected by Hákon Vilhjálmsson. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 073).

This subspecies of Black Tern is the only marsh tern found in North America. Differences in size and plumage, especially noticeable in juveniles, suggest it might actually be a full species.



Pic. 073.
American Black Tern, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

Tennessee Warbler *Leiothlypis peregrina*

1956 Iceland: First-winter, Hallbjarnareyri, Snæfellsnes, 14th October (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), found dead.

Found dead by Svava Guðmundsdóttir. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 074).



Pic. 074.
Tennessee Warbler,
Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

The first live and second Western Palearctic record was an immature bird found by Chris Heard and Graham Walbridge near the Double Dyke trap on Fair Isle on Saturday, 6th September 1975. They watched it for a few minutes flitting about, before it took off heading towards the southern end of the island and despite searching the area until darkness fell they had no further sighting of it that day. The following morning Chris and Graham refound it in a potato patch, where it proved far less elusive. Consulting the available literature they identified it as a Tennessee Warbler, a Nearctic Wood Warbler. It frequented a crofting area where it was seen daily, mainly feeding in the standing crops right up until 18th September, when it was trapped. On the afternoon of the 20th it was seen for the final time at Field Croft (Broad 1981).

Black Brant *Branta bernicla nigricans*

1957 England: Foulness, Essex, 9th February (Burton 1960).

What is presumed to be the same individual returned again to Foulness in February 1958.

Black Brant is the northwestern Canadian Arctic, Alaskan and northeastern Siberian form of Brent Goose, where it breeds on low coastal barren tundra, wintering on both sides of the north Pacific Ocean. Some regard it as a potential candidate for full species status.

Persian Shearwater *Puffinus persicus*

1957 Kuwait: 25, off Shuaiba, 5th September (Al-Sirhan 2021).

A flock of 25 were present off the beach just south of the port of Shuaiba (Al-Shu'aybah) on Thursday, 5th September 1957.

This shearwater was previously included in the Audubon's Shearwater complex, but is now known to be genetically distinct and regarded as a full species in its own right. It would seem likely these birds were of the nominate form that breed as close as Khuriya Island (off southern Oman) and Socotra in the Arabian Sea.

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*

1957 Wales: First-winter male, Bardsey Island, 11th to 25th September (Arthur 1963), trapped.

Bardsey Island, with an area of just over one-half of a square mile, lies a little under two miles off the tip of the Llŷn Peninsula (county of Gwynedd) in the Irish Sea. In 1979 it was purchased by the Bardsey Island Trust and in 1986 the island was declared a National Nature Reserve. Bardsey Bird & Field Observatory was founded in 1953 by members of the West Midland Bird Club, the West Wales Field Society and some local enthusiasts. It has made its home in the 19th Century Cristin House.

At 07:20 on Wednesday, 11th September 1957, R. Moss and R. Stjernstedt had brief views of a bird that resembled a large, bright male Greenfinch. It dived into dense cover and became lost to view before they could get anything on it. Fortunately it was caught by J.D. Gray at 12:15 in the island's 'Lane' Helgoland Trap and was provisionally identified as a Summer Tanager, a species that breeds across much of the southern USA.

This was confirmed when it was compared (in the hand) to a male specimen of the species that was kindly sent to Bardsey on loan from the City of Liverpool Public Museum by R. Wagstaffe. Once processed, it was released into brambles at the foot of a wall. During its 15 day residence at Bardsey, it spent most of the time in an area of bramble, gorse, small willows and plum trees. Left to its own devices it would sit out in the open in an upright shrike-like manner, but once disturbed it would dive back under cover pronto. It mostly fed on blackberries, but one time was seen to take a small fly in the air in the manner of a shrike. It was trapped again for a second and third time on 15th and 20th September, and was found to have put on weight between those dates going from an initial 24.6 to 36.7 grams. Some time later Dr. Charles Vaurie and Dr. Eugene Eisenmann (of the American Museum of Natural History) identified the bird as an immature male Summer Tanager, adding the bill was too large for Scarlet Tanager.

The species was not assigned to Category A of the British List until 1999. All three subsequent Western Palearctic records have occurred in the Azores at Corvo in 2006, 2010 and 2011.

Tristan Albatross *Diomedea dabbenena*

1957 Italy: Immature male, between Palermo and Termini Imerese, Sicily, 4th October (Haas 2009), killed.

While driving the coastal road between Palermo and Termini Imerese, Guagliardo Gaetano noticed a very large bird that was brought down by a gust of wind. Stopping his car he caught the bird and killed it, then took the body to his local hunters club. Once there, it was measured, photographed and at some point set up as a mount labelled 'Wandering Albatross'.

On hearing about this record many years later, Marcel Haas (author of *Extremely rare birds in the Western Palearctic* and numerous notes in the journal *Dutch Birding* on the veracity of historic records in the Western Palearctic) made contact with several people in Italy in an attempt to learn more about the bird. He discovered the specimen was housed at the Museo di Storia Naturale, Terrasini, Sicily and arranged for a photograph to be taken (Pic. 075).

Pic. 075.
Tristan Albatross, Museo di Storia Naturale, Terrasini, Sicily.
Photo: © Fabio Lo Valvo.



Once the photo was examined it was clearly revealed to be one of the wandering albatross superspecies group, now recognised as five full species. Size alone ruled out Wandering Albatross, but not Antipodean Albatross, however the latter was discounted on account of its Pacific Ocean distribution (breeding at Campbell Island and the Auckland and Antipodes Islands, dispersing across the South Pacific from Australia to Chile at other times) making it a most unlikely candidate.

Clues to the specimen's identity were found in Orlando (1958), who quoted the bill size as, length 150mm and width ca. 39mm, both consistent with Tristan (or Gough) Albatross (that breeds on Gough and the Tristan da Cunha group of islands in the South Atlantic and throughout the south Atlantic outside the breeding season), which is assumed to be the specimen's identity.

However, see also Corso (2009), who has expressed some reservations about how this bird might have reached Mediterranean waters.

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*

1958 Israel: Eilat, 13th January (Shirihai 1996), found dead.

Eilat is the most southerly city in Israel, situated on the Gulf of Eilat (aka Gulf of Aqaba), at the northern tip of the Red Sea where Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia all have coastlines. The city and surrounding area, which includes the Negev Desert, have acquired the reputation for great birding and has hosted numerous first Western Palearctic records.

Pic. 076.
Swinhoe's Storm-petrel,
The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, Israel.
Photo: © Amos Belmaker.



This storm-petrel was found dead on the North Beach at Eilat. The specimen is housed in the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, catalogue number SMNH-AV.3373 (Pic. 076). Swinhoe's Storm-petrel breeds on islands in the Sea of Japan and Yellow Sea and since the early 1980s has been turning up in northwest Europe, begging the question of just what route or routes are these amazing birds taking to journey half-way around the world?

Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*

1958 Israel: The Fish Ponds at Ma'agan Mikhael, south of Haifa, 20th June to 12th July (Shirihai 1996).

Although Red-billed Teal is a resident species found across southern and eastern Africa, it is known to undertake long journeys in search of water at times of drought.

Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

1958 Netherlands: Texel Lightship, North Sea, 27th/28th November (van der Spek & CDNA 2018), obtained.

A *Phylloscopus* warbler crashed into the Texel Lightship (moored just off the northwest coast of the Netherlands in the North Sea), on the night of 27th/28th November 1958. The bird was obtained and donated to the Zodlogisch Museum, Amsterdam where it was provisionally identified as Yellow-browed Warbler.

The specimen's identification as Hume's Leaf Warbler was not established until the early 1980s by Tom van der Have (van der Have 1985). Historically, Hume's Warbler was treated as a subspecies of Yellow-browed Warbler, but it was known that their calls and songs differed significantly, and there are a number of consistent plumage differences. Not surprisingly it was recognised as a full species by the CDNA in 1988 and the BOURC in 1997. The specimen is preserved at the National Museum of Natural History, Leiden.

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia*

1959 Scotland: Male, Ward Hill, Fair Isle, Shetland, 27th April to 10th May (Davis & Dennis 1959), trapped.

During the evening of Monday, 27th April 1959, Roy Dennis found a small bird that resembled a cross between a Hedge Sparrow and a bunting that was skulking in a tangle of rusty barbed-wire near the derelict radar-station on Ward Hill, Fair Isle. Roy hurried back to the Obs to alert Peter Davis and to their great relief it was still present on their return. The size and overall drab colour and skulking behaviour reminded them of Dunnock, however the bill and head-pattern suggested a bunting. Decent views were hard to come by, but they eventually saw enough to realise it was a Nearctic sparrow.

A single-panel mist-net was erected and within half-an-hour the bird was trapped and taken back to the Observatory laboratory for processing. Following reference to *A Natural History of American Birds* by E.H. Forbush and J.B. May and that old reliable, *A Field Guide to the Birds* by Roger Tory Peterson, it was identified as a male Song Sparrow, an abundant and widespread North American sparrow. The sex was confirmed early on 1st May when it was heard singing just outside the Observatory's kitchen and this was repeated most mornings right up to the 7th and on two occasions in the evening. During its fortnight stay it was often shy and could be difficult to locate. Its usual haunt was by a cliff in South Haven, where it was sometimes seen feeding in the short turf near the cliff's edge. When moving slowly it would hop along, but if disturbed it would fly rapidly back under the nearest cover. Apart from a brief excursion to the Gully Trap on 6th May, it remained near the Observatory right up to 8th May, then on 9th and 10th May it was observed for the final time down by the stream at Vatstrass.

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*

1959 Denmark: Blåvands Huk, West Jutland, 24th to 25th September (Christensen 1960).

In the autumn of 1959, Niels Christensen and his wife were bird watching in West Jutland, the peninsula that is the continental part of Denmark. On Thursday, 24th September they spent the morning on the headland at Blåvandshuk, after which they set off east stopping from time to time along the road checking for migrants. In a low Poplar and Birch thicket they found two flycatchers, at first assuming both were Spotted Flycatchers. Indeed one of them was, but they soon realised the second bird was something unusual. The found the bird's repeated trilling call particularly puzzling, being unlike any other flycatcher call they knew, describing it as not dissimilar to some Blue Tit notes or a Robin's alarm call.

In fine conditions they spent the next hour taking a detailed description as well as grabbing some photos. They returned later the same day and the next to find the bird still present but there was no sign of it after the 25th. Niels noticed the bird's pale eye-ring and was aware this feature was indicative of Asian Brown Flycatcher, and he began to suspect that's what the mystery flycatcher was. However, finding a detailed description in the available literature proved difficult, but an examination of museum skins turned up a match to clinch the identity, and at the same time rule out other grey or brown Asian flycatcher species.

There are a number of earlier claims that have some credentials but have ultimately failed to be convincing.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

1959 Iceland: Male, Heimaey, Vestmannaeyjar, 22nd October (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), collected.

Collected at Heimaey by Sigurður V. Jónatansson on Thursday, 22nd October 1959. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 077). The species honours Johann Reinhold Forster, an 18th Century German pastor and naturalist, who accompanied James Cook as naturalist on Cook's second voyage of discovery to the Pacific.



Pic. 077.
Forster's Tern, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

Siberian Pipit *Anthus japonicus*

1960 Italy: Female, Noventa Padovana, Veneto, 26th October (Bonfio 1962).

The Siberian Pipit is found in far-eastern Asia (including Japan). This is the first European record, elsewhere in the Western Palearctic it is a scarce but regular passage migrant and winter visitor to the Middle East.

Historically this was one of three subspecies of Buff-bellied Pipit *A. rubescens*. However, following the release of IOC World List version 14.2 in August 2024, the Eastern Palearctic *japonicus* became designated as the monotypic Siberian Pipit, while both the New World forms (*rubescens* & *alticola*) now comprise the polytypic American Pipit (see page 27) .

Cape Teal *Anas capensis*

1961 Libya: Northeast of Kufra Oasis, before April (Snow & Perrins 1998), found dead.

Cape Teal (aka Cape Wigeon) is native to much of sub-Saharan Africa. One was found dead about 250km northeast of Kufra (an oasis in south-eastern Libya), sometime before April 1961 (BWP I), possibly in January? Bundy (1976) reports another bird found dead at Kufra Oasis on 3rd April 1961. These would appear to be the first and second WP records?

A position 250km northeast of the Kufra Oasis would be across the border in Egypt, which suggests the direction from Kufra was more to the north of northeast for the location to be in Libya?

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

1961 Iceland: Adult female, Fagurhólsmýri, Öraefi, 5th June (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), found dead.

Found dead by Hálfdán Björnsson. The specimen is preserved at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pics. 078-079).

The first live and second Western Palearctic record was a first-winter male found among some scrubby Sallows at the southeast corner of the Great Pool on Tresco, Isles of Scilly, England on Friday, 26th September 1975. It later moved to some nearby Elms, where it began to drill for sap (for a photograph of the drilled holes see *British Birds* 72(9): 411). It remained for 11 days and was last seen on 6th October (Hunt 1979).



Pics. 078–079.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photos: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca*

1961 Wales: North Haven, Skomer Island, Pembrokeshire (Dyfed), 5th October (Saunders & Saunders 1992).

On Thursday, 5th October 1961, David Saunders was coming to the end of his early morning patrol as Skomer Island National Nature Reserve's Warden. Reaching the sheltered cliffs above the North Haven landing beach, he noticed a strange bird about 75 metres away. His initial impression was of a grey bird about the size of a Pied Flycatcher, but with the build of a warbler. The bird made its way along the ivy covered cliff, eventually giving David a clearer view and to his astonishment he could see it had a bright sulphur-yellow breast (Pic. 080).

He called his wife Shirley from the nearby warden's house and they both watched as it moved about the cliff, coming as close as ten metres from time to time. It remained there for most of that day, always keeping on the move, sometimes disappearing momentarily in the ivy. They searched the cliffs the following morning but there was no sign of the strange bird, and it also became evident there were far fewer birds about than on the previous day. David and Shirley were at a loss to put a name to it and whatever reference material was to hand, did not help. In addition, nobody else was on the island and they had no means of communicating with the neighbouring island of Skokholm or with the mainland. David sent his description to I.J. (Ian James) Ferguson-Lees (then executive editor of *British Birds*), who replied on 15th December that he would circulate the description among the members of the Rarity Records Committee.

Almost a year later on 15th October 1962, Christopher Swaine (the Rarity Committee's Secretary) replied to the Saunders telling them that it was almost certainly a Blackburnian Warbler and congratulated David on taking a very thorough description. It remained as 'unidentified *Dendroica* sp.' thereafter until David and Shirley decided (with a lot of encouragement from the Pembrokeshire County Recorder, J.W. Donovan) to resubmit the record, which they did in September 1988 and this time it was accepted and published as Blackburnian Warbler (although age and sex were described as uncertain) in the 1989 report of the BBRC.



Pic. 080.
Artist's impression of
Blackburnian Warbler, Skomer,
October 1961, *British Birds* vol. 85(7): p. 339.
Painted by Peter Fullagar
for *British Birds* magazine.
Scan courtesy of © British Birds,
with their permission.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*

1961 France: Female, Ile d'Ouessant, Finistere, 10th October (Vielliard 1962), captured.

This bird most likely arrived at Ouessant courtesy of Hurricane Frances, which had brushed the coast of Nova Scotia, Canada a couple of days prior to its discovery, before crossing the Atlantic as a deep and fast moving depression. The specimen is housed at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle de Paris.

Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus*

1961 At sea: North Atlantic, 21st to at least 22nd October (Durand 1972).

Alan Durand was serving as Radio Officer on the eastbound RMS *Queen Elizabeth* that had departed New York for Southampton in October 1961. On the 20th, Alan spotted a large raptor hanging about the ship, which he identified the following day as a Red-shouldered Hawk, this when they were about half-way to Southampton. It remained until the 22nd and when last seen the ship was nearing the Isles of Scilly. Assuming a steaming speed of 22 knots (easily achievable by the old *Queen*), ship and hawk would have entered the WP at 30°W longitude sometime on the 21st.

Throughout its three day stay it fed exclusively on storm-petrels caught by dashing out from the ship's rigging. On one occasion Alan saw it carrying a Leach's Storm-petrel, which it devoured in the after rigging about six metres above him and another time he saw it drop the indigestible remains of a petrel down one of the ship's funnels. It took to roosting in a recess under the all-round white light on the *Queen's* after mast. It was clearly ship assisted, but as it did not receive food or shelter from anyone on board, in this Author's opinion it fully deserves the distinction of the first for the Western Palearctic.

A possible earlier record is said to have been obtained at Kingussie, Inverness-shire, Scotland on 26th February 1836, however Baxter & Rintoul (1953) judged the circumstances did not warrant its inclusion on the Scottish List as a wild bird.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

1962 England: First-winter male, St. Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 19th September (Parslow & Carter 1965), trapped.

Early on Wednesday, 19th September 1962, F.H.D. Hicks discovered a bunting-like bird whose most distinctive feature was its striped black and yellow head pattern. It was moving about small grassy fields that were overgrown with bracken, in an area close to the Pool on St. Agnes. The bird was unfamiliar to him so he raced back to the Observatory where he found M.J. Carter and together they returned to the spot and quickly refound the bird.

About a half-hour later, they were joined by J.A. Burton and all three watched as the bird moved about. It seemed quite at home in the bracken or sometimes perched on a stone wall or rock. For much of this time it was catching insects on the wing, flying up from a wall or bracken, on which it appeared rather ungainly and unstable. A mist-net was erected and it was soon trapped and taken back to the Observatory for processing. Identification proved difficult, its bunting-like appearance initially suggested an *Emberiza* and the striped head pattern and yellowish under-parts hinted at a female or immature Yellow-breasted Bunting.

However, the large size, pointed tail feathers and absence of white in the wings and tail eventually ruled that out. The only North American guide available was Roger Tory Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds*, which was not particularly helpful as it did not illustrate or clearly describe immature or autumn Bobolinks. When Carter returned home a few days later he was able to study several reference books and realised they had found a Bobolink and this was further confirmed on 25th September when both he and J.A. Burton visited the British Museum and examined Bobolink and other species skins, concluding the St. Agnes bird was a first-winter male.

When the bird was trapped it weighed a healthy 39.5 grams, which seemed excessive for a bird that had just crossed the Atlantic, however the species is known to build considerable fat deposits prior to migration, so much so that it is known as the 'Butter Bird' in Jamaica while on passage.

Alexander & Fitter (1955) mention two undated records from the German island of Helgoland, however both occurred during summer months and the plumage of each was noted to be very worn, not surprisingly they are regarded as escapes from captivity.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

1962 Ireland: First-winter male, North Harbour and The Waist, Cape Clear Island, Cork, 7th to 8th October (Fogden & Sharrock 1965).

Cape Clear Island is located at the entrance to Roaringwater Bay, Cork, three miles northeast of the Fastnet Rock at the southwest extremity of Ireland. To the south and west are the Celtic Sea and Atlantic Ocean and the island is frequently lashed by North Atlantic storms making European landfall.

An Observatory was established there in 1959 by British birders interested in investigating the island's potential for observing and recording migration. Its first home was the old Coastguard Station in South Harbour (subsequently taken over by An Óige and run as a youth hostel for many years), then moving to the building known as 'Stroma', located just off the A1 road (known locally as the Leaca Mhór) during 1961 and 1962. In 1963 it moved to Harbour House in North Harbour (Trá Chiaráin), where it remains to this day.

Around midday on Sunday, 7th October 1962, Michael Fogden and Dr. J.T.R. (Tim) Sharrock (managing editor of *British Birds* magazine from 1976 to 2000 and one of those involved in setting up the Obs on Cape), had brief views of a first-winter male Rose-breasted Grosbeak in North Harbour bushes. It soon departed but was refound at the same location later that afternoon, when they watched it for over an hour as close as ten metres, before it moved on to Cummer and then to The Waist where it spent all of the next day, which was its last on Cape. Most of the time it foraged in brambles continuously feeding on blackberries, which had the effect of staining its bill a deep purple. Incredibly, when first discovered it was sharing the bushes with a Subalpine Warbler and a Red-backed Shrike.

Pine Siskin *Spinus pinus*, Field Sparrow *Spizella pusilla*, Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana*

1962 At sea: North Atlantic, October (Durand 1963).

None of these Nearctic sparrows or finch are on any Western Palearctic national list, nor can they be added to the full Western Palearctic list as a consequence of their presence on the RMS *Mauritania* during its six day crossing of the Atlantic in October 1962, even though they were on board when the ship entered the WP at 30°W longitude, as food and water was provided by the crew during the voyage, making them candidates for Category D2 at best.

The ship departed New York on 7th October 1962, heading straight into the tail end of Hurricane Daisy at a time of peak migration. The full and fascinating account of the huge number of Nearctic species that sought refuge on board the *Mauritania* at that time is recounted in Alan Durand's article in *British Birds* (Durand 1963), a really fascinating and informative read!

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

1963 Azores: Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, 20th or 21st December (Bannerman & Bannerman 1966), shot.

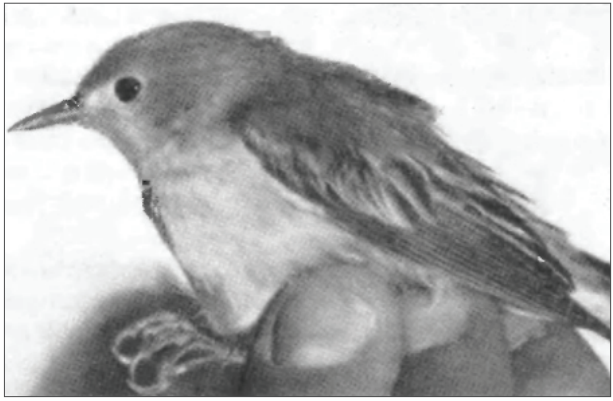
Wood Duck is a Nearctic perching duck that is commonly kept in European wildfowl collections, making escapes of fully winged individuals a real possibility from time to time. This tends to cast suspicion on its occurrences that usually end up assigned to Category E, even when they are discovered at traditional vagrancy hot spots.

The bird at São Miguel is described a more likely transatlantic vagrant (BWP I) and as probably also of transatlantic origin (Snow & Perrins 1998). Either way, the language used is not wholly unequivocal and an element of doubt must hang over it given those assessments. Should it ever be relegated to Category E, there can be no doubt about the current second WP record, a female shot on Flores, Azores in January 1985, as it was ringed in South Carolina in November 1984 (Snow & Perrins 1998).

American Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia*

1964 Wales: First-winter male, Bardsey Island, 29th August (Evans 1965), trapped.

H. Miles, the newly arrived Assistant Warden at Bardsey Island (Gwynedd), was lugging his belongings from the pier to the Observatory when he noticed a small, bright yellow, warbler-like bird perched on top of a nearby hedge. Weighed down by his possessions and without his binoculars, he had to leave it and although puzzled by its identity, he concluded it was probably just an odd Willow Warbler.



Pic. 081.
American Yellow Warbler, in the hand, Bardsey Island, August 1964, *British Birds* vol. 58(11), Fig 1.
Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.
Photo: H. Miles.

A couple of hours later R.F. Durman took a small party of visitors for a short spell of mist-netting. A net was set up in the Cristin House withy bed and the surrounding area walked through. During the drive, Durman observed what was obviously the same bird seen earlier by Miles. George Evans, the Warden, was summoned and he managed good, although fleeting views of the bird, which left him completely stumped, it being like nothing he had ever seen before. Its movements were agile and fast as it moved at or just below the canopy level, appearing in full view briefly before darting out of sight. Evans considered the possibility it was just an aberrant Willow Warbler, but that was soon dismissed. A mist-net was erected and after a few close shaves it was eventually trapped at about 19:20 (Pic. 081). Once examined in the hand, American Yellow Warbler seemed the most likely identity, however, reference material to hand proved inadequate to clinch the identity and deteriorating light precluded a thorough in the hand examination, so it was decided to hold the bird overnight, but unfortunately it died soon after dawn the following morning.

The skin was preserved by Durman and the carcass was examined and later dissected by Dr. P.M. Driver (who had also seen it in the field) on his return to the mainland. Driver reported that although there were no observable signs of disease or parasitic infection, and seemed generally to be in good condition, its fat deposits were seriously deficient. The size of the testes suggested it was an immature male and this was supported by the description taken. On the following 3rd September, Durman brought the skin to the British Museum where Derek Goodwin had no hesitation in confirming it was a first-winter American Yellow Warbler.

Cape Petrel *Daption capense*

1964 Italy: Immature, off Sciacca, Sicily, September (Massa 1974), collected.

Cape (or Pintado) Petrel is circumpolar in the Southern Ocean where it is an abundant and widespread species. Individuals were often taken captive by sailors and kept as pets onboard ships. Consequently, historic records from Wales, France, Ireland and the Netherlands are judged to have been carried to European waters by seafarers returning from southern latitudes (see Haas & Crochet 2009 for a full account).



Pic. 082.
Cape Petrel,
privately preserved.
Photo: © Bruno Massa.

There are three Category A records in the Western Palearctic. The first was taken at sea off Sciacca, Agrigento, Sicily in September 1964. It was examined and identified by Bruno Massa (Professor of Entomology at Palermo University) in November 1973. The mounted specimen is preserved in the private collection of Gino Fantin and family (Pic. 082), however it is expected to be donated to the Museo delle Scienze, Trento sometime in the future. The second flew close-in past Europa Point, Gibraltar on Wednesday, 20th June 1979 (GONHS Bird List [online, accessed November 2021]), and the most recent was photographed at the Asgard oil field in the Norwegian sector of the North Sea from 5th to 7th May 2010.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*

1964 Azores: First-year, Fazenda, Flores, 28th November (Dennis 1981), found dead.

This bird was ringed as a pulli at Margate, New Jersey, USA on 28th June 1964. The first live and second Western Palearctic record overall was also in the Azores, a first-year bird at Fajã dos Cubres, São Jorge from 18th September to 9th October 1997 (Costa *et al*. 2000). The first European and fourth overall for the WP was a first-year at Barnaderg Bay, near Letterfrack, Galway, Ireland from 24th September to 22nd October 2008 (Breen 2008).

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

1965 France: Barfleur, Manche, 25th August (Dubois & Yésou 1986).

The Cunard liner RMS *Queen Mary* en-route from the USA had called at Cherbourg (just over 15 miles from Barfleur) two days before its discovery.

Western Great White (American) Egret *Ardea alba egretta*

Before 1966 Azores: Terceira, date or year not known (Bannerman & Bannerman 1966), collected.

This is the New World subspecies of Great White Egret. It is found from southern Canada south to Argentina and southern Chile. This form is a candidate for full species status *per* IOC World List version 13.1.

Eastern Towhee *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

1966 England: Adult female, Manor Farm Hotel, Lundy Island, Devon, 7th June (Waller 1970), trapped.

During the morning of Tuesday, 7th June 1966, C.S. (Cliff) Waller learned of an unfamiliar bird [...] seen by residents in the garden of the Manor Farm Hotel. Along with Miss J. Mundy he soon located the bird, not at the hotel, but in a nearby and much overgrown stone walled garden.

Their first impressions were of an enormous warbler, the bird's shape and carriage reminding [both] of a very large Dartford Warbler, even to carrying its tail in the same half-cocked attitude. Once on the ground it was more thrush-like, hopping about on strong looking legs, rummaging in the leaf-litter and was heard to call *cheweek cheweek* several times. Its most striking and obvious features were a rufous flank that contrasted with a white belly and red eyes that were quite striking even from a range of 20 yards. Any time it was disturbed it would fly jerkily away and perch on a fence or wall, on one of these occasions landing near some Chaffinches, when it appeared to be about half-as-big again.

In flight it was somewhat shrike-like showing a long and rounded tail, which it would sometimes spread just enough to display white spots at the tips of the outer feathers. After watching it for 30 minutes a decision was taken to trap it. While back at the Observatory to fetch the mist-net, reference was made to Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* and it was identified as an adult female Rufous-sided Towhee (of the form now given full species status as Eastern Towhee). It was successfully trapped and a full description taken.

Masked (White) Wagtail *Motacilla alba personata*

1966 Cyprus: First-winter male, Akrotiri, 22nd September (Flint & Stewart 1992).

This is the first European record. Elsewhere in the Western Palearctic, Masked Wagtail is a rare winter visitor to Iraq and has been recorded as a vagrant in Israel and Egypt (Alström & Mild 2003). Masked Wagtail is the central Asian form of White Wagtail that is found from northern Iran east to northwest China and western Himalayas.

Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica*

1966 Israel: Ma'agan Mikhael, south of Haifa, 15th November to March 1967 (Shirihai 1996).

There are nine species of Whistling (or Tree) Duck that are widespread in the tropics and subtropics. This bird was originally identified as Australian Plumed Whistling Duck and later as Fulvous Whistling Duck. As both of these were occasionally kept in captivity in Israel it was assumed to be an escape.

Then in 1991, when Israeli ornithologist Hadoram Shirihai (author of *A Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife* and joint author of the two volume *Handbook of Western Palearctic Birds*) was working on *Birds of Israel* (Shirihai 1996) he identified it from a photograph as Lesser Whistling Duck, a Tree Duck that is widespread in the Indian subcontinent and southeast Asia. Several features revealed in the photograph (Pic. 083), such as the pristine state of its plumage and the realisation that the species had never been part of an Israeli zoo's collection in the 1960s, ruled out captive origin and it was judged to be a genuine vagrant.



Pic. 083.
Lesser Whistling Duck,
Ma'agan Mikhael,
Winter 66/67.
Photo: © Y. Livneh.

Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*

1966 England: Durlston Head, near Swanage, Dorset, 18th November to 5th February 1967 (Incledon 1968), trapped.

At 09:30 on Friday, 18th November 1966, C.S.L. Incledon was at Durlston Head when he heard an unusual call, a sudden and explosive *chat* coming from the wooded area above the cliffs. There he found a thrush-sized bird, uniformly reddish-brown above, showing two white wing-bars and a wing as long as the body, feeding on the ground at a distance of about 25 feet. Returning home, Incledon consulted several books, including Oliver L. Austin and Arthur Singer's *Birds of the World*, after which he was almost certain the bird was a Brown Thrasher, a species found across much of eastern North America. This was confirmed the following day by Dr. J.S. Ash and M.F. Robertson. On 23rd November it was trapped and ringed by F.R. Clafton and photographed by Dr. D.J. (David) Godfrey (Pic. 084).

During its two month stay it could be extremely shy at times, keeping close to cover, but at other times it seemed indifferent to observers and could be approached quite closely. It was the bird's two characteristic and often repeated call-notes that often alerted birders to its presence. One was a chat-like *tehee* or *tschack* and the other, a harsh Jay or Magpie-like *tseh-aak*. Although on one occasion it was observed pulling worms from the ground in the manner of a thrush, its clear preference was for acorns, which it consumed with vigour. It was last seen on 5th February 1967 by P. Mays and to date remains the sole record for the Western Palearctic.



Pic. 084.
Brown Thrasher,
in the hand, Durlston Head,
November 1966.
Photo: © David Godfrey.

Giant Petrel sp. *Macronectes giganteus / halli*

1967 France: Adult, at sea off northwest France, 2nd November (Meeth 1969).

On Thursday, 2nd November 1967, Piet Meeth and his wife were watching Great Shearwaters on the first day of a sea-voyage from Rouen, France to west Africa. At the time, the ship was battling a gale just to the west of Ile d'Ouessant at the entrance to La Manche (English Channel). The Meeths were surprised to see a Great Shearwater chasing another bird of almost twice its size, which was clearly a kind of petrel. Its most noticeable feature was a heavy body, a big head and an enormous hooked bill, all giving the bird an odd-looking, if not ugly, expression. They identified it as a Giant Petrel but not to species as it would appear they were not aware it had been split as Northern (*M. halli*) and Southern Giant Petrels (*M. giganteus*) in 1966. At noon on the day of observation the ship was in position 48°23'N, 005°37'W (i.e. 20 nautical miles west-southwest of Ile d'Ouessant, Finistere).

Although reported to have a darker head (albeit seen in poor light), what was possibly the same bird was observed by Bernard King off the Wolf Rock (eight nautical miles southwest of Land's End), Cornwall, 13 days previous (Bourne 1992). A record of Southern Giant Petrel observed from a ferry between Igoumenitsa and Ancona in the southern Adriatic on 2nd September 1991 (Brichetti *et al*. 1995), has been re-evaluated by the COI as Giant Petrel sp. (Brichetti & Fracasso 2018, Flood & Yoðurtcuoðlu 2024).

Acadian Flycatcher *Empidonax virescens*

1967 Iceland: Probably a male, Selfoss, Árnessýsla, 4th November (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), found dead.

Found dead by Einar Gunnarsson. This was the first record of an *Empidonax* flycatcher in the Western Palearctic. The specimen is preserved at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pics. 079-080).

The first live and only other record for the WP, was a first-year bird at Dungeness, Kent, England on 22nd September 2015 (Walker 2017). Identification was confirmed at the University of Aberdeen following DNA analysis of faecal matter.



Pics. 085–086.
Acadian Flycatcher, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photos: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata*

1968 England: St. Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 12th to 25th October (Grant 1970).

At about 12:30 on Saturday, 12th October 1968, P.W. & R.J. Burness, R.J. Buxton, P.A. (Paul) Dukes and Peter Grant were walking near the Post Office on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, when Buxton drew their attention to a small bird feeding at the top of a hedge some 25 yards distant. Suspecting a North American wood warbler, all five set about taking detailed notes of its main features.

Peter Grant (author of *Gulls, a guide to identification* and joint author with Killian Mullarney of *The New Approach to Identification*) returned to his cottage where he compiled their notes and compared them with descriptions of wood warblers in *Birds of North America* by Chandler Robbins, Bertel Bruun, Herbert Zim and Arthur Singer and that old reliable, Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds,* after which he was almost certain they had been watching a Blackpoll Warbler, although the similar Bay-breasted Warbler needed to be eliminated and that was achieved once some additional features were double-checked. The bird remained until the 25th and was seen and enjoyed by many during this time. There is an earlier ship assisted record that was present aboard the RMS *Queen Elizabeth* when she docked at Southampton in October 1961. It remained for part of the return voyage, dying when the *Queen Elizabeth* was about half way across the Atlantic (Durand 1963).

Evening Grosbeak *Hesperiphona vespertina*

1969 Scotland: Male, Hirta, St. Kilda, Outer Hebrides, 26th March (Picozzi 1971).

St. Kilda is an archipelago in the North Atlantic about 40 nautical miles west of the Outer Hebrides, Scotland. The largest island in the group is Hirta, which has not had a resident population since 1930, although latterly and up to the present day the army maintain a very small encampment close to the old village on Hirta. The entire archipelago is currently owned by the National Trust for Scotland.



Pic. 087.
Evening Grosbeak, Hirta, St. Kilda, 26th March 1969.
Photo: © Nick Picozzi.

On Wednesday, 26th March 1969 at about 10:00, Nick Picozzi heard a metallic *jink* coming from a small bird perched on a dry-stone dyke in the old abandoned village of Hirta. In excellent light Nick appraised the culprit through 8x bins and was impressed by its dumpy appearance and conspicuous white wing-patch. It didn't hang about and took off with an undulating flight towards the army encampment. Nick watched it perched on an overhead cable from about 12 metres showing a very heavy, pale lime-green beak and a predominantly dull yellow body. He continued to follow as it moved about the encampment, until it came to rest on a wooden landing platform, where he managed to take a colour photo from five metres (Pic. 087).

He noticed some crown feathers were missing and its body feathering was very loose, giving the impression it was not in the best condition. It moved on to grass but did not feed, then flew off through the army encampment and was never seen again. Nick identified the bird as an Evening Grosbeak and this was further confirmed following an examination of his photograph.

Given the state of its plumage, the possibility it was an escaped cage bird was considered and investigated by M.D. England and Derek Goodwin, who reported there was no known instance of the species been offered for sale in Europe for nearly 40 years. Sometime later Nick learned that the bird's appearance at St. Kilda occurred a few months after an unprecedented movement of Evening Grosbeaks in eastern North America during the winter of 1968/69, which further supported wild origin.

Little Curlew *Numenius minutus*

1969 Norway: Adult, Hamningberg, Varangerhalvøya, Finnmark, 14th July (Andersson 1971).

Gert Andersson and two others from Nynäshamn visited Hamningberg on Monday, 14th July 1969 with the intention of looking for Gannets off the point at Syltefjordklubben. They arrived at 14:45 and managed to see four Gannets, four Iceland Gulls and seven Glaucous Gulls. They were about to leave at 16:30 when they saw what turned out to be the best bird of the day standing by the roadside! Initial impressions suggested a Ruff, but the noticeably long bill ruled that out.



Pic. 088.
Little Curlew, Hamningberg, Finnmark,14th July 1969.
Photo: © Gert Andersson.

The mystery bird then joined nine Golden Plover foraging in the grass and they noticed it was as tall as the plovers. It showed a Whimbrel's head pattern but with a dark spot behind the eye and a straighter and shorter bill. It was heard to call *kly kly*. Using the car as a hide about 20 photographs were taken (Pic. 088). It was looked for again on the 15th but it had departed along with the Golden Plover and was not seen again.

Relevant literature and museum specimens were studied. Furthermore, their photographs were examined by, among others, Gustav Rudebeck at the Zoological Institute, Lund and Carl Edelstam of the Natural History Museum, Stockholm with the result that it was confidently identified as a Little Curlew, aka Little Whimbrel.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*

1969 England: Tresco, Isles of Scilly, 19th August (Rogers & RC 1985).

This one-day bird was found by R.F. Coomber, D.B. Hunt and P.Z. Mackenzie. It was subsequently published in the Rarities Committee's 1969 report as a Semipalmated Sandpiper (Smith & RC 1970). However, in reference to the same record, the 1977 report stated that, previously accepted, but now considered unacceptable after review and should be deleted (Rogers & RC 1978).

However, that wasn't the end of it and those involved would have to wait for the 1984 report before it was finally put to bed when, following a review, the BBRC were able to report that a re-examination of the photographs in the light of current knowledge showed this bird to be a classic moulting adult Western [Sandpiper].

A bird trapped on Fair Isle in 1956 was for a time thought to be a Western Sandpiper but was eventually re-identified as a Semipalmated Sandpiper.

American Coot *Fulica americana*

1969 Iceland: Juvenile male, Álftanes á Mýrum, 7th November (Ólafsson 1986), found dead.



Pics. 089–090.
American Coot, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photos: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

This bird was found dead in a feed enhancer storage room at Álftanes (just north of Tanganes Point, Vesturland). The specimen is preserved at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pics. 089-090). The second for the Western Palearctic was also found dead in Iceland, at Höfn in Hornafjörður, A-Skaft on 10th March 1971. When discovered by Sveinbjörn Sverrisson, it had obviously been dead for some time and was partly eaten.

The first live and third record for the Western Palearctic was controlled at Lajes, Flores, Azores on 25th October 1971, it had been ringed in Ontario, Canada on 30th August 1971 (Dennis 1981).

Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan*

1970 England: Adult, Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, 21st February to 16th May (Billett & Grant 1971).

On Saturday, 21st February 1970, J.T. Smith and D.F. Billet were birding at the southern tip of Farlington Marshes, a few miles east of Portsmouth on the south coast of England. At 16:40, a small dark-winged gull approached low along the shore and settled immediately in front of them about 100 yards away. Some nearby Black-headed Gulls were clearly agitated by the new bird's presence and they harassed it to such an extent that after ten minutes of trying to avoid them, it took flight and departed. It was clear to Smith and Billet that it was something unusual, smaller than Black-headed Gull, showing a dark mantle, incomplete hood, short bill, dark red legs and a rather hunched appearance. In flight, the wing pattern was predominantly dark grey with a white trailing edge and a black tip.

Having seen the first-winter Laughing Gull at Weymouth the previous year, they considered it might be an adult or near-adult of that species, but obvious structural differences, especially its size, soon ruled that out. They consulted Albrektsson and Lindberg's (1967) note on immature Laughing Gulls, which also dealt with adult Franklin's Gull, but they mainly relied on Dwight (1925), a long-time standard reference on gull identification, after which they confidently identified it as a Franklin's Gull. The bird was not seen again until 1st March, but thereafter was regularly at Farlington until 16th May and was enjoyed by many hundreds during this time. A daily pattern emerged that began with the Franklin's mingling with other gulls on one of the marshes' lagoons in the early morning, then moving to nearby fields where it fed, before returning to the lagoon in the evening to wash and preen but wherever it went to roost was never discovered.

An adult Franklin's Gull was discovered about 55 miles east of Farlington at Arlington Reservoir, Sussex on the following 4th July. The possibility it was the same bird was considered, but the general consensus was that it was a different individual and was published as such by the BBRC.

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*

1970 Iceland: Adult male, Heimaey, Vestmannaeyjar, 21st May (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), found dead.

This nuthatch was picked up dead by Egill Árnason. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 091).

Pic. 091.
Red-breasted Nuthatch, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Yann Kolbeinsson.



The first live, and to date only other published WP record was a first-year male at Holkham Meals, Norfolk, England from 13th October 1989 to at least 6th May 1990. It was discovered by Jean and Roy Aley who were watching tits and Goldcrests when they noticed an unusual nuthatch feeding on a grassy footpath about six metres ahead of them they could not identify. They watched it for a several seconds before it flew to a nearby pine, where it halted for a moment, before making off through the trees (Aley & Aley 1995). Fortunately it was still present the following day when a number of birders twitched and identified it as a Red-breasted Nuthatch (Hatton & Varney 1989). In addition, there is a Category D record at Tönsheider Wald, Schelswig-Holstein, Germany from October to December 2022.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*

1970 England: Adult, Marazion Marsh, Cornwall, 7th to 8th June (Round 1996).

Found by a young Philip Round during the afternoon of Sunday, 7th June 1970 on his home patch of Marazion Marsh, a couple of miles east of Penzance. J.H. (John Henry) Johns arrived a little later and together they watched it for about two hours. This bird was much brighter and more strongly scaled on the upperparts than the Temminck's found there the previous Friday. It was still present the next day right up to evening time when it was seen by Philip and others at distances down to six metres. Although neither Philip nor J.H. had experience of the North American Least Sandpiper, they concluded that's what it was and submitted it to the BBRC as such, and it was subsequently published as the first spring Least Sandpiper for Britain.

At the time of observation, Philip was unaware of the existence of Long-toed Stint (an Eastern Palearctic peep that breeds in Siberia) indeed none of the submissions to the BBRC mentioned that species, although both Philip's and John Henry's descriptions made reference to the bird's unusually long toes. A couple of weeks later Philip met Dave Britton at the marsh and he asked Philip if the possibility of Long-toed Stint was considered and excluded? However it wasn't until 1974 when Philip read a paper by D.I.M. Wallace on small *Calidris* identification that he began to seriously doubt the original identity.

Pics. 092-095.
Long-toed Stint, Marazion Marsh, 8th June 1970, *British Birds* vol. 89(1), Plates 8-11.
Scans courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.
Photos: J.H. Johns.



He discussed his misgivings with others who had seen the bird and a combination of re-examining photographs (Pics. 092-095), visiting the British Museum to check skins and gaining considerable field experience of the species wintering in Thailand, all led him to believe that the Marazion bird had indeed been a Long-toed Stint in breeding plumage and it was re-submitted. However it would be a further 15 years before it was finally accepted by the BBRC in 1994 and endorsed the following year by the BOURC as the first for Britain.

Hooded Warbler *Setophaga citrina*

1970 England: Female or immature, Big Pool, St. Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 20th to 23rd September (Edwards & Osborne 1972).

About 15:00 on Sunday, 20th September 1970, Clive Totty and P.G. Williams flushed a small warbler-like bird from sedge at the edge of the Big Pool on St. Agnes that immediately disappeared back into cover. They managed to flush it a couple more times before loosing sight of it in a thicket of gorse and bracken. They had no idea what they had just seen and the best they could manage was a hotchpot of Old World warbler species. They told G.W. and K.D. Edwards about it, but further searches that day and the following morning were not successful and it looked very much like it had left the island.

At the same time, K.C. Osborne was staying on the nearby island of St. Mary's and he paid a visit to St. Agnes on 21st September. He birded the area around the Big Pool in the afternoon, where he disturbed a very green 'warbler' with yellow underparts that he first thought might be a large *Phylloscopus* warbler. Although it was a real skulker he managed to flush it three more times before losing sight of it, but at least managed to take note of rather short wings and a long tail, and its flight and general behaviour seemed more typical of *Acrocephalus* than *Phylloscopus*. While making his way back to the quay he met both the Edwards and told them about the bird he had just seen at the Pool. This prompted both G.W. and K.D. to head back to the Pool, taking up a position on an adjacent seawall from where they hoped to connect with the mystery bird, but no such luck! So at 17:00 they began walking the area, which succeeded in flushing it briefly a few times, before it finally obliged by sitting out in full view on bracken about 15 yards off for a couple of minutes. They agreed it was somewhat similar to a rather green and yellow Melodious Warbler, but it had a noticeably long tail and its bill was large, heavy and quite unlike that of any European warbler, which caused them to wonder if it might possibly be a North American wood warbler. Consulting Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* they tentatively identified it as a female or immature Hooded Warbler.

Dreadful weather on the 22nd ensured that it was not seen that day, but at 10:40 on the 23rd the Edwards met others at the Pool including K.C. Osborne (without revealing to anyone that they suspected the bird was a Hooded Warbler). During the next hour-and-a-half they had fleeting views of the bird, before it eventually sat out in full view on a small dead bush for about seven minutes, where everyone managed to get on it at distances down to eight yards, all the time with the sun directly behind them. A number of attempts to trap it were made but they all failed so they left at 13:40 to give the bird a break. Later that afternoon it was watched again as it fed among Tamarisks until it was finally seen at 16:20.

In the discussion that followed all were agreed the bird was very probably a female or immature Hooded Warbler, but the literature to hand was not sufficiently detailed to be absolutely certain. A joint decision was taken not to submit the record until they had the opportunity to visit both the British and Liverpool Museums, where they could study Hooded Warbler skins preserved there. This confirmed their tentative identification and a full account and description was submitted and accepted by the BOURC. The same description was also forwarded to James Baird, of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, who commented that it adds up to a very convincing record of a Hooded Warbler.

Veery *Catharus fuscescens*

1970 England: First-winter, Porthgwarra Valley, Cornwall, 6th October (Allsopp 1972), trapped.

G.E. Dunmore was birding in a small secluded valley near Porthgwarra on Tuesday, 6th October 1970. At 09:30 he was watching a Yellow-browed Warbler flitting about in willows when a bird flew across his line of vision and landed in bushes about six metres away. It had the appearance of a Robin sized plump thrush, but as soon as it turned to face him it showed streaking on the upper breast sharply demarcated from uniform whitish below. Not knowing what it was, Dunmore brought it to the attention of H.P. Medhurst, who opined it resembled a large Thrush Nightingale.

Pics. 096–097.
Veery, Porthgwarra Valley, 6th October 1970, *British Birds* vol. 65(2), Plate 9.
Scans courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.
Photos: Keith Allsopp.





Both had reasonable views of the bird low down in bushes for about two minutes. Dunmore's thoughts then turned to the North American *Catharus* thrushes and was aware that Grey-cheeked Thrush had been recorded in Britain (seven prior to 1970) and Swainson's Thrush, then known as Olive-backed Thrush, in Ireland (two prior to 1970) but this bird did not appear to be either of these. A decision was taken to leave it for 15 minutes and go find Dave Barker, Phil Pearce, Keith Pellow and L.P. (Laurie) Williams and let them know what they found. On their return, the bird was on the edge of a large elderberry bush, where it was watched down to ten metres for about 15 minutes, at which point E.M.P. (Enid) Allsopp and Keith Allsopp arrived just as it disappeared. It was clearly time to consult the Peterson guide and Robbins, Bruun, Zim & Singer's *Birds of North America,* whose pages revealed it to be a Veery. It reappeared two hours later and all present watched it for about 30 minutes as it moved slowly about the vegetation with long pauses between each move, occasionally feeding on elderberries, but at other times entering tamarisks and dead bushes.

It did not appear to be in the least bit bothered by those watching, who were able to get as close as two metres. It was trapped and photographed (Pics. 096-097) and found to be in a very good condition, with no detectable weakness and with none of the plumage spoiled and when released it flew off strongly, soon disappearing into a large Elderberry and was never seen again. On 24th November, E.M.P Allsopp visited the British Museum and consulted two trays of nominate Veery and one of the western form *salicicola*, as well as other *Catharus* skins and they all supported the identification of the Porthgwarra bird as a Veery.

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii*

1970 Ireland: Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, North Slob, Wexford, 6th October to 28th April 1971 (Irish Rare Birds Committee 2013).

This bird (Pic. 098) had paired with a Barnacle Goose and they produced four hybrid offspring (impossible to say where this occurred but possibly on the Barnacle's breeding grounds in eastern Greenland?).

Pic. 098.
Cackling Goose (extreme right), North Slob, Wexford, Winter 1970/71.
Photo: © Tom Ennis.



A photograph of a party of 'Canada' Geese that could not be identified as either Canada or Cackling Goose that were present at the North Slob the previous winter, included one that may well have been the same bird (which had also paired with a Barnacle Goose and produced two hybrid young) and probably was, but the evidence needed to confirm it as a first Irish was insufficient.

In 2004, the American Ornithologists' Union raised the 'large' and 'small' forms of Canada Goose to full species status, i.e. Canada Goose and Cackling Goose respectively. This arrangement was subsequently adopted by others, e.g. the BOU in 2005 and IRBC in 2009.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

1970 England: Adult, Plex Moss, Lancashire, 5th December to 17th January 1971 (Batty & McInerny 2023, Holt *et al*. 2022).

This bird was first observed on Saturday, 5th December 1970. It frequented the Plex Moss and Formby areas of Lancashire in the company of Pink-footed Geese over four consecutive winters until last seen on 12th January 1974.

Due to uncertainties about the provenance of Ross's Goose occurrences, 50 years would elapse before it was accepted as a genuine vagrant and the species added to Category A of the British List. This replaces the previously accepted first WP record at Santpoort-Noord, Noordholland, Netherlands on 30th November 1985.

Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*

1971 Spain: Adult, Marisma de Hinojos, Doñana, 30th June & 15th August (Ree 1973).

At 11:00 on Wednesday, 30th June 1971, Viggo Ree found a Grey-headed Gull on the Marisma de Hinojos in Doñana National Park, a reserve of just over 200 square miles in Andalucía, southern Spain. It was sometimes observed with Gull-billed Terns, Whiskered Terns and Slender-billed Gulls. The bird was present throughout much of the day at the Marisma de Hinojos and later on, was seen at the Paciles Cortados. It was not at all shy and came so close to Viggo he was able to make out the colour of its eye.

Viggo saw it for a second time on 15th August, when he and Morton Brandt were ringing in the Marismas near the Guadiamar River. It circled above them before departing to the north across the river. Viggo managed to take some photographs and later the same day Morton saw it again at 16:00, for what turned out to be the final time. Their attempts to trap it were not successful. This was the first record for mainland Europe, there is a small breeding population just inside the Western Palearctic border in Mauritania.

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*

1971 Norway: Vardø, Troms og Finnmark, 6th July (Kuhn *et al*. 1973).

German birders Michael Kuhn, Achim Bruch and Wolfgang Stickel embarked on a birding vacation to northeastern Norway from 1st to 13th July 1971. At 18:00 on Tuesday, 6th July, they were at Vardø on the island of Vardøya, where they found a dowitcher that was frequenting a small brackish pool at the southern end of the island.

It was in the company of Ruff and feeding rapidly using a short drilling action. Unfortunately, after about 45 minutes and without warning, they all took flight and departed to the south-southwest. It was heard to call several times, a three (or less frequently two) *tü-tü-dit* series of notes, strongly suggesting Short-billed Dowitcher. The call was recorded and compared with that species sonograms, which proved a match and confirmed the identity.

Taiga Merlin *Falco columbarius columbarius*

1971 Azores: First-year female, Fajã de Baixo, São Miguel, 8th November (Robb *et al*. 2022), collected/found dead.

The specimen was presented to the Carlos Machado Museum, Ponta Delgada by Gilberto Tavares Carreiro.

This recently published record replaces the previously accepted first Western Palearctic record of a juvenile male found dead at Akranes, Iceland in October 1989. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.

It is not known if the bird at São Miguel was collected or found dead. If the latter, the first live and third Western Palearctic record overall was a juvenile (Pic. 099) found by Willie McDowell at Cape Clear Island, Cork, Ireland on 29th September 2000 (Garner 2002).



Pic. 099.
Taiga Merlin, Cape Clear Island, Cork, September 2000. Photos: © Michael O'Keeffe.
More than likely this was the first Taiga Merlin to be found alive. It was the third WP record overall following one in the Azores in 1971, and another in Iceland in 1989.

Pic. 100.
Northern Flicker,
Vejgaard, Ålborg,
Denmark, 18th May 1972.
Photo: © Hans Krabsen.



Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus*

1972 Denmark: Female, near Ålborg, Denmark, 18th May (Hansen *et al*. 1974).

Northern Flicker is a Nearctic woodpecker with nine subspecies that are divided into four distinct geographical groups. Any that make it to the Western Palearctic would be expected to come from the southeastern USA group *auratus*, also known as Yellow-shafted Flicker. These show yellow on the underwing and under-tail and have yellow shafts on the primaries.

In 1972 Hans Krabsen was living in Vejgaard, near Ålborg. While reading in his bedroom on Thursday, 18th May 1972, he heard a call coming from outside that he could not identify. Looking out his window he saw a bird sitting in a tree, so taking his camera he took a picture (Pic. 100). Unfortunately the sound of the camera's shutter spooked the bird, causing it to depart, never to be seen again. It was later identified as a female Northern Flicker.

This record was reviewed by the Rarities Committee of the Danish Ornithological Society in 2013 to determine if it should be a part of the Danish List or not and it was duly accepted (Ortvad *et al*. 2015). Not surprisingly they concluded it belonged to one of the two relatively similar subspecies *auratus* and *luteus*.

There is an earlier record of one seen to fly ashore from the RMS *Mauretania* as it approached Cork Harbour, Ireland on 13th October 1962, which had spent much of the transatlantic voyage on board (Durand 1963). As food and water was provided by the crew during the voyage, the species was assigned to Category D2 of the Irish list (this was the same sea voyage that transported the Nearctic sparrows and finch mentioned on page 85). In addition, one was found dead on a ship or perhaps on a container discharged from a ship in 1981, its not know if it entered the WP dead or alive. All other Western Palearctic records have occurred in the Azores with two at Corvo (2010 & 2016) and one at Faial (2013).

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

1972 Azores: Adult, Santa Maria, 23rd September (Dennis 1981), caught by hand.

This bird was ringed on the previous 24th July 1972 at Madeleine Islands, Quebec, Canada.

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

1973 Northern Ireland: Juvenile, near Garrison, Fermanagh, 11th January (Preston 1974, Smiddy & O'Sullivan 1996), shot.

This bird was shot by a County Fermanagh farmer, who claimed it was attacking the chickens in his yard. The location where the eagle was shot is at the extreme eastern shore of Lough Melvin, which is renowned as one of Ireland's best angling loughs, in every way an ideal place for a trans-Atlantic sea eagle to find some temporary sanctuary. The specimen was originally identified as a White-tailed Sea Eagle by Dr. Robert Nash at the Ulster Museum, Belfast. In mid-1990 a picture of the specimen was brought to the attention of Dave Allen (then of the RSPB, later an Ecological Consultant with Allen & Mellon Environmental) by Joe Magee, the RSPB's Warden in Fermanagh, however Dave wasn't convinced it was a White-tailed Eagle. He was aware that just a few years earlier in Kerry, a bird that was initially believed to be a White-tailed Eagle was later re-identified as a juvenile Bald Eagle (at that time the only known record of the species in the Western Palearctic). Dave wondered if this odd-looking bird might also prove to be a Bald Eagle, and he made arrangements to examine the specimen, which was still in the possession of the Fermanagh farmer who had shot it.

At this point it was also seen by Bob Scott and measured by Martin Gray (both RSPB at the time) and their collective notes were sent to Pete Colston at the Natural History Museum, London who quickly confirmed it was a juvenile Bald Eagle. When examined, there were grains of chicken feed found on the body, perhaps confirming the farmer's story? The mounted specimen now resides in the vaults of the Ulster Museum, Belfast (Pic. 101).



Pic. 101.
Bald Eagle, Ulster Museum, Belfast.
Photo: © Willie McDowell.

An eagle at Ballymacelligot, Kerry, Ireland on 18th November 1987 was initially thought to be a Golden Eagle, but after this exhausted and weak bird was taken into care it was re-identified as a White-tailed Eagle. However, when Killian Mullarney (renowned artist who along with Dan Zetterström illustrated the *Collins Bird Guide* and joint author with Peter Grant of *The New Approach to Identification*) was shown Richard Mills' photograph of the bird published in the *The Cork Examiner* newspaper, he noticed the tail pattern did not look quite right for juvenile White-tailed Eagle and wondered if it might actually be a juvenile Bald Eagle?

Having receiving some detailed advice from raptor expert Dick Forsman, Killian travelled to Kerry in the company of Alyn Walsh (of the NPWS), to carry out an inspection of the live bird, which established it was indeed a juvenile Bald Eagle (Pics. 102-103). At that time it was the first occurrence in the Western Palearctic, but was pre-dated a few years later when the Fermanagh bird's identity was determined.

When it was captured at Ballymacelligot the eagle weighed just six pounds. During a period of recuperation it put on five pounds and was eventually considered ready for repatriation. On 22nd December 1987 it was returned to the USA aboard Aer Lingus flight EI-ASJ and was released back into the wild in Massachusetts. To date both these Irish birds are the only Western Palearctic records of this Nearctic sea-eagle.

Pics. 102–103.
Juvenile **Bald Eagle**, Ballymacelligot, Kerry, November 1987.
Photos: © Richard T. Mills.







Pic. 104.
Canada Warbler, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Yann Kolbeinsson.

Pic. 105.
Canada Warbler, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Yann Kolbeinsson.



Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*

1973 Iceland: Male, Sandgerði, Gullbringusýsla, 29th September (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), taken.

This bird was obviously exhausted when captured by Sólveig Sveinsdóttir. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pics. 104-105).

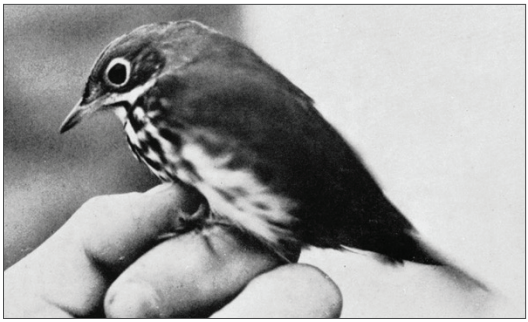
Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

1973 Scotland: First-year, Out Skerries, Shetland, 7th to 8th October (Robertson 1975), trapped.

During the afternoon of Sunday, 7th October 1973, Iain Robertson was looking for migrants on Out Skerries, the most easterly group of islands in Shetland. He saw a bird that he did not immediately recognise run behind a dry-stone wall. He cautiously approached, and peering over, saw it searching for grubs about ten metres away. It put Iain in mind of the waterthrush genus *Seiurus**, and as it lacked a supercillium, he thought it was probably an Ovenbird, a species that breeds over much of central and eastern North America.

As he watched, the bird ran among the fallen stones at great speed and hopped through gaps in the wall with surprising agility. It was about the size of a Nightingale, and its chat-like stance, with tail erect and wings drooping on either side, was also reminiscent of that species. Its most conspicuous features were a pale eye-ring and dark crown-stripes. Iain took some notes, then set up a mist-net across a gap in the stone wall and after a failed attempt, trapped the bird (Pics. 106-107). He bagged it and took it back to his house where, along with his wife, the initial identification was confirmed and it was aged as a first-year. Once processed and photographed it was released in the nearest cabbage patch, and as the light was fading they left it there undisturbed to find shelter. The next day, Dennis Coutts, J.H. Simpson and R.J. (Bob) Tulloch arrived on Skerries to see the bird. After some time they found it feeding along a grassy bank on the shore-line, but it soon departed and headed for open rocky hillside about 500 metres distant, where it continued to feed. It remained there for about an hour, eventually disappearing behind a small hillock and was gone for good.

Pics. 106–107.
Ovenbird,
in the hand, Out Skerries,
7th October 1973.
Photos: © Iain Robertson.





All four remarked on its appearance and how it reminded them of a Nightingale or a giant Goldcrest! During the entire time it was observed it remained silent. Iain continued to search for it after the 8th, but without success and assumed it had departed Out Skerries. However, as he would later discover, that is almost certainly not the case. On the night of 11th/12th October, the fishing boat *Heather Bell*, from the nearby island of Whalsay, was tied-up overnight at the pier in Skerries. As it departed the following morning the crew noticed an unusual bird sat in a fish basket on the deck. Some time later, the boat's skipper described the stow-away to J.H. Simpson, which left him in no doubt it was an Ovenbird. Unfortunately the skipper did not notice if it was carrying a leg-ring or not, but what are the chances of two Ovenbirds being present on the Skerries at the same time? It was accepted by the BOURC as the first authenticated record.

The provenance of an Ovenbird's wing found protruding from flotsam on the tideline at Formby Point, Lancashire some years earlier on 4th January 1969 is not established.

* Since the time of Iain's great find, both waterthrushes have been moved to the genus *Parkesia* and are currently not considered to be particularly closely related to Ovenbird.

Pics. 108–109.
Snowy Egret, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photos: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.





Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

1974 At sea/Iceland: Adult male, in position 63°15'N, 023°10'W (40 nautical miles south-southwest of the Reykjanes Lighthouse), 6th April (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), found dead.

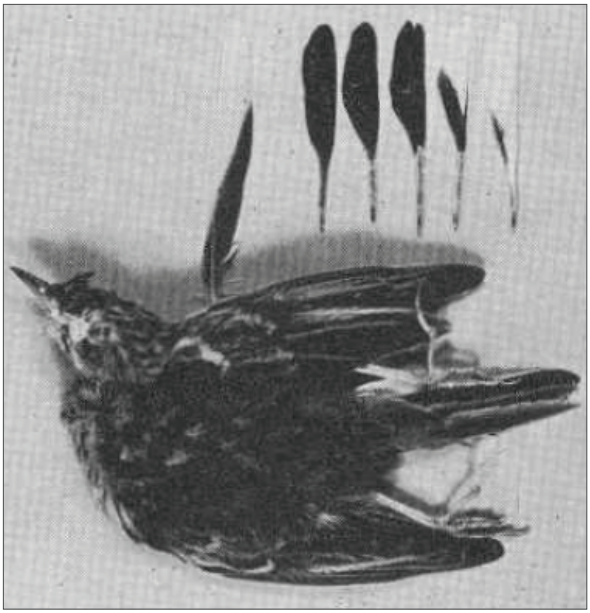
Found dead on a ship by Friðþjófur Bragason. The specimen is in the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pics. 108-109). The first live bird for the WP was collected by Friðrik Jónsson at Hraunkot í Lóni, A-Skaft, Iceland on 6th June 1983 (Pétursson & Ólafsson 1985). An earlier record of one shot at the Weser Estuary, near Dorumer, Germany on 26th October 1937 is assigned to Category D of the German List (Barthel & Krüger 2019).

Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans*

1974 France: Adult, Banc d'Arguin, Gironde, 10th May to at least Summer 1984 (Dubois & CHN 1994).

This bird was discovered in a Sandwich Tern colony at Banc d'Arguin, a sandbank just off Le Petit Nice at the entrance to Arcachon Bay on the Bay of Biscay. It returned to the colony in most years until (at least) 1984 and perhaps even thereafter. During these years it produced hybrid young, whose progeny are assumed to be still around.

Nevertheless, genetically pure Elegant Terns are known to be occurring in western Europe thanks to work carried out by Dufour *et al*. (2016), which, among other findings, has confirmed their presence using DNA sequencing.



Pic. 110.
Blyth's Pipit,
Finnish Museum of Natural History, Helsinki.
Photo: © Pamela Harrison.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

1974 Finland: Lågskär Bird Observatory, Åland, 10th October 1974 (Rauste & Salonen 1978), captured.

On Thursday, 10th October 1974 a large, unidentified pipit was captured at Lågskär. It was held in captivity, but unfortunately died during the following night.

The skin, which was found to be in a poor condition, was examined by, among others, Lars Svensson, Kenneth Williamson and Peter Grant, who all concluded it was a Blyth's Pipit (Pic. 110). The specimen is preserved at the Finnish Museum of Natural History in Helsinki.

At the time, this became the second Western Palearctic record. However, it was later promoted to first following the decision by the BOU to reject the previously indicated first record, a bird caught at Brighton, on the south coast of England on 23rd October 1882 (BOU 2018, Williamson 1977).

Algerian Nuthatch *Sitta ledanti*

1975 Algeria: Djebel Babor, Petite Kabylie, 5th October (Ledant 1977).

A certain amount of poetic license is needed to include this Algerian endemic as it is a species new to science, rather than a first record. It was discovered in October 1975 in mixed oak-fir forest by Jean-Pierre Ledant (who is celebrated in the scientific name), a young Belgian agronomist, in the Petit Kabylie region of the Babor Mountains in northeastern Algeria.

The species was formally published the following year and is the most recently described new species for the Western Palearctic (Pics. 111-112). Small populations have been discovered in similar habitat since 1975, all of these found within 30km of each other.





Pics. 111–112.
Algerian Nuthatch,
Bouafroun Forest, Algeria,
28th September 2018.
Photos: © Graham Talbot.

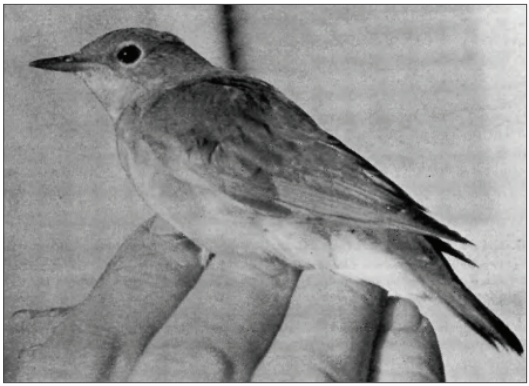
Siberian Blue Robin *Larvivora cyane*

1975 Channel Islands: First-year female, Banquette Valley, Sark, 27th October (Rountree 1977), trapped.

Philip J. Guille had set up a mist-net under a canopy of Sycamores alongside some Blackthorn scrub at the head of Banquette Valley on the Channel Island of Sark. At 13:50 he checked the net and discovered a small passerine whose identity was a complete mystery to him. Structurally, it resembled a small thrush or a large Robin but the plumage did not match any WP thrush or chat. He bagged the bird and summoned assistance in the form of the Marsdens and the Rountrees, who arrived in time to witness Philip examining the bird, which gave Alan Marsden the opportunity to take photos (Pic. 113). While handled it remained silent but when released it was heard to call *tchak*. The intention was to study the bird at length in the field, however upon release it shot off and was never seen again.

To begin with, they had no idea what it was and could not find anything similar in a European field guide. They extended their search to the wider Palearctic, consulting Kobayashi's *Birds of Japan in Natural Colours* and *A Field Guide to the Birds of Southeast Asia* by Ben King, Martin Woodcock and E.C. Dickinson. Here they learned of several potential Eastern Palearctic chats, eventually determining it was a Siberian Blue Robin, and probably a first-year female. It arrived during a period of strong easterly winds, caused by a deep anticyclone centred over the Baltic. There was never any doubts expressed that it wasn't a wild bird and it was duly accepted by the Sark Rare Bird Panel, and later, by the BBRC.

Pic. 113.
Siberian Blue Robin,
in the hand, Sark, October 1975, *British Birds* vol. 70(9), p. 363.
Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.
Photo: Alan Marsden.



Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*

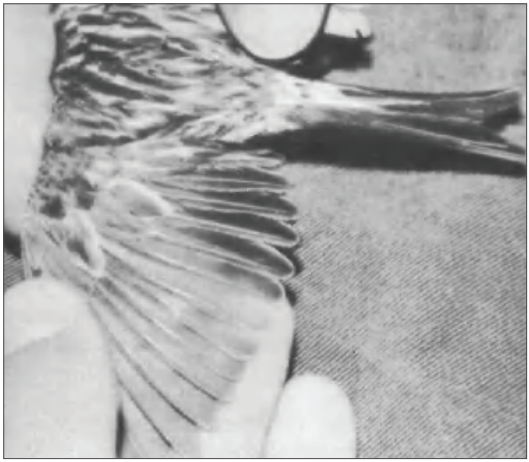
1976 Scotland: Adult female, Skerryholm, Fair Isle, Shetland, 29th September to 11th October (Broad & Oddie 1980), trapped.

About midday on Wednesday, 29th September 1976, Roger Broad was near Fair Isle's Skerryholm, when he glimpsed a small nondescript passerine fly low from a potato drill for some 20 metres, before diving straight back in again. Although this behaviour was repeated several times, Roger never got a clear view of the bird. Thankfully it eventually revealed itself in full view creeping mouse-like through the vegetation about 15 metres from him. Over the next 20 minutes he observed it briefly in flight and occasionally on the ground, where it invariably kept well concealed in the vegetation. Initial impressions were of a small, nondescript, totally unfamiliar bunting and when seen side by side with a Twite, was more or less the same size. Apart from Little Bunting (and it clearly wasn't one), Roger wasn't aware of any Palearctic bunting the size of a Twite and he even pondered the possibility it was a New World sparrow. Joined by J. Watt, they both watched it over the next 15 to 20 minutes as it continued to frustrate all their attempts to get a proper look at it. They left to alert others at the Observatory, returning as soon as possible to try and trap the bird. While back at the Obs, Roger checked the literature, which at least allowed him to rule out Nearctic sparrows, but provided little else and he even wondered if it might be an escaped cage bird, but its nondescript appearance seemed to rule that possibility out. On their return, they thoroughly searched the area without success and, although looked for over the next few days, there was no further sign of it. It seemed like this was one that got away and a lost cause to boot as their combined notes were not suggesting a species!

Then on 5th October, S.D. Cook, A.R. Lowe and Bill Oddie (author, presenter of television wildlife programs and member of the 1970's comedy group, The Goodies) had fleeting glimpses of a small bunting in a dense crop of oil-seed rape at Taing. It was obviously the Skerryholm bird and clearly much smaller than a nearby Reed Bunting. That evening both Lowe and Oddie made a concerted effort to identify it. Various options were considered, eventually working on the theory it was Siberian in origin and they spent some time browsing *Birds of the Soviet Union* by Dementiev & Gladkov. Here they learned that Pallas's Reed Bunting lacks moustachial stripes, which raised the possibility it was a female of that Siberian bunting?

Pics. 114–115.
Pallas's Reed Bunting, in the hand, Fair Isle, September 1976, *British Birds* vol. 73(9), p. 404.
Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.
Photos: Roger Broad.







Pic. 116.
Water-colour of **Pallas's Reed Bunting,** Fair Isle, September 1976, *British Birds* vol. 73(9), Fig. 1.
Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.
Painted by Richard Richardson.

It was trapped on the 11th at Taing and taken to the Observatory for processing where it was seen by a dozen or so birders (Pics. 114-115). Later on, Richard Richardson, who was one of those present, painted a water-colour of the bird (Pic. 116). It was held overnight and released back at Taing the following day. While held in the Observatory it was heard to utter a single anxiety note, which was rendered as a cross between the calls of House Sparrow and Yellow Wagtail. The plumage was found to be exceedingly heavily worn, but there was no obvious sign of previous captivity.

Wing formula details in Dementiev & Gladkov fitted both Pallas's Reed and Reed Buntings, but were found to be more consistent with the former, and the plumage compared favourably with a female Pallas's Reed. In the end it was details of the species described in Lars Svensson's *Identification Guide to European Passerines* that confirmed it. Once back on the mainland, Bill Oddie and R.J. (Ron) Johns visited the British Museum, Tring to examine skins and found some of the form *montanus* (not currently recognised as a valid subspecies by the IOC, and is most likely a synonym of the nominate?) collected in Turkestan most closely resembled the Fair Isle bird. An earlier 1954 Danish record has not been accepted as a wild bird.

Taiga Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*

1976 England: First calendar-year, Spurn Point, East Yorkshire, 19th October 1976 (Machin 2022), trapped.

Staffordshire brothers Ian and Niall Machin (then aged 17 and 14) have fond birding memories of 1976, a ground-breaking year for both. During a couple of visits to Portland Bill they had ticked off a tailless Bonelli's warbler species, Aquatic Warbler, Ortolan Bunting and Red-backed Shrike. That October they had booked a week long stay at Spurn Bird Observatory on the east coast of England, the very same week that West Midlands Bird Club's Frank Gribble would be ringing there. During the morning of Tuesday, 19th October 1976, the wind at Spurn was from the southeast and the visibility was reduced due to fog.







Pics. 117–119.
Taiga Flycatcher, in the hand, Spurn Point, 19th October 1976. Photos: © Niall Machin.

Frank was ringing at the Warren, where he was happy to encourage [Ian and Niall] by letting [them] help, although he wasn't best pleased with the brothers annoying habit of checking the mist-nets before the ringers had a chance to! On one such occasion, Niall was checking a net setup in Sea Buckthorn that held a bird showing quite a bit of white in the tail. He was amazed and excited to see it was a Red-breasted Flycatcher, a tick for the young birder. He hurried off to inform Frank of the prize and later on he took pictures of the bird in the hand after it was ringed (Pics. 117-119).

A mere 46 years later in October 2022, Niall booked a week-long stay at the newly furbished Spurn Observatory. In advance of his visit, he decided to post some of his old photos on Twitter, including one image of the 1976 'Red-breasted Flycatcher', which prompted immediate responses highlighting the dark uppertail coverts and the whitish edgings to the tertials and coverts and apparent cold-toned plumage and all black/dark bill. Niall quickly posted all three photos of the bird that he had digitized from the original slides. Help was at hand, Spurn's historic ringing and birding notes were taken from storage at Treasure House (at Beverley, East Riding of Yorkshire). Ian Machin provided his 1976 notebook and others were requested from various Yorkshire birders present at Spurn at the same time. All told, there was good reason to suggest the bird was a Taiga and not a Red-breasted Flycatcher, which was split in the early 2000s. The record was submitted to the BBRC and following a thorough examination of the ringing and personal records, it was accepted and later endorsed by the BOURC (BOURC 2024a), becoming the first Taiga Flycatcher for Britain and western Europe. The breeding range of this largely Asian species extends into the Western Palearctic in eastern Russia. It replaces the previously indicated first western European record, a first-winter bird trapped at Segerstad, Öland, Sweden on 26th October 1998 (Cederroth *et al*. 1999).

Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

1977 Morocco: 11 or 12 individuals, Oued Massa, 7th to 26th April (Snow & Perrins 1998).

Fulvous Whistling Duck is found across tropical regions of both the Old and New Worlds. Earlier records at Camargue, France in September 1970 and at Guadalquivir Marismas, Spain in September 1971 are described as possible vagrants only (BWP I).



Pic. 120.
Canvasback, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

Pic. 121.
Canvasback, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.



Canvasback *Aythya valisineria*

1977 Iceland: Immature female, Arfadalsvík í Grindavík, Gullbringusýsla, 11th April (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), collected.

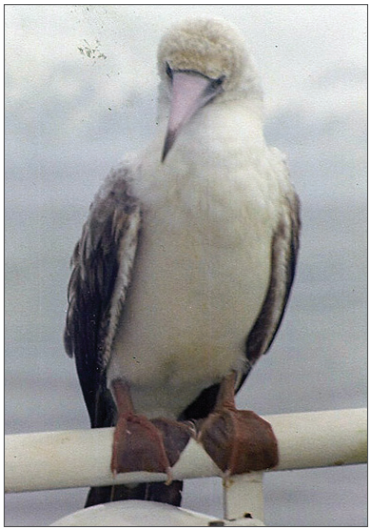
This Nearctic diving duck was found by Ingólfur Guðnason, Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson, Ólafur K. Nielsen, Kristinn H. Skarphéðinsson and Skarphéðinn Þórisson. The specimen is preserved at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pics. 120-121).

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*

1977 At sea/Cape Verde Islands: Immature, in approximate position 17°N, 023°W (about 12 nautical miles north-northeast of the Farol da Ponta Norte Lighthouse, Sal), 17th April (Hazevoet 2010).

Ernest Glyndwr Lewis was serving as Radio Officer on the 36,000 tonne MV *Causeway* that departed Tilbury (on the River Thames) on Thursday, 7th April 1977 for San Francisco via the Panama Canal. On the 15th, the vessel bunkered at Tenerife and two days later was approaching the Cape Verde island of Sal from the north when a large white bird resembling a Gannet landed on the deck. It must have been very happy aboard the *Causeway* as it hitched a ride all the way to the Panama Canal. By day it would perch on a bridge deck rail, where Lewis took some pictures of it (Pic. 122), preferring the warmth of the funnel deck to roost overnight (Nuovo 2008).

Just a short 31 years later in July 2008, Lewis decided to try and discover the identity of the species that has crossed the Atlantic with him, so he turned to the Italian EBN '*Argonauti*' for help. Not long after he posted his photo and request, answers flooded in identifying it as an immature Red-footed Booby.



Pic. 122.
Red-footed Booby, MV *Causeway*.
Photo: © Ernest Glyndwr Lewis.

Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*

1977 Scotland: Male in song, Paisley Glen, Renfrewshire, 17th June (Byars & Galbraith 1980).

On Friday, 17th June 1977, Tom Byars was birding in Paisley Glen, an area of ornamental parkland and mixed woodland on the outskirts of Paisley (a town in Scotland's west central lowlands). At 14:00 GMT he heard an unfamiliar song coming from an overgrown part of the glen. The singer was an exotically coloured warbler-like bird that was suggestive of a Nearctic wood warbler (Pics. 123-126).

Tom took a full description, then fetched his camera and tape recorder and after he took some photographs and made a sound recording, he informed Hector Galbraith of the bird's presence. In excellent conditions and at close quarters Tom and Hector watched the bird up to 19:30 in a small area (0.17ha) of open mixed woodland and scrub-filled clearing, feeding mostly in Spruce, Scots Pine and Rowan. Illustrations and descriptions in Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* confirmed the identity as a Cape May Warbler in breeding plumage. It appeared to be well settled and content, however at 19:00 a rather enthusiastic group of local birders arrived and the bird became shyer and more elusive and when looked for the following day could not be found nor at anytime after that.



Pics. 123–126.
Cape May Warbler, Paisley Glen, 17th June 1977.
Apart from top left, these photographs have never been previously published.
Photos: © Tom Byars.

For much of the time the bird was in full song, delivered from both the tops of trees and low-level scrub, the song consisted of four notes repeated intermittently and each phrase, a flat *swee-swee-swee-swee,* repeated fairly quietly and with a slight nasal intonation, lasted a couple of seconds.

It is fitting that the first Cape May Warbler for the Western Palearctic should be found in Paisley as Alexander Wilson, who named the species after the site in New Jersey, USA, where he first recorded the bird in 1811, was born and spent his youth there and his birthplace is easily seen from Paisley Glen!

Cabot's Tern *Thalasseus acuflavidus*

1978 Netherlands: First-winter, Veerse Meer, Noord-Beveland, Zeeland, 23rd December (Scharringa 1979), found dead.

Jelle Scharringa found a dead tern near the shore of the Veerse Meer, just south of the Veersen Dam. He was surprised to discover it carried an American leg-ring (US Fish & Wildlife Service #136-315540). As the bird was in a very bad condition (the head and bill were missing) Jelle was unable to determine the species, but it was clearly a first calendar year bird. He sent the details to the Het Vogeltrekstation in Arnhem for forwarding to the US Fish & Wildlife Service, who replied with the news that it was a Sandwich Tern and was ringed as a pulli at Cape Lookout, North Carolina on 23rd June 1978. At that time Sandwich Tern was treated as polytypic with three subspecies, the nominate Old World form and two others in the Americas. Both New World races were later raised to full species status as Cabot's Tern, consisting of the nominate *acuflavidus* and the more southerly distributed *eurygnathus* (Cayenne Tern). Cabot's Tern will be again be lumped with Sandwich Tern once AviList's unified global checklist of birds is adopted.

The only other record for the WP was a first-year found dead at Newhouse Wood, Herefordshire, England on 28th November 1984. This bird had been ringed the previous June at Cape Lookout. The first Cayenne Tern for the Western Palearctic was found at Our Lady's Island Lake, Wexford, Ireland on 13th June 2020, remaining until the 25th (see page 266).

Whistling Swan *Cygnus columbianus columbianus*

1978 Ireland: Lough Gill, near Castlegregory, Kerry, 31st December to 1st February 1979 (Preston 1980).

Frank King was watching wildfowl at Lough Gill when he picked up a swan with what appeared to be an all black bill. Although conditions were dull and cloudy, Frank was certain he could not find any trace of yellow in the bill and concluded he had just found a Whistling Swan, especially as he could clearly pick out yellow on the bills of Whooper Swans that were much further away. The bird fed on its own just off a jetty on the eastern side of the lake about 120 yards from where Frank was parked. When he next saw the bird early in 1979 the light was perfect and the bill appeared to be entirely black to the naked eye, which had the effect of making it appear proportionately larger than those on Bewick's Swans that had arrived at Lough Gill in the interim. However, using binoculars, Frank noticed a very small yellow mark just in front of the swan's eye, but this only when it turned its head to a certain angle. He saw the bird a couple more times and always found it in the same spot and always on its own.

In early February there was extremely heavy rain and flash flooding in the Castlegregory area and when Frank visited the lough on 3rd February the water level had risen considerably and the swans had departed. When they eventually returned in smaller numbers, the Whistling Swan was not with them, nor anytime after that. The polytypic Tundra Swan is comprised of the Old World Bewick's and New World Whistling Swans.

An earlier record of an adult at Zonnemaire, Schouwen-Duiveland, Zeeland, Netherlands on 15th February 1976 is no longer accepted by the CDNA.

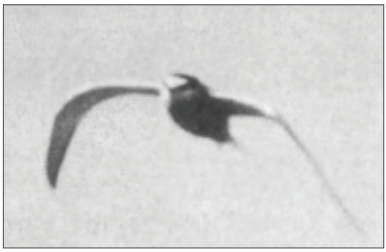
Aleutian Tern *Onychoprion aleuticus*

1979 England: Adult, Farne Islands, Northumberland, 28th to 29th May (Dixey *et al*. 1981).

In the early afternoon of Monday, 28th May 1979, R. Heywood heard a soft wader-like call, on Inner Farne, in the Farne Islands, Northumberland. Expecting a wader he turned only to find a dark tern with a sharply defined white forehead, quite unlike any other tern found at Farne. He contacted other wardens present, A.E. Dixey, A. Ferguson, D.E. Mole and A.R. Taylor, who on arrival began taking field notes. They agreed the most distinctive feature was the bird's noticeably deep wingbeats, with the emphasis on the downbeat, much deeper than that of Arctic or Common Tern. A check of European field guides failed to identify the species, so A.R. Taylor browsed the pages of *A Field Guide to the Seabirds of Britain and the World* by Gerald Tuck and Hermann Heinzel and, although there was no mention of the call, he found Aleutian Tern the sole credible candidate.









Pics. 127–130. Aleutian Tern, Farne Islands, 28th May 1979, *British Birds* vol. 74(10), p. 414. Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission. Photos: A. Ferguson.

On the face of it this seemed highly improbable as that species breeds in the north Pacific and winters in Australia, very definitely the other side of the world. Although it was seen less frequently as the day wore on, the wardens took every opertunity to observe it, take more notes and grab some photos (Pics. 127-130). The next day it was less evident in the morning, but reappeared in the afternoon until last observed at 18:30. On both days the wind was south-southwest force 3/4, with pretty decent weather. The bird was usually seen in flight, often high over the sea before returning to Inner Farne calling, very typical tern behaviour following a migration. It was regularly harassed by the local terns, which did their best to chase it away, and anytime it landed, was afforded only five minutes peace and quiet before nearby birds chased it off.

The Farne Islands are at a similar latitude to many of the Aleutian Islands, Kamchatka Peninsula and parts of Sakhalin, all north Pacific Rim locations where Aleutian Tern breeds. The date it occurred at Farne corresponded with the expected date of return to the Aleutian breeding grounds (Kessel & Gibson 1978). It may just be that somehow this bird became associated with Arctic Terns on their wintering grounds and migrated north with them all the way to Northumberland.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*

1979 Germany: Adult summer, Glewitzer Vogelhaken, Rügen, Mecjklenburg-Vorpommern, 27th July (Schwarze & Schwarze 1981).

Eckart and Dirk Schwarze were working as supervisors at the breeding bird protection area of Glewitzer Vogelhaken at the southern tip of Rügen, an island in the Baltic Sea off the Pomeranian coast. The weather on Friday, 27th July 1979 was very agreeable with partly cloudy skies, a moderate westerly breeze and an air temperature of 21°C, a welcome change following a few days of mixed and changeable weather. At about 09:00 and from a distance of about 15 metres they observed some waders feeding in a wetter part of the Central Lagoon. There were about 25 Dunlin, a Curlew Sandpiper and a Little Stint and in another part of the Vogelhaken, four Sanderling and a few Knot. At the same time their attention was drawn to a smaller wader among the main group that, among other features noted, showed a fox red throat, foreneck and upper breast. A sudden noise disturbed them, putting everything up and the mystery wader was lost to view. They quickly took notes and field sketches then consulted *Die Vögel Europas* by Peterson, Mountfort & Hollom and *Sumpf- und Wasservögel* by Creutz, but nothing in their pages was a match for what they had seen. Nevertheless, they were aware of Red-necked Stint, a far-eastern Asia and parts of Alaska peep, and assumed that's what it was.

However, they had to wait until later in order to check the *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas* (Bd. VI) and the BTO Guide #17, *Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders* to confirm their suspicion. Earlier records at Tatatstan, Russia in October 1957 and October 1958 have been rejected and one at Wilhelmshaven, Germany in 1968 has never been taken seriously as a good record.

Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

1979 Turkey: Adult female, Borçka, Artvin Province, 25th September (Laine 1996).

In September 1979, Finnish birder Lasse Laine was part of an international group counting raptors at Borçka, a small town by the River Çoruh in northeastern Turkey.

Pics. 131–132.
Crested Honey Buzzard, Borçka, 25th September 1979.
Photos: © Lasse J. Laine.





On the 25th, birds were arriving from the north at a moderate rate, very much in contrast to the previous day when 45,000 made up of 15 species passed over. This provided Lasse with time to take photographs and at one point he grabbed shots of a presumed Honey Buzzard, which circled several times before continuing south.

This individual looked like a fairly normally patterned Honey Buzzard, showing the typical outline of small head and large, broad wings (Pics. 131-132). On his return home, Lasse set about writing an article for the Finnish nature magazine *Eläinmaailma* on raptor migration at Borçka and while selecting photos for the piece, he began to wonder about the bird photographed on the 25th. He had never seen such an odd state of moult among the several thousand he had previously seen in Finland, Bulgaria and Turkey. He showed the photo to raptor expert Dick Forsman, who had studied moult in raptors over many years and Dick was puzzled by its appearance also. The most likely explanation was that it was a second calendar-year bird that was returning to Africa having departed during the summer, which would be at complete odds with expected behaviour. One option not considered was Crested Honey Buzzard, the far eastern counterpart to Honey Buzzard, about which not a lot was known back then and details of its appearance would only emerge slowly.

Almost ten years later Lasse saw a couple of flight photographs of Crested Honey Buzzard taken in Siberia by Urban Olsson, making him aware of the significance of a longer sixth primary and a broader hand as key field marks when separating from Honey Buzzard. A further significant step forward was the publication of an identification paper by Dick Forseman, this following a trip to Kazakhstan where he observed 135 migrating Crested Honey Buzzards at Chokpak Pass between 3rd and 15th September 1993 (Forsman 1994).

Then in September 1995 Dick was browsing his scrapbook of raptor photographs when the Borçka bird came to his attention and in that moment he resolved the identification. Contacting Lasse he told him, by the way, you have a first for the Western Palearctic as the picture clearly showed an adult female Crested Honey Buzzard, which predated the previously recognised first WP record at Eilat, Israel on 14th May 1994 by almost 15 years.

Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus*

1979 Wales: First-winter, Kenfig Pool, East Glamorgan, 24th November (Moon 1983).

In the mid-afternoon of Saturday, 24th November 1979, S.J. (Steve) Moon was watching a group of gulls at Kenfig Pool (about four miles south along the east Glamorgan coast from Port Talbot). As he scanned the gulls, he noticed a tern perched on top of a post, which showed a prominent yellow bill and a black wedge through and behind the eye. Steve realised this was a species totally unfamiliar to him, so he took a full description from a distance of about 100 metres, then left to alert others by phone. As it turned out, nobody lived close enough to get there before dusk, however he did get the opportunity to discuss what he saw with Peter Lansdown, who was in Cardiff at the time. Steve returned to Kenfig Pool and in the fast fading light found the bird still perched on the same post. It was obviously tired, easily approached and he could see it was ringed, so he slowly waded into the pool, eventually getting within three metres of the bird from where he managed to make out the first part of the ring's signature, which displayed the prefix 724, beneath an unreadable address. He made a start on sketching the bird but this was interrupted when two Mute Swans crashlanded nearby, spooking the tern sufficiently for it to take off unsteadily from the post and despite its obvious fatigue, completed a low circuit of the pool before departing in the direction of Kenfig Sands. Despite a thorough search of the whole area the following day the tern was never seen again.

Next came the task of identifying the bird to species. Once all regularly occurring and some other rarer species were ruled out, three remained for consideration, i.e. Royal, Crested and Lesser Crested Terns. Initial investigations appeared to rule out both Royal and Crested Terns, consequently the record was submitted to the BBRC as Lesser Crested Tern. However, one 'fly in the ointment' was the leg-ring and it was judged to be most unlikely that a ring-carrying Lesser Crested Tern would find its way to south Wales from Australia. A vagrant from North America in the shape of a Royal Tern was a much more realistic possibility and this option was explored by the Rarity Committee. At that time, Royal Tern was polytypic, consisting of the North American and Caribbean form *maximus* and West African *albididorsalis*, both now raised to full species status as Royal and West African Crested Tern respectively following the release of IOC World List version 10.1.

They contacted the United States Fish and Wildlife service and learned that rings with a 724 prefix were fitted to Royal Terns at six breeding sites on the east coast of North America between Metomkin Island, Vrginia and Cape Lookout Channel, North Carolina, USA, which strongly suggested the bird had been ringed as a nestling at one of these six tern colonies. Royal Tern was initially excluded as a possibly, because it was thought the bird Steve saw was too small, as well as showing several other features incompatible with *maximus*, e.g. the colour of the bird's rump, uppertail, bill and leg.

Subsequent detailed studies of both Royal and Lesser Crested Terns revealed quite the opposite, these features did not rule out *maximus* Royal Tern after all. Indeed, several characteristics that were observed on the Kenfig Pool tern were later realised to rule out Lesser Crested Tern. The record was resubmitted to the BBRC as an 'American' Royal Tern and following two circulations of the committee it was accepted and published in the 1981 bird report (Rogers & the RC 1982) as an immature and most likely a first-winter bird.

In all likelihood, there are earlier records of North American Royal Terns in the Western Palearctic, but this appears to be the first confirmed record (Dufour & Crochet 2020).

Rough-legged Hawk *Buteo lagopus sanctijohannis*

1980 Iceland: Adult female, Fagrahlíð, Fljótshlíð, 29th to 30th April (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), collected.

Collected by Óskar Björgvinsson at Fljótshlíð in the Southern Region of Iceland. The specimen is preserved at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pics. 133-134).

This very dark individual's subspecific identity was resolved only after a full set of measurements were taken, which revealed it to be and example of the smaller, darker, shorter-winged and migratory Nearctic form of Rough-legged Buzzard that breeds throughout Alaska and northern Canada.





Pics. 133–134.
Rough-legged Hawk, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photos: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Ardenna carneipes*

1980 Israel: Off the North Beach, Eilat, Gulf of Aqaba, 15th August (Shirihai 1996).

In the early afternoon of Friday, 15th August 1980, Hadoram Shirihai was seawatching from North Beach, Eilat when he noticed an unusual-looking shearwater that was in the company of eight Cory's Shearwaters. He was able to watch it for two hours at distances down to 400 metres. The plumage was mainly dark brown and it was superficially similar to Sooty Shearwater, but with notable differences, including size (larger and bulkier), a uniformly dark underwing, buffish upperwing coverts, pale pink legs and a strong bill with a pink base, all pointing to Flesh-footed Shearwater (also known as Pale-footed Shearwater). This Indian and Pacific Ocean shearwater is a regular visitor to the Arabian Sea and presumably arrived off Eilat via the Red Sea.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*

1980 Morocco: Adult, Oued Souss, Agadir, 27th August (Lister 1981).

On Wednesday, 27th August 1980, Steve Lister was birding at the mouth of the Oued Souss (just south of Agadir), when he noticed a medium sized sandpiper in the company of seven Knots that were loafing about on a sandbank about 200 metres away. Steve was intrigued, but apart from the general impression of a dark back and breast he was unable to discern much else. Fortunately about one hour later, he relocated the bird in the company of Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin and Kentish Plover all formed in a tight group that was constantly on the move, keeping ahead of the rising tide.

He watched it for about 15 minutes at distances between 30 and 100 metres until the flooding tide eventually forced them to depart, which was the final time Steve saw it. Its appearance was different to any other wader he was familiar with, so by the time he left for home he still had no idea what he'd found. However, all was not lost as he had taken detailed notes, made a couple of field sketches and taken note of the call, a short croaking *krer* and a similar sounding and repeated *kri-kri-kri*, which he heard just once, immediately before it landed. Back in England, Steve consulted the BTO Guide #17, *Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders* and the brief description of Great Knot tallied with his field notes and he felt able to tentatively identify the bird as an adult of that Siberian Calidrine. This was soon confirmed after Steve referenced a translated version of *Birds of the Soviet Union*. Finally, he sent his notes to Dr. R.J. Raines, who knew the species well having studied them in Australia, and Raines agreed with his identification.

An earlier claim of an adult at Salinas de Sant Antoni, Ebro Delta, Tarragona, Spain on 7th April 1979 was rejected by the Comité de Rarezas (Spanish Rarity Committee) in their 1984 report.

Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta*

1981 Israel/Egypt: Immature male, off both North Beach, Eilat and Taba, at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba, 20th February to 7th March (Harrop 1994).

This bird was first observed off Eilat on Friday, 20th February 1981, then later off Taba, which is just across the border in Egypt. It was found dead at Eilat on 7th March and identified as an immature male Shy Albatross.

Pic. 135.
Shy Albatross, The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, Israel. Photo: © Amos Belmaker.



The specimen is preserved in the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, catalogue number SMNH-AV.9659 (Pic. 135). This was just the second record for the Northern Hemisphere, the first was collected in the Pacific Ocean off Washington State, USA in September 1951 (Slipp 1952).

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas*

1981 Israel: Off North Beach, Eilat, Gulf of Aqaba, 22nd April (Moon 2024).

The bird was observed off Eilat's North Beach on Wednesday, 22nd April 1981 by Rupert B. Hastings, Andrew V. Moon, Peter Gasson, Peter Naylor, Rob A. Strachan, Simon Cox and Colin J. Mackenzie-Greieve. The record was previously rejected but after it was resubmitted in 2021, the Israeli Rarities & Distribution Committee undertook a review of the original and detailed description and as a result, found it acceptable as a first Israeli and Western Palearctic record. The full decision of the IRDC and their reasons for acceptance were published online in Bulletin 2022 - Rare Birds in Israel, February 2023 [accessed June 2023].

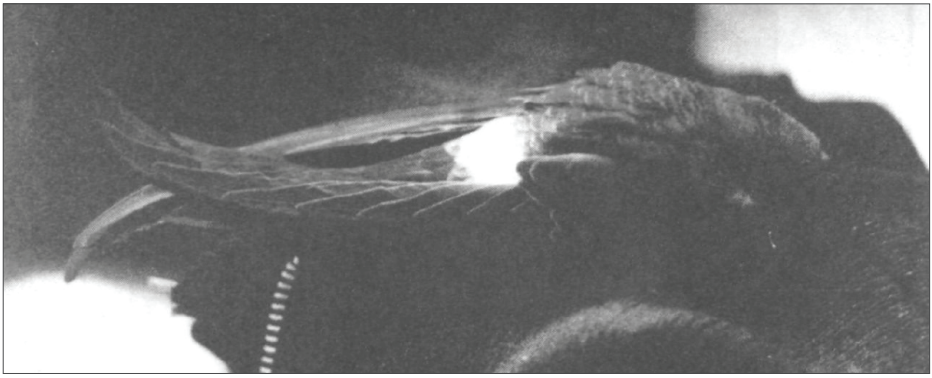
This record has proved to be controversial and some have cast doubt on the identity. Others consider a record of two or possibly three birds (photographed) at the same location from 21st June to September 1992 as the first undisputed records of Streaked Shearwater in the Western Palearctic (Morgan & Shirihai 1992).

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*

1981 At sea/England: In position 53º06'N, 002º12'E (Shell Oil Platform, Leman Bank, North Sea, approximately 30 nautical miles northeast of Great Yarmouth), 19th June (Parker 1990).

On Friday, 19th June 1981, R. Walden was standing on the deck of a Shell Oil fixed installation platform on the Leman Bank, when a bird attempted to land on his shoulder. It proceeded past him and ended up clinging to part of the platform's superstructure. Walden had no great difficulty catching the exhausted migrant and sent it ashore on the next helicopter for release shore-side.

Pic. 136.
Pacific Swift, in the hand, Suffolk, June 1981, *British Birds* vol. 83(2), p. 44.
Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.
Photo: Gary Davies.



At 20:30 the helicopter landed at Beccles Heliport, Suffolk, and the swift was handed over to Mrs. S. Irons in the passenger terminal. She was aware that her colleague Mike Parker was a birder and lost no time getting him over to check out the bird. On arrival Mike was astonished to discover the bird was a swift (Pic. 136) that was showing a startling white rump and all the upper body feathers pale-tipped, giving a very scaly appearance and that was reason enough for him to rush around and close all the windows. Mark reasoned that in all likelihood it was one of two European 'white-rumped' swift species, i.e. Little or White-rumped. Little Swift was soon ruled out as the Leman Bank bird showed a deeply forked tail, quite unlike Little Swift's square-cut tail. Cliff Walker was contacted and he measured, photographed and took a description of the bird. At that point, White-rumped Swift was discounted as the measurements taken were at odds with that species. The bird was now showing signs of recovery so it was released at 21:00 and to their great relief it flew off and immediately started to catch insects about the airport's perimeter. As the light faded all they could see of the yet to be identified bird was the white rump. That puzzle was independently solved the same night by Mike and Cliff who, following reference to various field guides, concluded it was a Pacific Swift (aka Fork-tailed Swift). It was seen for the final time the next day by Cliff at Shadingfield, Suffolk, about three miles southwest of the heliport.

The first seen over land was a one day bird at Cley, Norfolk, England on 30th May 1993, a distance of about 45 miles from the Leman Bank. It was first observed from the reserve's North Hide by local birder Alan Brown, who was sure it was a partially albino Common Swift. Alan mentioned the bird to Steve Gantlett (editor of *Birding World*) and together they headed back to the hide. Steve was so intrigued by what he saw that he phoned Richard Millington (assistant editor of *Birding World* and former member of the BBRC) and suggested he get down to the North Hide asap (Gantlett 1993). Richard and others began to arrive and shortly after, the swift did a fly-past just 25 yards in front of the hide, when it showed faint grey scaling on both the upperbody and the underbody, which clinched the identity as a Pacific Swift (Pics. 137-138).

Pics. 137–138.
Pacific Swift, Cley, 30th May 1993. The first Western Palearctic on land record.
Photos: © Steve Young.



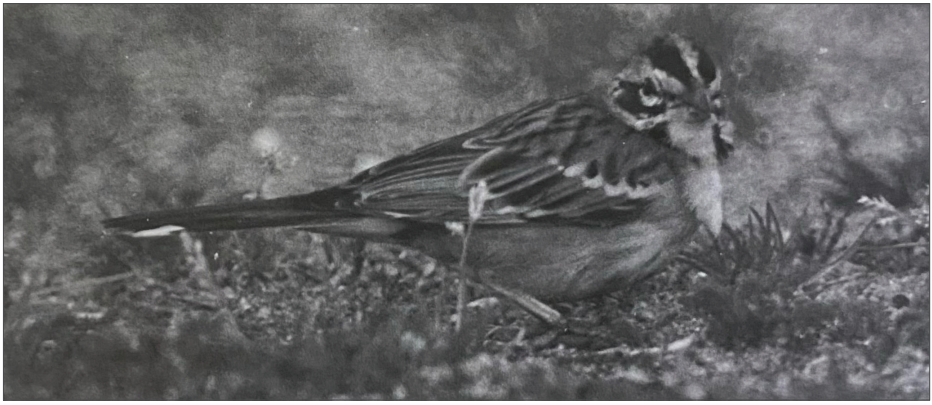


Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*

1981 England: Coastguard's Cottage, Landguard Point, Suffolk, 30th June to 8th July (Charlton 1995).

Landguard Point is on the east coast of England, situated at the northern entrance to the port of Felixstowe (Suffolk), where fast container ships from North America and the Far East regularly dock. There has been a Bird Observatory there since 1984 that was founded by local birders, which is independently run and administered by the Landguard Conservation Trust.

On Tuesday, 30th June 1981, Trevor and Lesley Charlton visited Landguard Point for an afternoon's birding. There were few birds about but at 14:45 while they were crossing a short grassy sward near the Coastguard's Cottage they flushed a flock of about 20 House Sparrows, a single Skylark and another slightly smaller and darker bird. Brief views of this intriguing individual suggested a bunting, but with a long tail that when fanned showed an extraordinary amount of white on its edges and corners. It took off, eventually coming to settle in a cluster of poppies growing on a shingle bank about 100 metres away. Both Charltons moved to within 30 metres and saw it momentarily as it peeped out through the foliage, which was just long enough for them to notice a rather complex face-and-head pattern (Pic. 139).



Pic. 139.
Lark Sparrow, Landguard Point, Suffolk, June 1981.
Photo: © Nigel Jones.

Pics. 140–141.
Lark Sparrow, Waxham, 16th May 1991. The 2nd and, to date, only other record for the WP. Photos: © Steve Young.





Moments later it stood out in the open, revealing a startling dark breast-spot. Even though it put them in mind of Rustic Bunting, their thoughts soon turned to the west and the possibility it was a Nearctic sparrow, having seen many on a trip to the USA a few years previous. News of the unidentified North American sparrow was circulated, which brought Arthur Westcott and Harry Lee armed with a North American field guide to Landguard and following a browse of its pages, the bird was identified as a Lark Sparrow, a locally common species over much of the USA, wintering from southern USA south through Mexico.

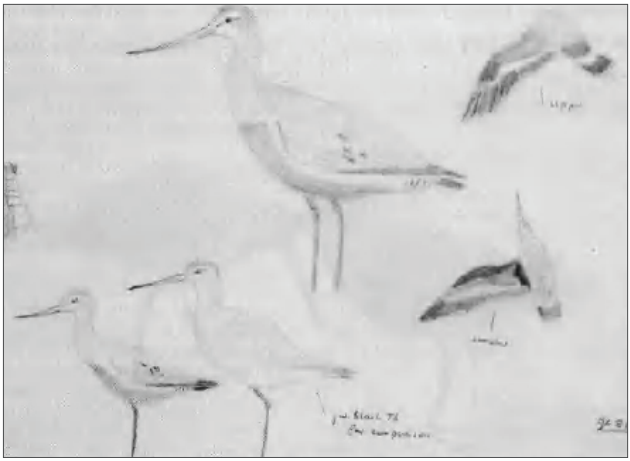
Over the following eight days many hundreds travelled to see it and were rewarded with prolonged and sometimes close views, often down to four metres, sometimes on its own, sometimes in the company of House Sparrows and Linnets. The possibility it was an escape due to its somewhat later than usual arrival date for Nearctic sparrows raised doubts about the record and it was initially placed in Category D, however sometime later it was promoted to Category A.

To date there is just one other published record for the WP and like the first it was found on the east coast of England, this time at Waxham, Norfolk on Wednesday, 15th May 1991 by B.W. (Barry) Jarvis (Pics. 140-141). Waxham is approximately 65 miles further north along the east coast from Landguard Point. It remained until Friday, disappointing the great many who travelled on Saturday to twitch it.

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*

1981 England: Adult or first-summer male, Blacktoft Sands, Humberside, 10th September to 3rd October (Grieve 1987).

Andrew Grieve entered the Xerox hide at RSPB Blacktoft Sands at 06:00 on Thursday, 10th September 1981. He quickly picked out five Black-tailed Godwits, and what he assumed was a Bar-tailed Godwit, sleeping in a shallow part of the lagoon. The 'Bar-tailed' was smaller with a large patch of very dark red plumage on the underparts, covering the belly and extending beyond the legs. There were few other details showing, but he did notice the smaller bird was much greyer on the back.



Pic. 142.
Field-sketches made by © Graham Catley of **Hudsonian Godwit,** Alkborough Flats, September 1981.

Some time later Andrew noticed all six in flight heading towards the River Humber and was puzzled by how similar the smaller godwit's wing and tail pattern resembled Black-tailed Godwit's. Later on, Andrew checked a few reference books including *Birds of North America* by Robbins, Bruun, Zim & Singer, the only North American guide in his possession, but the illustrations depicting American godwits were either in full summer or full winter plumage, and what few pointers he gleaned were at odds with the Blacktoft bird, although he wondered if that could be explained by the state of its moult. The BTO *Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders* stated the only other godwit similar to Black-tailed was Hudsonian but didn't elaborate further, however it did include details of the Asian race *melanuroides*, which when compared to the nominate was smaller, had more extensive red on the underparts and was greyer on the back, and therefore a possible candidate.

Seen by many over the next few days, Hudsonian Godwit was discussed, but the underwing pattern had yet to be clearly observed. At this point Andrew Grieve did not feel he was able to make a definitive ID, so it remained unidentified for the time being. It was not seen from the 21st to the 23rd but returned again on 24th September, however it wasn't until the 27th that Andrew finally got a good look at the underwing, which showed a dark under-forewing and black axillaries. He discussed the bird with Steve Madge (author, former member of the BBRC and one of the founders of Birdquest), who had learned that the smaller Asian form *melanuroides* showed a pale underwing similar to the nominate and Icelandic races, a detail that finally allowed Andrew conclude it was indeed the Nearctic Hudsonian Godwit.

While at Blacktoft Sands it was only ever seen on a high tide, when it was mostly fast asleep, presumably heading out on the Humber at low-water to feed. The only known deviation from this pattern was when Graham Catley (renowned wildlife photographer and former member of the BBRC) saw it at the nearby Alkborough Flats on 15th September (Pic. 142). The bird attracted hordes of birdwatchers to Blacktoft on Saturday, 3rd October, so when it flew into the lagoon there was some disturbance among the crowd, which put everything up. After a brief reappearance, the Hudsonian Godwit took off heading towards the Humber and it was not seen again or at least that's how it seemed at the time.

What is presumed the same individual was discovered at Countess Wear, near Exeter, Devon (ca. 250 miles from the Humber) the following 22nd November to at least 14th January 1982, and made a second visit to Blacktoft Sands from 26th April to 6th May 1983, as mega rarities go that's pretty good value for money!

Magnolia Warbler *Setophaga magnolia*

1981 England: Adult male, Barnaby Lane, St. Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 27th to 28th September (Enright 1995).

After a rather uneventful morning's birding, Shane Enright and Alaric Sumner were walking along Barnaby Lane on St. Agnes, the most southerly of the populated Isles of Scilly. It was Sunday, 27th September 1981 and the first fine day following several of strong westerlies. They spotted a small bird perched close to the top of a *Pittosporum* shrub. First impressions were of a brightly coloured warbler-type with a double white wing-bar, which made Shane immediately suspect it was North American and probably a wood warbler. Before any more detail could be made out it flipped over the shrub and disappeared out of sight. They were soon joined by Bill and Edna McGubbin and a search began, initially unsuccessful, but after Francis Hicks arrived, they turned their attention to a small orchard situated behind the post office where it was refound and identified as Magnolia Warbler, a wood warbler that breeds across much of central Canada and northeast USA.

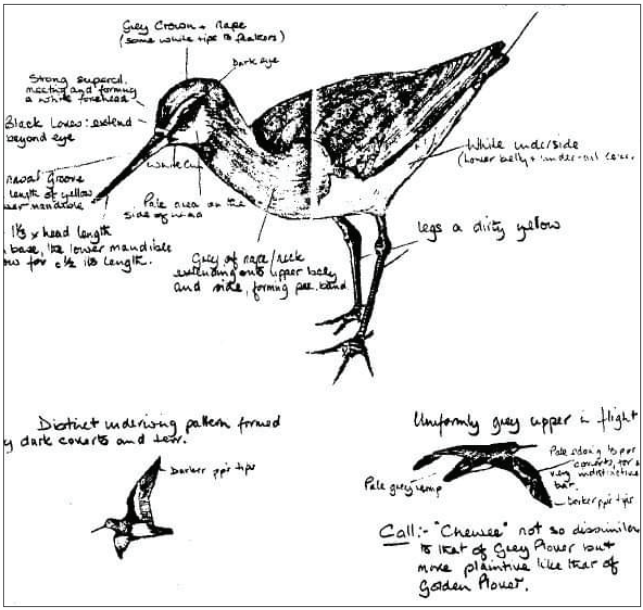
During this time the bird was very lively, constantly flitting and hopping about close to the tops of hedgerows as it foraged for food. News of their find was phoned to the nearby St. Mary's and chartered boats full of birders soon began to arrive. Fortunately, none of those who made the trip were disappointed as the bird continued to show well. Rather fortuitously it was seen back in Barnaby Lane the next day, as some difficulties were encountered in gaining access to the Post Office orchard. The record was duly accepted as an adult Magnolia Warbler in the process of moulting to winter plumage.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes*

1981 Wales: Dyfi Estuary, Ynys-hir, Dyfed, 13th October to 17th November (Thorpe 1995).

On Tuesday, 13th October 1981, R.I. (Reg) Thorpe was walking, in the company of two volunteer wardens, from the Saltings Hide at Ynys-hir RSPB Nature Reserve on the Dyfi Estuary, when he noticed two Common Redshanks and a smaller, greyer wader flying north along the River Dyfi. The smaller greyer bird caught his attention and he followed them until they disappeared from view. Fortunately the mystery wader soon returned, eventually landing about 250 metres from them. Once seen on the deck it resembled a Redshank in structure but its plumage was more reminiscent of Knot.

It took flight again, this time settling on a small raised bank and began bobbing in typical *Tringa* behaviour. It flew again and came to rest about 200 metres from the Saltings Hide, so they headed to the hide and although it was still some distance off, got it in the telescope and heard it call. It was at this point the possibility of tattler was discussed and on his return home Reg consulted *Rare Birds of the West Coast* by Don Roberson, and once he had studied the tattler photos on page 148, he was almost certain it was a Grey-tailed Tattler!



Pic. 143.
Field-sketches and notes made by © Malcolm Stott of **Grey-tailed Tattler,** Dyfi Estuary, October 1981.

At high tide the following day, Reg and R.Q. (Roger) Skeen saw it on the estuary and thanks to much better views than before, Reg was happy with his tentative identification (Pic. 143). Plans were made to cope with the expected influx of birders, but these all came to nothing as the Reserve Warden made a decision that news could not be released under any circumstances. This decision was based on a number of factors, but foremost among them was the potential for disturbance to wintering wildfowl on the estuary in the vicinity of the tattler's favoured feeding area.

The bird continued to be seen in the area during times of high-water, but on 23rd October it was buzzed by a Peregrine and seen to fly towards the mouth of the Dyfi, thereafter being observed on the reserve only during times of spring high-tides, until it was last seen on Tuesday, 17th November. The record was submitted to the BBRC and after much debate and several circulations it was finally accepted as Grey-tailed Tattler.

Ipswich Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis princeps*

1982 England: Probably a male, Portland Bill, Dorset, 11th to 16th April 1982 (Broyd 1985), trapped.

Early on Sunday, 11th April 1982, Gary Edwards and three others where at Portland Bill (the southern tip of the tied Isle of Portland on the south coast of Dorset) when they observed a small bird land about 15 metres from them. They watched it for about a minute before it disappeared beneath a rock. About ten minutes later, some others, including Keith L. Fox and Ron King noticed a small, streaky passerine on some nearby rocks, but it too quickly disappeared. The possibility it was a Little Bunting was quickly ruled out on account of the presence of yellow about the supercilium. The area was searched but nothing better than a female Yellowhammer was discovered and the mystery bird was forgotten about.

Pic. 144.
Ipswich Sparrow,
Portland Bill, Dorset, April 1982.
Photo: © Terry Box (right).



Pics. 145–146.
Ipswich Sparrow, Portland Bill, Dorset, April 1982.
Photos: © John Miller (below).





Later that same day, S.J. (Steve) Broyd was searching for migrants along the cliffs east of Portland Bird Observatory when he noticed a small, streaky bird feeding in the short grass at the cliff-edge. To get a clearer view he moved closer and as he did so the bird turned to face him, revealing a small triangular bill and very noticeable yellow supercilium. Broyd identified the bird as a Savannah Sparrow, a species he had previously seen many times in North America (Pics. 144-146). He quickly brought it to the attention of his wife and J. Tilbrook who were both nearby, and then hurried back to the Observatory to alert others. A crowd soon gathered, including Ron King who was fairly sure it was the same bird he and Keith Fox had briefly seen earlier in the day. The sparrow remained until 16th April and proved to be very confiding for the several hundred birders that twitched it. It ran about actively in search of food and even established a small territory that it defended with short bursts of song delivered from the top of large limestone blocks, under which it roosted at night.

On Monday, 12th April, it was trapped and ringed by M. Rogers, who took a detailed description and full set of biometrics. Somewhat surprisingly, these suggested the bird was an example of the subspecies *princeps*, known as Ipswich Sparrow (quite possibly a full species) that breeds almost exclusively on Sable Island (just 13 square miles in area, situated about 160 nautical miles southeast of Halifax, Nova Scotia in the northwest Atlantic Ocean) and very occasionally on the adjacent coast of Nova Scotia, with winters spent on the eastern seaboard of North America from Nova Scotia south to Georgia.

Rogers sent his findings to Professor J.D. Rising at the University of Ontario, who replied that they clearly preclude the possibility that your bird is anything other than an Ipswich Sparrow [and] is in all probability a male*. The record was published in the BBRC's 1984 report as showing characters of the Sable Island race *A.s. princeps*, adding, it has a total population of only a few thousand, but is arguably well-placed geographically for transatlantic displacement. Among some other differences, Ipswich Sparrow is larger and paler than the typical form.

* For the full exposition of Professor Rising's comments as well as further confirmation of the bird's subspecific identity provided by Professor McLaren of Dalhouse University, Halifax, Nova Scotia see S.J. Broyd's note in *British Birds*, vol.78, pp. 647-656.

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*

1982 Netherlands: Adult male, Polder Waal en Burg, Texel, Noord-Holland, 18th to 20th May & 14th June (van Vliet & Ebels 2007), and, presumed same, Formerumer Wiel, Terschelling, Friesland, 2nd to 3rd July (Ebels & van den Bergh 2007).

During the summer of 1982, a Yellow-headed Blackbird was observed at locations about 35 miles apart in the West Frisian Islands (a chain of islands located off the north coast of the Netherlands, along the edge of the Wadden Sea in the southern North Sea). It was found on Texel (the largest of the islands) by Piet van Vliet, who immediately identified it based on previous experience of the species in North America. However, it was not until the early 1990s that Piet submitted his description to the CDNA, but it wasn't accepted and unfortunately his notes were mislaid. Less than three weeks after it was last seen on Texel what was presumably the same bird was found by Leo van den Bergh, Francien van Driel, Dick Visser and Fer Jan de Vries on Terschelling (the island to the northeast of Texel). When van Vliet learned of the Terschelling record he decided to resubmit his original description.

Following a review, the record was accepted and both occurrences were judged to involve the same bird. To date there is just one other WP Category A record, an adult male at Hafnarnes í Nesjum, Iceland from 23rd to 24th July 1983.

Atlantic (Schlegel's) Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*

1982 Israel/Jordan: Gulf of Aqaba, off both the North Beach, Eilat, and Aqaba, 31st May (Shirihai 1996).

On Monday, 31st May 1982, Hadoram Shirihai was taking part in a seabird survey at Eilat. At 06:00 he noticed a bird in the distance displaying the typical arching flight of *Pterodroma* petrels. It was heading towards the North Beach from the Jordanian side of the Gulf of Aqaba, eventually settling on the sea among a raft of Cory's and Sooty Shearwaters that were soon dispersed by skuas, after which Hadoram lost sight of it. For the most part, the plumage was dark but with a white belly.

Checking the literature he realised what he saw was consistent with Atlantic Petrel that breeds on Tristan da Cunha and Gough Island in the South Atlantic. At 08:30 he refound the petrel swimming alone about 150 metres off shore and confirmed the identification.

The second WP record was also in the Gulf of Aqaba off Eilat and Aqaba from 18th to 24th April 1989. The report of one killed at Dolinky (then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now in modern day Slovakia) in 1870 has not been accepted by the Slovenské Faunistická Komisia (Slovak Rarity Committee).

Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*

1982 Cyprus: Adult female, Akrotiri, 27th June (Lobb 1983).

While on a visit to the western side of the of the Akrotiri Peninsula early on Sunday, 27th June 1982, S. Mumford noticed a bird perched on a telephone wire that he was unable to identify. He brought it to the attention of M.G. Lobb and J. Veal and together they watched it for about 20 minutes up to 09:15, after which it was not seen again despite many subsequent searches of the area. It spent most of the time feeding on caterpillars, flying down from its perch to trap and eat them. They took field notes and made sketches that were later submitted to I.H.J. Lyster (of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh), P.R. Flint and R.R. Kersley and all three agreed the bird was an adult female Diederik Cuckoo, a bird of sub-Saharan Africa and Arabia. The name is an onomatopoeic rendition of the bird's *dee-dee-dee-dee-derik* call.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

1982 England: Saltash, Cornwall, 30th August (Griffiths 1996).

In the mid-1990s the BBRC reviewed four historic Northern Mockingbird records, i.e. Norfolk in August 1971, Glamorgan in Summer 1978, Cornwall in August 1982 and Essex in May 1988.

The birds in Cornwall and Essex were accepted and the species assigned to Category A of the British List, thus making the Saltash bird the first for Britain and the Western Palearctic. It was first noticed by E. (Ted) Griffiths early on Monday, 30th August 1982, this after it was chased from a tall conifer by a couple of Carrion Crows. It called *chack* a few times as it dropped into some small trees, settling low down in an Apple tree, about one metre above the ground. To get a better look at it, Ted got down on his hands and knees and peered through a small hedge. He watched it for about five minutes perched in the open at a distance of four metres. As it departed, chased by Magpies, the wing pattern became very obvious showing a large white wing patch and white wing-bars. It repeated its *chack* call a few more times as it disappeared over Saltash in a northwesterly gale, and was not seen again.

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*

1982 Israel: Near Eilat, 19th to 20th October (Shirihai 1996).

Found by Hadoram Shirihai in a flooded field of Sudanese herbage and corn at Kibbutz Eilot, near Eilat. It was sometimes seen with Cattle Egrets picking at insects on the ground, but when observed feeding on its own it would create shade by opening its wings and spreading them in such a way as to resemble an umbrella.

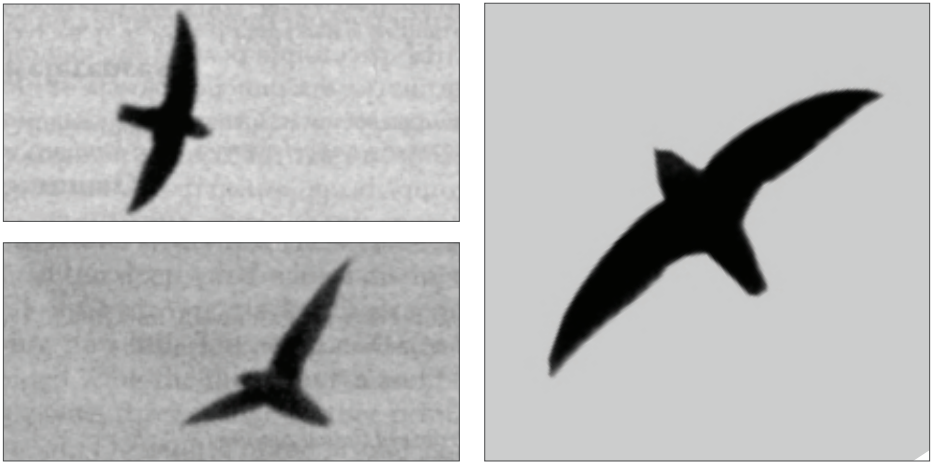
An earlier claim of two at Elephantine Island, near Aswan, Egypt on 2nd August 1980 has not been accepted by the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee, although they were most likely this species (Dekker 1981).

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*

1982 England: Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 21st to 27th October (Williams 1986).

In the early afternoon of Thursday, 21st October 1982, L.P. (Laurie) Williams and G.C. (Graham) Hearl arrived at Porthgwarra in west Cornwall. As Williams stepped from his car he glanced up towards a house at the top of the valley and saw something flitting about over its roof.

Pics. 147–149.
Chimney Swift, Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 21st October 1982, *British Birds* vol. 79(9), p. 425.
Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.
Photos: S.C. Hutchings.



Seen through binoculars it gave the appearance of a large bat but before anything further could be established it was lost to view. About 20 minutes later, Graham Hearl noticed a very small swift flying towards him, which put him in mind of Little Swift, but as he got better views he noticed it showed a dark (rather than a white) rump, with what appeared to be small spines projecting from the end of its tail, and a very different jizz to the Little Swift he had seen in west Cornwall during Spring 1981. He called over Laurie Williams and together they watched the swift for about two hours at distances down to ten metres. To begin with, it fed over houses, later on moving to a nearby cliff-top, where it was last seen and where they surmised it roosted over night.

When discussing the identity they began by ruling out Little, Needle-tailed and runt Common Swifts before concluding it was most likely a Chimney Swift, a species that is a widespread summer visitor to much of central and eastern North America. Once they got home and were able to consult the literature this identity was independently confirmed (Pics. 147-149).

It was observed by hundreds of birders over the following six days and quite remarkably was joined by a second Chimney Swift from the 23rd to 25th. It was last seen early in the morning of 27th October.

Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius*

1982 England: Juvenile, Porthellick, St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 22nd October, remaining around Scilly until 8th June 1983 (Martin 2008).

This bird was present at a time when it was treated as the Nearctic form of Hen Harrier and known as Marsh Hawk. It was subsequently raised to full monotypic species status following the release of IOC World List version 3.1 in 2012. This after it was shown to be more closely related to the South American Cinereous Harrier than to Hen Harrier.

Pics. 150–151.
Northern Harrier, Bryher, Isles of Scilly, 29th October 1982.
Photos: © Barrie Widden.





It was initially seen around Porthellick Down on St. Mary's, later wandering widely about the Isles of Scilly, until last seen on Bryher in June the following year (Pics. 150-151). Uncertainties about the identification requiring clarification meant the record was not published until the 2006 report of the BBRC (Fraser & the Rarities Committee 2007).

There are earlier records showing features consistent with this form but ultimately failed to meet all the criteria needed for acceptance. A juvenile harrier present at Cley, Norfolk, England from October 1957 to April 1958, was accepted as *hudsonius* by some, but failed to convince everyone and it remained controversial as the identification criteria [then] were, to some extent, uncertain. Around the same time, a female harrier observed at Gufuskálar farm, near Garði, Southern Peninsula, Iceland on Tuesday, 15th October 1957 was probably of the Nearctic subspecies *hudsonius* (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999) but final confirmation appears to be lacking.

Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius*

1982 England: First-winter, Nanquidno, St. Just-in-Penwith, Cornwall, 9th to 24th November (Madge *et al*. 1990). A grey morph individual, completely lacking any orange pigment.



Pic. 152.
Varied Thrush, Nanquidno, Cornwall, November 1982.
Photo: © John Miller.

Pic. 153.
Varied Thrush, Seward, Alaska, June 2005.
Photo: © Colin Bradshaw.



On 14th November 1982, E. Grace was leading an RSPB field outing at Nanquidno, near St. Just-in-Penwith, Cornwall. In the early afternoon, one of the ladies in the group drew Grace's attention to an unusual thrush, the like of which could not be found in any field guide. It was dark grey with a white throat and supercilium, greyish breast-band and white wingbars (Pic. 145). The only possible candidate appeared to be the far-east Asian Dusky Thrush, but several features noted suggested otherwise and Dusky Thrush was ruled out. Further searches of the area were not immediately successful but on the morning of Wednesday, 17th November, it was relocated by Bernard King and later by Steve Hutchings, Graham Hearl and Laurie Williams and on another occasion by Steve Madge. Several other thrush species were discussed and considered but not one was a match for what they observed, although the underwing pattern did suggest one of the *Zoothera* thrushes, i.e. possibly White's Thrush. While studying the literature it suddenly dawned on Steve Madge that if the Nanquidno birds's whitish plumage was instead coloured orange, it would perfectly resemble a Nearctic Varied Thrush. In addition, other features noted were distinctive enough to show that no other thrush could possibly fit, and the mystery was solved. To compare the Nanquidno bird with a normally marked individual, see Colin Bradshaw's photo on this page (Pic. 153).

It was later discovered to have been present since Tuesday, 9th November when it was seen by Miss Phillips at Nanquidno Farm. It regularly visited the farm to feed in a small orchard on *Cotoneaster* berries and fallen apples. Although often seen in the open, it was generally shy, spending most of the time not far from cover. Its flight was low, skimming over walls and between trees. It was largely silent but occasionally was heard to call a low *chuur chuur*.

As well as a 2025 pending record in Iceland, there are two others, a male at Unaós, Hjaltastaðaþinghá, Iceland for five days in early May 2004 and the second British record, which was a first-calendar year female at the Links, Papa Westray in the Orkneys, Scotland from the end of October to 1st November 2021.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

1982 Israel: Adult male, Sede Boqer, near Yeroham, November to February 1983 (Shirihai 1996).

The bird was present from at least Friday, 12th November 1982. An earlier record from Fehértó, Hungary in April 1979, is now judged to be a Woodchat x Lesser Grey Shrike hybrid.

Chestnut-headed Sparrow-lark *Eremopterix signatus*

1983 Israel: Adult male, Eilot Fields, Eilat, 1st May (Shirihai 1996).

On Sunday, 1st May 1983, Hadoram Shirihai was birding at Eilot, to the north of Eilat. While scanning a stubble field, a male *Eremopterix* lark landed about ten metres from him. Apart from realising it was not a Black-crowned Sparrow-lark, Hadoram had no idea which species of *Eremopterix* it was, a genus with eight species found from Africa to the Indian subcontinent.

Despite its highly distinctive appearance, it was only after Hadoram paid a visit to the Natural History Museum, Tring in January 1986, where he examined skins and undertook a study of Sparrow-lark photographs taken in East Africa that he was finally able to confirm the identity as Chestnut-headed Sparrow-lark, a species found in parts of eastern and northeastern Africa.

Least Tern *Sternula antillarum*

1983 England: Probably a male, Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, East Sussex, June to 5th July (Yates 2010).

Managed by the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Rye Harbour Nature Reserve (1,150 acres) is located about midway between Hastings and Dungeness on the Sussex coast. The terrain is generally flat and low lying, including areas of shingle that host a Little Tern colony. It was there that a North American Least Tern took up residence each summer from 1983 to 1992. It acquired the sobriquet 'Squeaker' on account of its distinctive call that was transcribed as *pudee pudoo* or *puedeek puedeek,* with a tone similar to Oystercatcher.

Although it had probably been around for five or six days previously, it was first noticed by Assistant Warden Pam Knight on Tuesday, 14th June 1983. Even though it was never known to find a mate, it was observed to take part in courtship flights as well as attempting to present fish to other birds, behaviour suggesting a male. As time went on it was realised its squeaky call suggested it was one of three Nearctic forms of Little Tern, now treated as the full polytypic species, Least Tern. Apart from the call, the main difference with Little Tern is a grey rather than a white rump. Recordings of the call were made, converted to sonograms and favourably compared with North American birds. The record was submitted to the BBRC and after it was established that Squeaker's calls differed from all other subspecies of Little Tern it was accepted by the BBRC and BOURC. It was seen for the final time on 8th July 1992.

There are two other records for the Western Palearctic, a first-winter at Jaizkibel, Gipuzkoa (Basque Country) in northern Spain on 26th September 2019, and an adult that mainly frequented the Little Tern colony at Portrane, Dublin, Ireland from June to August 2021 that returned each summer from 2022 to 2025.

American Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

1983 England: Juvenile, St. Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 10th October, and, presumed same, between Gugh and St. Mary's, 10th to at least 27th October (Crosby 1988).

Early in the afternoon of Monday, 10th October 1983, an unusual hirundine was briefly observed by several birders on the conjoined islands of St. Agnes and Gugh (the most southerly of the inhabited Isles of Scilly). Later the same day, a small flock of Swallows was seen arriving in over the sea to St. Mary's (the largest and most populated of the Isles of Scilly), by P. Morrison, M. Opie and D.N. Smith. One of these was strikingly different in shape from the others, and had a pale orange-pink rump and collar. Red-rumped Swallow was a possibility but once it was seen overhead they began to doubt this and even wondered if it might be a hybrid. They were soon joined by M. Andrew, R.E. Innes and Michael Crosby and together they watched as the swallow circled overhead before coming to rest on a roof for several minutes.

At this point Crosby realised he had previously seen the species while on a visit to the USA in 1981 and after a few minutes of head scratching he identified it as a Cliff Swallow, a long-distance migrant found across large areas of Canada and the USA, wintering further south. By the late afternoon a crowd of several hundred had gathered and were enjoying excellent views of the bird as it fed low over Garrison Wall on St. Mary's. During the next couple of weeks it visited various parts of the island with Higher Moors and the Longstones particularly favoured. It arrived during a period of prolonged westerlies, associated with a series of fast-moving depressions, classic conditions for trans-Atlantic vagrancy.

Mongolian Short-toed Lark *Calandrella dukhunensis*

1983 Israel: Male, Nizzana, Negev Desert, 3rd November (Shirihai *et al*. 2023).

During the autumn of 1983, Hadoram Shirihai maintained a bird-ringing station near Nizzana in the Negev Desert with the purpose of studying moult in four sandgrouse species. Around the same time, the Negev witnessed a phenomenal mass migration of (Greater) Short-toed Larks that involved millions of birds passing through on passage (peak numbers occurred in October, with smaller numbers continuing into November), a spectacle that occurs about once every 20 years (Shirihai 1996).



Pic. 154.
Mongolian Short-toed Lark,
in the hand, western Negev Desert,
November 1983.
Photo: © Hadoram Shirihai.

Pic. 155.
Mongolian Short-toed Lark, in the hand, western Negev Desert, November 1983.
Photo: © Hadoram Shirihai.



Early on Thursday, 3rd November 1983, tens of Short-toed Larks were feeding in a small grassy patch near Nizzana. Among them, Hadoram noticed a 'strange' *Calandrella* lark that appeared chunkier, thicker-billed, more boldly patterned and more richly coloured than any Short-toed Lark he had previously seen and at first glance appeared intermediate in appearance between Short-toed and Bimaculated Larks (Pics. 154-155). Another feature that caught his attention were the legs, which were noticeably dark, in stark contrast to the paler legs of Short-toed Lark, so he setup a mist-net and trapped both the 'strange' individual and a few Short-toed Larks to allow for direct comparison in the hand.

At the time there was nothing in any field guide available that described the many forms of Short-toed Larks, nor had Hadoram access to the type of information that might have helped him identify the bird. Consequently, he surmised that all he could state with confidence was that it was an unidentified *Calandrella* lark. He decided the best chance of reaching an identification was to bring it to the Zoological Gardens at Tel Aviv University, where the bird lived in simulated natural conditions for seven months. However an identification had yet to be reached when it died on 8th June 1984. Upon dissection, it was discovered to be a male and the study-skin was presented to the University's bird collection (now known as the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History), catalogue number SMNH-AV.9905 (Pic. 156). In January 1986, Hadoram brought the 'Nizzana' lark to Peter R. Colston at the Natural History Museum, Tring, where, after they compared it with Greater and 'Mongolian' Short-toed Lark specimens, identified the bird as a typical example of the *dukhunensis* subspecies of Short-toed Lark in terms of plumage, morphology and biometrics.

Pic. 156.
Mongolian Short-toed Lark, The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, Israel.
Photo: © Amos Belmaker.



Further confirmation of the identity came following DNA analysis of a small piece of skin taken from the specimen's tarsus, which when compared against Mongolian Short-toed and other related larks, showed it was a perfect match. In addition, research into the evolutionary history and family relationships within the Palearctic larks revealed that Mongolian Short-toed Lark is more correctly treated as a full species in its own right (Alström *et al*. 2013, Stervander *et al*. 2016). As a result it was raised to full species status following the release of IOC World List, version 6.4 (Gill & Donsker 2016).

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

1983 Iceland: Second calendar-year, Þorbrandsstaðir, Vopnafjörður, N-Múl, 5th November (Hallgrímsson 2007), shot.

In late Summer 2001, two specimens labelled as Grey Herons preserved at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History's bird collection were realised to be Great Blue Herons. Both have now been accepted by the Icelandic Rarities Committee and as a result represent the first two for the Western Palearctic.

The first of these was shot at Þorbrandsstaðir in northeast Iceland on Saturday, 5th November 1983 (Pic. 157). The second was an adult seen at Laugarnes, Reykjavík on Friday, 6th April 1984. Four days later it was noticed to have sustained injuries to its legs and was taken into care, but died on 24th April.

There is an earlier ship-assisted record of one that came aboard the east-bound MV *Picardy* in the North Atlantic while it was on passage to Avonmouth (at the head of the Bristol Channel), remaining on board to enter the Western Palearctic at 30°W longitude. It spent the first few days on the ship's foredeck and around the forecastle head, where the crew provided it with scraps of food and water. It was subsequently accommodated in the crew's mess room until the vessel arrived off Land's End, when it was put back outside. Clearly feeling right at home, it choose not to depart and remained on the *Picardy* all the way to Avonmouth. Once there it was handed over to the RSPCA, who arranged for it to be taken to Rode Tropical Bird Gardens at Frome, Somerset to recover. As food and shelter were provided by the crew this record can not be considered as the first for Western Palearctic.

Pic. 157.
Great Blue Heron, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.



Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*

1984 Morocco: Immature, Oued Souss, 12th March to 12th December (Bouwman 1985, Crochet & Spaans 2008).

This bird was first seen and photographed on the estuary of the River Souss (southern Morocco) on both 12th and 23rd March 1984. On the following 8th and 9th June it was seen resting at the edge of a reed-bed at Oued Massa by Dutch birder Rob Bouwman. It continued to be seen on and off until 12th December. The record has been accepted by the Moroccan Rarities Committee and the species added to Category A of the Moroccan list. Pre-1919 records in Egypt are generally considered to involve feral birds and the status of one or more at Abu Simbel, Egypt from 2nd to 7th March 1962 is uncertain but probably of doubtful origin.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

1984 Israel: Two, near Eilat, 28th September to 13th October, and, at least one of these to the end of October, and others to April 1985 (Shirihai 1986).

Early on Friday, 28th September 1984, Hadoram Shirihai was trapping and ringing in fields to the north of Kibbutz Eilot, near Eilat. As he released some, he noticed two unusually small larks flying away and calling with an unfamiliar monosyllabic call. These were both seen repeatedly up to 13th October and at least one to the end of the month. Hadoram began to wonder if they were Small Skylarks (an alternative name), but to begin with was unable to confirm this. On 14th October he trapped one and was given permission to hold it in captivity for 24 hours and it was during this time his suspicions were confirmed, it was an Oriental Skylark. Towards the end of October more were discovered and by 1st November Hadoram had ringed seven. Then on 22nd November an unringed bird was seen, which led him to conclude that a total of nine were present and they remained in fields at Kibbutz Eilot until 15th December. Seven days later Hadoram discovered a further group of eight in a melon field some distance away and he could see that just one was ringed.

He trapped one of this new group in January 1985 and from then to mid-April observed some of these moving to the fields where the first birds were observed. At this time he managed to trap two more. Between September 1984 and April 1985 a total of 16 were recorded, these are the first records for the Western Palearctic, although the species was almost certainly observed in October 1980 but not identified (Shirihai 1996).

There is a possible earlier record of a bird collected on the shore of the Caspian Sea near Lenkoran, Azerbaijan sometime before 1911 (Snow & Perrins 1998).

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

1984 Sweden: First calendar-year, Nidingen, Halland, 3rd October (Hellström *et al*. 2007), trapped.

Nidingen is a small island located in the Kattegat off the west coast of Sweden, about four miles south-southwest of the Onsala Peninsula. The Göteborgs Ornitologiska Förening have maintained a bird ringing station there since 1980. Throughout the week of 29th September to 6th October 1984, the station was staffed by Dennis Kraft and Dan Gieselson. During this time the weather was very mixed; on Tuesday, 2nd October visibility was reduced due to fog. Towards the evening it began to rain, which continued into the next day, but by the morning of the 3rd the rain had cleared, the wind had dropped, but the hazy conditions persisted. At 10:00 on 3rd October they trapped a shrike, which was probably the same one seen the previous day in much reduced visibility. In the hand and when compared to Red-backed Shrike, a number of features stood out, including a more reddish-brown tail, upper rump and head and the literature consulted indicated it was an Isabelline Shrike of the form *phoenicuroides* (since raised to full species status as Red-tailed Shrike). Some consideration was given to the possibility it was a Brown Shrike but on balance that was ruled out and it was accepted as the second Isabelline Shrike for Sweden by the Raritetskommittén (Swedish Rarities Committee), (Hirschfeld 1989).

In the years following 1984, a greater awareness and understanding of the subtleties of shrike identification developed, especially when it came to distinguishing subspecies. Against this background, the Raritetskommittén undertook a reassessment of all Isabelline Shrike records up to 2007.



Pic. 158.
Brown Shrike,
in the hand, Nidingen,
3rd October 1984.
Photo: © Dennis Kraft.

As part of the review Magnus Hellström was sent photographs of the Nidingen bird to study. He identified several characteristics that were at odds with the initial identification, instead suggesting the bird was a Brown Shrike. Together with Lars Svensson they obtained additional biometrics from the observatory at Nidingen and photographs of the bird (Pic. 158). When compared with specimens of both shrike species preserved at the Natural History Museum, Tring, they concluded the bird was actually a first calendar-year Brown Shrike of the nominate form *cristatus*, and a first Western Palearctic record. This predates by a year the previously indicated first record, which was an adult at Grutness, Sumburgh, Shetland, Scotland from 30th September to 2nd October 1985 (Hume 1993).

Knob-billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*

1984 Mauritania: Female, off Iwik, Banc d'Arguin, 7th December (Hazevoet *et al*. 2011), in flight.

On Friday, 7th December 1984, a *Sirius Bird* tour-group were sailing just off the coastal town of Iwik, located within the Banc d'Arguin National Park (about 4,500 square miles of sand dunes, coastal swamps, small islands and shallow coastal waters fringing the Atlantic coastline). At 08:30 they had a 30 second sighting of a large duck flying between their boat and the shore. It was about the size of a Shelduck with dark upperparts and underwing, white underparts and proceeded with rather slow wingbeats recalling a goose. They identified it as a Knob-billed Duck (aka African Comb Duck) and it was obviously a female as it lacked the knob that is characteristic of the male's bill. The species is found across tropical wetlands of sub-Saharan Africa and is a regular visitor during the rainy and dry seasons to parts of Mauritania not far to the south of the Western Palearctic border.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

1985 Denmark: Adult male, Bygholm Vejle, North Jutland, 5th to 7th May (Rasmussen 1996).

This record was initially rejected (Olsen 1987) but was later accepted as a genuine vagrant by the DOFS (Danish Rarity Committee) following a review, thus making it the first for the Western Palearctic. This predates by almost two years the previously indicated first record, which was a first-year male at Jeffrey's Swag, Chasewater, West Midlands, England from 8th March to 26th April 1987 (Holian & Fortey 1992).

The first confirmed female for the WP was at Roquito del Fraile, Tenerife in the Canary Islands from 17th November 1994 to February 1995 (Clarke *et al*. 1995).



Pic. 159.
Grey-throated Martin (right), with Sand Martin, in the hand, Eilot Fields, 5th November 1985. Photo: © Hadoram Shirihai.

Grey-throated (Sand) Martin *Riparia chinensis*

1985 Israel: Eilot Fields, near Eilat, 6th May (Shirihai 1996), trapped.

During May 1985, Hadoram Shirihai and others, including Adi Ganz, Rami Mizrachi, Avner Rothschild and Merav Gellert, were trapping and ringing birds north of Eilat at Eilot Fields. On Monday, 6th May, they were almost overwhelmed by a large influx of Sand Martins. The nets had not been open for long when one of the volunteers reported an unusually small, dark Sand Martin, which Hadoram identified as a Brown-throated Sand Martin.

A full description and set of measurements were taken, which confirmed it was an example of the central and far east Asian form *chinensis*, since raised to full species status as Grey-throated Martin (Pic. 159). Once released it joined a group of feeding Sand Martins and was lost to sight in less than 30 seconds. This replaces the previously indicated first record at Jahra Pools Reserve, Kuwait from 24th November to at least 27th December 2017.

Brown-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*

1985 Israel: First-summer, Eilat Salt Ponds, 12th May (Shirihai *et al*. 1987).

On Sunday, 12th May 1985, Hadoram Shirihai, Anders Jonsson and Nina Sebba were watching Black-headed and Slender-billed Gulls at the salt ponds near Eilat when Hadoram noticed an aberrant small gull amongst them. Excellent views down to seven metres were obtained both in flight and on the deck for about 40 minutes.

It was provisionally identified as a first-summer Brown-headed Gull (a species that breeds in Asia and winters at large inland lakes in the Indian subcontinent) and this was confirmed following reference to the literature. Its most obvious feature was a very distinctive upperwing pattern with an unbroken black trailing edge from wing tip to body. Comparisons with photos, sketches and descriptions of similarly aged Brown-headed Gulls in the Far East showed the same features as the Eilat bird.

However, see also Hoogendoorn (1991), who has highlighted apparent inconsistences between the gull's features described in Shirihai *et al*. (1987) and his own observations and studies of Brown-headed Gull, both in Thailand and museum collections.

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

1985 Scotland: Noss, Shetland, 25th to 26th June (McKay 2000).

Clive McKay was employed as Warden at Noss National Nature Reserve (the Isle of Noss lies to the east of Bressay in Shetland). Sometime during the afternoon of Tuesday, 25th June 1985, Mr and Mrs P. Leward, who were on a visit to Noss, informed Clive they had seen a waxwing while walking around the island. The time of year caused him to suspect it was probably an escape.

Nevertheless, Clive set off for the island's north coast and found the bird feeding in Thrift at the top of a sheltered rocky headland. It clearly wasn't a Bohemian Waxwing, having no white on the primaries, and possessing pale sulphur-yellow underparts. Relying on a limited knowledge of Nearctic species, he suspected it was a Cedar Waxwing, found across much of North and Central America. Clive took a full description, then left to try alert local birders but without any success.

Next he telephoned Keith Clarkson in Sheffield, who Clive knew had spent time undertaking research work in Newfoundland during Summer 1982. Keith told him that Cedar Waxwing is migratory and he had seen small flocks on his study island in June, well away from their normal habitat. Clive consulted the *Shell Guide to the Birds of Britain and Ireland* and was surprised to discover that several Nearctic passerines had been recorded in Britain in June and he began to consider the real possibility that the bird was a genuine vagrant? It was still present the following day when, along with Susan Crosthwaite, he watched and photographed it from 08:30 to 10:30, after which he was satisfied there were no visible signs of previous captivity. When looked for on the 27th it could not be found, nor at any time after that.

Some doubts about the provenance of this bird meant it was originally placed in Category D by the BOURC. However, the occurrence of a second Cedar Waxwing for Britain (a first-winter bird) in Nottingham during February and March 1996 (Smith 1996), prompted a re-examination of the status of the bird on Noss, and following a review it was accepted as a genuine vagrant and the first for Britain and the Western Palearctic.

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Setophaga pensylvanica*

1985 Scotland: First-winter, Fetlar, Shetland, 20th September (Peacock 1993).

In the early afternoon of Friday, 20th September 1985, Michael Peacock was walking the Burn of Feal on Fetlar (one of the most northerly of Shetland's islands). He was hoping for migrants and before long had discovered a Pied Flycatcher at one end of the Burn, then walked to a clump of Irises where he flushed a Garden Warbler, which took off and landed in a large patch of thistles further up the Burn. As Michael approached the thistles, he noticed another warbler-like bird making its way through them, which then flew up to a fence where it perched with its tail erect and wings slightly drooped. It next jumped back down among the thistles, moving through them, before flying back towards the Irises, which were about 200 metres distant. It repeated this cycle a few times, sometimes in one continuous flight and sometimes in stages. When flying longer distances it had a slightly undulating flight, the wing-bars were very distinct and some white was visible on the outer tail feathers. It preferred to sit out on vantage points, such as a fence, flying down to catch prey in the vegetation or sometimes flycatching passing insects before returning to its launch pad.

After about 30 minutes, Michael fetched his telescope and some time later his wife Val joined him and they got excellent views of the bird right up to 17:30. Returning home he made a few phone calls, including one to Mike Walker, the RSPB Warden on Fetlar, who was visiting Fair Isle at the time. Mike managed to get off Fair Isle, but didn't arrive on Fetlar until after dark. So at first light the following morning (about 05:30) both he and Michael, as well as some others who had arrived from Shetland, went searching for the bird but unfortunately there was no sign of it that morning nor at any other time after that. Michael was fairly certain it was a Nearctic wood warbler, but he did not have access to a North American field guide, so it wasn't until he made a telephone call to birders on Fair Isle for advice that he was able to determine the bird was a Chestnut-sided Warbler, a first for Britain and the Western Palearctic. Later on, when he was able to check of the literature, he aged the bird as a first-year.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*

1985 Spain: Adult, Puerto Sotogrande, Cádiz, Andalusia 10th October (De Juana & la SEO 1988).

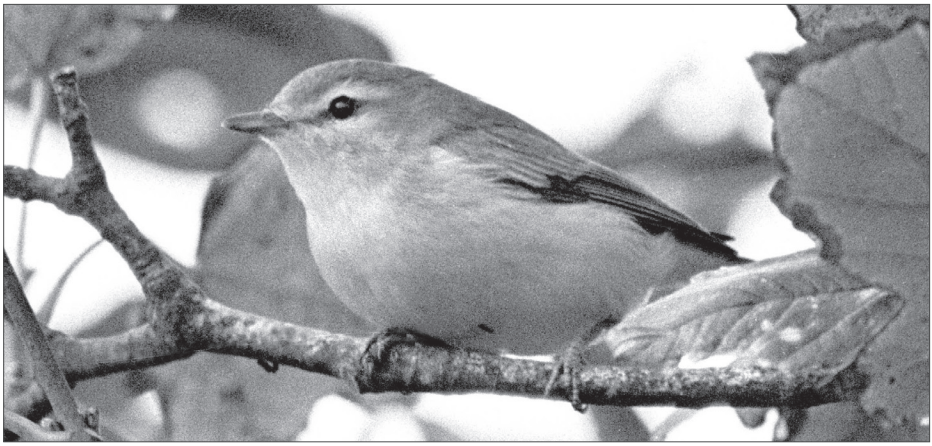
This bird was found by E.J. Mackrill at Puerto Sotogrande at the mouth of the Guadiaro River in southern Spain. It was probably the same individual that was seen by A.M. Paterson at Torremolinos, near Málaga the following 14th December and for a second time back at Torremolinos on 9th January 1986. Puerto Sotogrande and Torremolinos are about 50 miles apart, a mere stroll in the park for an ocean wanderer like a Masked Booby.

Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*

1985 Ireland: Dirk Bay, Galley Head, Cork, 6th to 17th October (Dowdall 1993, 1995).

Aidan Duggan was a very fortunate 16-year-old birder to have a Honda 50 motorbike at his disposal and it was on that machine that he headed out for some birding at Dirk Bay, which at the time was a potentially promising area near Galley Head, Cork, nowadays well and truly on the Irish birding map. Aidan parked up the bike and made his way down the lane where, within a few minutes, he got a glimpse of an odd-looking passerine in a Sycamore.

Initial impressions were of a robust warbler-like bird with a stout bill and a striking head pattern. The bird was very active and it was difficult to get a good clear view, but after several hours he managed to make out a dark eye-stripe, contrasting white supercilium and grey crown. The upperparts were olive-green and the underparts were a buffy white with a noticeable yellow wash. Although Aidan had yet to see any vireo species, he realised this was one and presumed it was a Red-eyed Vireo, even though he was puzzled by the yellowish wash visible on the underparts, but convinced himself that was probably a feature of a first-winter bird (Aidan Duggan pers. comms.)! As good a bird to find as Red-eyed Vireo is, subsequent observations would reveal it to be a much rarer transatlantic visitor.



Pic. 160.
Philadelphia Vireo, Galley Head, Cork, October 1985.
Photo: © Richard T. Mills.

Pic. 161.
Philadelphia Vireo, Galley Head, Cork, October 1985.
Photo: © Richard T. Mills.



A week later on Saturday, 12th October, Jim Dowdall, Paul Cummins and Joe Adamson were birding around Galley Head on their way to Cape Clear Island when Jim discovered a bird feeding in the company of Blue Tits and Goldcrests at Dirk Bay. Initial views made Jim suspect it was a Red-eyed Vireo, but when the bird turned to face him he realised it was a species unfamiliar to him. They watched the bird for as long as possible until they had to leave to catch the Cape ferry.

While on the boat they discussed the bird with others and consulted the National Geographic's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* after which they made a tentative identification of Philadelphia Vireo, a species that breeds across southern and central Canada. Later that night Jim saw a photo of Philadelphia Vireo in The Audubon Society's *Field Guide to North America Birds* and became certain that was what he saw earlier and returning to Galley Head the following day he confirmed this (Pics. 160-161). The bird duly obliged everyone by remaining until 17th October.

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*

1985 England: Male, Rame Head, Cornwall, 13th October (Smaldon 1990).

On Sunday, 13th October 1985, Roger Smaldon, Roger Burridge and V.R. (Vic) Tucker had enjoyed a good morning's birding around Rame Head, the westerly entrance to Plymouth Harbour. At about 11:00, Roger left to head off home but, on the way, he stopped to check out some hedges and trees around Rame Church, where all he saw initially was a small flock of Blue and Great Tits and a few Goldcrests in a roadside hedge. He was about to depart when a small bird in a Hawthorn caught his attention. Even though it was facing away and partly obscured he could make out that the upperparts were a bright olive-green on the mantle and coverts and a darker shade on the flight feathers and that no wingbar was visible.



Pic. 162.
Wilson's Warbler,
Rame Head, Cornwall, 13th October 1985.
Photo: © Keith Pellow.

It then moved position to show bright yellow underparts and a yellow head with a neat black cap and a prominent black eye. A bird that stunning just had to be a Nearctic wood warbler but Roger could not put a name to it and then it dropped out of sight into cover! The others were alerted and they hurried back from the headland. All three then searched the area but after about two hours without sight or sound of it, they were beginning to think the bird had probably scarpered, all the more heartbreaking for Roger Burridge, as he deduced from Smaldon's description it was a Wilson's Warbler, a widespread North American wood warbler! Fortunately their gloom was lifted when Burridge shouted that he had it in the topmost branches of a small ash tree about 20 metres from where Roger had found it.

They all got very good views for a few minutes, before it disappeared into cover once again, then it dropped further down until eventually ending up in an ivy-covered hedge, where it remained for most of the day. News of the bird was broadcast and about ten others got to see it during that time and Keith Pellow took a photograph (Pic. 162). That evening it was seen to go to roost in the ivy, which gave some hope it might be present the following day but, despite much searching from dawn on the 14th it was not seen again. It was submitted to the BBRC and subsequently to the BOURC and was accepted following a single circulation of both committees.

Tricoloured Heron *Egretta tricolor*

1985 Azores: First-winter, Lajes do Pico, Pico, 22nd to 24th October (Parrott *et al*. 1987).

In October 1985, John Parrott, John Phillips and Viv Wood were on a birding holiday to the Azores. Throughout their stay at Lajes on the island of Pico, a Tricolored (or Louisiana) Heron was present in extensive rocky tidal lagoons outside the seawall from 22nd to 24th October (Pic 163). During times of low-water it fed in rock pools, catching fish by slow stalking, or, more characteristically, by prancing around in an erratic manner, sometimes up to the 'thighs' in water, with the wings raised to form a partial canopy.



Pic. 163.
Tricoloured Heron, Pico, Azores, October 1985.
Photo: © John Parrott.



Pic. 164.
Hume's Short-toed Lark,
in the hand,
Eilot Fields, Eilat,
February 1986.
Photo: © Hadoram Shirihai.

Pic. 165.
Hume's Short-toed Lark,
The Steinhardt Museum of
Natural History at Tel-Aviv
University, Tel-Aviv, Israel.
Photo: © Amos Belmaker.



Hume's Short-toed Lark *Calandrella acutirostris*

1986 Israel: Adult, Eilot Fields, Eilat, 4th to 14th February (Shirihai & Alström 1990), trapped.

On Tuesday, 4th February 1986, Hadoram Shirihai noticed a strange-looking *Calandrella* lark at Eilat (Pic. 164). Although similar to Short-toed Lark, it differed in plumage and in particular, in its call. Mist-nets were erected and it was trapped on 14th February, but attempts to identify it were not successful, so it was sent to the Tel Aviv Zoological Gardens for further studies, but sadly died after a few days.

Hadoram brought the study-skin to the Natural History Museum at Tring the following year with the intention of identifying it. Comparisons with other larks preserved in the museum's collection revealed it to be Hume's Short-toed Lark, native to south-central Asia. The study-skin is preserved in the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, catalogue number SMNH-AV.9983 (Pic. 165).

Subsequent genetic analysis of the museum specimen has determined the bird to be an example of the nominate form *acutirostris* and was 100% identical to samples collected in Afghanistan (Shannon *et al*. 2022). To date it is the only record for the Western Palearctic.

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

1987 England: St. John's Valley, Lundy Island, Devon, 24th to 25th April (McShane 1996).

Colin McShane, K.J. Mitchell and A.J. Wood visited Lundy Island on Saturday, 25th April 1987. Upon their arrival, the Warden told them that several birders had reported an Orphean Warbler in St. John's Valley (located near the island's Landing Beach) early the previous morning. The Warden had not seen the bird but did have a note left him by the finders describing a large, grey-brown and white warbler with a dark hood. They headed to St. John's where an initial search for the purported warbler was not successful, so they set up mist-nets in the nearby Millcombe Valley, hoping to trap the as yet to be identified bird. By about 15:00 they were all beginning to feel the effects of an all night journey to Devon and boat ride to Lundy, so the nets were furled and they headed off to grab 40 winks. A couple of hours later Colin McShane returned to St. John's and immediately saw a bird fitting the warden's description, but, even after just a few seconds, it was obviously not an Orphean Warbler; indeed, it was not a warbler at all. He watched it for about 20 minutes down to five metres in excellent light. It was behaving like a typical flycatcher, darting out to catch passing insects, before returning to a convenient launching pad. Colin took a description, then went off to get Mitchell and Wood, who returned with telescopes and together they watched the bird for an hour. They reset the nets but the bird refused to enter, at one point sitting tantalisingly close on one of the net's support poles! At 19:00 it took off flying towards the next valley and was never seen again.

Although superficially resembling a large Spotted Flycatcher, the description did not match any European species, so had to wait until they had departed Lundy before undertaking a search of field guides from other regions of the world. Illustrations of Eastern Phoebe in North American field guides seemed to fit the Lundy bird very closely and their collective descriptions were sufficient to clinch that identification and it was accepted as a Category A record.

Two days earlier, an Eastern Phoebe was claimed at Slapton Ley on the south coast of Devon, about 70 miles southwest of Lundy, however it was not accepted by the BBRC and even though minor differences in their respective plumages was noted it was possibly the same individual, but its credentials were simply not sufficient to be accepted as a first for Britain.



Pic. 166.
Brown-headed Cowbird,
in the hand, Jomfruland, 1st June 1987.
Photo: © Øyvind Olsen.

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*

1987 Norway: Female, Jomfruland Bird Observatory, Kragerø, Vestfold og Telemark, 1st June (Gustad 1995b), trapped.

On Monday, 1st June 1987 a female Brown-headed Cowbird (a brood parasitic passerine found across much of North America), was seen feeding on the ground in the company of Greenfinches in the Bird Observatory garden on the island of Jomfruland (in the northern Skagerrak).

It was trapped and photographed (Pic. 166). When examined in the hand it was obvious the bird was in a very weak condition and it died not long after. The specimen is preserved at the Zoological Museum, Oslo.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*

1987 Scotland: First-winter, Shirva, Fair Isle, Shetland, 30th September to 1st October (Ellis & Riddiford 1992), trapped.

On Fair Isle, Wednesday, 30th September 1987, was a mainly dull day with moderate south-southwesterly winds. P.M. (Peter) Ellis was walking alongside a turnip rig at Shirva when he saw a small bird emerge from the crop about ten metres ahead of him. He managed a brief view of its rear before it hopped around the corner of the rig and out of sight. He got another brief view, mainly of the bird's head, from the top of the rig, before it dived back into the crop. The best Peter could come up with was that it resembled a bunting but unlike any he had ever seen. The bill was long and pointed and that put him in mind of a Nearctic sparrow and the presence of a yellow supercilium immediately suggested Savannah Sparrow but other features were reminiscent of Song Sparrow and it had been some considerable time since he had seen either species, so his recollections were a little hazy, and his views were brief to say the least (Pics. 167-168). He high-tailed it to the nearest phone box and called the Observatory, telling Elizabeth Riddiford he had found an American sparrow, probably Savannah or Song, and asked her to bring an American field guide.





Pics. 167–168.
Savannah Sparrow, Fair Isle, Shetland, 30th September 1987.
Photos: © Tim Loseby.

A copy of Robbins, Bruun, Zim & Singer's *A Guide to Field Identification: Birds of North America* soon arrived, but it didn't provide sufficient detail to determine the species. Regardless, Peter was fairly sure he had found a Savannah Sparrow but it was left to R.J. (Ron) Johns to clinch it when he described Savannah Sparrow as having a very short tail, something Peter had spotted earlier.

Eventually the bird gave those watching excellent views and later that afternoon it was aged as a first-winter after Nick Riddiford trapped it. It was present again the following day but not thereafter. This is the second Western Palearctic record of Savannah Sparrow overall, but the first of the typical form. An earlier record at Portland, Dorset in April 1982 was identified to the race *princeps* known as Ipswich Sparrow (see page 129), which is quite distinctive, being larger and greyer than all other subspecies.

Two-barred Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*

1987 England: First-winter, Gugh, Isles of Scilly, 22nd to 27th October (Bradshaw 2001).

Autumn 1987 had not begun at all well for Colin Bradshaw (stalwart of the BBRC for almost 20 years, including nine of those as Chairman). He arrived on Scilly too late to see the first British Philadelphia Vireo on Tresco (present from 10th to 13th October) and the third British Hermit Thrush on St. Agnes (present from 15th to 16th October) and to make matters worse, a Blyth's Reed Warbler had been trapped at Prior's Park, near his home patch of Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear on 20th October, the same day he arrived at St. Agnes!



Pics. 169–172.
Two-barred Greenish Warbler, Gugh, Isles of Scilly, October 1987.
Photos: © Colin Bradshaw.

On Thursday, 22nd October he learned of a drab Yellow-browed Warbler reported on the small adjacent island of Gugh, so on the following day Colin and his father Tom, went looking for it. Having spent time searching the moor on the island's south side, they were making their way back towards the central fields when a small *Phylloscopus* warbler was noticed flicking through some brambles along the southern edge of the fields. Although superficially resembling Yellow-browed Warbler, i.e. showing an obvious supercilium and two wing-bars, it lacked pale edges to the tertials, a feature typical of *inornatus*. They took a full set of notes before returning across the tombolo to St. Agnes.

While away, things had become very interesting with Booted Warbler, Red-rumped Swallow and a strange Common Nightingale all found near the Post Office. Despite all the activity, Colin managed to corner Alan Dean, John Ridley and Pete Lansdown to discuss the bird on Gugh. They felt sure it was not a Yellow-browed and Colin's description hinted at *plumbeitarsus*, the Asian race of Greenish Warbler (since raised to full species status as Two-barred Greenish Warbler, aka Two-barred Warbler) and they agreed another look was badly needed. There was no time to lose so, despite a flooding tide, Colin, Tom and Pete set off for Gugh where prolonged views of the bird and a subsequent detailed analysis of a series of photographs were eventually sufficient to confirm its identification as Two-barred Greenish Warbler. It remained on the island for a further five days (Pics. 169-172).

Resolving the identification was far from straightforward. At the time, Two-barred Greenish Warbler was not foremost in the minds of British birders as a potential vagrant to western Europe. In fact, few had much field experience of *plumbeitarsus*, mostly limited to just a few spring sightings in Siberia. Indeed most of those previously seen by Colin were elusive and difficult to study, remaining high in the canopy and in song. Consequently, a few years would elapse before the BBRC and BOURC were ready to accept it and the record was not published until the 1992 Rare Bird Report.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*

1987 Iceland: First-winter, Heimaey, Vestmannaeyjar, 23rd November (Petersen 1989), found exhausted.



Pic. 173.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet,
Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

This bird was found in an exhausted state by Ingi Sigurjónsson, expiring a short time later. The specimen is preserved at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 173). The first to survive and second overall for the Western Palearctic was also at Heimaey, a female or first-winter present on 10th and 11th October 1998 (Kolbeinsson *et al*. 2001).

A 19th Century claim of an adult male in worn plumage collected at Kenmore Wood, Lough Lomond, Scotland in the summer of 1852 was reviewed by the BOURC in 1990 and found to be unacceptable (Knox 1994).

Oriental Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orientalis*

1988 Israel: Eilat, 28th February to 13th April (Shirihai 1996).

When found by Hadoram Shirihai and Bill Laird this warbler was feeding along a reed-fringed canal that runs towards Eilat's North Beach. It had noticeable streaking on the breast and white on the outer tail feathers and in structure was judged to be intermediate between Great Reed and Clamorous Reed Warblers.

Later Hadoram and Bill tentatively identified it as *orientalis,* the far eastern form of Great Reed Warbler (since raised to full species status as Oriental Reed Warbler). On 9th March a mechanical digger began work near the canal causing the bird to depart, fortunately returning to the same spot on 2nd April. Their tentative identification was confirmed some time later once Hadoram had examined *Acrocephalus* study-skins at the Natural History Museum, Tring.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

1988 Spain: Adult, Es Cibollar, Albufera d'Alcudia, Majorca (Mallorca), Balearic Islands, March to September (Grant 1988).

African Spoonbill is resident throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar. It is an occasional visitor to Yemen (where breeding was attempted) and a vagrant to Oman, both places outside the boundaries of the WP *per* BWP.

An adult was present at the Parque Natural S'Albufera de Mallorca from mid-March to at least 2nd September 1988. When observed by Peter Grant on 1st and 2nd September, it was not carrying leg-rings and was observed to be fully-winged. An African Spoonbill found dead on the Ebro Delta (about 110 miles across the Balearic Sea from Majorca) in February 1989 was very possibly the same bird (Snow & Perrins 1998). The Spanish Rarities Committee placed the record and species in Category D.

Siberian Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

1988 Sweden: Adult female, Svartåmynningen, Roxen, Östergötland, 29th to 30th June (*Vår Fågelvärld* 49: 470).

Following the release of IOC World List ver. 13.2 in July 2023, Lesser Sand Plover was split into two full species, i.e. Tibetan Sand Plover *C. atrifrons* and Siberian Sand Plover (with subspecies *mongolus* and *stegmanni*). The newly split Tibetan Sand Plover is a rare but regular migrant to Egypt and a winter visitor or passage migrant in Kuwait (Snow & Perrins 1998). Siberian Sand Plover is a rare vagrant to the Western Palearctic and this appears to be the first record that can be attributed to the *mongolus* group. However, keep in mind that not all earlier records have been classified as either *atrifrons* or *mongolus.* AviList 2025 will reassign the genus from *Charadrius* to *Anarhynchus*.

Pic. 174.
Black-throated Blue Warbler, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.



Black-throated Blue Warbler *Setophaga caerulescens*

1988 Iceland: Adult male, Heimaey, Vestmannaeyjar, 14th to 19th September (Pétursson *et al*. 1991), collected.

Collected by Viktor Sigurjónsson. The specimen is preserved at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 174). The second (and first to survive) for the Western Palearctic was also in Iceland, an adult female at Vestmannaeyjabær, Vestmannaeyjar (Westman Islands) on 17th and 18th October 2003.

Banded Martin *Neophedina cincta*

1988 Egypt: Elephantine Island, near Aswan, 15th November (Clements 1990).

On Tuesday, 15th November 1988, Andy Clements was birding at Elephantine Island (an island in the River Nile about three miles north of the Aswan high-dam). He was at the northern end of the island in fields known to attract migrants. At 07:30 he was watching about 25 Hirundines hawking insects above a bund wall that separated fields from the island's western shore and the River Nile. Apart from a single Pale Crag Martin they were all Swallows, including both the nominate and the Egyptian form, *savignii*.

After a while, another bird approached from the northwest, which Andy initially took to be an Alpine Swift, an impression soon dispelled once it joined the flock. It was clearly a Hirundine, but large, chunky, and with a stiff-winged flight, noticeably larger and bulkier than Pale Crag Martin. The stiff flight action and its broad triangular wings gave it a heavy-shouldered appearance and it seemed to spend more time gliding than in flapping flight. About six minutes later, the entire flock departed east across the River Nile, eventually becoming lost to view over the town of Aswan. Andy realised he had previously seen this species, but was unable to recall the name! As soon as he could, he checked *Birds of the Middle East and North Africa* by Hollom, Porter, Christensen & Willis and identified it as a Banded Martin.

Double-crested Cormorant *Nannopterum auritum*

1989 England: Charlton's Pond, Billingham, Cleveland, 11th January, although probably present since early December 1988, to 26th April (Blick 1989, Williams 1996).

During his January year-ticking cycle, Martin Blick visited Charlton's Pond, Billingham on Wednesday, 11th January 1989. He saw a cormorant species standing on a tern nesting platform, which he identified as a Shag on account of its apparent small size and brownish underparts. Once he got the bird in the telescope, he noticed a strange bright yellow/orange facial colouration and stripe in front of the eye, but left convinced it was just an unusual looking Shag.

Later that day he met volunteer warden T.J. Williams and told him about the bird. As Williams had yet to see Shag on his local patch he went to look for it. When he first saw it from a distance of about 300 metres, it resembled a Shag but as he got closer, he found himself looking at a Cormorant and wondered if they had both made a mistake or if the Shag had departed unnoticed? A few days later a second birder reported a Shag at Charlton's Pond, but when Williams got there all he found was a Cormorant. This bird was a real Jekyll and Hyde, from a distance it looked like a Shag but on closer examination it was obviously a Cormorant!

Williams was puzzled and could not reconcile it to either species, it certainly had the jizz of a Cormorant and he began to ponder various options, could it be an oiled bird, unusually small, an out of normal range subspecies or even a hybrid? He undertook a detailed study of plumage variations displayed by Cormorants and Shags, but its combination of pale upper underparts and dark lower underparts did not fit any juvenile variations. Nor could he find anything in a European field guide that resembled the colours and shape of the head, face and bill. On 30th January, Williams watched the bird swimming with a Cormorant and noticed that it adopted a strange diving pattern, following about four or five feet behind and slightly to one side and diving about two seconds later.



Pic. 175.
Double-crested Cormorant, Charlton's Pond, Cleveland, early 1988.
Photo: © David Cottridge.

That evening Williams telephoned Martin Blick to discuss the behaviour he had observed earlier. Martin was able to tell him this behaviour was characteristic of Double-crested Cormorant, the most widespread cormorant species found in North America. By this time, Williams had become convinced that is what it was by virtue of both [his] previous observations and the information [from Martin Blick] about the feeding behaviour. They jointly agreed to release news of the bird's identity and the following day a number of birders arrived including some who had previous experience of the species and all agreed with the probable identity. It remained to 26th April and was observed and photographed (Pic. 175) by at least 1,400 birders as well as attracting the attention of the media and TV cameras. It was not published until the 1992 report, where it was described as one of the more underwhelming species added to the British List in the last decade.

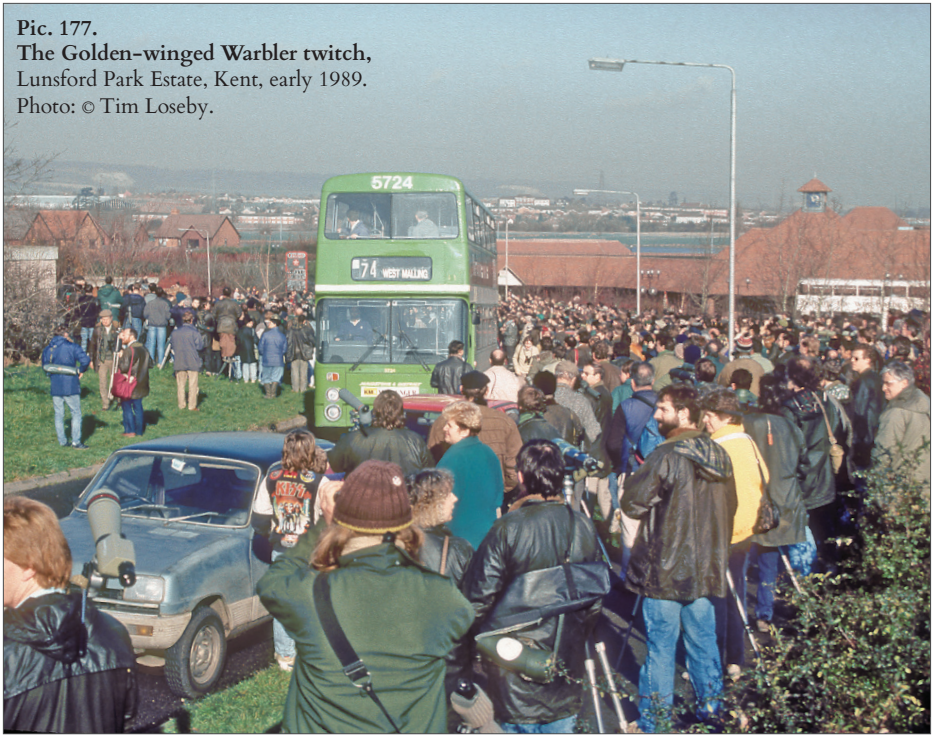
Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*

1989 England: Male, Lunsford Park Estate, New Hythe, Larkfield, Kent, 24th January to 10th April (Doherty 1989, 1992).

On Tuesday, 7th February, Paul Doherty was on his way to post a few letters in a post box about 200 yards from his house on the Lunsford Park Estate. Half way there, a small bird displaying a flash of yellow briefly emerged from a *Cotoneaster* and, however unlikely it seemed, Paul's first reaction was Yellow-rumped Warbler! It soon reappeared, showing obvious lemon-yellow patches on the crown and greater coverts, a black patch running back from the bill and around the eye, and a broad black bib. Paul regretted not having brought his bins but the bird was so tame he was able to watch it down to six feet for about three minutes before it took off.



Pic. 176
Golden-winged Warbler, Lunsford Park Estate, Kent, early 1989.
Photo: © David Cottridge.



Pic. 177.
The Golden-winged Warbler twitch,
Lunsford Park Estate, Kent, early 1989.
Photo: © Tim Loseby.



Pic. 178.
The Golden-winged Warbler twitch,
Tim Loseby being interviewed by BBC Radio 4.

Paul felt that something so bright must be an American wood warbler, but that was way too fanciful, considering the date and the location. Nevertheless, as soon as he got home Paul checked the warbler plates in National Geographic's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America,* halting on page 354 in a state of astonishment, with the realisation he had just seen a male Golden-winged Warbler sunk in (Pic. 176). Paul knew that confirmation was badly needed, so on the following morning, along with Bill Jones, Terry Laws, Tim Loseby and Alan Woodcock, an unsuccessful search was carried out in rather murky weather. During the afternoon the weather picked up, so Paul decided to check out some ornamental bushes in the local Tesco car park and to his great relief one of the first birds that [he] saw was the Golden-winged Warbler.

Later that same day it was relocated by Andy and Jackie McKee about 100 yards from Tesco. When they last saw the bird it was heading towards some rough ground down by the River Medway (southeast England), a riverside location that often held wintering Chiffchaffs. Paul reasoned the warbler was spending most of the time there, only making an occasional foray to the housing estate gardens and Tesco car park. Therefore, thinking it was more or less confined to an area of open ground with public access, Paul felt it was safe to release the news and a message was put on *Birdline*, which attracted huge numbers to twitch it. However, contrary to what was expected the bird forewent the riparian rough ground, appearing to prefer Tesco's car park and housing estate gardens. The actual numbers that arrived that first weekend is not precisely known but Paul estimated, from a rough count, there were 3,000 on Saturday and 1,200 on Sunday. The extraordinary spectacle of what is probably the largest ever twitch in Britain, is perfectly captured in Tim Loseby's photo showing the huge assembled crowd (Pic. 177).

Although the bird remained to 10th April (as spring approached there were reports it was heard in song), it could be difficult to keep track of as it moved quickly from garden to garden around Lunsford Park Estate and was easily lost to view. Rather appropriately the last person to see it was Paul Doherty in bushes surrounding Tesco. Just when it arrived in Britain will never be known and certainly the location and date don't fit any traditional vagrancy pattern, but it is tempting to speculate it arrived the previous autumn, either in Kent or further afield and somehow remained undetected over the winter. Regardless, it was judged by the BOURC to be a genuine vagrant and the species admitted to Category A of the British list. It subsequently emerged that prior to Paul's initial sighting, Mrs. C. Miller had seen it in her Larkfield garden on Tuesday, 24th January 1989. Although not a birder, it was unusual enough for her to make a drawing and a few days later took some photographs that clearly showed it to be the same bird. Its presence attracted the interest of the wider community and news of the bird was reported in the local and national news (Pic. 178).

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*

1989 Isle of Man: First-year male, Bird Observatory, Calf of Man, 31st October to 1st November (Sapsford 1996), trapped.

The Calf of Man is a small island of about 600 acres in the Irish Sea. It is separated form the southwest coast of the Isle of Man by the Calf Sound. Previously in private ownership, it was donated it to the National Trust to become a bird sanctuary and is currently under the control of Manx National Heritage. There has been a Bird Observatory on the island since 1959.



Pic. 179.
Mourning Dove,
Calf of Man Bird Observatory,
October 1989.
Photo: © Ian Fisher &
Calf of Man Bird Observatory.



Pic. 180.
Mourning Dove,
Manx Museum, Douglas.
Photo: © Laura McCoy.

About 11:00 on Tuesday, 31st October 1989, Aron Sapsford drove one of the Helgoland traps set up near the Observatory building. When he went to remove some Blackbirds from the catching box, he noticed a small dove among them that was not much bigger than the Blackbirds. Whatever it was, it was new to Aron, so he placed it in a ringer's bag and took it back to the Observatory for processing. He assumed it would prove to be an escape but upon examination he discovered the plumage to be completely fresh. He could find nothing similar in any Western Palearctic field guide, but help was on hand in the form of Ian Fisher who upon seeing the bird exclaimed, I've seen that before - in the States! I think it's a Mourning Dove.

A quick check of National Geographic's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* confirmed that. Aron judged it had just arrived as it was clearly in an exhausted state, its sternum protruded and at 83 grams appeared to be underweight. It was measured, ringed, photographed and released back to a sheltered part of the Observatory garden (Pic. 179). During the afternoon it was seen to feed on grain and it seemed to be picking up, but unfortunately it was found dead the following morning. The specimen is preserved in the Manx Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man (Pic. 180).

Thayer's Gull *Larus glaucoides thayeri*

1990 Ireland: First-winter, The Lough, Cork City, 21st February, and Cork Refuse Tip, 22nd February to 3rd March, and Cobh Harbour, 26th February to 5th March (Wilson 1990).

On Wednesday, 21st February 1990, Jim Wilson was scanning gulls gathered at the Lough in Cork City (a shallow spring-fed freshwater lake) when he noticed an unusual looking gull that resembled a first-winter Iceland Gull in structure but was darker and lacked pale primaries. It put Jim in mind of a putative Thayer's Gull he had seen at the Galway City Rubbish Tip in March 1989, and although that bird was several shades darker, the basic plumage patterns were very similar. Jim's thoughts turned to that enigmatic species and the possibility this was the real deal. However, work commitments meant he had to leave before he could investigate further.



Pic. 181.
Thayer's Gull, Cobh, Cork, March 1990.
Photo: © Killian Mullarney (left).

Pic. 182.
Thayer's Gull, Cork Refuse Tip, February 1990.
Photo: © Paul Archer (below).



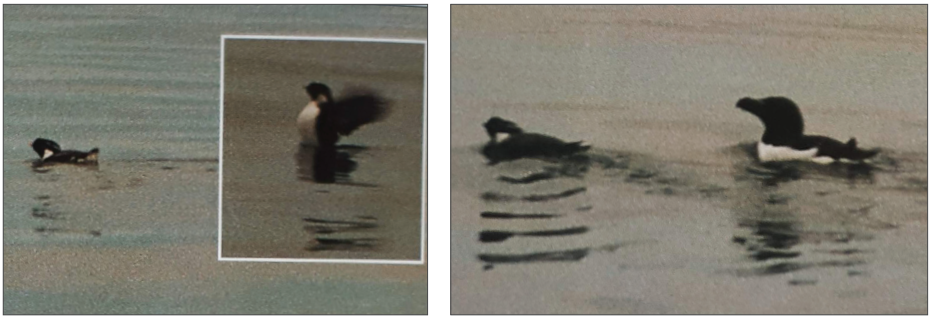
Fortunately, he refound the gull the next day at the Cork Refuse Tip and the views he obtained dispelled any slight doubts he held and allowed him confirm his tentative identification of Thayer's Gull (Pics. 181-182). For the remainder of its stay, it divided its time between the refuse tip and the port of Cobh (about ten miles from the tip on the southern side of Great Island in Cork Harbour), where it could usually be found when the tip was closed on Sundays. It was observed for the final time at Cobh on 5th March. The record was submitted to the IRBC and following a long evaluation process, it was eventually accepted and published in their 2001 report as the first Thayer's Gull for Ireland and the Western Palearctic.

Thayer's Gull has long been a controversial taxon, at various times it has been treated as a full species, a subspecies of American Herring Gull or (as currently by the IOC) a subspecies of Iceland Gull. However, Browning (2022) makes a very convincing case for full species status.

Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*

1990 England: Adult summer, Jenny's Cove, Lundy Island, Devon, 27th May to 26th June (Campey & Mortimer 1990, Waldon 1994).

In May 1990, Richard Campey and Keith Mortimer organised an RSPB South West office outing to Lundy Island where they were hoping to see the island's Puffins. They departed Bideford on the MV *Oldenburg,* arriving at Lundy at midday. The group immediately set off for Jenny's Cove on the western side of the island. After about 30 minutes of watching Puffins, their attention was drawn to a bird flying into the cove at 13:45. Although an auk species, it was clearly not a Puffin, and unusual enough to be potentially mega rare. They watched and took notes from 300 feet above, as it swam and dived about the cove. Keith then left to find John Waldon and Stan Davies, eventually finding John watching Guillemots and Razorbills in another part of Jenny's Cove. By 14:25, John arrived at the spot where Richard and Keith were watching, and [had] relocated the bird in question, flying far out to sea. When they picked it up in Richard's telescope in was in flight alongside a couple of Guillemots. It was time to check the literature so Richard and Keith headed back to the village to find Lundy's resident birder, Andy Jewels, and get a look at his copy of Harrison's *Seabirds, an identification guide,* quickly deciding it was either a Crested or an Ancient Murrelet, the illustrations slightly favouring Crested.



Pics. 183–184.
Ancient Murrelet, Jenny's Cove, Lundy Island, 28th May 1990.
Photos: © Dave Atkinson.

They returned to the cove only to discover the bird had flown further out to sea, but both John and Stan had good views of the bird and had taken a full description. On the return trip to Bideford, Harrison's *Seabirds* and *Seabirds of Britain and the World* by Gerald Tuck and Hermann Heinzel were consulted and they confidently identified it as an Ancient Murrelet (Pics. 183-184), a small auk species of the north Pacific Rim, found from the Yellow Sea east to the Aleutians and the Haida Gwaii archipelago off British Columbia.

On his return home to Exeter, Richard sought the consent of the Lundy Island Administration before he could release the news of a first Western Palearctic record. Once permission was granted, he began the process of alerting various telephone birdlines with the news. Many found it hard to believe and some even considered it was a wind-up; a north Pacific Alcid in the Bristol Channel was something that only existed in the realms of fantasy. It remained to 26th June and attracted almost 4,000 birders during that time. It could be elusive at times and best looked for in the morning when it fed in Jenny's Cove. It must have found Lundy Island very much to its liking as, what is presumed to be the same individual, returned twice more. During 1991 it was present from April to June and in 1992 from late March to late April.

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

1990 England: Adult male, Porth Hellick Pool, St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 6th to 10th June (Hickman 1995).

On Wednesday, 6th June 1990, having finished his shift behind the bar at the Mermaid Inn (located just a stone's throw from the Quay in Hugh Town), Jeremy Hickman decided to head to Porth Hellick on the other side of the island for a spot of birding, only to find it practically devoid of bird life. At 19:00, five Hirundines approached low over the pool, consisting of three Swallows, a House Martin and one other that was somewhat martin-like but lacking a white rump and possessing a glossy blue-green mantle and crown, and pure white underparts.

It flew towards the far end of the pool, where it began hawking insects in and around some pines and over surrounding fields. Jeremy followed to get closer views and to note its plumage in detail. It was bulkier than a House Martin with broader wings and a more powerful flight, the underparts were snowy white and the upperparts showed the most amazing bright, glossy blue-green (Pic. 185). Jeremy was now faced with a dilemma, he had no idea what he had just seen and as no one else was present, he would have to leave the bird if he was going to get the news out, running the risk he might not refind it on his return! Deciding he had to risk it and leave, he drove to Old Town at 20:00 and phoned St. Mary's resident birders, Carl Downing and Adrian Hickman. They referenced Angela Turner and Chris Rose's *A Handbook to the Swallows and Martins of the World,* which allowed them rule out several possibilities, including both Violet-green and Bahama Swallows, eventually identifying the bird as a North American Tree Swallow.

Jeremy needn't have worried, as on his return it was still present and he watched it flying among a larger group of Hirundines right up until dusk fell. It remained until the morning of the 10th, when it departed with the same group of Hirundines with which it had arrived. During its five day stay it was often observed perched on rocks and posts, where it was sometimes heard to sing a very liquid chirping, suggesting a male. It attracted huge numbers, estimated at between 800 and 1,000.

Pic. 185.
Tree Swallow, St. Mary's, June 1990.
Photo: © Robin Chittenden, www.robinchittenden.co.uk.



Its time of arrival did not fit any traditional vagrancy template, and it was speculated that its presence among northerly migrating Hirundines, suggested it had crossed the Atlantic the previous autumn, and somehow became associated with local birds as they migrated south and was now making the return leg in their company, having spent the previous winter in Africa? A possible earlier record in Derbyshire (1850) has never been taken seriously as the details are rather vague.

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*

1990 England: Kenidjack Valley, near St Just in Penwith, Cornwall, 20th to 27th September (Birch 1994).

During the morning of Thursday, 20th September 1990, Andrew Birch was birding in Kenidjack Valley. He knew the area well having watched it regularly for seven years. He decided to check bushes at the bottom of the valley for a second time that morning, a decision that paid off big time. Reaching the last bush about 10:00, he noticed movement and focused on what he thought might be a Pied Flycatcher, but with better views could see it showed a gleaming yellow throat.

Andrew was shaking with excitement, it was obviously a mega! He quickly ruled out any of the North American wood warblers on the British List, so a first was on the cards. Taking some mental notes he rushed home to check National Geographic's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* but much to his surprise none of the wood warblers seemed to fit and there were only two that showed even a vague resemblance, i.e. Pine and Cerulean Warblers. He phoned around, eventually getting hold of Richard Millington and described the bird to him. Richard telephoned some other people to try to confirm the sighting. Meanwhile, Andrew returned to Kenidjack and after 45 minutes of searching had brief but clear views of the bird and this time its jizz put him in mind of Red-eyed Vireo and in that moment he realised that it was, of course, a Yellow-throated Vireo (Pic. 186).

Pic. 186.
Yellow-throated Vireo, Kenidjack Valley, September 1990.
Photo: © Tim Loseby.



News of the bird was released and by midday the first local birders had arrived. It remained to the 27th and during this time was usually seen foraging in bushes and bracken and when it grabbed an insect it would often fly up to a bush to eat it. It could be very elusive at times but was seen by many hundreds.

Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica*

1991 Israel: Adult, Bet She'an Valley, 22nd to 23rd May (Bear 1991), trapped.

During the evening of Wednesday, 22nd May 1991, Alon Bear, Yaron Baser and Koby Meirom were ringing Barn Swallows at a roost in the northern Israeli town of Bet She'an. Alon Bear extracted a Hirundine from the net that was unknown to him, but which he immediately suspected was a potential new species for Israel (Pic. 187). The light was fading fast so all the trapped swallows were taken to Koby Meirom's house, which was nearby and where they were processed, then held overnight in ringer's bags.

African field guides were independently consulted and all three identified the mystery bird as an Ethiopian Swallow, a widespread African Hirundine, found over much of central and west Africa. Normally a sedentary species, but is known to make some post-breeding movements. Identification was based on a variety of features noted that included a short tail, lack of breast band, dark intrusion to the sides of the breast and a rufous patch on the forehead. It was released early the next morning and was never seen again. To date this is the only published record for the Western Palearctic.



Pic. 187.
Ethiopian Swallow, in the hand, Bet She'an Valley, 23rd May 1991. Photo: © Yoav Perlman.

Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus*

1991 Sweden: Landsort, Öja, Södermanland, 10th October (Bister 2004, Svensson 2001), trapped.

The long and narrow island of Öja is the most southerly in the Stockholm archipelago. At its most southern tip is the village of Landsort, where the oldest lighthouse in Sweden is situated. There is an Observatory on the island, whose committee was set up in 1988, although ringing had started there on a small scale as far back as the late 1970s. On Thursday, 10th October 1991, Björn Söderlund took the pilot boat to Öja. He had two tasks in mind, first was to look for a Radde's Warbler reported there and second, to photograph the lighthouse for a newspaper article he was writing. The Radde's was quickly located and after some time spent around the northern part of the island he struck out for the lighthouse.

Reaching a narrow valley just north of Landsort, Björn heard an intense and explosive alarm call that was most likely caused by the sudden appearance of a Sparrowhawk. The call was completely unfamiliar to Björn and after a short wait the offender revealed itself to be a small compact and silvery-grey *Phylloscopus*-like bird with a short neck and a white bib. It headed to a sheltered spot in the valley and settled near some rolled-up nets. As he watched from a distance of ten metres it called a squeaky *tjitt-tjitt* note. Björn still had a few hours before the boat was due to depart so he left to photograph the lighthouse and by the time he returned, fog had drifted into the valley. Despite the reduced visibility, he soon refound the bird sitting in a tree about three metres up from the base.

It was still calling and was constantly flicking its wings and tail nervously. It flew down to the ground, allowing Björn to notice just how extremely short the primary projection was, making the tail appear much longer than it really was (Pic. 188). Björn returned to the harbour, where he had left his backpack and field guide, and taking it out he began browsing the pages, hoping to find a match for what he had seen, eventually concluding it most closely resembled a Booted Warbler!

Pic. 188
Plain Leaf Warbler, in the hand, Landsort, 10th October 1991.
Photo: © Anders Haglund.



Time was moving on and he would soon have to catch the boat back to Stockholm but he was conscious of the need to let others know about the bird before he left, so he headed to the Obs. At that time the Observatory staff consisted of Anders Engström, Fredrik Forsberg and Bosse Holst with Anders Haglund and Magnus Jäderblad staying as guests. Only Anders was present when he got there and he was getting ready to depart on the same boat as Björn, but on hearing the news he quickly headed to Landsort and set up a mist-net and in just a few minutes the bird was trapped. He carefully placed it in a collection bag, then headed back to the Observatory to process the bird. The harbour was on the way so he showed it to all those about to head off. Just then, the bird called and Björn immediately recognised it as the same squeaky note he heard earlier. At the same time the possibility it was a Booted Warbler was ruled out, due to the absence of white edges to the tail feathers! Observatory staff had now arrived in the harbour and as Anders was about to step aboard the boat he handed the bag to Fredrik Forsberg, telling him to go and identify it.

To begin with, no one present had the first clue regarding the identity, but fortunately Fredrik remembered hearing about Plain Leaf Warbler, an Asian *Phylloscopus* that breeds from Iraq east to Pakistan and winters in the Arabian Peninsula and India. The available literature was checked and published details of *neglectus* wing formula noted, which proved be a match when compared with the trapped bird. Now it was important to discuss the bird with others, so phone calls were made to Göran Wallinder (at Falsterbo Bird Observatory), Göran Frisk (at the National Museum, Stockholm), Johan Nilson and Staffan Rodebrand and they all agreed it was a Plain Leaf Warbler. The bird was processed and Anders Haglund took some video and photos. One very significant feature that helped confirm the identity were the bird's olive green soles.

Once processing was completed, it was released close to the Observatory into a small copse of trees known as Södra Lunden. As darkness was beginning to fall the bird was almost immediately lost to view, disappearing among the branches of a tall tree. The news was released and the following day about 15 birders arrived on Öja to twitch it. As they searched, a grey *Phylloscopus* popped out of the undergrowth, making everyone think they found it but it turned out to be a *tristis* Chiffchaff, and despite extensive searching there was no sign of the bird and it appeared to have departed Öja.

However, five days later Björn was back at Landsort and he heard the squeaky call once again, which was repeated with the same frenzy as before. The sound was coming from high in a Birch tree, it called one last time and was gone for good. When the time came to assess the record it was judged to have been present on 10th October only as the Rarity Committee judged that its presence could not be determined by call alone. An earlier 1963 record from Azraq, Jordan has since been rejected. Species is sometimes known as Plain Willow Warbler.



Pic. 189.
Wilson's Snipe, wing & tail feathers, Ulster Museum, Belfast.
Photo: © Angela Ross.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*

1991 Northern Ireland: Juvenile, near Coleraine, Derry/Londonderry, 28th October (Irish Rare Birds Committee 1998), shot.

This bird was shot by a wildfowler near Coleraine, however the precise location is not recorded. The specimen, which consists of just a wing and a tail (Pic. 189), was sent to Dr. Michel Devort in Bordeaux, France, who was undertaking research on behalf of the International Snipe-shooters Club at the time. Examining the Coleraine bird, he realised it was an example of *delicata,* the North American form of Common Snipe (since raised to full species status as Wilson's Snipe).

Devort informed the BTO and sent the remains to Guy Mountfort, who in turn passed them on to the IRBC. They agreed with Devort's assessment and it was published in their 1996 report (Milne & O'Sullivan 1998). The wing and tail are preserved in the Ulster Museum, Belfast.









Pics. 190–191 (top two).
Glaucous-winged Gull, La Restinga, El Hierro, February 1992.
Pics. 192–193 (two above).
Glaucous-winged Gull, Essaouira, Morocco, 31st January 1995.
Possibly the same bird that was at El Hierro in 1992 and had remained in the general area since?
Photos: © Domingo Trujillo (top two), © Theo Bakker (two above).

Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*

1992 Canary Islands: Third-winter, La Restinga, El Hierro, 7th to 10th February (De Juana & SEO 1998).

This gull was found and photographed by Domingo Trujillo in the harbour at the fishing village of La Restinga, at the southernmost tip of El Hierro, the most southerly and westerly of the Canary Islands (Pics. 190-191). The record has been accepted by the Spanish Rarities Committee.

On 31st January 1995, an adult Glaucous-winged Gull was found by Dutch birders Theo Bakker and Koen van Dijken on the beach at the mouth of the Oued Ksob at Essaouira on Morocco's Atlantic coast (Bakker *et al*. 2001). La Restinga and Essaouira are about 550 miles apart and considering the extreme rarity of Glaucous-winged Gull in the WP it is not inconceivable that the same individual was involved in both sightings (Pics. 192-193).

A leg-ring found at Lake Zürich, Switzerland in early November 1969 had been fitted to a juvenile Glaucous-winged Gull on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada in July 1969 (Snow & Perrins 1998). As no trace of the bird was ever found, it would appear the ring was somehow detached from the bird's leg and transported by accident to Switzerland from Canada, perhaps caught in the undercarriage of an aeroplane?

Tropical Shearwater *Puffinus bailloni*

1992 Israel: Eilat, Gulf of Aqaba, 18th to 21st June (Shirihai 1996).

A small shearwater, whose identity was initially unknown, was discovered by Hadoram Shirihai in the Gulf of Aqaba off Eilat on Thursday, 18th June 1992, remaining there until the 21st (Pic. 194). While attempting to identify the shearwater, Hadoram corresponded with Northern Ireland birder Ian Sinclair, then resident in South Africa. Their investigations led to a specimen of a very similar shearwater collected at Durban, South Africa in January 1987 that was preserved at the Durban Natural Science Museum and which had so far remained unidentified.



Pic. 194.
Tropical Shearwater, Eilat, June 1992.
Photo: © Hadoram Shirihai.

Observations of shearwaters in the Mozambique Channel off South Africa, as well as further to the north off the Seychelles, seemed to be a match for the Durban specimen, which became the type specimen for Mascarene Shearwater *P. atrodorsalis*, a species new to science whose details were published in Shirihai, Sinclair & Colston (1995). The vernacular name was selected on the basis of a similar specimen preserved at the Natural History Museum, Tring that was collected at Réunion, i.e. one of the Mascarene Islands, an archipelago in the western Indian Ocean.

Subsequent advances in the understanding of the features of Audubon's Shearwater's subspecies *bailloni* identified the Eilat bird to that form. Since then, *bailloni* has been raised to full species status as the polytypic Tropical Shearwater, whose five subspecies were previously subsumed within the Audubon's Shearwater complex. For the full and fascinating story and sequence of events that led to the identification of the Eilat shearwater, see Hadoram's note in *Birding World* (Shirihai 2001).



Pic. 195.
Three-banded Plover,
Gebel Asfar, March 1993.
Photo: © John Tidy.

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

1993 Egypt: Adult, Gebel Asfar, near Cairo, 5th to 26th March (Hoath 2000).

A Three-banded Plover was found by Mashuq Ahmad and Martin Elliott at Gebal El-Asfar (about 12 miles northeast of Cairo) on Friday, 5th March 1993. Early on 19th March, Richard Hoath and Dr. Derek Russell visited the area with the intention of seeing the plover. They headed for a shallow freshwater pond surrounded on three sides by *Phragmites* and an area of exposed silt on the fourth.

At 09:15, the Three-banded Plover flew in and joined a Little Ringed Plover. They sketched and photographed the plover for about 30 minutes as it fed on the silt bed. Identification was readily confirmed, Richard had previously seen the species in Namibia, Tanzania and South Africa. Its distinctive plumage ruled out confusion with other African *Charadrius* plovers previously recorded in Egypt. Realistically, the only possible confusion species is the west and central African Forbes's Plover, which differs by showing a dark forehead, never white or pale like Three-banded (Pic. 195).

(American) Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*

1993 Canary Islands: Costa Calma, Fuerteventura, 19th to 23rd March (De Juana & SEO 1998).

This replaces the previously indicated first record at Vigia das Feteiras, São Miguel, Azores from 24th August to 7th September 2008 (Jara *et al*. 2010).

White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi*

1993 Iceland: Adult male, Foss, Fossfjörður, 3rd June (Garðarsson 1997).

On Thursday, 3rd June 1993, Arnþór Garðarsson drove to Foss, a farm in Fossfjörður, south of Arnarfjörður in northwest Iceland. There he discovered an adult male White-winged Scoter (at the time regarded as the Nearctic subspecies of Velvet Scoter, since raised to full species status) that had paired with a female Eider. A photograph of the bird is published in *Bliki* (vol.18, p. 66).

Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche chlororhynchos*

1994 At sea/Norway: Adult, in position 64°28′ N, 009°45′E (about 20 nautical miles north-northeast of Halten, Sør-Trøndelag), 13th April (Gustad 1995b).

This bird was photographed at sea by Jostein Sørgård, the skipper of a fishing boat (Pics. 196-197). It remained near Jostein's boat for about three hours. The record was published as Yellow-nosed Albatross, which has since been split, with both the Atlantic and Indian Ocean forms raised to full species status. This individual was subsequently identified as an Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross by the NSKF.

This is the first confirmed record for the WP. Some previous claims are probably of this species; off Iceland about 1844, off France in August 1889, about 40nm south of Cornwall, England in April 1985 and 300nm west-southwest of Cape Clear Island, Ireland in December 1986, but none of these can be verified.



Pics. 196–197.
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, at sea off Halten, 13th April 1994. Photos: © Jostein Sørgård.



Tufted Puffin *Fratercula cirrhata*

1994 Sweden: Adult, Laholmsbukten Bay, Lagoset, Halland, 1st & 8th June (Haraldsson 1995).

Having spent two weeks at the end of May 1994 around the reed-beds at Kvismaren Nature Reserve (southeast of Örebro in south-central Sweden), Mikael Haraldsson decided he needed a change of scenery. Therefore, on Wednesday, 1st June 1994 he headed for the coast and the mouth of the Lagan River at Laholmsbukten Bay on the Kattegat coast of Sweden, a location he was very familiar with. When he arrived there was a fresh northwesterly breeze blowing in off the sea and a chaotic sky.

Thinking back on the events of that day, he could not say for sure but thinks it was while scanning the bay that he first noticed something suddenly passing across the bottom of his line of sight that resembled a Puffin? The bird was generally dark overall and appeared to have a yellow neck. His brief view of the bill was not enough to discern much detail and his immediate reaction was, what was that? Somehow Tufted Puffin occurred to him, but since the views were so brief and the shear improbability of a north Pacific Alcid on Laholmsbukten Bay in June meant he could not seriously contemplate making such a claim. Over the coming week Mikael visited the estuary daily and often thought about what he had seen, at least confident the bird was an auk. On the 8th he was back again and this time in the company of Sven-Åke Persson. There was a brisk wind but the day was clear and sunny.

Suddenly Sven shouted Puffin, fortunately Mikael soon picked it up in his telescope, and they both exclaimed in unison, Tufted Puffin, and there it was, confirmed! They looked at each other attempting to come to terms with the enormity of what they had just seen. It then became lost to view but about 30 minutes later they saw it again, this time flying north. Both times they saw the bird it was at distances between 150 and 200 metres. According to the literature the bill is not completely red but shows some elements of yellow-green but as far as they could tell it was completely red and more robust than that of Atlantic Puffin, however a direct comparison was not possible. However, they were at least able to determine it was an adult in breeding plumage. In the days after the 8th it was searched for by a large number of visiting birders but despite their best efforts it was never seen again.

Cape Gull *Larus dominicanus vetula*

1995 France: Adult, Jardin des Plantes Zoo, Paris, January and probably into February (Jiguet 2003, Jiguet *et al*. 2004).

During January 1995 and probably for some time in February, a large dark-mantled, white-headed gull visited the Jardin des Plantes Zoo, by the River Seine, Paris. It was free flying, not part of the zoo's collection and was unknown to the Zoo's staff. It regularly fed with captive Herring and Yellow-legged Gulls (and was even observed displaying to a captive Yellow-legged Gull) and in every way appeared to be nothing more that a visitor, rather like hundreds of other wild gulls do each winter. Its structure and plumage were unusual for a European species and attracted the attention of Frédéric Jiguet and Pierre Defos du Rau, who set about identifying it. They initially considered it was an aberrant Lesser Black-backed Gull, a small Great Black-backed Gull or even a hybrid, but all eventually ruled out as their structures, primary feather pattern and bare-part colourations were incompatible with the Plantes Zoo bird.





Pics. 198–199.
Cape Gull,
Jardin des Plantes Zoo, Paris,
January 1995.
Photos: © Frédéric Jiguet.

Instead, they turned their attention to the Kelp (or Dominican) Gull that breeds on coasts and islands throughout much of the Southern Hemisphere, as far south as subantarctic islands. Papers and notes describing the various forms (there are five subspecies *per* the IOC) of this gull were studied. Features displayed by the Paris bird, such as the leg, eye-ring, iris and bill colours, all fell within the range of variation shown by the coastal western and southern African form *vetula*, known as Cape Gull, which is a possible candidate for full species status (Pics. 198-199). The record has been accepted by the CAF, initially placed in Category D, later elevated to Category A and a first WP record.

Cape Gull was added to the Western Palearctic breeding avifauna in April 2009 when at least two pairs of Cape Gull and a mixed Cape x Yellow-legged Gull pair bred at Khnifiss Lagoon Island, southern Morocco (Bergier *et al*. 2009).

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*

1995 Italy: Adult male, Pilone di Cannitello, Calabria, 29th April (Corso & Dennis 1998).

During the afternoon of Saturday, 29th April 1995, Pete Dennis was counting migrating raptors at the Pilone di Cannitello, on the Calabrian side of the Straits of Messina, the body of water that separates the eastern tip of Sicily from southern Italy. At 16:15 he was counting Honey Buzzards and Red-footed Falcons, when he noticed what he thought to be an adult Red-footed Falcon flying towards him. He got it in his scope, instantly noticing something odd about the wings; it appeared the underwing-coverts were missing! As it came closer he realised they were not, rather they were strikingly white. He last saw it departing with four Red-footed Falcons. Although Pete was puzzled by its appearance, he decided it was just a Red-footed Falcon with aberrant markings. That evening he returned to the watch point camp and took the opportunity to browse several field guides with the intention of finding the bird he had seen earlier.

He found an illustration of the eastern form of Red-footed Falcon in the pages of a first-edition *Birds of Britain and Europe* by Heinzel, Fitter & Parslow, and was incorrectly told by others in the camp that it occurred in Italy. His interest in the bird continued even after he returned to England, so Pete wrote to Andrea Corso enquiring about the possibility it was an Amur Falcon (previously treated as a subspecies of Red-footed Falcon), the small east Asian falcon that winters in southern Africa. Andrea replied within a few days stating, of course, you have a first for the Western Palearctic. The white underwing-coverts are diagnostic for male Amur Falcon, the only alternative was an albinistic Red-footed Falcon but the white was far too symmetrical and perfectively demarcated, which ruled that out. Two years later on 4th May 1997, the second for the WP was found by Andrea on the Sicilian side of the Straits. A photograph of the 1997 bird is published in *Birding World* (vol.11, p. 260). Both records have been accepted by the Commissione Ornitologica Italiana (COI).

Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea*

1995 England: First-winter male, Land's End, Cornwall, 1st October (Ferguson 1997).

On Sunday, 1st October 1995, David Ferguson and Jo Wayte decided to spend the morning strolling the cliff-walk from David's holiday cottage near Sennen Cove to Land's End and back. When they arrived the previous day the area was shrouded in a thick mist, but as they set out on their walk it was sunny, warm and windy.

At 10:00, when they were about 200 metres from the 'First and Last House', David noticed a small bird about ten metres away in the short turf on the landward side of the path. Although it was facing away, he could tell it was warbler-like with a bright green back, blackish wings with brilliant white double wing-bars and equally bright white edges to its tertials. David was at a loss to put a name to it but fortunately he carried a video-camera with him and within seconds was pointing his telescope and camcorder combination at the bird. However, the windy conditions and the bird's erratic movements meant he only managed to capture a few seconds of blurred and shaky video, despite five minutes of filming. They cautiously followed after the bird as it hopped along the path towards Land's End.

By this time David surmised he was watching a North American wood-warbler, probably one belonging to the (now defunct) genus *Dendroica*. He initially considered Blackpoll Warbler, as it was the most regularly occurring (27 British records previous to October 1995), but that was ruled out as it was too bright. Both Lars Jonsson's *Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East* and *A Field Guide to the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe* by Lewington, Alström & Colston were consulted and having browsed both he ruled out any of the wood warblers illustrated in their pages. However, once he read the description of Bay-breasted Warbler in Lewington *et al*., he realised it was an exact match! He prudently released the news as *Dendroica* warbler, probably Bay-breasted, just in case it was a species not mentioned in either field guide. When he returned home on 7th October he consulted the National Geographic's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and confirmed the identification as a first-winter male.

Hurricane Marilyn had tracked along the east coast of North America the previous 22nd to 26th September, which produced a strong westerly airflow reaching as far as northwest Europe and it would seem likely this was the weather system responsible for the bird's appearance, as well as seven other Nearctic warblers during 1995.

Redhead *Aythya americana*

1996 England: Adult male, Bleasby, Nottinghamshire, 8th to 27th March (Dennis 1998).

Having learned of Bearded Reedlings reported at a former gravel-pit in Bleasby, about ten miles northeast of Nottingham, Mark Dennis decided to head there and take a look for himself. Arriving at about 15:45 he headed for that part of the 100-acre site most likely to hold them. As he skirted a small pool he noticed several Pochards emerging from their feeding area under the overhanging vegetation. As they swam away, he noticed a larger, slightly darker but otherwise Common Pochard-like bird, with them, which he realised was a drake Redhead, a diving duck that is widespread across much of North America.

Mark settled down and with reference to nearby Pochards for comparison, took a description from a distance of 100 metres using 10x42 bins, then headed back to his car. He was certain it was a Redhead, but could not help but wonder how it got there? He next telephoned some others in the area, managing to get hold of two, John Hopper (the County Recorder) and Bernie Ellis and both eventually got there. Together they had good views of the bird as it fed, preened and courted a female Common Pochard within the small flock (Pic. 200).



Pics. 200–201.
Redhead (& Pochard, right), Bleasby, Nottinghamshire, March 1996.
Photos: © Iain Leach.



It was not carrying leg-rings and there were no signs of captive damage visible in the bird's wings. It behaved exactly like a Pochard, swimming in a purposeful and unhurried manner and making short dives before surfacing with its bill full of weed. Its call was similar to Wigeon but a less whistly *weeooo*. The site was private and the local Parish Council Chairperson flatly refused en-bloc access, agreeing only to 'local' viewing, a decision that limited the numbers arriving at dawn the following morning to about 20. A dog-walker flushed the Redhead and it flew to the nearby Gibsmere Pool, which was open to members of the public, and the news was released on the Nottinghamshire *Birdnews* service. As it remained for 20 days, a great many got to see it until 27th March, when it finally departed along with the local Pochards. Not surprisingly, there was some debate about the bird's origins, however it was not ringed and behaved in a way reminiscent of a wild bird (Pic. 201).

It was established that Redhead was not commonly kept in western European wildfowl collections and the bird had arrived at a time of record population levels in North America. The date of discovery and location was consistent with mid-winter vagrancy, followed by northward migration alongside common European species and following a single circulation of the BBRC it was accepted and the species admitted to Category A of the British List by the BOURC.

The first female for the Western Palearctic was a first-winter bird found by Andrew Stevenson and Angus Hogg on Loch Tangasdail, Barra, Outer Hebrides, Scotland from 20th September 2003 to 15th April 2004 (Scott 2004b).

Purple Martin *Progne subis*

1996 Azores: Two, Pico, Azores, 28th September (Tipper *et al*. 2022).

This 1996 record of two birds at Pico on Saturday, 28th September 1996, was not published until 2022 in the 2020 report of the Comité Português de Raridades (Tipper *et al*. 2022). These replace the previously accepted first record, a first-winter found by Shaun Coyle, Torcuil Grant and Mark Witherall at the Outer Hebridean island of Lewis and Harris on 5th and 6th September 2004 (Coyle *et al*. 2007). This bird now becomes the third Western Palearctic record overall.



Pic. 202. Purple Martin, Natural History Museum, Dublin. Photo: © Brian McCloskey.

An even earlier record involves a female shot near Dun Laoghaire (then known as Kingstown), near Dublin, Ireland, a short time before March 1840. This bird is not regarded as a genuine vagrant and was assigned to Category D of the Irish List (Ruttledge 1980). However, considering subsequent occurrences of birds treated as natural vagrants, it may be time to review the record. The mounted specimen is on display in the Natural History Museum, Dublin (Pic. 202).

Pic. 203.
Soft-plumaged Petrel & Arctic Skua, Varangerfjorden, 6th June 2009.
Photo: © Graham Catley.



Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*

1997 Israel/Jordan: Off both the North Beach, Eilat and Aqaba, 25th March (Andrews *et al*. 1999, Shirihai 1996).

During the afternoon of Tuesday, 25th March 1997, very large numbers of birders were seawatching from Eilat's North Beach. At about 17:30, a petrel was seen to fly across the bay from Aqaba towards Eilat, eventually coming within 400 metres of the shore. At least 30 birders managed to get on it, enjoying good views for five minutes in excellent light. Erik Hirschfeld (co-author of the *World's Rarest Birds*) and others immediately suggested it was a Soft-plumaged Petrel, rather than one of the various north Atlantic island gadfly-petrels, and this despite the lack of a complete breast band, which might be expected.

During the weeks that followed, Erik and Hadoram Shirihai prepared descriptions of the bird, which they sent to other observers and experts, then some time later Hadoram examined skins preserved at the Natural History Museum, Tring. Finally, after Hadoram had gained considerable experience of the species at sea, and taking all the evidence and advice received into account, he concluded the bird was indeed a Soft-plumaged Petrel, a species that breeds at Southern Hemisphere islands as far apart as Tristan da Cunha in the south Atlantic Ocean and the Antipodes Islands off New Zealand. The record has been accepted by both the Jordanian and Israeli rarity committees.

There are two other records for the Western Palearctic. One was off Nesseby, Varangerfjorden, Norway on 6th June 2009. It was found by British birder-photographer Graham Catley, who had brief views of it being harassed by an Arctic Skua (Pic. 203). When last observed it was heading east in the direction of Vadsø. The most recent was observed and photographed flying past various headlands along the northeast coast of England on 1st July 2021. The identity was accepted by the BBRC (Holt *et al*. 2022) and was later added to Category A of the British List, following validation by the BOURC (BOURC 2024b).

Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus*

1997 Jordan: Female, Aqaba Sewage Works, 9th to 10th April (Bashford 1997).

On the morning of Wednesday, 9th April 1997, Richard Bashford was leading a *Naturetrek* tour at the Aqaba Sewage Works when his attention was drawn to a small greyish duck asleep among the local Garganey and Teal. It soon lifted it head to reveal a short stubby goose-like bill. Since the bird was smaller than the adjacent Teal, Richard realised it must be something unexpected. He drew the group's attention to it before concluding it was a Cotton Teal (an alternative name), one of the world's smallest wildfowl that has a widespread distribution from India east to south China, Indonesia and New Guinea. Together they watched it for about 30 minutes before it departed along with four Teal to an adjacent pool. It was seen later that day feeding in the open with other wildfowl and was still present the next day.

This appears to be the only record for the Western Palearctic, although two live females were discovered in the Al-Ashar food market in Basrah, Iraq in November 1975. They were supposedly captured the previous day at the nearby Hammar Marshes, but their origin cannot be definitively known (Snow & Perrins 1998).

Trindade Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*

1997 At sea/Azores: Dark morph, ten nautical miles south of Pico, 18th July (Dubois & Seitre 1997).

In calm conditions, Roland and Julia Seitre observed a dark *Pterodroma* petrel in a position ten miles south of the Azores island of Pico on Friday, 18th July 1997. Three or four strong wingbeats sent it gliding towards them, never rising more than a few metres above the sea. It passed close by their boat, then drifted off to a distance of 200 metres, then returning and circling the boat three times as close as 20 metres, before finally departing after five minutes, eventually becoming lost to sight. It was about the same size as some Cory's Shearwaters that were in the vicinity, but the body was much lighter and the wings narrower (Pics. 204-207).



Pics. 204–207.
Trindade Petrel, 10 nautical miles south of Pico, Azores, July 1997.
Photos: © Roland Seitre.

It was tentatively identified as a Herald Petrel*, based on Roland and Julia's previous experience of that species at Round Island in the western Indian Ocean. Subsequent analysis of photos taken and careful scrutiny of flight pattern confirmed this and identified it to the Atlantic population. The bird appeared to be in moult as there were white spots on both the upper and underparts, suggesting a second calendar-year bird?

The first pale-morph Trindade Petrel for the Western Palearctic was found about six nautical miles north of Faial, Azores on 17th May 2006 (Pinguinhas 2006).

* Trindade Petrel (pronounced Treen-DA-djze) was previously treated as one of two subspecies of Herald Petrel *P. heraldica*. As the type specimen was collected by the crew of Vittorio Arminjon's (who is honoured in the scientific name) ship *Regina* at Trindade Island while on passage from Naples to Montevideo, it retains the original scientific name following the raising of both forms to full species status.

Cerulean Warbler *Setophaga cerulea*

1997 Iceland: First-winter female, Eyrarbakki, Árnessýsla, 1st to 7th October (Þráinsson 1997), trapped.

During the final days of September 1997, fast moving low-pressure systems brought three Nearctic wood warblers and five Red-eyed Vireos to Iceland between 26th September and 7th October*. The second of these to be found was a Cerulean Warbler discovered by Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson at Eyrarbakki on the southwestern coast of Iceland.

It was discovered sheltering among trees and shrubs in a garden where it often gave excellent views, especially when it dropped down on the ground to feed. It was trapped there on the 7th, the last day it was observed. It was initially thought to be a Bay-breasted Warbler but when photographs were studied the correct identification was reached (Pics. 208-209). To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic.

* Common Yellowthroat, 26th to 27th September; Cerulean Warbler, 1st to 7th October; Palm Warbler, 5th to 10th October and Red-eyed Vireos on 30th September, 30th September to 1st October, 1st to 3rd October 1997, 4th to 11th October and 7th October.



Pics. 208–209.
Cerulean Warbler, Eyrarbakki, Árnessýsla, October 1997.
Photos: © Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson.

Pic. 210.
Palm Warbler, Stokkseyri, Árnessýsla, October 1997.
Photo: © Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson.



Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum*

1997 Iceland: Immature, Stokkseyri, Árnessýsla, 5th to 10th October (Þráinsson 1997).

This was the third (and second first Western Palearctic) of three Nearctic wood warblers found in Iceland during the autumn of 1997. It was discovered by Gaukur Hjartarson and Ríkarður Ríkarðsson during the afternoon of Sunday, 5th October 1997 at Stokkseyri, which is just a few miles further along the coast from Eyrarbakki, where the Cerulean Warbler was found four days previous. It was not seen on the 6th due to bad weather, but was present again from the 7th to 10th in much improved conditions. It mainly confined itself to local gardens and gave as good as, or even better views, than the Cerulean Warbler.

Most of the time it fed on the ground, continuously pumping its tail in the manner of a wagtail. It was identified to the eastern form *hypochrysea*, which is yellower on the flanks (Pic. 210). It was enjoyed by 15 birders, a well attended twitch by Icelandic standards. No attempt was made to trap it. To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic.

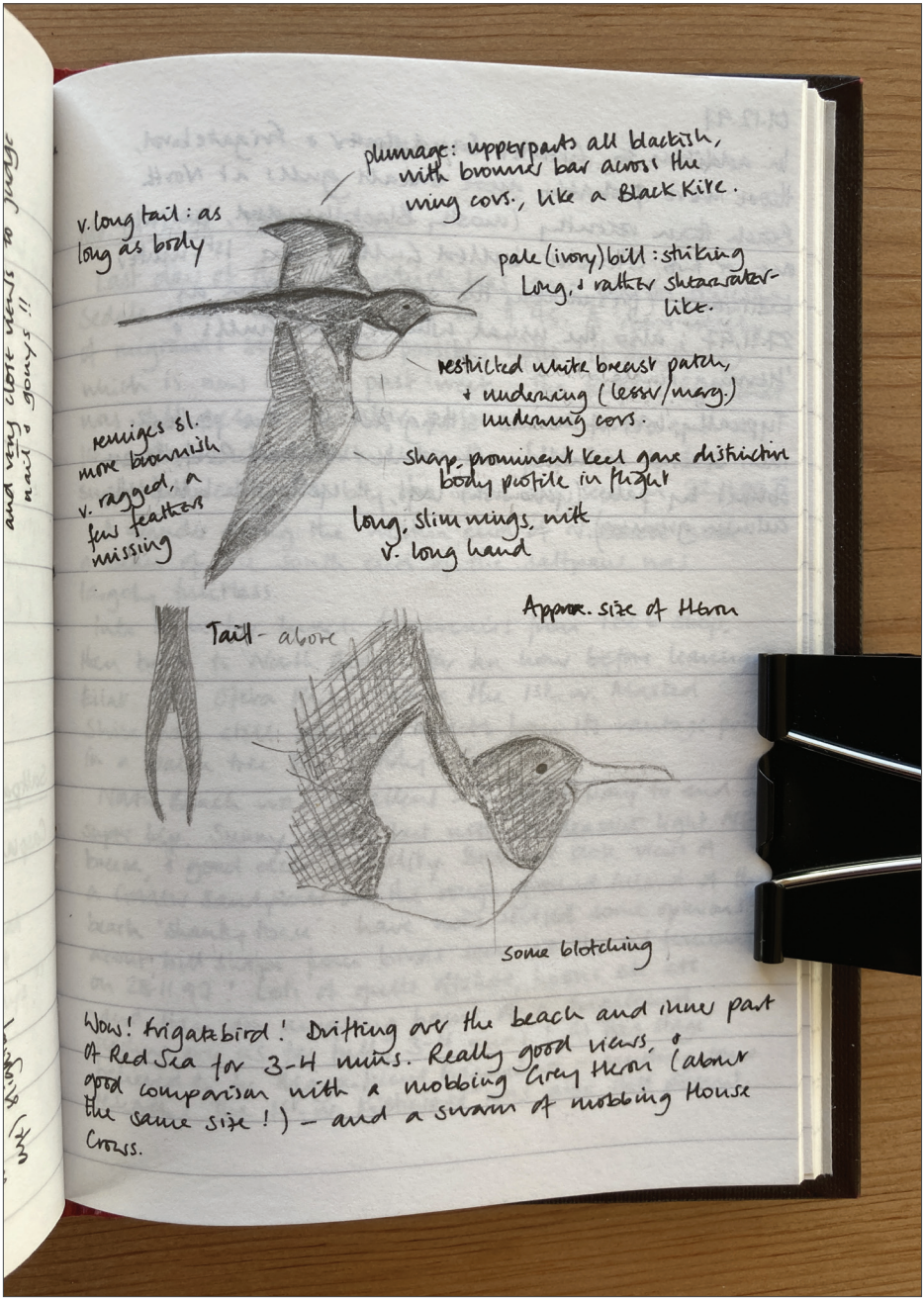
The headless remains of a male Palm Warbler, found on the tideline at Walney Island, Cumbria, England on 18th May 1976 is considered to be of uncertain provenance and therefore discounted as a possible vagrant.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel*

1997 Israel: Immature male, North Beach, Eilat, 1st December (Riddington & Reid 2000).

Monday, 1st December 1997, was the last day of a two-week birding holiday to Israel taken by Roger Riddington and Jane Reid (who had both worked at Fair Isle Bird Observatory that year). The last few hours were spent on foot around some of Eilat's best sites. As there was a distinct absence of new arrivals they headed to the North Beach for a final throw of the dice.

Pic. 211.
A page from Roger Riddington's note book, showing the **Lesser Frigatebird** at Eilat, December 1997. Photo: © Roger Riddington.



They scanned the seabirds and waders and were rewarded with close views of a Greater Sand Plover, otherwise it was quiet but that would soon change. At about 15:30, Jane shouted 'Frigatebird'! and looking up they saw it directly overhead, circling above North Beach pursued by an angry Grey Heron and a small swarm of House Crows, although it did not appear to be especially bothered by their attention, and avoided them with ease. It was a warm and sunny day with excellent visibility and the bird was sufficiently close for [both to] mentally [...] compile some reasonably detailed field notes. After about four minutes it slowly drifted out to sea. They immediately began taking a description and drawing sketches, hoping not to overlook any important feature (Pic. 211). Then a stroke of luck, the bird reappeared and this time it came closer to the beach and remained in view for 15 minutes, allowing them to double-check their field notes and leaving them just enough time to catch the airport coach to Ovda Airport and their flight back to London.

A good few hours later they arrived at Bob Arnfield's house in East Putney, having walked through a light covering of snow in southwest London on the way. A copy of Peter Harrison's *Seabirds* was consulted, which suggested it was a Lesser Frigatebird, a species of tropical and subtropical waters across the Indian and Pacific Oceans, with an isolated population in Brazil. The magnitude of the record began to sink in, it would be a first for the Western Palearctic!

Over the coming days further research was carried out, which confirmed their initial identification and it was submitted to, and accepted by, the Israeli Rarities and Distribution Committee. Roger had never previously seen any frigatebird and Jane's experience was limited to Magnificent Frigatebird in Brazil, and both were well aware of the challenges involved when attempting to specifically identify frigatebirds. However, they had had very good views of the bird and crucially managed to discern the pattern on the underwing and underbody, which were significant features in identifying it to species and eliminate other members of the family. It was aged as an immature male on the basis of its dark, blackish head, which ruled out immature females and juveniles and the extent of white on the underparts most closely agreed with an immature male. Two others since, another one at North Beach Eilat in May 1999 and an immature seen at the port of Mina Al Zour, Kuwait in April 2008.

Long-billed Murrelet *Brachyramphus perdix*

1997 Switzerland: First-winter, Lake Zurich, near Zollikon, Meilen, December (Maumary & Knaus 2000).

Sometime between 15th and 18th December 1997, Urs Bäumler, a local fisherman, extracted a dead bird from a fishing net about 40 metres from the shoreline of Lake Zurich, near the municipality of Zollikon. Urs had been asked by René von Allmen to preserve any birds he discovered in his nets, so he brought the corpse home and stored it in his freezer until René could come and collect it. The following spring René brought it to the taxidermist Bruno Ambauen for setting up. René displayed the mounted specimen in his private collection, but without a title as it had yet to be identified. In September 1998 and quite by chance it was noticed by Jürg Kägi who thought it was an immature Back Guillemot. He took some photos and sent them to Raffael Winkler at the Naturhistorisches Museum in Basel, and he in turn brought it to the attention of the Swiss Rarities Committee.

Pics. 212–213.
Long-billed Murrelet, Naturhistorisches Museum, Basel.
Photos: © Peter Knaus.





They identified it from photographs as a first-winter Marbled Murrelet of the north Pacific form *perdix* (since raised to full species status as Long-billed Murrelet). The specimen was subsequently examined by the committee at their meeting of 28th November 1998, after which, the species was added to Category A of the Swiss List. The possibility of escape was considered, but the fresh state of its plumage, the absence of any sign of human assistance and the fact that Long-billed (Marbled) Murrelet was not known to be held in captivity all supported wild origin. The specimen is on display at the Naturhistorisches Museum, Basel (Pics. 212-213). This becomes the fifth north Pacific Alcid to be added to the Western Palearctic list. The first live record was a juvenile off Langstone Rock, Dawlish Warren, Devon, England on 7th November 2006 (Hopkins *et al*. 2006).

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*

1998 Israel: Probably an adult female, KM20 salt pans, north of Eilat, 22nd April to at least 8th May (Shirihai 2000).

On Wednesday, 29th April 1998, Hadoram Shirihai received a phone call from Barak Granit and Daniel Gilbert asking him to help identify a strange duck they had found on a marshy pond just south of the KM20 salt pans. Hadoram visited the site in the company of Ben Hoare and upon seeing the bird immediately suspected it was a Southern Pochard, a species he had previously seen in East Africa and checking the literature on his return home confirmed it. Some time later he met Kees Renes and Rita Huisman who, it turned out, had also seen it at the same site and same time. Later still, Hadoram reported it to Steve Gantlett, who told him that Jean-Philippe Siblet had already informed him about the bird, having seen it on 22nd April. It was most likely an adult female, however an immature or female-like male could not be completely ruled out. Its most noticeable feature was the rather striking white crescent pattern running down its face and neck (Pic. 214).



Pic. 214.
Southern Pochard,
KM20, north of Eilat,
April 1998.
Photo: © Hadoram Shirihai.

Southern Pochard is found on two continents, the nominate form has a fragmented range across much of South America and the African *brunnea* is found from the Ethiopian highlands south to the Cape of Good Hope and is the most obvious source of the Eilat bird. They are generally sedentary but will undertake dry seasonal movements from time to time, which probably explains the bird's presence in Israel?

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*

1999 Cape Verde Islands: Adult, Ilhéu de Curral Velho, off Boavista, 20th February (Dufourny 1999).

On Saturday, 20th February 1999, Hugues Dufourny and Kris De Rouck were sitting on the shore opposite Ilhéu de Curral Velho, a bare, heavily eroded calcareous rock of about two acres, lying off the southeastern shore of Boavista in the Cape Verde Islands. They were hoping for Magnificent Frigatebird (which had been known to breed on the islet) but after four hours watching all they had for their troubles were some of the local Brown Boobies, so Kris decided he would take a walk in the hope of finding some waders.

Meanwhile Hugues continued his vigil and his perseverance was rewarded at about 14:30 when he picked up a white bird with very long tail-streamers flying across the sea towards Ilhéu de Curral Velho from the west that he immediately identified as a tropicbird. It landed on the water a few times before flying off towards the islet. Although clearly a tropicbird, Hugues was puzzled by what he saw, a golden-yellow wash on the entire body, a completely unmarked mantle and an obvious black bar on the wing-coverts. There was no way this was a Red-billed Tropicbird, a species that breeds in the Cape Verde Islands, indeed there was one sitting in a breeding cavity in nearby rocks for comparison!

By this time, Kris had come back and was informed of the new arrival, which had reached the rock and begun to plunge-dive just behind it. Even though it was at a distance of about 550 metres both enjoyed excellent views, especially when it moved to their side of Curral Velho, giving them a clear view of its orange-yellow bill, the feature that clinched its identification as an adult White-tailed Tropicbird. They continued to watch it until 16:30 when they had to leave. Although it was in view for most of the time, unfortunately it never came close enough for them to grab a photograph.

Given the location, it was most likely one of two Atlantic subspecies, i.e. *ascensionis* from tropical South Atlantic islands or *catesbyi* from the Caribbean. The closest breeding site to Cape Verde is at Fernando de Noronha (where *catesbyi* is found) off northeast Brazil, which is about 1,500 nautical miles distant. Several earlier claims of sightings made at sea have never been fully substantiated.

Relict Gull *Ichthyaetus relictus*

2000 Russia / Kazakhstan: 14 adults, Maly Uzen' River, near Dryamsky, Saratov and Maly Uzen River, 7th May (Piskunov & Antonchikov 2007).

On Sunday, 7th May 2000, Vladimir Piskunov and A.N. Antonchikov were censusing birds along the Maly Uzen' River (Saratov Oblast) on the Kazakhstan/Russia border. Near the village of Dryamsky they noticed a flock of 14 gulls circling high above, that flew down and landed in ploughed fields. Two of this flock ended up about 40 metres away, with all the others at about 70 metres. Both Vladimir and A.N. managed to get good clear views of the flock using binoculars and spent time comparing them with other nearby gull species, including Great black-headed, Black-headed and Little. They attempted to get closer but only succeeded in putting them all up and much to their disappointment could only watch as they departed in a quick and determined flight, and crossed the Maly Uzen' river into Kazakhstan.

They were heard to call twice, initially when first noticed and again when departing, it was a call neither Vladimir nor A.N. was familiar with and is what initially brought them to their attention. They were medium sized gulls, larger than Black-headed and significantly smaller than Great Black-headed, showing a dark hood, broad white eye-crescents, a red bill and legs and a wing-tip pattern that resembled Great Black-headed Gull. These characters identified the birds as the central Asian Relict Gull. The only other possible candidate was Mediterranean Gull, a rare spring migrant in the area, but that option was quickly ruled out. Their behaviour, especially when the flock became disrupted, i.e. immediately exhibiting an urgent desire to reunite, would suggest they were migrating. The species does indeed breed in Kazakhstan but in the east of the country and not on the Russian side.

There are two previous claims of Relict Gull in the Western Palearctic, the first involved the recovery of a ringed bird in Burgas (on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast) in 1978 and the subsequent discovery of a ring at Adana (south-central Turkey) in 1990. Both of these are considered to be unsubstantiated.

Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*

2000 Hungary: Adult female, Virágoskúti Fish Ponds, Hortobágy, 14th to 22nd August (Ecsedi *et al*. 2000).

In the early afternoon of Monday, 14th August 2000, János Tar noticed a strange-looking heron at the Virágoskúti Fish Ponds in the Hortobágy National Park (about 300 square miles of mainly steppe grasslands in eastern Hungary). Not knowing what it was he phoned his fellow park wardens, Zoltán Ecsedi and János Oláh jr., to assist with the identification. His description was sufficiently interesting to ensure both abandoned what they were doing and come join him at the double. They got to the fish ponds at 15:00 and found János had the bird lined-up in his scope. Both newcomers had seen the species in southeast Asia previously and quickly identified it as a Chinese Pond Heron, at the time a possible second Western Palearctic record.

Pics. 215–217.
Chinese Pond Heron, Virágoskúti Fish Ponds, Hortobágy, August 2000.
Photos: © János Oláh jr.







The news was released and about 20 birders managed to get there and see the bird before dusk fell. It was present for nine days and during this time was observed daily. It would feed in the dense vegetation around the ponds and became loosely associated with the local Squacco Herons, at all times remaining wary and alert. In total, about 100 birders visited the fish ponds and most managed good clear views from distances down to 40 metres, this despite the bird's shyness (Pics. 215-217).

There were no signs of previous captivity, e.g. no visible damage to either its feathers or claws, a clean, rather than dirty, undertail, an absence of leg-rings and behaviour typical of a wild bird throughout. Furthermore, it arrived during a period of strong easterly winds and very significantly, the species was not known in captivity in Hungary or the rest of Europe at that time. Despite this, the MME Nomenclator Bizottság (the Hungarian Rarity Committee) initially placed the bird in Category D, however this decision was reversed in their 2017 report and the record promoted to Category A (MME 2020).

The reappraisal of the Virágoskúti bird's status means the previously accepted first, an adult found by Neil Bowman at Eccles-on-Sea, Norfolk, England on 31st October 2004, becomes the second for the WP (Bowman 2017, Gantlett 2004). An even earlier bird at Møre og Romsdal, Norway in October 1973 was assigned to Category D.

Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora cyanoptera*

2000 Ireland: First-year male, Cotter's Garden, Cape Clear Island, Cork, 4th to 10th October (Wing 2000).

Situated where it is in the path of Atlantic low-pressure systems, there are days on Cape Clear Island when the weather is so adverse and brutal that birding is physically impossible and Tuesday, 3rd October 2000 was one of those days as the tail-end of Hurricane Isaac lashed the island with torrential rain and violent storm force winds. In contrast, the following day arrived with blue skies and calm conditions, and the consensus among birders was that the storm must have blown something mega to Cape.



Pics. 218–223.
Blue-winged Warbler, Cape Clear Island, Cork, October 2000.
Videograbs: © Stuart McKee (top two), © Paul Hackett (middle two).
Photos: © Phil Palmer (bottom two).

Pic. 224.
Watercolour of the **Blue-winged Warbler** perched on brambles in Cotter's Garden, October 2000. Painted by © Eugene Archer.



On Wednesday morning there were just three birders on the island, a sign of those times. Observatory Warden Steve Wing offered Dennis Weir a lift to the Alderwood, but Dennis declined. Meanwhile, Willie McDowell with all his masterful patience, tramped off before Dennis was ready to leave the Obs, so he followed along out of sight in his wake. As Dennis approached Cotter's Pub he heard a strong crisp *tzik* call, then once again before entering Cotter's Garden. He stood at the bottom of the garden for about ten long seconds, impatiently wondering if he might encounter the call's source? All of a sudden and in a flurry of yellow, blue and white, a small bird launched itself vertically out of a patch of nettles at the opposite side of Cotter's. It then dropped back out of view, but a short time later repeated this action, each time rising to about ten feet. At that point Dennis had no idea what he was looking at, but something that bright could only be a Yank.

Eventually the shaking nettle stems revealed brief glimpses of what he now guessed was a Blue-winged Warbler, not news he was anxious to put out if he was wrong! The bird took flight up the slope of Cotter's, headed out of the garden and was gone. He began to whistle in the hope of attracting Willie's attention and attempted to ring Steve, who answered but the connection was so poor, no words were exchanged. Eventually Willie appeared and they had a nervous wait until the bird flew back and into the nettle patch.

Realising that Dennis was not entirely happy with his putative identification, Willie suggested that he should hightail it back to the Obs and consult a field guide, whilst Willie could relax, keep an eye on the bird and await his return. A good plan if it was followed, but this was not what ensued and before Dennis could return with confirmation of the bird's identity, Willie went ahead and put the news out. This was one of the most stunning birds ever seen on Cape (Pics. 218-224). It remaining for a further six days around Cotter's, delighting the 600 or so birders that twitched it and who gave generously towards refurbishment of the Observatory.

Pics. 225–226.
Intermediate Heron, Maccarese Fish Ponds, June 2001.
Photos: © Riccardo Molajoli.





Intermediate Heron *Ardea intermedia*

2001 Italy: Adult, Maccarese Fish Ponds, near Rome, 30th May to at least 24th June (Taube & Grylle 2001).

On Wednesday, 30th May 2001, Fredrik Taube and Magnes Grylle took in some early morning birding around the fish ponds at Maccarese before heading to work. Their usual routine was to spend 40 minutes in and around the ponds, followed by 40 minutes of seawatching from the nearby town of Fregene (about seven miles north along the coast from the mouth of the River Tiber), then head into the office.

However, on this particular day their usual itinerary was interrupted for the best possible reason. Arriving at 06:20, they were greeted with a dawn chorus of Nightingales and Great Reed, Fan-tailed, Cetti's and Melodious Warblers. It was already daylight so they headed to the fish ponds to check for waders and terns, instead flushing a group of eight egrets that included a suspiciously small 'Great White Egret' with a short yellow bill. However unlikely it seemed, their immediate reaction was, wasn't that an Intermediate? The birds landed again and they studied them in the telescope, making out a single Great White Egret, six Little Egrets and one other, just slightly larger than the Little Egrets but smaller that the Great White. By now they were 95% sure it was an Intermediate Heron (Pics. 225-226) and any thoughts of a seawatch were forgotten.

Local birders were alerted and a call was made to Christian Cederroth, a Swedish friend, who advised them it was essential to check the gape-line, which should finish directly under the eye and in contrast to what you would expect to find on Great White Egret, the triangular feathered area between the eye and the gape-line should not be present. Both of these were checked off and along with a combination of other features noted, including size, short bill, dark legs and feet, all supported their initial identification (or more accurately, their initial gut instinct) of Intermediate Heron, a species found across much of sub-Saharan and eastern Africa and from the Indian subcontinent through southeast Asia to Australia. The bird remained until at least 24th June.

Strong southerly winds blowing from the Sahara, known locally as the Sirocco, had persisted during the previous week and may account for the bird's presence. This is a first European record. Intermediate Egret is scarce but regular at Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania (BWP I, Snow & Perrins 1998), just inside the Western Palearctic border and there are other records in Jordan, Israel, Egypt and Cape Verde Islands. AviList 2025 will raise all three subspecies of Intermediate Heron to full species status. The bird at the Maccarese Fish Ponds will become Yellow-billed Egret *A. brachyrhyncha*.

(Northern) Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* ssp.

2001 England: At least first-calendar-year, St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 2nd October, and, presumed same, Tresco, 9th to 18th October, then back at St Agnes, 20th to 23rd October, and finally at Tresco, 29th to 31st October (Small 2002, 2022).

(Northern) Horned Lark is the name given to those 27 (from an overall total of 42) subspecies (including the nominate form) of Shore Larks found in the Americas.

Brian Small (renowned wildlife artist and tour leader with Naturetrek), first became aware of this bird, originally found by Darryl Spittle, when he saw a photo of it (taken in early October 2002 on St. Agnes, Isles of Scilly) posted on Surfbirds and was sufficiently intrigued to comment on its unique appearance to Richard Millington. As soon as Brian arrived on Scilly later that same month, he sought it out (by which time it had swapped St. Agnes for Tresco). After studying the lark at some length, he was certain it was markedly at odds with the Shore Larks [he was] familiar with, wintering along the North Sea coast. Returning home, he set about researching the appearance of the many forms of Shore/Horned Larks. He visited the Natural History Museum at Tring, where he had access to the many specimens in their collection, an exercise that revealed numerous similarities between the Scilly bird [and the] migratory races of Horned Lark, i.e. *alpestris* and *hoyti.* As a result, Brian became more convinced the bird observed on Scilly was indeed of North American origin.



Pic. 227.
(Northern) Horned Lark, Tresco, Isles of Scilly, 18th October 2001.
Photo: © Michael Malpass.

Based on his investigations, Brian compiled a list of criteria, which was largely concerned with structure and plumage (including bill structure and shape, breast markings and head pattern), which could be referred to when attempting to separate *alpestris* and *hoyti* forms of Horned Lark from Shore Lark. When the Scilly bird's features was scrutinised, they were found to be consistent with Horned Lark (see Small [2022] for the full exposition of his findings).

Not having found the bird, Brian was reluctant to submit the record to the BBRC, and he was aware the finder had some misgivings [...] surrounding the identification as Horned Lark. That situation might not have changed except for the occurrence of a Horned Lark at Staines Reservoir, Surrey in 2017 and 2018, which Brian saw in early 2018 and it was evident the similarities with the Scilly bird were marked. As the Staines bird's identification as Horned Lark was confirmed following DNA analysis (and was accepted by the BBRC as the second British record, following one at South Uist in the Outer Hebrides in October 2014), it seemed reasonable to Brian that the Scilly bird was also a Horned Lark. In addition, Ross Ahmed proposed the identification of the Stains bird based on a note describing the Scilly bird that Brian had written for *Birding World* (Small 2002), which only strengthened Brian's convictions it was a Horned Lark. He submitted his description to the BBRC, who accepted the record, and some time later the BOURC recognised it as the first British record (Pic. 227).

There are two older records that showed characteristics consistent with one of the Nearctic forms. One was collected (or possibly found dead) at Garðskagi, Gullbringusýsla, Iceland on 17th November 1981 (Ólafsson 1983, Pétursson & Ólafsson 1999) and another was at Tyrella Beach, Down, Northern Ireland in January 1998 (Garner 1999). It's not inconceivable that both birds were actually Horned Larks. Even though Horned Lark is the nominate form, this record is colour coded as a well marked subspecies on account of it extreme rarity in the Western Palearctic.



Pics. 228–229.
African Crake,
Santa Cruz, Tenerife,
November 2001.
Photos:
© Juan Antonio Lorenzo.

African Crake *Crecopsis egregia*

2001 Canary Islands: Adult, Parque García Sanabria, Santa Cruz, Tenerife, 23rd to 24th November (Lorenzo 2002).

On Friday, 23rd November 2011, a crake was found beside a small pond in the Parque García Sanabria, Santa Cruz, Tenerife, and it was clearly in a very weak state. It was taken into care by staff at the Centro de Recuperación de Fauna Silvestre del Cabildo de Tenerife, but unfortunately it succumbed to its injuries and died the following day.

Neither Juan Hernández-Abad nor Carmen Méndez (at the recovery centre) were able to identify the bird, so they contacted Juan Antonio (Toño) Lorenzo (the Project Coordinator for Sociedad Española de Ornitología/BirdLife in Tenerife), asking him to come take a look at the mystery crake. He did so and was very surprised to discover it was an African Crake, a species of rail found throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa from Senegal east to Kenya and south to KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa (Pics. 228-229). Although known to be a partial migrant, the species is prone to undertake seasonal movements when conditions demand. The plumage was in a pristine condition, indicating to Toño that the bird had just undergone a post breeding moult, and was most likely a male.

Just prior to its discovery, the winds on Tenerife were coming from the north and northeast, i.e. towards, rather than off the coast of Africa, which might suggest the bird arrived sometime before it was found, most likely at the beginning of the month when storms drove Saharan dust towards the Canary Islands? In recent years the species has become more regular in the Western Palearctic. The record has been accepted by the Spanish Rarities Committee.

Swinhoe's Snipe *Gallinago megala*

2002 Russia: Male, Yuzhnaya Mountain, Yengane-Pe Ridge, Polar Urals, 23rd to 24th June (Morozov 2004).

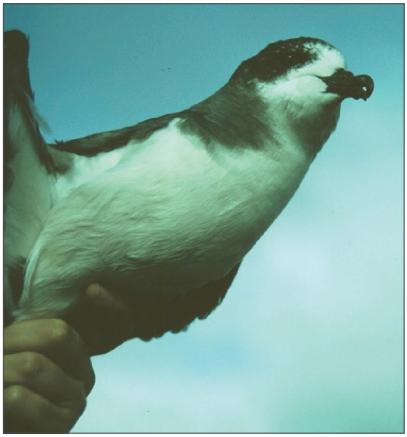
On 23rd and 24th June 2002, Vladimir Morozov was carrying out fieldwork on the Yuzhnaya Mountain, a part of the Yengane-Pe Ridge. His location at 67°08'N, 065°00'E is in extreme northeastern European Russia and just under 20 miles inside the Western Palearctic border.

On Sunday, 23rd June, Vladimir observed a male Swinhoe's Snipe (whose core populations breeds in central and southern Siberia and Mongolia) performing its display flight over sparse Siberian Spruce forest, keeping to areas with extensive bogs and grassy glades with willow Salix scrub. The similar Pintail Snipe is a common breeder in the region and he was able to do a 'compare and contrast' between both species on several occasions. A combination of its diagnostic flight display calls (transcribed by Vladimir as *kkhryu-kkhryu-kkhryu-kkhryu*) and flight pattern, allowed him rule out Pintail Snipe and confidently identify the bird as a Swinhoe's. Prior to this record the nearest site in Russia where the species was recorded was on the Irtysh River, just under 500 miles south-southeast of Yuzhnaya Mountain.

An earlier 1998 record from the Hula Valley, Israel is now rejected by the Israeli Rarities and Distribution Committee and a 19th Century claim from the northern Caucasus region is considered dubious.

Pics. 230–234.
Bermuda Petrel, Ilhéu da Vila, Santa Maria, November 2002.
Photos: © Joël Bried.







Bermuda Petrel *Pterodroma cahow*

2002 Azores: Probably a male, Ilhéu da Vila, Santa Maria, 17th to at least 21st November (Bried 2003), trapped.

On Sunday, 17th November 2002, Maria Magalhães caught a *Pterodroma* petrel (that was not carrying a leg-ring) in a burrow on Ilhéu da Vila, a predator free islet off the southwest coast of Santa Maria. Maria fitted a leg-ring and her colleague Joël Bried measured and photographed the bird, then took a full description and a 100ml blood sample before releasing it back into the burrow. The bird was bigger than both Zino's and Soft-plumaged Petrels, similar in size to Fea's Petrel, and intriguingly, its measurements fell at the upper range limit for Bermuda Petrel specimens, but well within the range of the values obtained from 12 live adults by J.L. (Jeremy) Madeiros (Pics. 230-235). Other features confirming Bermuda Petrel included the underwing pattern that showed its dark thumb-print mark, the pale band at the base of the tail and a more slender bill than Fea's. It seemed to be both robust and healthy and, although not weighed, appeared to be carrying fat reserves and was free of external parasites. Five days later on the 21st it was recaptured in the same burrow by Joël Bried this after he heard it call, apparently in response to a Barolo Shearwater calling from a neighbouring burrow. Joël checked the leg-ring and found it was the same one fitted by Maria, then released it back to the burrow.

During another visit on 31st January 2003 he found the burrow empty and did not find Bermuda Petrels in any neighbouring burrows. In advance of breeding, Bermuda Petrels are known to return ashore in late October and November with egg-laying taking place during the first fortnight of January with chicks fledged in late May and June. The Ilhéu da Vila individual was therefore occupying a burrow during the same time-span as pre-breeders would do in Bermuda. This behaviour, together with its fat reserves, suggests that it was in pre-laying condition as well.

Measurements taken indicated it was within the top 20% of the [species size] range, which would seem to suggest it was a male. The same individual (the ring number was checked each time) returned to the same location in November 2003 and again during the night of 12th/13th December 2006.



Pic. 235.
Bermuda Petrel,
Ilhéu da Vila, Santa Maria, November 2002.
Photo: © Joël Bried.

The Bermuda Petrel or Cahow went unrecorded for over 300 years and was thought to be extinct since about the 1620s. In the 1930s a few were found dead or injured in Bermuda, which gave hope they were not completely lost. Then in January 1951, one was killed following a collision with a lighthouse and sometime later, 18 breeding pairs were discovered on rocky islets in Castle Harbour, Bermuda by Robert Cushman Murphy and Louis Leon Arthur Mowbray (Murphy & Mowbray 1951). With them that day was a 15-year-old Bermudian, David B. Wingate, who subsequently set up a Cahow recovery program. David devoted his life to saving the species, including the construction of 'Tropicbird proof' nesting burrows around Castle Harbour.

Short-billed Gull *Larus brachyrhynchus*

2003 Azores: Adult, Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, 18th February to at least 24th March (Alfrey & Ahmad 2007).

On Tuesday, 18th February 2003, Peter Alfrey (former member of the Portuguese Rarity Committee and a director of the environmental management company, Little Oak Group) was watching a pre-roosting site for gulls on the beach at Praia da Vitoria on Terceira. Among them Peter noticed an unusual adult-type Common Gull that had a distinctive long-necked and small-headed appearance, showed a pale olive-yellow iris and, in flight, showed extensive white in the wing-tip. Peter's thoughts turned to the possibility it was an example of the Nearctic subspecies *brachyrhynchus* (since raised to full species status as Short-billed Gull). By a happy coincidence a second-year Common Gull (just the fourth record for the Azores) was also present allowing a direct side-by-side comparison.

What was now presumed to be a Short-billed Gull was still present the following day when Peter returned and managed to photograph it (Pics. 236-237). Returning home, Peter consulted with various 'Lariphiles' for their expert opinion and following much discussion and debate, his tentative identification was confirmed. The next month, Mashuq Ahmad visited Terceira and refound the Short-billed Gull on Sunday, 16th March and between then and Monday, 24th March he shot video footage of the gull on several occasions. The record was accepted by the Portuguese Rarities Committee as a first Azores and Western Palearctic record.





Pics. 236–237.
Short-billed Gull, Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, February 2003.
Photos: © Peter Alfrey.

Pics. 238–239.
Oriental Plover, Alajoki, 25th May 2003.
Photos: © Antti Lind.





Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus*

2003 Finland: Adult male, Alajoki, Ilmajoki, 25th May (Rannila 2003).

On Sunday, 25th May 2003, Hannu Sillanpää was counting gulls at Alajoki on the west coast of Finland. At 13:00 he noticed a strange-looking bird in a ploughed field about 70 metres north of the road he was driving on. His initial reaction was that it was a odd-looking Ruff or a Dotterel? Stopping the car, he grabbed his binoculars and a quick look was all he needed to realise it was neither, rather it was a first for Finland, a Caspian Plover!

Hannu immediately contacted local birders, who hurried to the site as quickly as possible and at 14:10 news of the bird was broadcast on the Finnish pager system and twitchers started making plans to get to Alajoki. As birders gathered at the site, a discussion about the bird's identity ensued and in particular it was noted that the bird's pale head did not seem to match Caspian Plover. Field guides and those with previous experience of Caspian Plover were consulted and it soon became evident it was not one. In fact it was a much much rarer plover, a summer plumaged adult male Oriental Plover, a species that breeds on the dry steppe and arid grasslands of parts of Mongolia and China (Pics. 238-239). It spent the rest of the afternoon feeding in a ploughed field at distances of between 200 and 300 metres from the road. Then at 18:10, the bird began to show signs of being restless, spreading its wings occasionally, and to everyone's great disappointment about ten minutes later it took off, departing strongly to the northwest and was never seen again. All-in-all, about 100 managed to see it but a great many others arrived too late and missed out.

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*

2003 Iceland: Juvenile, Stokkseyri, Árnessýsla, 6th to 7th October (Kolbeinsson 2003), caught.

A series of fast moving North Atlantic depressions tracked northeast across Iceland during the first half of October 2003. This type of weather pattern tends to bring North American landbirds to Iceland, and that is precisely what happened after one such system passed over during 4th/5th October, dropping six Nearctic species along the south coast of Iceland between 6th and 10th October, including two first Western Palearctic records.



Pic. 240.
Least Flycatcher, Stokkseyri, 6th October 2003.
Photo: © Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson.

The first was a Least Flycatcher that flew into Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson's house in Stokkseyri during the afternoon of Monday, 6th October (Pic. 240). It was captured, examined and identified while in his kitchen. Flycatchers of the genus *Empidonax* can be tricky to identify to species, but in this case it was a combination of the bird's small size, short primary projection, stubby bill, white eye-ring and emargination on the sixth primary (counting inwards) that clinched it. As it appeared to be in a poor state of health, it was held overnight and released the following morning in Jóhann Óli's garden and was never seen again. To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic.

Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum*

2003 Iceland: Juvenile, Kverkin Plantation, Eyjafjöll, 10th October (Kolbeinsson 2003), trapped.

Just three days after the Least Flycatcher was last seen, another *Empidonax* flycatcher was found, this time by Björn Arnarson, Edward Rickson and Sigmundur Ásgeirsson at Kverkin Plantation, which is about 45 miles further south along the coast from Stokkseyri. A mist-net was set up, the bird was duly trapped and a full set of measurements were taken and compared with those published in Peter Pyle's *Identification Guide to North American Birds*. Finally, and after all the evidence was considered and debated it was identified as an Alder Flycatcher (Pics. 241-243). Upon release, it shot off and was never seen again, but not before 14 birders managed to get there in time to see it.

Pics. 241–243.
Alder Flycatcher,
Kverkin Plantation, Eyjafjöll,
10th October 2003.
Photos: © Daniel Bergmann.







Apart from the Least and Alder Flycatchers records already described as first Western Palearctic records, other Nearctic landbirds found between 6th and 10th October 2003 in southern Iceland were; an American Robin at Heimaey, Vestmannaeyjar (Westmann Islands) on the 6th; a Baltimore Oriole at Eyrarbakki from the 7th to 13th; a Cedar Waxwing at Heimaey on the 8th (the fourth Western Palearctic record) and a Belted Kingfisher that hung around the harbour on Heimaey from the 10th to 12th.

Streak-throated Swallow *Petrochelidon fluvicola*

2003 Egypt: Ras Umm Sid, Sharm el Sheikh, 19th November (Checklist of the Birds of Egypt).

This bird was found by S. Kühn and M. Kühn. They submitted a full description to the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee. It was accepted and the record published in the EORC's first report (Jiguet *et al*. 2011). Also known as Indian Cliff Swallow, it is common in Pakistan, India and northeastern Afghanistan. Some populations are sedentary but northern populations are migratory.

Asian Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*

2004 Greece: Adult, Gennadi, Rhodes, 21st August (Hellenic Rarities Committee 2006).

This bird was photographed by Christos Vlachos at Gennadi on the Greek island of Rhodes (the largest of the Dodecanese Islands). The Hellenic Rarities Committee did consider the possibility of escape however, following a review of the facts decided that possibility was minimal, so the observation was accepted. At the time it was treated as the nominate subspecies of Little Green Bee-eater, since raised to full species status.

Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata*

2004 Scotland: First-winter, Fair Isle, Shetland, 15th to 20th October (Shaw 2008).

Prolonged periods of westerly winds throughout much of September 2004 raised the unthinkable prospect of a disastrous autumn on Fair Isle. However, on the 29th the wind backed light southeasterly and hey presto, a stunning male Red-flanked Bluetail was discovered that afternoon to ensure the month would not pass-by vagrant-free! The bleak days of September were soon forgotten by early October when a Lanceolated Warbler was found on the 4th, closely followed the next day by a Booted Warbler. Over the coming ten days, a high pressure system developed over northern Europe, producing an easterly airstream that brought a flood of common and scarce migrants to Fair Isle. At lunch on Friday, 15th October, Hywel Maggs mentioned that he'd had brief views of an odd 'Little Bunting' in the bird-cover crop at Skadan, near the island's South Lighthouse. He had got there at 11:00 and was walking along the rows of kale when a bunting flew out of the crop, briefly landing in full view side-on to him, before diving straight back under cover.



Pic. 244.
Chestnut-eared Bunting, Skadan, Fair Isle, 17th October 2004.
Photo: © Hugh Harrop / Shetland Wildlife.

Hywel assumed it was the same Little Bunting that was at Lower Leogh the previous afternoon. In that brief moment, he noticed the bird's prominent eye-ring but was slightly perplexed by a number of plumage details. Moving in closer he could see it was feeding in the kale, it appeared to have bold pale mantle straps, a yellowish wash to the sides of the breast [...] and a less than typical head pattern for Little Bunting. As far as he could judge, it was somewhat larger than a Little Bunting, but Hywel considered that might be a result of the breezy conditions. So he chalked it down as an odd Little Bunting and texted Deryk N. Shaw (the Warden on Fair Isle) and Alan Bull with the news. A little later he met Alan and they discussed the bird but when he departed Fair Isle later that same afternoon it was still an odd Little Bunting as far as he was concerned. Later that day and in the fading light, Deryk Shaw caught up with the same bird and he too thought that it looked a bit odd.

Deryk went through every European bunting in his mind but even after this mental exercise, he had to agree with Hywel's assessment of 'odd Little Bunting', and just like Hywel he reasoned it was most likely the same bird previously seen at Leogh. Despite this, there were some features that Deryk knew were not quite right and they continued to play on his mind and niggle him, such as the tail appearing longer than expected, a chestnut rump (unlike the dull rump of Little Bunting) and the absence of any black in the face (Pic. 244). So he asked his Assistant Warden, Rebecca Nason to keep an eye out for it during her census work the next morning and after completing her rounds she was able to report it was still present.

After lunch, Deryk and a few others went looking for the bird and found it sheltering in a crop of oats. Good views were hard to come by, thanks to the strong wind blowing and they had to settle for brief flight views when flushed, but it usually hovered for a second before dropping back down. Regardless, what they saw was enough to rule out Little Bunting once and for all, but after an hour of brief views they were no closer to putting a name to it. The consensus was that it showed a combination of features associated with Little and Ortolan Buntings and Yellowhammer and it would appear the only course of action left to them was to trap it. A mist-net was erected and the bunting was easily coaxed into it. It was taken to the Observatory, where Deryk took a full description and set of measurements. Cometh the hour, cometh the man, and the man was Phil Harris who crucially remembered an article in *Birding World* by Steve Votier describing various Eastern Palearctic buntings (Votier 2001), and he returned a few moments later with the relevant issue and slapped the page down on the bench.

Deryk flicked through the note, and there on page 396 was a rearview shot of the bird. It was a Chestnut-eared Bunting, a species that breeds from the Himalayas east through China and southeastern Siberia to Korea and Japan. They frantically searched for more information in whatever literature was available and it all fitted neatly into place, the chestnut ear-coverts, whitish eye-ring, partially hidden chestnut breast-band, faint orange-buff wash, longish tail etc., they were all there, present and correct. It was identified to the nominate form (a long distance migrant) and aged as a first-winter, then released back at Skadan where it remained to the 20th. News was released to the local Shetland grapevine and *Birdline Scotland* and it was seen over the next five days by about 120 visiting birders.

Pic. 245.
Rufous-tailed Robin, Bull's Park, Fair Isle, 23rd October 2004.
Photo: © Hugh Harrop / Shetland Wildlife.



Rufous-tailed Robin *Larvivora sibilans*

2004 Scotland: First-winter, Bull's Park, Fair Isle, Shetland, 23rd October (Shaw 2006), trapped.

On Saturday, 24th October 2004, conditions on Fair Isle were conducive to the arrival of vagrants. A light breeze was blowing from the northeast as Deryk Shaw (Fair Isle's Warden) set out that morning to undertake census work around the northern parts of the island. By about 11:00 he had reached Ward Hill but despite his earlier optimism, all he had seen were a few thrushes and some cracking 'Northern Bullfinches'. Around the same time Mike Wood (a Director of Fair Isle Bird Observatory) was strolling along the road leading from the Observatory with his wife, Angela and daughters Emily and Kate, when he noticed a bird resembling a juvenile Robin hopping along the roadside by Bull's Park.

Puzzled, he asked Mark Newell, who was nearby, if a juvenile Robin was possible this late in autumn? Mark was certain it was not, so they both headed back to look for the bird. As Deryk was descending Ward Hill his phone rang and an out-of-breath and still running Alan Bull (Fair Isle's Assistant Warden) was shouting down the phone, Mark has just described to me what sounds like a Veery at Bull's Park, well a *Catharus* thrush anyway! Veery or not, any *Catharus* thrush was a lifer for Deryk, so he started running and by the time he arrived it had been identified as a Veery and was giving good views as it fed behind an old gate leaning against the dry-stone dyke. Deryk appraised the bird and thought it looked more like a Hermit Thrush than a Veery. Of those birders present only one had seen both and his opinion strongly favoured Hermit Thrush.

At this point no other species were considered so news of a tentative Hermit Thrush was released on the grapevine. Over lunch, the debate continued and it was only then that Nick Dymond casually mentioned that it looked a bit like a Rufous-tailed Robin, before adding, but it couldn't be that 'cos they are small, the jizz wasn't right and besides they are from southeast Asia. With the prospect of another first Western Palearctic record on Fair Isle in the same month, all hell broke loose as references and details of Rufous-tailed Robin were searched for, and it wasn't long before Deryk was staring with incredulity at a picture of one he found while browsing the Web and at the same time Alan Bull produced another in the pages of *Birding World*. So, it seems that lightning does strike twice, and a second first was in the bag!

Now they needed to see it in the field again and it was soon refound further along the dry-stone wall and any lingering doubts regarding the identity were firmly put to bed, it was a Rufous-tailed Robin, a species of chat that breeds in the taiga forests of northeastern Asia and Mongolia (Pic. 245). The earlier tentative news of Hermit Thrush was amended, including a phone call to Paul Harvey, who along with others making their way from Shetland, were aboard the *Cyfish* steaming towards Fair Isle, thinking they were on the way to twitch either a Veery or a Hermit Thrush! Once the cheers had died down and feelings of elation had eased somewhat, a decision was made to try and trap the bird and examine it in the hand. A mist-net was set up next to the wall where it was seen and the bird gently chivvied into it. Deryk inspected the underwing and as he anticipated it was a plain buffish-white. In the hand he was amazed at just how tiny it was, even smaller than a Robin! It was found to be in good condition with no feather, claw or bill damage and was aged as a first-winter. Once a set of measurements, a brief description and some photographs were taken it was released back at the same area, where it remained until dusk. There were clear skies over Fair Isle that night so it wasn't such a huge surprise when there was no sign of it the next day. This species has a number of alternative names, including Whistling Nightingale and Swinhoe's Robin.

Amur Wagtail *Motacilla alba leucopsis*

2005 England: Adult male, Vane Tempest Colliery, Seaham, Durham, 5th to 6th April (Addinall 2010).

During the afternoon of Tuesday, 5th April 2005, Stephen G. Addinall was birding on wasteland that was previously the site of the Vane Tempest Colliery, which had ceased mining operations as far back as June 1993. Stephen had only recently moved to the area and was still feeling his way around his new local patch, located just a short distance from his new home.

As he walked about he noticed a wagtail whose appearance was unfamiliar to him and compared with the nearby Pied Wagtails was very eye-catching. It showed a noticeably white throat, black bib and a large white patch across the wing-coverts. Although Stephen thought it would probably turn out to be a partially albino Pied Wagtail, he decided it was worthwhile to make a sketch before moving on. Later on, as he returned home, he saw the bird again and this time he got much closer views, allowing him study its features in greater detail than before. He realised the large white patch was formed along the greater coverts, which had very faint grey centres, the underparts were entirely white apart from a black bib patch and it lacked the smoky-grey flanks of Pied Wagtail (Pic. 246).

Pic. 246.
Amur Wagtail, Seaham, Durham, 6th April 2005.
Photo: © Chris Batty.



All-in-all, it superficially reminded him of the *calcarata* subspecies of Citrine Wagtail, which he had recently seen at Ladakh, northern India. Stephen was aware there were multiple forms of *alba,* as well as other wagtail species found across North Africa and into Asia, so although he still wasn't discounting 'partially albino Pied Wagtail', he thought it prudent to check if any of his field guides illustrated something similar. So he browsed the pages of a *Pocket Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent* by Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp and *A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan* by the Wild Bird Society of Japan, and each depicted illustrations resembling the Vane Tempest Colliery bird, labelling them as a male White Wagtail of the race *leucopsis,* the form that breeds in central and eastern China, far eastern Russia, Korea and southern Japan and is known in the vernacular as Amur Wagtail. Unfortunately neither guide provided any more details of the taxon, so instead Stephen turned to the Web for help and was pleasantly surprised to find a photograph, taken in South Korea, of a bird that was virtually identical.

As he was new to the area he had yet to meet any of the local birders, so he contacted Tim Cleeves (one of the authors of the *RSPB Handbook of British Birds*), who confirmed the description matched the illustration in *A Field Guide to the Birds of Korea* by W-S. Lee, T-H. Koo & J-Y. Park and he advised Stephen to get back out and photograph the bird, which he did in the fading light. The next morning it was in the same area and Stephen spent time watching through his telescope and what he saw convinced him it was not an aberrant individual or a partially albino Pied Wagtail but an Amur Wagtail. Stephen phoned John McLoughlin at *Birdline North East* to discuss what he had found. He emailed John some of the poor quality images he had taken and a second, more detailed, sketch he had made and happy with the identification the news was released at midday as an apparent *leucopsis* White Wagtail.

A short while later birders began to arrive and small numbers were present for the rest of the day. It proved very obliging, remaining in the area throughout the 6th, giving views down to three metres. It was last seen at about 19:30 when it departed to the north and when searched for on the 7th was not found. Considering the time of year, it was unlikely to have been a recent arrival from far eastern Asia. It is tempting to speculate that it had somehow reached Europe during the previous Autumn and had over-wintered somewhere, and was now quite naturally undertaking a northerly migration with the purpose of returning to its breeding grounds? If that was the case, it would make its presence at Seaham simply that of a passage migrant. There is a fitting postscript to this record, as just one month later Stephen was in China and saw an Amur Wagtail for the second time and realised that both birds really were the same. There have been several other earlier candidates of birds showing some characteristics of Amur Wagtail but none were fully documented.

Daurian Starling *Agropsar sturninus*

2005 Netherlands: First-winter male, Oost-Vlieland, Vlieland, Friesland, 11th to 12th October (Giljam & van Ouwerkerk 2005).

On Tuesday, 11th October 2005, Christiaan Giljam and Rutger van Ouwerkerk found a Daurian Starling (aka Purple-backed Starling) on the island of Vlieland (one of the West Frisian Islands). It was in the company of Common Starlings gathered on Sea Buckthorn along the island's foreshore by the De Kaap Bungalow Park. Once it was seen well enough to confirm the identity, news was released on the Dutch Birding Birdline. Birders present on the island began arriving, but it disappeared and was not seen again that day. The next morning, Christiaan and Rutger saw it in flight with Starlings and later on, Leon Edelaar had it at Camping Stortemelk, where about ten birders managed to see it before it departed. Max Berlin and Ted Hoogendoorn decided to take the afternoon boat to Vlieland and their decision paid off as they enjoyed great views of the bird for about an hour. It was last seen back at the bungalow park around 16:30 on the 12th by Jan van der Laan who took a series of photos (Pics. 247-248).





Pics. 247–248.
Daurian Starling, Vlieland, Friesland, 12th October 2005.
Photos: © Jan van der Laan.

Although it was sometimes seen on its own it spent most of the time in the company of about 1,000 Common Starlings, a flock that included two Rosy (Rose-coloured) Starlings. Daurian Starling breeds in far eastern Asia and winters in southeast Asia as far south as parts of Indonesia. Records in the Western Palearctic have traditionally been treated with suspicion and assigned to either Category D or E. Consequently, the CDNA took some time to consider this occurrence, but eventually accepted it as a Category A record and it was published in their 2006 report (van der Vliet *et al*. 2007).

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*

2005 Azores: First-winter, Ribeira do Gaivao, Corvo, 22nd to 23rd October, and, presumed same, Ribeira da Ponte, Corvo, 23rd November (Alfrey 2005, Alfrey *et al*. 2012).

On Saturday, 22nd October 2005, Azores regular Peter Alfrey (who found the first Short-billed Gull for the Western Palearctic on Terceira in 2003) was birding in fields around Ribeira do Gaivao, a wooded valley on the eastern slope of Corvo. He noticed a little brown job that he could not immediately put a name to but as soon as it landed in front of him realised it was an Indigo Bunting. The bunting flew down to take a drink at pools in the Ribeira and as he watched it, a small bird with two prominent white wing-bars passed through laurels on the other side of the stream but by the time he got the bird in his bins all he saw was it disappearing into cover. He considered the possibility it was a Nearctic wood warbler or maybe even an escape, but just could not piece together what [he] had seen. After a short anxious wait the bird revealed itself in a laurel a few metres away showing bright yellow lores and eye-ring, bluish-toned nape, pale throat, green upperparts with two strong white wing-bars set against sulphurous yellow and flanking a white belly.



Pic. 249.
White-eyed Vireo, Ribeira do Gaivao, Corvo, 22nd October 2005.
Photo: © Peter Alfrey.

Peter grabbed his camera and managed a single hand-held record shot (Pic. 249). It was a Yellow-throated Vireo, or so Peter thought, but back at the guest-house he checked Sibley's *North American Bird Guide* and was stunned to realise it wasn't a Yellow-throated at all, but a White-eyed Vireo and a Western Palearctic first! It was present again early the following morning but it didn't hang around and he never saw it again. However, what is presumed to be the same bird was relocated by Staffan Rodebrand at the nearby Ribeira da Ponte a month later on Wednesday, 23rd November. To date all five Western Palearctic records of White-eyed Vireo have been on Corvo.

American Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster*

2005 Azores: First-winter, Ponta Delgada, Flores, 30th to 31st October, and, a different first-winter, Ponta Lopo Vaz, Flores, 2nd November (Jiguet & Zucca 2005).

Frédéric Jiguet and Maxime Zucca had spent the first few days of a visit to the Azores on Terceira, Graciosa and São Miguel. They next intended to travel further west to Flores from where they could get a flight to the migration hotspot of Corvo, the most westerly of the Azores.

Bad weather delayed their flight to Flores on 28th October, and it wasn't until the following day they got there, only to learn there was no possibility of travelling onwards to Corvo because of more bad weather, so they visited the north coast of Flores (which faces Corvo), on the 30th. At Ponta Delgada they found a Semipalmated Plover and an Upland Sandpiper beside a football pitch. Next they headed into the village to check the gardens, which seemed to offer the best cover for migrants. Maxime soon noticed a Swallow, which they immediately suspected was the New World form *erythrogaster,* especially as they had already seen a Nearctic Tree Swallow on São Miguel. They made a quick check of the identification criteria, the underparts were clearly pinkish-buff and not creamy-white and the dark breast band was restricted to patches on the side of the neck, with a narrow grey line loosely connecting them.



Pics. 250–251.
American Barn Swallow, Ponta Delgada, Flores, 30th October 2005.
Photos: © Frédéric Jiguet.

But they had to wait for the bird to perch before they could confirm the absence of a continuous dark band across the breast separating the chestnut throat from the buff underparts, indeed it was a first-winter American Barn Swallow, the form found throughout North and Central America (Pics. 250-251). It was still present the following day. A couple of days later on 2nd November, Maxime found three swallows at Ponta Lopo Vas at the southern tip of Flores. Two were Tree Swallows and the third was a different first-winter *erythrogaster*, which was only seen in flight as it fed over pastures and cliffs along with the Tree Swallows.

Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus*

2006 Egypt: Adult male, El Faros Garden, near Abu Simbel, 1st May (Crochet *et al*. 2012).

On Monday, 1st May 2006, Eric Didner, Philippe Geniez and Pierre-André Crochet were parked in the shade of trees at El Faros garden near Abu Simbel in southern Egypt. While Eric was catching 40 winks, Philippe and Pierre-André were processing (photographing, tissue sampling) the reptiles found in the morning. At the same time the constant song of a bird was heard coming from a nearby clump of trees that Pierre-André assumed was made by a Nile Valley Sunbird. Waking from his slumber Eric asked what was making that strange song but was not at all convinced by the sunbird theory, instead suggesting it was a caged bird. However, this was soon dismissed when the sound moved trees, so Eric got out of the car and went to look for it. He soon called out to the others that he found a yellow bird with a black head, which was sufficiently intriguing to prompt Philippe and Pierre-André to postpone processing the lizards and come join Eric, soon locating the bird that was singing in a dense part of a tall tree.





Pics. 252–253.
Village Weaver,
El Faros Garden, 1st May 2006.
Photos: © Pierre-André Crochet.
The long claws visible in the photo (below) is a feature the species can sometimes exhibit.

The bird was obviously a *Ploceus* weaver but exactly which one eluded them, so they took as many photographs as possible with the intention of checking them on their return home. They watched it for about 30 minutes as it sat motionless in dense cover singing (Pics. 252-253). Satisfied they had enough photographs they left but were somewhat underwhelmed with the prospect of discovering the identity as the consensus was it was most likely an escaped cage bird. However, back home they quickly determined it was a Village Weaver, a species found across much of sub-Saharan Africa. Their collective notes highlighted the absence of any bare part or feather damage (even to the longest tail feathers), so the bird was unlikely to be a recent escape. The extent of orange on the underparts suggested it belonged to the subspecies *bohndorffi*, however the limited extent of black on the rear of the crown suggested *abyssinicus*, so it may well have been an intergrade of both, which are the two subspecies likely to occur naturally in Egypt.

It was aged and sexed as an adult male by Ross McGregor who had extensive experience with the species in the hand from his field studies in Nigeria. The long claws visible in some photographs was explained by Ross who was able to confirm the species does sometimes show this feature and therefore is not outside the variation for a bird of wild origin. The species is largely sedentary, however some are known to undergo local movements.

Tom Jenner informed them that the species is now common in Khartoum [capital of Sudan] itself, and that he has seen the species along the Nile valley up to 100km north of Khartoum, less than 700km south of Abu Simbel, although this may not even be the northern extent of their range. Consequently, a natural occurrence of the species in southern Egypt is thus perfectly plausible and it was known that traffic between Abu Simbel and Sudan, either by road or by ferry, is minimal. Finally Richard Hoath was able to tell them he had never seen the species in captivity in Egypt despite visiting pet shops and zoos for the past 20 years, including in Aswan, making the possibility it was an escape extremely unlikely. Taking all these factors into account the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee accepted it as the first for Egypt, adding the species to Category A of the Egyptian and Western Palearctic lists.

The same individual was probably seen very briefly the previous 2nd April near Lake Nasser by Erik Forsyth, while he was leading a *Rockjumper* birding tour, however this report remains unconfirmed. Previous records from the Cape Verde Islands and Portugal are presumed to involve introduced birds.

Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus auroreus*

2006 Russia: Male, Pechoro-Ilychskiy Reserve, Upper Pechora, 18th to 30th September (Ryabitsev 2008).

This bird was photographed west of the Urals in European Russia in the approximate position, 61°46'N, 056°43'E, and therefore within the Western Palearctic.

There is an earlier record at the Isle of May, Fife, Scotland on 29th April 1988 that remained to the next day when it was caught near a rabbit hole, later dying. It was identified to the less migratory and southern race *leucopterus*. It was not accepted as a genuine vagrant and assigned to Category D by the BBRC/BOURC. Likewise an adult male at Skebäck, Örebro, Närke, Sweden from 22nd to 26th September 1997 ended up in Category D.

American Woodcock *Scolopax minor*

2006 France: First-winter, Sorges-en-Périgord, Dordogne, 28th October (Ferrand *et al*. 2008), shot.

Taken during a European Woodcock hunt.

Forest (Tree) Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*

2006 Kuwait: Al-Abraq Al-Khabari, 10th November (Pope *et al*. 2006).

Al-Abraq Al-Khabari is an isolated oasis farm in the western Kuwaiti desert, a place where Kuwait-based birders are allowed visit. On Friday, 10th November 2006, Mike Pope, Brian Foster and Pekka Fågel had travelled there and were checking out a small irrigated plot of sweetcorn just south of the farm's central buildings. Mike Pope, a South African birder new to Kuwait, noticed an unfamiliar wagtail on the ground at the edge of the plot and asked Brian Foster if he recognised the species.

After a brief look, Brian replied that it was a Forest Wagtail, a species he had previously seen in southern Asia. At this point Pekka joined them and together they enjoyed great and prolonged views of the bird as well as taking a number of photographs before moving on (Pics. 254-255). Unfortunately, despite several subsequent searches over a number of days it was not seen again.



Pics. 254–255.
Forest Wagtail,
Al-Abraq, Al-Khabari,
October 2006.
Photos: © Mike Pope.







Pics. 256–257. Pacific Diver, Farnham Gravel Pit, February 2007. Photos: © Graham Catley.

Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica*

2007 England: First-winter, Farnham GP, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, 12th January to 4th February (Mather 2010).

During the evening of Friday, 12th January 2007, John Mather received a phone call from June Atkinson, the Harrogate and District Naturalists' Society's (HDNS) honorary warden at Farnham Gravel-pit, near Knaresborough, Yorkshire. June told John of a presumed Black-throated Diver at Farnham's South Lake that afternoon. Despite poor viewing conditions, she had seen enough to realise the bird was somewhat atypical, showing some resemblance to a very small Great Northern Diver, lacking as it did a white rear-flank patch (normally a distinctive feature on a swimming Black-throated Diver). At 09:00 the following morning John arrived at Farnham, where he met June and Brian Darbyshire, both of whom had been watching the diver earlier. They told him that, although carefully looked for, the white flank patch was definitely absent. This revelation prompted John to suggest the possibility of it being a Pacific Diver, previously treated as a subspecies of Black-throated Diver until they were split in 1985.

By this point the bird had flown the short distance to Farnham's North Lake and scanning from the causeway separating both lakes, they picked it up far in the distance. John left and drove to the other end of North Lake and found the bird about 25 metres from the shore showing well in excellent light. He had previous experience of Pacific Diver along the Pacific coast of North America and after closely examining the bird through 12x bins he satisfied himself it was a Pacific Diver.

Back at the South Lake he met a few HDNS members who were under the impression they had come to see a Black-throated Diver, instead John explained they would have the pleasure of scoping a first Western Palearctic record (Pics. 256-257).

Farnham Gravel Pit is a restored quarry site covering 80 hectares in total, including two lakes, the 24 hectare North Lake and the 10 hectare South Lake. It is a private, multi-use site that facilitates anglers, yachting and gun clubs among others. The owners were adamant they did not want large numbers on the site, however on 27th January news of the bird was leaked and birders naturally wanted to see it. Fortunately arrangements were made to allow access and the site was eventually opened on 30th January. The bird remained to 4th February when it was seen to depart to the northwest.

Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki*

2007 Russia: Adult male Neftekamsk, Bashkortostan, 2nd August (Haas 2012).

This replaces the previously indicated first record of a first-winter bird trapped at Passo della Berga, Bagolino, Brescia on 6th October 2011 (Janni & Fracasso 2013).

Earlier records at Treviso, Italy in October 1957 and at Humberside, England in November 1991 are not accepted as genuine vagrants. The bird at Stone Creek, Humberside was a first calendar-year present on 16th and 17th November 1991. It has been reviewed three times by the BOURC, the maximum number allowed. The third and final review resulted in a dead heat with four votes in favour of Category A status and four against and therefore the species was placed in Category E (BOU 2016).

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*

2008 Kuwait: Up to three non-breeding males, Ras Al Subiyah, 5th January to 10th February (Al Hajji *et al*. 2008).

On Saturday, 5th January 2008, heavy rain made the approach roads to Jahra East Outfall impassible, preventing Rashed Al Hajji from visiting the site as he intended. Instead he headed to Ras Al Subiya, a stretch of desert scrub some 50km further north.





Pics. 258–259.
Purple Sunbird. Ras Al Subiyah, January 2008, One of three birds present.
Photos: © Mike Pope.

To his great surprise he found two Purple Sunbirds there that were feeding on flowers of *Lycium shawii* (a low scrubby bush) and they seemed well at home in the area (Pics. 258-259). He took some photographs then quickly got the news out, allowing AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan to see them the same day and over the next few days by Pekka Fågel, Brian Foster and Mike Pope and later on by visiting birders from Britain and Denmark.

Both birds found on the 5th were joined by a third on 10th and 11th January and one of this trio remained until 10th February. During all this time they lingered in or around the same *Lycium* bushes where Rashed had found them. Their normal distribution comes as close as the UAE, Oman and Iran so they may have just been prospecting, alternatively their occurrence at Ras Al Subiyah might have been the result of recent unusually cold weather in the region causing them to disperse ahead of it, moving across or around the Arabian Gulf?

African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus baeticatus*

2008 Libya: Western Lakes, near Benghazi, May (Hering *et al*. 2010).

In May and June 2008 Reed Warblers were heard singing at the Western Lakes near Benghazi. Two nests were discovered and two adults and a juvenile were trapped. DNA analysis of samples taken confirmed they were African Reed Warblers *A. baeticatus*, then regarded as a full species. However, following the release of IOC World List version 12.2 in August 2022, African Reed Warbler was lumped with Eurasian Reed Warbler as Common Reed Warbler based on similarities in morphology, vocalizations, habitat choice, and relatively recent genetic divergence.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*

2008 Kuwait: SAANR, Kuwait, 13th May (Al-Sirhan 2021).

This bird was found at the Sabah Al-Ahmad Natural Reserve (located adjacent to the western shore of Kuwait Bay) on Tuesday, 13th May 2008 by AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan.

The eastern form of Cattle Egret was first treated as a full species in *The birds of New South Wales: a working list* (McAllan & Bruce 1988). Just under 20 years later, the *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005) went even further and split Cattle Egret into two full species, Eastern and Western Cattle Egret.

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*

2008 Spain: Immature, Tarifa, Cádiz, 7th September (Dies *et al*. 2011).

White-backed Vulture is found from west Africa through the Sahel to Ethiopia and Somalia and south through east Africa to southern Africa. It is the most common species of vulture found in Africa. Although largely sedentary, it is known to undertake northerly movements during the rainy season. This bird was photographed in flight with Griffon Vultures (Pic. 260).

On 25th June the following year, a second calendar-year White-backed Vulture was found dead at Tarifa, this following a collision with a wind turbine. Examination of the dead bird confirmed it was not the same individual seen at Tarifa the previous September. There is an earlier Category D record of a bird photographed on 14th October 2006 at Cape St. Vincent (Cabo de São Vicente), the most extreme southwesterly point of Portugal and mainland Europe.

Pic. 260.
White-backed Vulture (left) **& Griffon Vulture**, Tarifa, Cádiz, 7th September 2008.
Photo: © Markus Varesvuo.







Pics. 261–262.
American Osprey, Hafnarfjörður, 22nd September 2008.
Photos: © Dagur Brynjolfsson.

American Osprey *Pandion haliaetus carolinensis*

2008 Iceland: Subadult male, Hafnarfjörður, Gullbringusýsla, 22nd September (Strandberg 2013).

This was an example of the largely migratory North American form of Osprey, *P.h. carolinensis* (Pics. 261-262), one of two New World subspecies. It was photographed at close range by Dagur Brynjolfsson on Monday, 22nd September 2008, as it perched on his apartment balcony in Hafnarfjörður, a harbour town, situated about six miles south of Reykjavík.

Amur (Stejneger's) Stonechat *Saxicola stejnegeri*

2008 Sweden: First-winter male, Landsort, Öja, Södermanland, 2nd October (Friberg & Corell 2019), caught.

On Thursday, 2nd October 2008 Karl-Erik Sundström found a badly injured 'Eastern' Stonechat at Landsort on the island of Öja in the Stockholm archipelago (where the first Plain Leaf Warbler for Western Palearctic was found in 1991, see page 165). Karl-Erik caught the bird in his hat and brought it to the ringing station where it was discovered to have a broken wing. It was made as comfortable as possible but eventually succumbed to its injury and died.

The carcass was sent to the Museum of Natural History in Stockholm, and the record was duly published as *S. torquatus maurus/stejnegeri* (i.e. one of the Siberian forms of Common Stonechat) in the 2008 Fågelrapport (Swedish rare bird report).

In 2014, a DNA barcoding project was carried out at the museum and two individuals of every species held there were singled out for analysis, including the Landsort stonechat. For reasons unknown, the project's preliminary results, indicating it was identified to the form *stejnegeri*, did not reach the ornithological community and instead was posted to an online forum. Nevertheless, the record was subsequently published as ssp. *stejnegeri* (by which time it was treated as a subspecies of Siberian Stonechat, a full species recently split from Common Stonechat) in the 2017 Fågelrapport and in the 2018 report as Amur Stonechat this after *stejnegeri* was raised to full species status, becoming the first confirmed record for the Western Palearctic.

It is not known if there are earlier records as differences in appearance between Siberian and Amur Stonechats are marginal and for all practical purposes both are very difficult to distinguish in the field and DNA analysis is often required to definitively distinguish one from the other.

Pics. 263–265.
Slaty-backed Gull,
Dumpiai Klaipeda, November 2008.
Photos: © Vytautas Jusys.







Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*

2008 Lithuania: Adult, Dumpiai Klaipeda, 17th to 20th November (Pareigis 2009).

This gull was found by Vytautas Pareigis on Monday, 17th November 2008 at a municipal rubbish tip a few kilometres southeast of the seaport of Klaipeda. He identified it that same evening from photographs as an Eastern Palearctic Slaty-backed Gull, something later confirmed by other Larophiles once they had examined his photos. The bird remained at the same site until 20th November (Pics. 266-268). Subsequent searches of the area were unsuccessful; however, what is presumed to be the same individual was seen approximately 160km away at a landfill site near Riga, Latvia from 13th to at least 18th April 2009 (Gibbons & Hackett 2009). At both sites, it spent the time feeding and loafing with thousands of other gulls.

Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*

2009 Kuwait: First-winter, Abdali Farms, at least 21st to 28th February (Al-Sirhan 2021).

In 2009, Kuwaiti birder AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan setup an online forum for the purpose of discussing matters of bird identification. On Saturday, 21st February 2009, Ouda Al-Bathali (a member of the forum) posted a photographed of a bird on his farm at Abdaly in northern Kuwait (close to the border with Iraq). Ouda had used his phone to take the photo so the quality was not great, nevertheless it showed a black bird that might possibly be a koel, a group of mainly Asian cuckoos.

The next day AbdulRahman and Rashed Al-Hajji were invited to visit Abdali. They soon managed to find the bird feeding on Date Palms. It was photographed and identified as an Asian Koel, a species previously recorded in nearby Oman and the UAE, although both of these locations are outside the Western Palearctic *per* BWP. It attracted a steady stream of birders up to 28th February when it was last seen (Pic. 266). Later, it transpired that it had probably been present for about a week or so before it was photographed by Ouda. It was duly accepted by the KORC as a first for Kuwait and the Western Palearctic.



Pic. 266.
Asian Koel, Abdali Farms, Ouda Al-Bathali, February 2009.
Photo: © AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan.





Pics. 267–268.
African Openbill,
Crocodile Island, Luxor,
26th May 2009.
Photos: © Benjamin Steffen.

African Openbill *Anastomus lamelligerus*

2009 Egypt: Female or immature, Crocodile Island, near Luxor, 26th May (Steffen 2010).

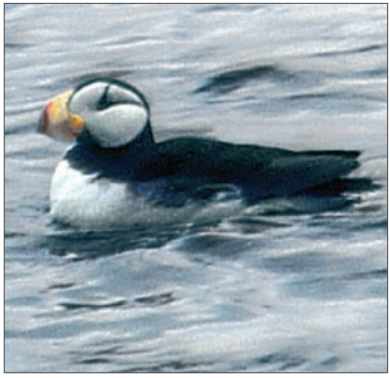
Early on Tuesday, 26th May 2009, Benjamin Steffen was birding at Crocodile Island, a few kilometres south of Luxor. By about 07:10 he had reached the southern tip of the island and while watching three Black-winged Kites, he suddenly noticed a large stork-like bird flying in at low altitude from a northern direction. Its overall dark appearance put him in mind of Black Stork, however that was soon ruled out when he noted the complete absence of any white in its plumage! Benjamin also dismissed the possibility of Glossy Ibis before concluding it was an African Openbill, this thanks to the unique combination of size, all dark plumage and characteristic bill shape. He judged it was possibly a female or, more likely an older immature? For some time it circled the southern end of the island, clearly seeking a safe place to settle, eventually landing about 250 metres from the shore of the Nile. It began to forage on unidentified molluscs, this while it was under attack from a Spur-winged Lapwing whose nest was nearby. Swampy areas near the shoreline prevented Benjamin from getting any closer than about 150 metres, nevertheless he managed to take some photographs of the bird in flight and on the ground (Pics. 267-268). He watched it for about 30 minutes, at which point it became hidden behind some higher vegetation and did not come into view again.

African Openbill is a species of stork that is widespread in sub-Saharan Africa with most breeding in south of the equator. Once fledged, juveniles are known to undertake expansive wanderings in search for food. This bird was not ringed nor showed any signs of previous captivity. Some earlier claims from Egypt in 1919 and 1938 have been rejected, but the Luxor bird has been accepted by the EORC as the first for Egypt and the Western Palearctic.

Horned Puffin *Fratercula corniculata*

2009 Norway: Off Hornøya, Vardø, Troms og Finnmark, 10th August (Van de Put & Ebels 2022).

In August 2009, Erwin Van de Put, and his father-in-law Bert Moonen, headed to Norway on a bird watching vacation. On Monday, 10th August, Erwin took a photograph of a puffin that was just off Hornøya, a small uninhabited island in the southern Barents Sea, east of the much larger island of Vardøya, where the town of Vardø is situated. At the time he assumed it was either a juvenile or an aberrant Atlantic Puffin (Pic. 269).



Pic. 269. Horned Puffin, off Hornøya, Finnmark, 10th August 2009. Photo: © Erwin Van de Put.

Some 12 years later Erwin was reorganising his photographs when he noticed the unusual Alcid from back in 2009 and he correctly identified it as Horned Puffin, a species that breeds across subarctic waters of the North Pacific in large and isolated colonies and is the North Pacific equivalent to Atlantic Puffin. On 16th December 2021, Erwin reported his discovery by email to BirdLife Norway, who in turn released the news to the wider birding community on 18th January 2022. It was accepted as a genuine vagrant by the NSKF and the record published in their 2021 report (Olsen 2022). This is the sixth north Pacific Alcid to be added to the WP list. Although a first for the WP it is not the first for the North Atlantic. A single bird was observed among Atlantic Puffins on Dalrymple Rock in northwest Greenland during each summer from 2002 to 2006 and from 2013 to 2019 another was frequently seen at the same site.

Gambel's (White-crowned) Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*

2009 Norway: First-winter, Ona, Ålesund, Møre og Romsdal, 2nd to 9th October (Gustad 2010).

This bird was an example of the Alaskan and western Canadian subspecies of White-crowned Sparrow, one of five *per* IOC World List. It is the first confirmed occurrence in the Western Palearctic of this form and overall, the tenth record of this New World sparrow. The first of the typical form was at Barfleur, France in August 1965 (see page 88).

Yellow-crowned Night Heron *Nyctanassa violacea*

2009 Azores: Immature, Angra de Heroismo Marina, Terceira, 25th October and subsequent dates in 2010 and 2011 (Barreiros *et al*. 2014, Haas 2017).

This bird was first observed by Ricardo Rego on Sunday, 25th October 2009 at the Angra de Heroismo Marina on the south coast of Terceira. What is presumed to be the same individual returned to the Marina from 24th to 28th July 2010 (Pic. 270), and again from 5th January to 18th April 2011 (Pic. 271), finally returning as an adult on 8th December 2011. Although first observed in 2009, the identity was not fully resolved until the following year.

Pics. 270–271.
Yellow-crowned Night Heron,
Angra do Heroísmo Marina, Terceira, 24th July 2010 (left) and 20th February 2011 (right).
Photos: © Paulo A.V. Borges (left), © Richard Bonser (right).





Over much of its range, Yellow-crowned Night Heron is resident, however some populations are migratory and birds have been found outside their normal range in the northern parts of the United States and Canada and as a vagrant on the island of Saint Pierre and Miquelon in the northwest Atlantic.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

2009 Azores: Female, Lagoa Branca, Flores, 30th October, and, presumed same, Cabo da Praia, Terceira, 31st October (Haas 2017).

Ruddy Duck is a stiff-tailed duck native to the Americas. Unlike the majority of records that are assumed to involve (fully-winged) escapes from wildfowl collections, this bird was judged a genuine vagrant.

Dickcissel *Spiza americana*

2009 Azores: Two, Ponta Delgada, Flores, 6th November (de Vries 2011).

In November 2009, Nico and Ans de Vries visited the Azores for the fourth consecutive year, staying on Flores, which along with Corvo, are the most westerly of the islands. Friday, 6th November 2009 was a fine sunny day with temperatures in the low 20s°C. Nico and Ans set out to tour the island by car, eventually stopping at a small football pitch just outside Ponta Delgada on the island's northern coast. The pitch was surrounded by grassy fields, edged with Azorean reed.

At around 15:30 Nico heard an unfamiliar sound coming from two sparrow-like songbirds with noticeably triangular bills, short tails and short primary projection that he suspected were Nearctic vagrants, so he quickly shot off a few photographs (Pics. 272-275). One took off and flew down, quickly becoming lost to view. By this time Ans had joined him and together they watched the remaining bird, but not for long as it too dropped down and soon both flew off together. Once back at their accommodation they checked a field guide and only then realised they had found a couple of Dickcissels, a species that breeds in on the plains of eastern and central USA, wintering further south.

Pics. 272–275.
Dickcissels, Ponta Delgada, 6th November 2009. First bird (below left), second bird (all others). Photos: © Nico de Vries.






They spent much of the afternoon and in the coming days (along with others) searching but there were no further sightings. At the time these were the 2nd and 3rd records for the Western Palearctic. Since then, an earlier record of an adult male at Måløy, Kinn, Vestland, Norway on 29th July 1981 that was previously accepted as a genuine vagrant was re-assigned to Category D following a review by the NSKF.

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

2009 Kuwait: Al-Abraq Al-Khabari, 7th November (Al-Sirhan 2021).

On Saturday, 7th November 2009, AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan travelled to the Al-Abraq Al-Khabari farm where he met Brian Foster and Pekka Fågel. They birded together for some time until Brian and Pekka decided to head off, leaving AbdulRahman to continue on his own. Some time later, AbdulRahman stopped beside a wet field shaded by Date Palms where he noticed a foraging heron. It didn't take him long to realise the bird was a good candidate for Indian Pond Heron, a species AbdulRahman had previously seen in 2008 on the Arabian Sea island of Socotra. He took photographs (Pic. 276) and alerted Brian and Pekka, but they couldn't make it back.

That evening he emailed Oscar Campbell (Northern Ireland birder now resident in the UAE), who AbdulRahman knew was familiar with the species. Oscar replied in the positive, confirming it was an Indian Pond Heron. Unfortunately it was a one day wonder and subsequent searches were not successful. AbdulRahman submitted the record to KORC and it was unanimously accepted as a first record for Kuwait.

An earlier 2004 record from Egypt is considered 'not proven' by the EORC as its photo did not show sufficient detail to be accepted and another in Belgium in July 1988 was judged to be an escape.

Pic. 276.
Indian Pond Heron, Al-Abraq Al-Khabari, 7th November 2009.
Photo: © AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan.



Dresser's Eider *Somateria mollissima dresseri*

2010 Ireland: Male, Glasagh Bay, Fanad Head, Donegal, 2nd January to 21st February (Farrelly & Charles 2010).

On a cold January day, Derek Charles and Wilton Farrelly were enjoying a day's birding around various Donegal hot-spots and already had a Snow Goose under their belts by the time they arrived at Glasagh Bay, Fanad Head on the north coast of Ireland. They quickly spotted a Velvet Scoter and while watching it noticed a Dresser's Eider that was swimming in the midst of a flock of Common Eiders (Pics. 277-279). It was so distinctive, they had no qualms about broadcasting the news straight away. To begin with, interest in the bird was surprisingly minimal, but as the weather improved through February, more and more travelled to see it. It wasn't always easy to find as it spent a lot of time keeping well offshore with the main Eider flock, but with patience most got on to it in the end, especially when they moved closer to shore or even better when it would sometimes sit out on rocky outcrops that were exposed at low-water. It remained in the bay for over a month until last seen on 21st February. What is presumed to be the same individual returned off the nearby Inishowen Peninsula, Donegal in June 2011.

Dresser's Eider is found along the east coast of North America from Labrador south to Maine and Massachussetts, wintering further south as far as Florida. There has been one other since, an immature male off Skerries, Dublin, Ireland from April to May 2019. A male at Grundarfjörður, Iceland on 26th January 2017 is a record pending yet to be assessed.

Pics. 277–278.
Dresser's Eider, Glasagh Bay, Donegal, February 2010.
Photos: © Craig Shaw.







Pic. 279.
Dresser's Eider (extreme right-hand bird)**,** Glasagh Bay, Donegal, February 2010.
Photo: © Paul Kelly.

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

2010 Kuwait: Jahra Farms, Abdali, 3rd to 10th April (Khil *et al*. 2019).

On Saturday, 3rd April 2010, Pekka Fågel was guiding two Swedish birders, Hans Rudhe and Olle Karlsson, around Jahra Farms in northern Kuwait. They began their walking tour at the so-called 'Ali's farm', named after the Iranian foreman in charge there. They spent some time at Ali's, then continued on the tour, eventually arriving back where they started from. Hans pointed to a tree-top above the farm gate and uttered the single word Drongo! Neither Hans nor Pekka were particularly elated as it just didn't seem possible that a Drongo could occur naturally in Kuwait. Nevertheless, Pekka took some record shots as a memento of the day.

That evening he sent some of his photos to AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan who replied immediately that the bird was an Ashy Drongo, a species found across eastern and southeast Asia, and that two had previously been recorded in nearby UAE, and therefore, a possible vagrant to Kuwait (Pic. 280). Pekka posted some of his photos to AbdulRahman's online forum and the following morning he received an email from *'Captain of B-777'* (who turned out to be an airline pilot working for Emirates) telling him there were in fact three, and not two, records in the UAE. The bird remained to 10th April and the record has been accepted by the KORC as a first for Kuwait and the Western Palearctic.



Pic. 280.
Ashy Drongo, Jahra Farms, April 2010.
Photo: © Richard Bonser (left).

Pic. 281.
Lincoln's Sparrow, Corvo, 12th October 2010.
Photo: © David Monticelli (below).



Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii*

2010 Azores: Middle Fields, Corvo, 12th to 13th October (Monticelli *et al*. 2018).

In the wake of Hurricane Otto, several Nearctic passerines were found in early October 2010 at or near Corvo's Middle Fields, including a Scarlet Tanager, a Bobolink and two Baltimore Orioles. Late in the afternoon of Tuesday, 12th October, Hugues Dufourny was birding there, when he noticed a small North American sparrow in overgrown vegetation. When he moved in closer he flushed the bird a short distance away. Hugues alerted others nearby and they soon relocated it, obtaining decent but brief views. At this point, it was identified as a Song Sparrow, an Azores first, but this was before any photos were taken and examined. Soon 20+ birders had arrived and much better views of the sparrow were obtained as it spent time feeding in fallow fields covered with tall herbs and fennels and where it was heard to give a sharp *chip* call as it raised its crest when alarmed.

Not everyone was convinced it was a Song Sparrow, so once they returned to the guest-house and were armed with better quality photos and a copy of Sibley's *North American Bird Guide,* a reappraisal of the identity was undertaken, which revealed several features inconsistent with Song Sparrow. Instead, Lincoln's Sparrow (widespread over much of North America and a close relative of Song Sparrow) emerged as the more likely, this based on subtle differences when compared with Song Sparrow. Pierre-André Crochet contacted Peter Pyle and David Sibley, and sent them photos of the bird, after which Sibley replied, a Lincoln's Sparrow without question! Congratulations. It remained into the next day when it obliged with prolonged views and photographic opportunities (Pic. 281).

Pics. 282–283.
African Mourning Doves, Abu Simbel, December 2010. Two birds, probably a pair.
Photos: © Kris De Rouck.





(African) Mourning Collared Dove *Streptopelia decipiens*

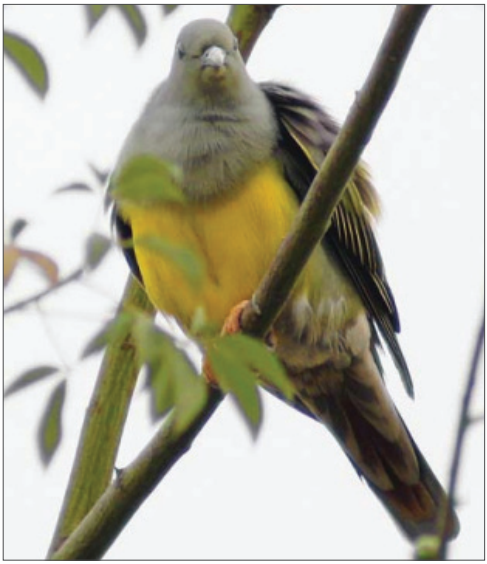
2010 Egypt: Two, Abu Simbel, 29th December to at least 11th May 2012 (De Rouck 2011).

Kris De Rouck and Dirk Colin visited Egypt on a birding holiday in late December 2010. One of their main objectives was to visit the area around the village of Abu Simbel, situated on the west bank of the Nile in the south of the country, not far from the border with Sudan. On Tuesday, 28th December 2010, they spent time searching the bays around Abu Simbel, where they found good numbers of White Pelicans, Glossy Ibises and Cormorants and, later back at the village, five African Pied Wagtails. That evening they visited the Water Research Centre and had excellent views of two Egyptian Nightjars and a Pharaoh Eagle Owl.

The next day, having visiting Airport Bay and finding nothing new there, they decided to head to the oldest part of Abu Simbel and check the gardens. While walking along its streets, Kris heard a strange gurgling, almost strangled call repeated every 20 seconds or so coming from a tree. Kris called Dirk over to listen, suggesting that maybe it's an African Collared Dove? A few minutes later it flew from the tree to another one nearby, where it resumed calling. About ten minutes later it took off and performed a display flight, which appeared to impress a second dove, which began making a similar call.

Both doves were now clearly visible allowing Kris to get photos of both (Pics. 282-283). At the time of observation both Kris and Dirk assumed both were African Collared Doves and very probably a pair, however something did not seem quite right with their appraisal. Returning home in January 2011, Kris made a start on checking his photographs and studying the literature, after which he realised they were in fact Mourning Collared Doves, a widespread and common dove in sub-Saharan Africa and a first for the Western Palearctic. Two birds were still reported at the same site in May 2012 (Jiguet *et al*. 2012).

Pic. 284.
Bruce's Green Pigeon,
Luxor, 3rd January 2011.
Photo: © Steven R. van der Veen.



Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia*

2011 Egypt: Kornish Al Nile, Luxor, Upper Egypt, 3rd January (van der Veen 2011).

In December 2010 and January 2011, American birder Steven van der Veen, his wife and adult son were vacationing in Egypt, all travelling on one of the typical Aswan to Luxor cruises.

Early in the morning of Monday, 3rd January 2011, Steven headed ashore for a walk around Luxor. At about 08:00 he noticed a brightly coloured dove in a tree and took a single photograph (Pic. 284). Unable to identify it, he posted the photo on the EgyBirdGroup where it was identified as Bruce's Green Pigeon, a species of sub-Saharan Africa and southwestern Arabian Peninsula.

The nearest breeding population to Luxor is on Sudan's Red Sea coast where it is locally common. Although normally a sedentary species, it is known to undertake local movements seeking water and food (it is especially fond of figs), and northward movements have been recorded in Sudan during the rainy season. The EORC judged the bird's presence at Luxor to be the result of natural vagrancy (it was found just a few days after the African Mourning Doves were found at Abu Simbel) and admitted the species onto Category A of the Egyptian List. Two birds in Kuwait in 2001 were considered to have been escapes.

Black-backed Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola calcarata*

2011 Turkey: First-summer male, Van, Eastern Anatolia, 17th to 18th May (Occhiato 2011).

Italian birder-photographer Daniele Occhiato, visited the marshes around Van in eastern Turkey from 16th to 18th May 2011. Just before sunset on Tuesday, 17th May he was watching Black-headed Wagtails going to roost, when he caught sight of a yellow bird with a completely black back on the ground about 20 yards from where he was parked.



Pic. 285.
Black-backed Citrine Wagtail,
Van, Eastern Anatolia,
18th May 2011.
Photo: © Daniele Occhiato.

Getting it in his bins Daniele realised he was looking at a magnificent adult male Citrine Wagtail, and, more particularly, one that was a perfect match for *calcarata*, the form found from eastern Iran to central China and known in the vernacular as Black-backed Citrine Wagtail. He grabbed his camera, but before he could even frame it in the viewfinder, it took flight and further searches made that evening were not successful. He had no luck again the following morning, but on his return that evening, he immediately picked up a singing male Citrine Wagtail. It was perched on earthwork beside a track about 15 yards from his car and about 200 yards from where he had first observed the wagtail roost.

This time, Daniele made sure to get it in his camera and studying it through the camera lens, he was confident it was the *calcarata* (Pic. 285). He took as many photos as possible, but after about a minute, the bird took off heading in the direction of where he had first seen it, eventually landing about 100 yards away on the other side of a wide ditch. He watched it in the scope catching insects for another minute, before it flew off carrying food in its bill and that was the last time he saw it.

Daniele spent the next few days at others sites around eastern Turkey, returning to Van on 29th May. During his absence, heavy rains had hit the area causing flooding and there was no sign of the wagtail. When studying the photos taken on 18th May, he noticed some differences compared with what he had seen on the 17th May bird and he considered the possibility there had been two birds? Back home in Italy he sent the photographs to Hadoram Shirihai and Lars Svensson and they confirmed Daniele's identification. The record was accepted by the Turkish Bird Records Committee as a first for Turkey and the Western Palearctic (Kirwan *et al*. 2014).

Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*

2011 At sea/Madeira: 15 nautical miles northeast of Madeira, 8th August (Correia-Fagundes & Romano 2011).

On Monday, 8th August 2011, Catarina Correia-Fagundes and Hugo Romano were leading a Madeira Wind Birds *Zino's Petrel Pelagic Expedition* in a position about 15 nautical miles northeast of Madeira. Also present were Holger Sperling, Ellen de Bruin, Ricardo van Dijk, Silvio Davison and Uku Paal. They drifted and chummed for about two-and-a-half hours, attracting several Cory's Shearwaters and Bulwer's Petrels, and single Wilson's and European Storm-petrels and Great Shearwater.

Pics. 286–289.
Black-bellied Storm-petrel, 15nm northeast of Madeira, 8th August 2011.
Photos: © Silvio Davison (top left), Ricardo van Dijk (top right), Uku Paal (two above).



At 20:00, another storm-petrel appeared above the slick that was larger than those already seen, which suggested Madeiran Storm-petrel, however its jizz was not right for that species. It banked to reveal an underwing and belly showing a bold black-and-white pattern and they all knew immediately that this was something special! It came close to the boat only once, departing after just a minute and was not seen again, but at least this was long enough for everyone to grab some photographs (Pics. 286-289). The details noted on its underparts identified it as a Black-bellied Storm-petrel, a species that breeds at sub-Antarctic islands, and a first for the Western Palearctic.

A *Fregetta* petrel that was seen off Severn Beach, Avon, South Gloucestershire, England on 25th November 2009 was most likely either a Black-bellied or a White-bellied Storm-petrel (Martin 2009).

Tropical Mockingbird *Mimus gilvus*

2012 Gibraltar: Transport Department Garages, Waterport, February to 9th April, and, presumed same at, Algeciras, Cádiz, Spain the following 7th and 20th August, and from 16th to 19th December and other dates to at least 14th March 2013 (Perez & Bensusan 2013).

On Friday, 24th February 2012, Charles Perez and Keith Bensusan were made aware of a strange bird at the Government Garages near the harbour's North Mole that had apparently been present for a couple of weeks already. They located the bird in a Mulberry and tentatively identified it as a Northern Mockingbird, although both remarked at the time it seemed a little odd for that species. They returned the next day to find it perched in a Palm tree. Both the Sibley guide and *Birds of the West Indies* by Raffaele *et al*. were consulted, after which they realised it was not a Northern Mockingbird, rather the closely related and very similar Tropical Mockingbird, a species that is common from parts of the Caribbean south to the coasts of Brazil.



Pic. 290.
Tropical Mockingbird,
Government Garages,
April 2012.
Photo: © Charles Perez.

It remained in the vicinity of the Government Garages until early April (Pic. 290) and although it could be very secretive at times, once located it was usually very obliging to visiting birders. Considering the sedentary nature of the species, it did not come as much of a surprise that the GONHS concluded it had arrived by ship and the species was consequently assigned to Category D.

What is assumed to be the same individual was relocated about six miles away on the other side of the Bay of Gibraltar at the Spanish port of Algeciras on 7th August by Fernando Barrios and on 20th August it was photographed by Javier Elgorriaga and was last seen there on 14th March 2013.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*

2012 Egypt: Wadi Lahami, Hamata, 26th April into May (Hering *et al*. 2013).

German ornithologists Jens Hering, Peter H. Barthel, Hans-Jürgen Eilts, Karl-Heinz Frommolt, Elmar Fuchs, Wieland Heim, Klaus Müller and Martin Päckert were undertaking research work into the North African Reed Warbler complex. In April and May 2012 this work took them to Egypt and the southern Red Sea coast, where birds were successfully captured and studied in the mangrove forests at Wadi Lahami (located within the Wadi El Gemal National Park).

Much to everyone's surprise, when the mist-nets were checked on Thursday, 26th April 2012 they were found to contain two small herons (Pics. 291-292). Both were photographed, measured, ringed and a sample taken for DNA analysis. Upon checking the literature, they were identified as Yellow Bitterns, a species found breeding in reed-beds across much of southern Asia and a first for the Western Palearctic.

Over the course of their time studying the local warblers, unfamiliar calls were heard coming from two dense regions of the mangrove forest each day after sunset and despite the presence of strong winds, sound recordings were made. By the end of May, these calls could be heard during the day, having become more clearly audible and were similar to Yellow Bittern calls they heard played on *Songs and Calls of 420 Birds in Japan* (Kabaya & Matsuda 2001). On 25th May, the Yellow Bittern CD track was broadcast over the reeds and 30 minutes later, one of the previous month's bitterns was back in the net and this time it showed a large brood patch.

Pics. 291-292.
Yellow Bitterns,
in the hand, Wadi Lahami, April 2012.
Photos: © Peter H. Barthel.
Two breeding males.





Four days later, a new bird was trapped and it too sported a brood patch. In addition, Yellow Bitterns were heard calling at a total of 12 locations both in Wadi Lahami and at a mangrove forest located to the north and south of it. In July 2013, in order to collect supplementary breeding biological data, the CD track was played once more at Wadi Lahami on the 8th and two of the bitterns ringed in 2012 were re-trapped. The next day three Yellow Bittern nests were found in dense mangroves near the shore of a lagoon and broken egg-shells were found in one of the nests. Despite their obvious presence, only one heron was ever observed in the open during 2013, when it flew low over a stand of mangroves. A small breeding population has since become established along the Red Sea coast.

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*

2012 Iceland: Juvenile, Höfn, Hornafjörður, 1st to 5th October (Brynjólfsson *et al*. 2020).

On Monday, 1st October 2012, Brynjúlfur Brynjólfsson and Björn Gísli Arnarson came across an unusual flycatcher perched on the highest branches of a fir tree at Höfn, Hornafjörður in southeast Iceland. After due consideration and ruling out Asian Brown Flycatcher, they concluded it was an unusually fresh Spotted Flycatcher, which during its five day stay was photographed several times (Pics. 293-294). However, Yann Kolbeinsson was not completely convinced and from time to time studied the images, cross-checking them with field guides, but never finding a perfect match and always having to settle for the fresh juvenile Spotted Flycatcher theory.

Pics. 293–294.
Dark-sided Flycatcher, Höfn, Hornafjörður, October 2012.
Photos: © Brynjúlfur Brynjólfsson.





At the beginning of 2016, a breakthrough came in the shape of *Rare Birds of North America* by Howell, Lewington & Russell, which illustrated and described Dark-sided Flycatcher on page 280. Once Yann and Gunnar Þór Hallgrímsson had read the species account, alarm bells started ringing and they became convinced the flycatcher's identity was solved. Following further investigations and discussions (including positive feedback from Paul Leader and Killian Mullarney), Dark-sided Flycatcher was confirmed as the identity. It was accepted by the Icelandic Rarities Committee as the first for Iceland and the Western Palearctic. An earlier record of one trapped on the island of Helgoland, Germany in August 1982 was judged to be an escape.

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*

2012 Ireland: Juvenile, Inishmore, Aran Islands, Galway, 5th October (Delaney 2012).

Following two days of driving rain and strong westerly winds at Inishmore, the morning of Friday, 5th October 2012 was bright and sunny with just a light breeze, a welcome change for island regular Hugh Delaney. Faced with the logistical conundrum of birding such a large island (the most westerly of the Aran Islands covers 12 square miles and is almost nine miles long), he normally starts off by concentrating on an area to the west of Kilmurvey Beach, a strategy that has paid dividends in the past.

By late morning he had covered Kilmurvey Wood and the area around the nearby café by bike and was feeling encouraged, having found three Chiffchaffs and a Willow Warbler. After a short break he continued further west, all the while keeping a constant check for movement on either side of the road. A bird sitting on top of a stone wall that crossed a field caught his attention and even with the naked eye it looked startlingly unusual. Getting the bird in his bins Hugh experienced a feeling of complete disbelief as he realised he was watching an Eastern Kingbird, a species he seen a number on times in the USA (Pics. 295-296). He watched it for a few minutes, then decided to run the description past Killian Mullarney for confirmation, which was quickly forthcoming. He released the news by text and phone. Now he urgently needed to grab some photos, but his own camera was out of action. Fortunately upon hearing about the bird, local photographer Fionnuala Hernon arrived and took some record shots. The kingbird was now moving between stone walls, trees in Kilmurvey Wood and the roofs of houses, actively catching insects and butterflies and in between times sitting very prominently in the open.

Pics. 295–296.
Eastern Kingbird, Inishmore, Aran Islands, Galway, 5th October 2012.
Photos: © Dermot Breen.





At about 16:30 Hugh was joined by Dermot Breen and Aonghus O'Dónaill, who had grabbed the final two seats on a scheduled flight to the island and later on by Victor Caschera, who had somehow managed to persuade a flight to a neighbouring island to divert to Inishmore. They all watched the bird moving about Kilmurvey Wood, until it was seen for the very last time just after 18:00, this when it headed to the western edge of the wood to catch the last few rays of the sun. That night was clear, calm and cold and when looked for the next morning it was not found nor at anytime after that, disappointing the (about) 70 birders who had travelled to twitch it.

Some consolation for those who missed out was the presence of two Myrtle Warblers on Inishmore, and at Lough Fee on mainland Galway, a Belted Kingfisher, just the fourth Irish record. The second for the Western Palearctic was found just under a year later on 24th September about 40 miles away at Inishbofin, another island off County Galway in the west of Ireland.

Prairie Warbler *Setophaga discolor*

2012 Azores: First calendar-year male, Lighthouse Valley, Corvo, 20th to 23rd October (Monticelli *et al*. 2018).

On Corvo, Autumn 2012 had recorded Wood Thrush, Golden-winged Warbler, Magnolia Warbler and Dickcissel by Friday, 19th October, a date when many birders departed the island. So, on Saturday the 20th, when Eric Didner and Pierre-André Crochet headed for the famous Lighthouse Valley, they had the whole area to themselves. Upon their arrival they split up, with Eric walking down along the southern side of the valley towards a large patch of Juniper, while Pierre went to check out a minor gully a few 100 metres north, locations that were beyond the range of their radios.

It was only as Pierre was heading back to Lighthouse Valley that radio communication was re-established and he learned that Eric had discovered two American wood warblers in the Juniper, but was uncertain of their identity, so Pierre hurried along to join him. Checking the images in Eric's camera's LCD screen, Pierre identified one as an American Yellow Warbler, but was unable to put a name to the second bird. However, it was quite clearly something new to Corvo and therefore a tick for anyone still present on the island, so news of both was circulated.

Pics. 297-298.
Prairie Warbler,
Lighthouse Valley, Corvo,
October 2012.
Photos: © Vincent Legrand (right),
© David Monticelli (below).





First to arrive were David Monticelli, Vincent Legrand and Darryl Spittle and once Eric's images were checked it was quickly identified it as a Prairie Warbler, a highly migratory species of southeastern and coastal Atlantic North America (Pics. 297-298). Fortunately it was not very mobile and extremely showy, feeding most of the time in full view on or about the bushes' extremities, allowing everyone get good clear views. While searching for both birds, Holger Lauruschkus managed to find a Myrtle Warbler, making it the first time three North American wood warblers were seen together on Corvo.

The Prairie Warbler remained in the area until Tuesday, 23rd October and it was always in or around the Juniper bushes, avoiding the denser woodland in the adjacent valley, a habitat preference known to be characteristic of the species. The record was accepted by the Comité Português de Raridades and published in their 2013/2014 report (Tipper *et al*. 2019). To date remains the only record for the Western Palearctic.

Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula*

2013 Netherlands: Probably a male, Kamperhoek, Flevoland, 8th April (Slaterus 2013, 2014).

On Monday, 8th April 2013, this bird was observed by five birders as it flew in a northeasterly direction over the migration watchpoint at Kamperhoek, near Swifterbant (Pics. 299-302). It was identified as a Common Grackle (a species native to North America) and the strong contrast noted between its glossy blue head and neck and equally glossy brown body, indicated it was an example of the migratory subspecies *versicolor*, known as Bronzed Grackle. Although it could not be aged and sexed with any certainty it was probably a male based on the large amount of gloss in the plumage and the triangular appearance of the tail.

Pics. 299–302.
Common Grackle, Kamperhoek, Flevoland, 8th April 2013.
Photos: © Mervyn Roos.



Enquiries made with cage bird enthusiasts revealed that as far as anyone knew there was no evidence of Common Grackle captive breeding in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the species had never been exhibited at a cage bird show and the ban on the import of wild birds into the European Union since 2007 made it unlikely that the species had been imported and it is not possible to export wild birds from Canada and the USA without the appropriate permits. Consequently it was accepted by the CDNA as a genuine vagrant and the first for the Netherlands and the Western Palearctic. An earlier record at Gevninge, Zealand, Denmark from late March to about 20th April 1970 has never been accepted by the Danish Rarities Committee.

Wahlberg's Eagle *Hieraaetus wahlbergi*

2013 Egypt: Pale-morph juvenile, near Ras Shuqeir, 120km north of Hurghada, 3rd May (Waheed 2016).

On Friday, 3rd May 2013, Ahmed Waheed and Ibrahim Saad were bird watching at a tiny oasis located southwest of the Red Sea coastal town of Ras Gharib. Visible migration was taking place, involving both passerines and soaring raptors that included a number of pale-morph Booted Eagles. What Ahmed initially took to be a dark-morph Booted Eagle came close and he set about getting some flight shots as it passed over. Ibrahin then pointed out that rather than continuing, the dark raptor had settled in a nearby palm tree, so Ahmed got additional shots of it sitting and [again] shortly after it had taken off (Pics. 303-305), which he saved to his Booted Eagle folder.







Pics. 303–305.
Wahlberg's Eagle,
near Ras Shuqeir, 3rd May 2013.
Photos: © Ahmed Waheed.

Almost a year later in April 2014, Ahmed was compiling photos for BirdLife's 'Migratory Soaring Birds' project, which reminded him of the 'dark-morph' oasis eagle and wondered about its identity. He sent his images to Finnish raptor expert Dick Forsman asking for help and he replied the next day saying, Congratulations! first WP record of Wahlberg's Eagle. Ahmed also sent the photos to Sherif Baha el Din and Uffe Gjol Sorensen, who both agreed it was a Wahlberg's Eagle, a species widely but unevenly distributed across much of sub-Saharan Africa.

Some populations of Wahlberg's Eagle are thought to be resident, but South African birds are known to migrate north for the austral winter, with some almost making it as far as the Sahel. Therefore, the May arrival of this bird fitted nicely with northbound post breeding migration of a bird from southern Africa overshooting its wintering range (probably) in Eritrea. The record was accepted by the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee and published in their 2014-2017 report.

Pics. 306–307.
Yellow-throated Warbler, Poço de Água, Corvo, 17th October 2013.
Photos:
© David Monticelli (right),
© Vincent Legrand (below).





Yellow-throated Warbler *Setophaga dominica*

2013 Azores: First-winter, Ribeira do Poço de Água, Corvo, 16th to 17th October (Monticelli *et al*. 2018).

Josh Jones, a long time member of the *BirdGuides* team, was on his third annual visit to Corvo in October 2013. He had seen plenty of good birds but with just two days of his trip left he was still hoping to find a real quality bird himself, but despite putting the hours in, the best he had found so far was a Red-eyed Vireo. After a couple of days of inclement weather, Wednesday, 16th October dawned sunny and calm, the sort of weather Corvo rarity finders long for. Josh headed for the upper parts of Poço d'Agua, an area of juniper, brambles and low laurel bushes that he suspected had rarity potential. To begin with, he worked his way to the bottom of the juniper, which produced a couple of Blackcaps. Hoping for something better he turned his attention to the final bush and caught sight of a bird in flight that even with the naked eye looked really special, typically it dived into cover. Josh suspected an American wood warbler and his suspicions were confirmed when he made out two wing-bars through his bins. The manner in which it was creeping about the branches put him in mind of Black-and-White Warbler but as best as he could make out through the tangle of branches, the upperparts were a more uniform grey, thus making Myrtle Warbler a possibility.

Then it stuck its head out, revealing a black, white and yellow head pattern and all these thoughts vanished in an instant as Josh tried to come to terms with the realisation he was watching a Yellow-throated Warbler (Pics. 306-307), a first for the Western Palearctic! He fumbled for his radio and pressing the transmit button began shouting YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER in the hope someone would hear. Fortunately it was picked up, but before anyone arrived it disappeared. Birders spread out searching the immediate area around upper Poço de Água and an anxious 45 minutes passed before Michael Fricke refound it about 100 metres further up the valley, allowing most to get on it before it was last seen that first day and the few that missed out were mighty relieved when it was there again for a final time the following day, when it put on a real show, coming as close as five metres. It was aged as a first-winter on account of the brown wash to the flank and remiges, but it could not be sexed conclusively.

It was accepted by the CPR and published in their 2013/2014 report (Tipper *et al*. 2019). To date it remains the only record for the Western Palearctic.

White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis*

2013 Western Sahara: Tachektent, Oued Ad-Dahab Province, 5th to 6th December (Jacobs *et al*. 2018).

On Thursday, 5th December 2013, Hervé Jacob and Noëlle Jacob were awaiting the arrival of sandgrouse at a well-known waterhole at Tachektent (variously known as Gleib Jédiane, Gleib Jdiane or Gleb Jdiane) that is situated on the main N3 road between the port of Dakhla and Aousserd. As they waited, a bee-eater was spotted perched on top of a Tamarisk, remaining there for about ten minutes until a 'Desert' Great Grey Shrike began harassing it, eventually chasing it away. As the sandgrouse turned out to be a no-show, both Hervé and Noëlle decided to return the next day, where on their arrival they discovered the bee-eater was still present. Using the car as a hide they attempted to get in close for a photo but all they managed was some really poor video footage (which can be viewed on the MaghrebOrnitho website [accessed February 2023]), all the more pity as they had not taken any photos the previous day. Some time later they identified the bird as a White-throated Bee-eater, a species that breeds along the semi-desert regions along the southern edge of the Sahara.

Back home they reported the record to the Commission d'Homologation Marocaine (Moroccan Rare Birds Committee) and much to their surprise were informed that not only was it a new bird for Morocco but a first for the Western Palearctic also. The record was accepted by the committee and published in their 2014 report (Bergier *et al*. 2015). White-throated Bee-eater is a migratory species with the nearest breeding grounds across the border in Mauritania, so the natural occurrence of the species at Tachektent is not that unexpected. Indeed, the second record for the Western Palarctic was also in Western Sahara at the Hotel Dakhla Attitude, located about 23km northeast of Dakhla in the northern reaches of Dakhla Bay from 28th February to 1st May 2017.

Pacific Eider *Somateria mollissima v-nigrum*

2014 Norway: Adult male, Vardø, Troms og Finnmark, 19th February to 18th April (Olsen *et al*. 2016).

Pic. 308.
Pacific Eider (bottom right), Vardø, 21st March 2014.
Photo: Tormod Amundsen © Biotope.



Biotope is an architectural practice that works solely on nature projects. Their office in Vardø is equipped with a Swarovski telescope, which is often used to scan the rafts of Common Eider (and less frequent King and Steller's Eiders) that are a regular sight from their office. On Wednesday, 19th February 2014, Alonza Garbett (architect and birder at Biotope) was manning the scope and despite a heavy snow storm outside he managed to pick out an eider with an orange bill among the Common Eiders. Using a phone/scope combination, Alonza took a series of photos of the bird that he posted on Twitter (Pics. 309-310). The photos were seen by the late Martin Garner, who raised the question of whether this could possibly be an eider of the form *v-nigrum* (Pacific Eider) that breeds along the Arctic and Pacific coasts of northeast Siberia and northwest Canada and Alaska and winters in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands.

The birds drifted south, so when Alonza and Tormod Amundsen (Biotope's CEO) searched for the bird they had no luck relocating it later that day. The following morning at 07:30 both headed out and about one hour later Tormod discovered a raft of 60 Common, eight Steller's and two King Eiders and in their midst, with its bright orange bill clearly visible, was the Pacific Eider. After a few minutes they all took off and headed towards Bussesundet, a shallow body of water between Vardøya and mainland Norway, a place where eiders gather to feed. Tormod, Alonza and local birder and photographer Kjell Ørjan Lyngmo headed to the bird hide at Steilnes (overlooking Bussesundet), soon spotting three huge rafts of eider.

There was no sign of the *v-nigrum* in either of the nearest two, however in the furthest off (holding 600+ birds), Tormod just about managed to pick the Pacific Eider out with his eyepiece set at 70x. Just as it seemed that the eider were about to drift

Pics. 309–310.
Pacific Eider (orange bill), Vardø, 19th February 2014.
Photos: Alonza Garbett © Biotope.





away even further south and out of sight, they turned and started heading back north, eventually all 600+ taking flight and passing right in front of the hide at distances down to 50 metres. Tormod concentrated on finding the bright orange bill and there it was, right in the middle of the flock. They agreed the bird stood out from the rest, particularly as its head shape seemed stretched when compared with other eiders present. It remained until 18th April and was accepted by the NSKF as a Pacific Eider and published in their 2013/2014 report as a first for Norway and the Western Palearctic (Pic. 308). Many male Pacific Eiders show a black 'vee' pattern along the throat, which is reflected in the scientific name.

Kamchatka Gull *Larus canus kamtschatschensis*

2014 Ireland: Adult, Black Rock Strand, Kerry, 6th March (IRBC 2025).

At lunchtime on Thursday, 6th March 2014, Kerry birder David O'Connor paid a visit to Black Rock Strand near Ballyheigue, Kerry. Apart from two Glaucous Gulls it was otherwise quiet and was on the point of leaving when an odd-looking Common Gull resting on the beach caught his attention.

Pics. 311–313.
Kamchatka Gull, Black Rock Strand, Kerry, 6th March 2014.
Photos: © David O'Connor.







It was a big adult bird that stood out from the 30 or so accompanying Common Gulls by virtue of its strikingly darker mantle and when compared to other Common Gulls present it appeared longer and the forehead more gently-sloped. He took some photos before it and the whole group took flight, managing only a few mediocre flight shots before it disappeared over the dunes (Pics. 311-313). That evening, David wrote up his notes while things were still fresh in his mind sent the photos to some local Kerry birders and Killian Mullarney. Killian suggested the gull looked more like the far-east Russian Common Gull subspecies, *kamtschatschensis* (aka Kamchatka Gull) than the Russian subspecies *heinei* and urged David to follow it up with better images, especially of the open wing, but despite returning to the site repeatedly over the next few days, there were no further sightings of the bird. A paper published in Dutch Birding on the identification of the Common Gull complex by Peter Adriaens and Chris Gibbins (Adriaens & Gibbins 2016) prompted David to send his photographs to the authors.

To his great delight they responded immediately stating the bird appeared to be a fully identifiable Kamchatka Gull, with Peter Adriaens in particular providing detailed insights into his reasoning. David submitted his photos and description to the IRBC, and following a detailed and lengthy review it has been accepted as a first Irish and Western Palearctic record of this Common Gull subspecies. The decision is announced on the IRBC website and the record will be formally accepted in the 2023 Irish Rare Bird Report, which is expected to be published in summer 2026.



Pic. 314.
Variable Wheatear,
Liyah Reserve, 24th March 2014.
Photo: © Rashed Al-Hajji.

Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*

2014 Kuwait: Liyah Reserve, Jahra, 24th March (KORC 2015).

On Monday, 24th March 2014, Rashed Al-Hajji was watching Pied Wheatears at Liyah Reserve. His attention was drawn to one of the wheatears present that was behaving more like a Redstart and he concluded it must surly be a different species of wheatear.

For much of the 30 minutes Rashed watched the bird, it remained perched in a tree, apart from those times it dropped down to feed on insects. He shot some video and took some photos, finally concluding it was a Variable Wheatear and he submitted it to the KORC as such. His description and images were also sent to birders in the UAE where Variable Wheatear winters and all agreed with his identification (Pic. 314). An earlier 1986 record from near Eilat, Israel has been rejected following a review and re-accepted as a Basalt Wheatear.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna tenuirostris*

2014 Kuwait: Kuwait Bay, 24th May (Kuwait RC).

On Saturday, 24th May 2014, Omar Al-Shaheen, Homoud Al-Shayji and Abdulaziz Al-Yousef took part in a pelagic on Kuwait Bay. They departed Kuwait Yacht Club's marina at 13:40 on a fine sunny day with light airs and temperatures in the high 20s°/low 30s°C. Just ten minutes into the trip they saw a dark bird flying across the Bay at sea level. Curious, they followed, all the time taking photos (Pics. 315-317). It was clearly a shearwater and most likely a Sooty and it was duly accepted as the second Sooty Shearwater for Kuwait.

In 2021, the Kuwait Rarity Committee reviewed all Sooty Shearwater records. As part of the review, photos of the 2014 bird were sent to seabird expert Robert Flood, who confidently identified it as a Short-tailed Shearwater, a species that breeds in southern Australia and Tasmania. This replaces the previously accepted first, which was at Saint-Brieuc Bay, Côtes-d'Armor, Brittany, France on 9th September 2015 (Touzé & le CHN 2022).



Pics. 315–317.
Short-tailed Shearwater,
Kuwait Bay, 24th May 2014.
Photo: © Omar Al-Shaheen.





Northern Shrike *Lanius borealis*

2014 Azores: Juvenile, Lighthouse Valley, Ribeiras da Ponte and Poço de Água, Corvo, 18th to 30th October (Hansen 2015).

On Saturday, 18th October 2014, Jens Søgaard Hansen and others were out early and even though it had produced little in the past few days, they headed for Lighthouse Valley on Corvo's east coast. The Valley is one of the most birded locations on the island and is where the Western Palearctic's first Prairie Warbler and second Golden-winged Warbler were found in October 2012. They began by working the lower reaches without much success, so after it started raining heavily and with no better options, Jens decided to head for the upper part of the valley, an area less frequently visited.

He had only gone 50 metres when he saw an unfamiliar bird perching in a small tree. It took him a moment to realise it was a shrike, a Great Grey Shrike and one more European species to add to the Common Redpoll, Golden Plover and Dotterel he had found during the previous couple of days. Jens couldn't help experiencing some regret, as most birders know the feeling, you simply do not go all the way to Corvo to look for birds you could just as well be finding back home, and it's the major American vagrants that are the primary target. He broadcast the news over CB radio and it didn't take long for the first birders to arrive. It was clearly a Great Grey Shrike but where did it come from and which one of the many subspecies was it? It did look a little strange, being heavily barred underneath and rather pale and it was even heard to sing at one point (Pics. 318-319). Darryl Spittle left to inform others of the bird but soon returned with the news that Pierre-André Crochet went all bananas! He says it's a *borealis*, the North American Northern Shrike!



Pic. 318.
Northern Shrike,
Corvo, October 2014.
Photo: © Jens Søgaard Hansen
(left).

Pic. 319.
Northern Shrike,
Corvo, October 2014.
Photo: © David Monticelli
(below).



As more birders began to arrive, the shrike moved further up the valley, eventually becoming lost to view as it neared the edge of the Caldeirão (a collapsed volcano crater). The following day Jens and Christian Leth refound it at the bottom of the Caldeirão, allowing all those who had dipped the previous day to catch up. The bird remained on the island until 30th October and was seen at several sites during its prolonged stay.

Northern Shrike breeds across northernmost North America and winters further south. It has variously been treated as a subspecies of Great Grey Shrike or as a separate species, which is the current status *per* the IOC. It was accepted by the Comité Português de Raridades and published in their 2018/2019 report (Tipper *et al*. 2021). The Siberian subspecies *sibericus* is also on the Western Palearctic list. The first record was shot at Hamar, Innlandet, Norway on 5th November 1881. Sub-specific identification was verified using DNA-sequencing (see page 37).

Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius*

2015 Western Sahara: Female, near the KM48 post on the Aousserd to Dakhla Road, 3rd May (Dyczkowski 2016), killed.

Just after midnight on Sunday, 3rd May 2015, Jurek Dyczkowski and Rafal Smykala were spotlighting for mammals near the KM48 post on the Dakhla to Aousserd road. All around them was bare stoney desert where only a few weeds and stunted Acacia trees managed to survive. Much to their surprise a nightjar suddenly took off and crossing the road collided with their car and was killed. Contrary to expectations, when the carcass was examined it was not the indigenous Egyptian Nightjar, nor a migrant European Nightjar, rather it was a Golden Nightjar, a species found across much of northern sub-Saharan Africa. Identification was straightforward, as no other nightjar shows a combination of large white wing-patches, contrasting bars on the flight-feathers and a golden-buff plumage (Pics. 320-321).





Pics. 320–321.
Golden Nightjar (killed in a collision with a car), Aousserd to Dakhla Road, 3rd May 2015.
Photos: © Jurek Dyczkowski.

The nearest location to KM48 the species was known to occur is southern Mauritania, roughly 600km distant. Jurek and Rafel took the specimen to Dakhla and offered it to Taoufik El Balla at the Association Nature Initiative, however he declined the offer as he had no means of preserving the specimen properly. Instead, after it was photographed and a full description taken, flight and contour feathers were deposited at the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin. The record was accepted by the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee in their 2015 report (Fareh *et al*. 2016).

Breeding in the Western Palearctic was confirmed on 17th March 2019, when an adult Golden Nightjar was observed protecting two young at Oued Chiaf, about 55km northwest of Aousserd.

Eastern Wood Pewee *Contopus virens*

2015 Azores: First calendar-year, Lighthouse Valley, Corvo, 18th to 24th October (Monticelli *et al*. 2018).

On Saturday, 17th October 2015, the largest fall of Nearctic landbirds since 2005 occurred on Corvo, with no fewer than 20 individuals comprised of ten species that included two Philadelphia Vireos, an Ovenbird and a Blue-winged Warbler. First thing the following morning Pierre-André Crochet, René-Marie Lafontaine, Vincent Legrand and Darryl Spittle headed to Lighthouse Valley on Corvo's east coast; their expectations were high. They first checked both sides of the Lower Valley, then followed the stream up through a small *Pittosporum* wood. As they walked along, Pierre-André noticed movement in dense *Hydrangea* undergrowth on the opposite side of the stream and getting it in his bins, realised it was a Northern Parula, a tick for many on the island, so Pierre-André was sent out of the valley to get [a] radio and telephone signal and spread the news about the parula. However, he hadn't gone very far when he spotted a bird flycatching on the top of a lone tree [that] immediately stopped him in his tracks.



Pic. 322.
Eastern Wood Pewee, Corvo, 20th October 2015. The 1st Western Palearctic record.
Photo: © Vincent Legrand.

It reminded him somewhat of Spotted Flycatcher, but with a long tail and prominent wing bars, uniform underparts with dark chest-sides. Pierre-André immediately got on the radio and shouted American flycatcher, however, before he could make out more details, and just as Darryl Spittle arrived beside him, the bird took flight and disappeared into the vegetation. When it became apparent it was not going to return, all four birders spread out, but after an hour or so of fruitless searching it was decided that Pierre-André should leave and find a spot where his radio signal would reach a wider audience. Despite brief views of the bird, he was confident it was neither a Palearctic flycatcher nor an *Empidonax,* so when the news was broadcast he mentioned both the Parula and an American flycatcher, [stressing it was] **NOT** an *Empidonax*. By the time other birders had made their way to Lighthouse Valley, two hours had passed since it was last seen. Consulting Sibley's *North American Bird Guide*, Pierre-André concluded it could only have been a pewee and therefore one of about 15 species of the genus *Contopus* (New World tyrant flycatchers) and therefore a first Western Palearctic record. It was Pierre-André's tenth autumn on Corvo and he had found the big one, but it had disappeared before it could be identified to species and he badly needed it to be refound.

Graeme Joynt decided to expand the area he was searching and headed off down the slope that follows the stream towards the coastal cliffs and took up a position with a good view across the valley. Once there, he heard a clear *pee-a-wee* call from the dense vegetation, immediately identifying the guilty party as Eastern Wood Pewee, a tyrant flycatcher that breeds across much of temperate eastern North America, and a species he had seen and heard during many trips to the USA. He played its call on a tape and out popped a Blackcap, a Chaffinch and finally and incredibly, an Eastern Wood Pewee! It sat out in clear view at the top of a small dead tree allowing Graeme to confirm the identity beyond any doubt. He quickly got on the radio, announcing I've got the bird further down the valley and it's an Eastern Wood Pewee. It was action stations for all birders as they galloped down the slope, eventually flushing the bird, which promptly disappeared before anyone else managed to see it!



Pic. 323.
Eastern Wood Pewee, Poço d'Agua, Corvo, 23rd October 2015. The 2nd Western Palearctic record. Photo: © David Monticelli.

An anxious hour would pass before Graeme refound it back where Pierre-André had first seen it, further up the valley. It obliged all those present by giving excellent views, provided plenty of photo opportunities and was sound-recorded, which provided sufficient evidence to confirm the identification (Pic. 322). It remained for a further six days until last seen on 24th October.

Remarkably, a second Eastern Wood Pewee was found soon after by Peter Alfrey at nearby Poco D'Agua. On 20th October, he had successfully twitched the bird in Lighthouse Valley in the company of Darryl Spittle. They had arranged for a lift back to the village, but when they got back to the rendezvous point there was no sign of the taxi, so both set off on foot! As they approached the bridge at Poço d'Agua, Peter saw a bird perched on top of a dead branch, which he immediately realised was an Eastern Wood Pewee. Turning to Darryl he said, It's the pewee, it's followed us here, I could have seen this from the taxi (Pic. 323). They put the news out that the pewee was now at Poço d'Agua, but soon received confirmation that it was still present at Lighthouse Valley. The second bird was also aged as a first calendar-year and it remained to 23rd October. All five WP records to date have been on Corvo, the 2015 birds were followed by singles in 2018, 2020 and 2023.

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea*

2015 Iraq: Dalmaj, Middle Euphrates, 22nd October (Salim *et al*. 2019).

This bird was observed on Thursday, 22nd October 2015 by a member of the Iraqi Organization for Conservation of Nature (IOCN) during one of their regular biodiversity surveys at Dalmaj (a region in the upper parts of southern Iraq), an area of arid and desert land, interspersed with shrubs and scattered small thorny trees. When first observed it was perched in a tree, where it proved to be elusive and difficult to get a clear view of and just when the observer attempted to take a photo, it took off and flew away. Although a written description was taken, the record was not published at the time as photographic evidence was required to support a first record.

On Monday, 7th January 2019, a Speckled Pigeon was shot by a hunter on agricultural land at Rumeitha, Samawa district (roughly midway between Baghdad and Basra). This bird (including a photograph) was brought to the attention of the IOCN, who immediately sent researchers to the location to study the area. When both the Dalmaj's and Rumeitha's bird's details were studied (including descriptions of the habitats they where found in) they compared favourably. Happy that both were Speckled Pigeons, the IOCN added the species to the checklist of the birds of Iraq. These represent the first two Iraqi and Western Palearctic records of this mainly sub-Saharan species.

A possible earlier record involved a single male found in a cage in a market at Diwaniya (southern Iraq) on 18th September 2014. When this bird was discovered it was sharing the cage with Collared and Laughing Doves. It was found by an IOCN member during a regular check of caged birds, a policy adopted by the IOCN as part of the 'Sustainable Hunting Project in Iraq' project. As it could not be established where the bird was first obtained, it can not be considered a first record.

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*

2015 Kuwait: Royal Family Farm, near Salmi, 9th November to at least 2nd December and probably in subsequent years (KORC 2016).



Pic. 324.
Black Drongo,
Salmi, November 2015.
Photo: © Pekka Fågel (above).



Pic. 325.
Black Drongo,
Salmi, November 2015.
Photo: © Omar Al-Shaheen (right).

On Monday, 9th November 2015, Omar Al-Shaheen was birding at Al-Abraq Al-Khabari, a small oasis farm in the western Kuwait desert that is owned by Sheikh Sabah al Sabah of the Kuwait Royal Family. The Sheikh described a strange bird he had seen, but Omar was unable to identify it from the description, so he suggested that Omar should accompany him to the Royal Family Farm near Salmi as the bird was still present.

However, when they got there he told Omar there was no bird and he just wanted to take lunch with him. Omar smiled, but he wasn't very happy to have been tricked. The Sheikh seemed to recognise Omar's disappointment at having his birding interrupted, so pointing to a farm building said, see that bird over-there. From some distance off and with the naked eye, Omar initially thought it was an Ashy Drongo but when he got it in his bins he was shocked to see it was the closely related Black Drongo (Pics. 324-325), a species found across much of tropical southern Asia! He took photos and broadcast the news on the local birding group, then took lunch with the Sheikh, who kindly granted permission for birders to visit the Royal Farm to see the Black Drongo. It remained until at least 2nd December.

Vega Gull *Larus vegae*

2016 Ireland: Adult winter, Duncannon, Wexford, 10th to 13th January (Mullarney 2016).

This Eastern Palearctic gull was found by Killian Mullarney, just south of the fishing village of Duncannon. While scanning a group of about 40 (mainly) Herring Gulls on Friday, 10th January 2003, his attention was drawn to an adult gull with darker upperparts that once viewed in his scope reminded him of gulls he has seen in photos taken at Choshi in Japan.

Pics. 326–328.
Vega Gull, Duncannon, January 2016.
Photos: © Paul Kelly (below left), © Killian Mullarney (below right & bottom).







Killian took some photos and viewing them in his camera's LCD screen he considered the bird was a good candidate for Vega Gull, a species that breeds on islands and sea-cliffs in Arctic and sub-Arctic Siberia. Returning home he checked the literature and emailed his photos to gull experts Peter Adriaens and Chris Gibbons, requesting their evaluation of the bird's identity and a nervous wait ensued. Both Peter and Chris agreed without equivocation the bird was indeed a Vega Gull. It was present for just a couple of hours the following morning and only very intermittently after that until last seen on 13th January (Pics. 326-328).

Pics. 329–332.
African Grey Woodpecker, north-east of Ouadâne, 11th April 2016.
Photos: © Eric Didner.



African Grey Woodpecker *Dendropicos goertae*

2016 Mauritania: Guelb er Richat (or Richat Structure), northeast of Ouadâne, 11th April (Didner & BirdGuides 2016).

On Monday, 11th April 2016, Eric Didner was birding to the northeast of Ouadâne, a small town in the desert region of west-central Mauritania. There he found an African Grey Woodpecker (Pics. 329-332) that was frequenting large Acacias close to the Richat Structure (a deeply eroded geologically feature that is exposed above ground as a slightly elliptical dome with a diameter of 40km).

Eric's discovery was not totally unexpected, as breeding African Grey Woodpeckers had previously been discovered at Ouadâne, which lies just eight kilometres south of the Western Palearctic border (at 21°N per BWP boundary) and the species was known to be a rains or winter visitor to the Adrar region, perhaps coming as far north as 20°N.

Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*

2016 At sea/Azores: Subadult, between Corvo and Flores, 14th April (Tipper *et al*. 2019).

This bird represents the first time a Cape Gannet was specifically identified within the Western Palearctic (Pics. 333-334).

Pics. 333–334.
Cape Gannet, at sea between Corvo and Flores, 14th April 2016.
Photos: © Carlos Mendes.





Previously, a bird observed at a fixed installation platform, 30km east of Tarragona, Spain in late January 1985, was originally accepted as Cape Gannet, however a later reassessment by the Comité de Rarezas (Spanish Rarity Committee) concluded it could only be accepted as either a Cape or an Australian Gannet.

An even earlier record recovered on a Russian fishing vessel in May 1966, which was supposedly sailing off the coast of Western Sahara at the time, was probably placed within the WP in error (see Crochet & Haas 2008 for more details). The origin and provenance of a 19th Century record from Scotland is uncertain.

Sulphur-bellied Warbler *Phylloscopus griseolus*

2016 Denmark: Christiansø, Bornholm, 30th May to 3rd June (Klein 2016).

On Monday, 30th May 2016, Sebastian Klein took the boat to the Danish island of Christiansø, situated about 18km northeast of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea. He arrived at 11:00 and after a few hours birding he found a singing Blyth's Reed Warbler. A little later on he heard a bird call a peculiar *djep*, which he realised was made by a *Phylloscopus* warbler perched in a small bush. Thinking it was just a Willow Warbler, Sebastian resumed watching the Blyth's Reed. Peter Lyngs then came to join him and they both heard the *Phyllosc* call again, then watched as it flew right past them and land in a nearby tree. They both agreed the call was not right for Willow Warbler and its yellow supercilium seemed much longer than would be normally expected. Both Sebastian and Peter were familiar with most Western Palearctic *Phylloscs* but this bird did not match any of them and left them utterly confused!

A couple of minutes passed and they heard the bird start to sing, which sounded a bit like that of Lesser Whitethroat or perhaps a Linnet, a development that only added to their confusion. Even the arrival of Lars Christiansen, Anders Myrtue and Hans Ole Mathiessen failed to shed any light on the identity, so they took photos and made sound recordings of the call and song and texted the images to others asking for help with the identity.

Pics. 335–336.
Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Christiansø, 30th May 2016.
Photos: © Christian Leth.





Meanwhile, Sebastian checked *Xeno Canto* for pretty much every rare Asian warbler-species [he] could possibly think of, streaming Tickell's, Yellow-streaked, Tytler's and Pale-legged Warbler's calls and songs, but none was a match for what was heard. Then, by a stroke of luck, Henrik Haaning Nielsen, who had seen the photos, suggested Sulphur-bellied Warbler, a species Sebastian had previously seen in India. A quick check of the call and song on *Xeno Canto* settled any doubts, it was indeed a Sulphur-bellied Warbler (Pics. 335-336). It remained to 3rd June.

Cinnamon Teal *Spatula cyanoptera*

2016 Morocco: Male, Salines de Oualidia, Doukkala, 8th October (Fareh *et al*. 2018).

In every way, this bird was observed to act and behave like a wild bird. It was identified to the migratory subspecies *septentrionalium* that breeds across western North America and winters from southern USA to northern Colombia. It was established by the Commission d'Homologation Marocaine that the species was not kept in captivity in any of the various large Moroccan animal parks, nor was it offered for sale as an ornamental bird anywhere in Morocco.

Although there are earlier occurrences of Cinnamon Teal that appear to display some credentials of wild origin (*e.g.* Scott 2004a), the likelihood of escape from wildfowl collections has meant that records have been treated with suspicion and consequently assigned to Category E, however this bird has been accepted as a Category A record by the CHM.

Pale-legged Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus tenellipes*

2016 England: Lighthouse Garden, St. Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 21st October (Headon *et al*. 2018), found dead.

Around midday on Friday, 21st October 2016, a *Phylloscopus* warbler was killed in a collision with the lighthouse on St. Agnes. Feathers retrieved from the bird were sent for DNA analysis, which confirmed it was a Pale-legged Leaf Warbler (Pic. 337), native to extreme northeast Asia.

Pic. 337.
Pale-legged Leaf Warbler, found dead in St. Agnes Lighthouse Garden, 21st October 2016.
Photo: © Laurence Pitcher.





Pic. 338.
Asian House Martin,
found dead near the Cape of Ventė,
28th October 2016.
Photo: © Vytautas Jusys.

A warbler observed in a garden at Southwell on the Isle of Portland, Dorset, England on Monday, 22nd October 2012 was either a Pale-legged or the very similar Sakhalin Leaf Warbler *P. borealoides*. Despite the availability of many excellent pictures, it has not been possible to specifically identify the bird (Saunders 2012). The behaviour slightly favoured Sakhalin Leaf Warbler.

Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus*

2016 Lithuania: Ventės Ragas, 28th October (Jusys 2022), found dead.

This bird was picked up dead near the Ventės Ragas Ornithological Station buildings at Cape of Ventė on the shore of the Curonian Lagoon (a freshwater lagoon located between Curonian Spit and the Baltic Sea). When found, the head was damaged, probably by a Great Tit (Pic. 338). The identity was not established for a few years until DNA analysis of the specimen was carried out.

Pic. 339.
American Tree Sparrow, Torreberga, 13th November 2016.
Photo: © Ronny Malm.



American Tree Sparrow *Spizelloides arborea*

2016 Sweden: Torreberga, Skåne, near Malmö, 12th to 18th November (Fors 2017).

On Saturday, 12th November 2016, Simon Fors realised he had a free hour-and-a-half to go birding on an otherwise busy day, so he decided to head to Torreberga, which was the nearest option. On a fine day with clear skies and 5°C temperature, Simon set off walking the embankment at Torreberga, where he saw some Blue Tits, a pair of Dunnocks and a noisy Water Rail. Reaching the meadows, he noted about 1,000 Barnacle Geese, some Lapwing, Golden Plover and Common Snipe. As Simon was heading back to his car he saw a sparrow-like bird climb a nearby tree. Getting it in his bins he could see it had a striped back, grey face and a reddish crest. It flitted about for a bit, then flew to another tree where Simon took some photos of it, and later at a pond about 100 metres further along.

Using his mobile phone, he took a photograph of the bird in the camera's LCD screen and sent it to Oskar Nilsson, who immediately called back saying it's something new, it's something American! Simon then had to call his partner and explain he would not be coming back for a while and their planned visit to the Nova Shopping Centre was cancelled! About 30 minutes later Oskar, Petter Olsson and Karl-Erik Splittorff arrived, by which time the bird had been identified as an American Tree Sparrow (Pic. 339). They made a search of the area and soon found it perched in a tree that was just off the embankment, then it flew down towards a pond.

As more birders arrived, it was refound foraging near the same pond. It was not until those present discussed the status of American Tree Sparrow in the Western Palearctic that Simon realised he had found a first for the region! This beautiful bird remained to 18th November and delighted everyone that twitched it.

Pics. 340.
Red-winged Blackbird, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 30th April 2017.
Photo: © Sam Viles.



Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*

2017 Scotland: Female, Garso, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 29th April to 14th May (Davies 2019).

Simon Davies, in his role as Principal Assistant Warden at North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory, had carried out census work during the morning of Saturday, 29th April 2017. As he made his way back to the Obs, he heard a strange little *chup* call while passing by the house at Garso. Turning, he saw a Starling-sized bird land on some gas bottles. He first considered the possibility it was a Redwing but that was before he got a clear view of the entire bird, now only about 15 metres away. Overall, it was a heavily streaked stocky brown bird with a broad supercilium, yellow chin and two white wing-bars. Simon was completely stumped but reasoned it must be a 'Yank' and running through the various possibilities in his head, he eventually remembered seeing Red-winged Blackbirds in Texas and thought, GOD... it might actually be a Red-winged Blackbird (Pic. 340). It flew up onto some wires, where it perched for a short while before dropping down into a bed of Irises.

Simon phoned others on the island with news of an odd bird at Garso, telling them it's American and mega, not 100% certain what it is but best guess is Red-winged Blackbird. Soon Harris Brooker, Sam Perfect and Larissa Simulik arrived and after about 15 minutes, the bird flew up from the Irises and returned to the gas bottles. Larissa, a Canadian, tentatively agreed with [Simon's] first thoughts, as did Pete Donnelly, who arrived shortly afterwards. The news was broadcast to the wider world and birders began making plans to get to North Ronaldsay. For most of its time at Garso it gave great views as it moved between the gas bottles and the Iris bed, where it fed. Towards the end of its stay this pattern changed somewhat and it became less tied to the gas bottles and would often fly up onto overhead wires and flycatch. The possibility it was an escape or ship assisted was considered but dismissed. It remained until 14th May and the record was accepted by the BBRC and BOURC following just a single circulation. A great many 19th Century records in Britain were judged to be either escapes or frauds.

Pic. 341.
White-winged Crossbill, Seltjörn, Reykjanes Peninsula, 25th November 2017.
Photo: © Yann Kolbeinsson.



White-winged Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera leucoptera*

2017 Iceland: Male, Seltjörn, between Reykjanesbær and Grindavík, Reykjanes Peninsula, 14th to 25th November (Jones & Robb 2017).

On Tuesday, 14th November 2017, Gummi Falk found and photographed a male Two-barred Crossbill at Seltjörn on the Reykjanes Peninsula (Pic. 341). It represented just the second national record of the species, following a male at Stöðvarfjörður in August 2009. Some of the bird's features* suggested it was most likely an example of the nominate Nearctic form, known as White-winged Crossbill. In order to confirm these suspicions it would be necessary to compare sound recordings of the male bird at Seltjörn with those of the Eurasian subspecies *bifasciata*. Gummi Falk and Gunnar Hallgrimsson relocated the bird on 15th November and, apart from taking additional photos, made sound recordings. In total, three different call types were sent to Magnus Robb (of the Sound Approach team) to use in comparison tests with those of *bifasciata*.

Both forms can be identified to type by comparing sonograms of their calls and songs, then checking for known differences that are consistent for males and females of all ages. Magnus compared Gunnar's recordings with examples of *leucoptera* he made at Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario, Canada and examples of *bifasciata* he made in the Netherlands. He discovered the closest matches were found when he compared the excitement calls of the Icelandic bird with those of the Canadian bird; they were pretty much identical. This, and other vocal comparisons carried out by Magnus, confirmed the Seltjörn bird as a White-winged Crossbill, a first for the Western Palearctic.

* In contrast to the Eurasian *bifasciata,* it is pinkish rather than crimson-red in colour, more lightweight in structure, with a longer, more slender and tapered bill, with the upper mandible extending beyond the lower mandible and fine white tips to the tertials.

Pics. 342–343.
Pale Martin, two of three present, Jahra Pools, November 2018.
Photos: © AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan.





Pale (Sand) Martin *Riparia diluta*

2017 Kuwait: Three, Jahra Pools Reserve, 26th November, with two remaining to 15th December (KORC 2018).

Markus Craig and Neil Tovey visited Jahra Pools on Sunday, 26th November to look for the probable Grey-throated Martin (at that point the identity had yet to be confirmed) found there two days earlier by Markus. An hour passed without any sign of the bird, so they decided to split up and head to different parts of the reserve. Neil moved to one side of the beach area and Markus to the other.

As Neil was scanning across marshy land, he noticed three Hirundines a good distance away sitting on barbed wire in the middle of the marsh. He quickly got them in his scope and within seconds he knew they were Pale Martins, a species of sand martin he was very familiar with, having seen them several times in both the UAE (including an incredible flock of 80+ birds) and India.

He called Markus, who was pretty much opposite him, and who was also watching the same three birds and had also come to the same conclusion (Pics. 342-343). They put the news out immediately and a number of local birders managed to get there in time to see them that same day. Later on, the Grey-throated Martin was relocated and at one point Neil and Markus were watching all four martins at the same time! Two of the three Pale Martins were present until the following 15th December and during that time a number of WP listers also made the pilgrimage to Kuwait for a first record. The polytypic Pale Martin's forms were previously treated as subspecies of Sand Martin.

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*

2018 Turkey: Kizilirmak Delta Bird Sanctuary, 11th March (Jones 2018).

Kizilirmak Delta Wetland and Bird Sanctuary is situated on Turkey's Black Sea coast, about 40km east of the seaport of Samsun. In 2018, the area was named in UNESCO's Tentative list of World Heritage Sites. On Sunday, 11th March 2018, Emin Yoğurtcuoğlu was undertaking project work at the Delta as part of the region's candidature, when he received a photo of a bird by text that he was asked to identify. Emin replied it was a Grey-headed Lapwing, only to be told the bird was much closer than might be imagined and was currently present in the Delta!

Pic. 344.
Grey-headed Lapwing, Kizilirmak Delta, 11th March 2018.
Photo: © Emin Yoğurtcuoğlu.



Emin was convinced this was a wind-up, however another of the project team, who was sitting beside him in the car, received the same image and asked Emin the same question. Emin replied it was a Grey-headed Lapwing, from northeastern China and Japan, but advised him to ignore it as it was clearly someone's idea of a joke. But his team-mate became very serious and told him, no it's not a joke, it's in the delta found by a ranger! Emin asked for the location, which turned out to be just three kilometres away, and even though he still wasn't 100% convinced, he put his foot down and belted it. Getting to the site, they found Mustafa Akca (one of the Wetland's Rangers) and his wife waiting for them, who immediately showed them the bird, it was no joke, they were watching a Grey-headed Lapwing! They learned it was first observed as it strolled across the ruins of illegally-constructed holiday cottages that had been pulled down by order of the Samsun City President, in order to protect the reserve's integrity.

Using the car as a hide they both watched and photographed the bird (Pic. 344). About 15 minutes later it took off, disappearing from view, not good news for the great many birders planning to twitch it and especially for the two dozen or so who were already on their way from Samsun. Fortunately Emin refound the bird at a hill pond not far from the holiday cottage ruins and it was still at this location when the first birders arrived. Emin was sure it would hang about into the next day, but there was no sign of it the following morning and despite the 100+ birders searching the area it was never seen again. Sometime later Mustafa told Emin that it was actually his wife (not a birder) who had first noticed the bird and they had only travelled to the Delta that day to have a picnic as Mustafa was off-duty. It was accepted by the Türkiye Kuş Kayıt Komitesi as a Category A record.

Pics. 345–346.
East Siberian Wagtail, Phasouri, 13th April 2018.
Photos: © Matthew Stephen Smith.





East Siberian Wagtail *Motacilla alba ocularis*

2018 Cyprus: Second calendar-year, Phasouri, Akrotiri, 28th March to 14th April (Moss 2020).

Jason Moss and Ashley Saunders were leading an *Oriole Birding* tour group to Cyprus, arriving there on 26th March 2018. On Wednesday, 28th March, they headed to the Akrotiri Peninsula, the southernmost point of the island. From the hide at the Phasouri reed-beds they saw Squacco Heron, Garganey and a couple of Water Pipits. At the same time, Jason noticed a striking female-type White Wagtail at the back of the pools [with] a sharply defined black eye-stripe (Pics. 345-346).

Before the rest of the group could get on it, the bird took off and was lost to view, but not for long as it was soon refound on flooded grassland nearby. It was clearly one of nine subspecies (*per* IOC) of White Wagtail, but they had to wait until back at the hotel when a check of the literature indicated the best fit was the northern Siberian to northwestern Alaskan form, *ocularis*, known as East Siberian Wagtail and this was later confirmed once Dave Appleton and Andy Stoddart were consulted. It remained to 14th April.

What was presumed to be the same individual was present once again from 30th March to 12th April 2019. There were no reports of the bird during 2020, however that was probably the result of strict Covid lockdown protocols in force for much of the time. In Spring 2021, Jane Stylianou (Chairperson of the Cyprus Rare Birds Committee) had fleeting views of a White Wagtail that appeared to show similar facial markings to *ocularis*, but it was too far off to make a definite identification and, despite subsequent searches of the area it was not refound. There is an earlier record just outside the BWP boundary of the Western Palearctic at Saadiyat island, Abu Dhabi, UAE on 7th November 2017.

Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*

2019 Kuwait: Kuwait Bay, 12th May (KORC 2019).

On Saturday, 12th May 2018, following two days of strong easterly winds, Markus Craig and Mike Pope were birding at Jahra Pools Reserve when Mike noticed a petrel in the far distance on Kuwait Bay.

It appeared to be an all-dark bird but was so far away it was impossible to make out any finer details. Over the next 30 minutes they observed the bird several times and, fortunately, the views gradually improved. An estimate of its size was made when it flew alongside an Arctic Skua, appearing to be about three-quarters the size of the skua. Markus and Mike last saw the bird as it flew parallel to the shore at a distance off of about 350 metres. Unfortunately, their attempts to photograph the bird were not very successful, this thanks to a combination of the distance involved, the rough state of the sea and the bird's erratic movements and in the end, all they managed were a couple of heavily blurred shots.

Once it had departed, the impression they were left with was of a larger version of Bulwer's Petrel, with a more robust head and bill. Ruling out all other all dark petrels that might be expected to occur in the wider Middle East, they concluded it was a Jouanin's Petrel, a species that is common in moderate numbers from spring to early autumn off the UAE and Oman and in the Gulf of Aden. Furthermore, it is quite frequently seen from the coast, especially off Oman, where coincidently, Markus had observed several just a few days previous. The description was sent to three external adjudicators who all agreed it was a Jouanin's Petrel and it was published in the 2018 report of the KORC.

The provenance of three (one collected) at Cinadolmo, Treviso, Italy on 2nd November 1953 has never been properly established. The identity was not in question, however, the suspicion was that sailors had carried them to the Mediterranean on board a ship (Snow & Perrins 1998).



Pics. 347-348.
Western Kingbird,
Ponta Delgada, 13th October 2018.
Photos: © Thijs Valkenberg.



Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis*

2018 Azores: Adult, Ponta Delgada, Flores, 13th to 14th October (Jones 2018).

This bird was found by Thijs Valkenberg at Ponta Delgada on the north coast of Flores on Saturday, 13th October 2018 (Pics. 347-348).

Its presence was probably courtesy of Storm Callum, which had hit the Azores just two days previous. Even though the bird remained into the next day, bad weather prevented birders on Corvo from crossing the 12 mile stretch of water between the islands until after the bird had departed; indeed only five birders on Flores managed to see it. Contrary to what was stated in the 2018/2019 Portuguese report (Tipper *et al*. 2021), the bird was not trapped and ringed.

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea*

2018 Azores: Juvenile, Ribeira do Poço de Água, Corvo, 17th to 23rd October, and Miradouro do Corvo, 24th to 25th October (Stronach *et al*. 2019).

On Wednesday, 17th October 2018, Peter Stronach and Robert Swann were walking along Corvo's Tennessee Valley. Arriving at Upper Poço do Agua, they met Marcin Sołowiej who had been in the Caldeirão, and all three birded together as they made their way down the Ribeira. Separating for a while, Peter and Robert found an Ovenbird, while Marcin had two Red-eyed Vireos. Meeting up again, they saw Ernie Davies on the other side of the Ribeira, and crossed over to join him.

Soon afterwards, their attention was drawn to a constant regular metallic chink call from about 20 metres further down the Ribeira. They all went to investigate, eventually getting within several metres of the bird, which was skulking in a *Hydrangea* on the other side of the gully. Thinking it might be a Northern Waterthrush, Peter played the call but there was no response, although it did stop calling briefly but soon resumed. At this point, Marcin and Peter decided to crawl under the barbed wire and out of the gully into the field where the *Hydrangea* was. As they got closer, a medium sized passerine flew out and briefly perched on top of the hedge, allowing Marcin and Peter to quickly take photos.





Pics. 349–350.
Blue Grosbeak, Poço de Água, October 2018.
Photos: © Vincent Legrand.

The possibility it was a tanager was discussed but no one had much of a clue just what they were looking at? Peter posted a message, along with the best available photo on the local *WhatsApp* group. Just as he was about to browse Sibley, a reply came from Josh Jones (back in London), who texted Blue Grosbeak, so the song and call were immediately played on the *Sibley* app, and it was 100% identical! It remained in the same grass field until the 23rd (Pics. 349-350), then moved about 1.5km to the Miradouro (Viewpoint), where it remained into the following day and where it was confidently identified as the same individual, thanks to missing feathers on its left wing. It was accepted by the CPR as a genuine vagrant and a first for the Azores and the WP. All previous records have been treated as escapes.

Alice's Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus aliciae*

2018 Netherlands: First-calendar year, Monster, Westland, Zuid-Holland, 5th November (van der Spek 2020), caught.

This bird was caught in a weakened state at Monster (about five miles further north along the North Sea coast from the Hook of Holland) and taken into care. Following a period of recuperation it was released back into the wild at Ockenburgh, Den Haag, Zuid-Holland on 20th November. DNA analysis showed the bird belonged to the subspecies *aliciae* and remarkably, when its DNA was sequenced, the best match proved to be with birds sampled in Alaska. It was the first Dutch record of any form and overall about the 105th Grey-cheeked Thrush for the Western Palearctic.

Horus Swift *Apus horus*

2019 Netherlands: Westerplas, Schiermonnikoog, West Frisian Islands, 26th to 27th September (Jansen & Driessens 2024).

A swift with a white-rump was observed by Justin Jansen on the West Frisian Island of Schiermonnikoog on Thursday, 26th September 2019. It was photographed the following day by Laurens Steijn (Pics. 351-352). As Horus Swift was suspected, both Justin and swift expert Gerald Driessens conducted extensive research into the characteristics of this sub-Saharan species, as well as comparing it with similar swifts and potential hybrids. This collaboration eventually produced a groundbreaking ID article published in *Dutch Birding* (Jansen & Driessens 2023).





Pics. 351–352.
Horus Swift, Schiermonnikoog, West Frisian Islands, 27th September 2019.
Photos: © Laurens Steijn, www.birdingbreaks.nl.

Although there is potentially an earlier record at North Bull Island, Dublin, Ireland on Christmas Day 2002 (Mullarney *et al*. 2024, Persson 2003), the likelihood of Horus Swift (which had never previously been observed north of the Sahara) occurring within the WP would appear to be very remote. Consequently, the task of reviewing this record posed an extremely challenging undertaking for the CDNA, who sought expert advice from external referees. After more than a year-and-a-half's deliberation, the CDNA accepted the bird as a Horus Swift, a first for the Netherlands and the Western Palearctic (CDNA 2023).





Pics. 353–354.
Prothonotary Warbler, Ribeira do Cantinho, Corvo, 5th October 2019.
Photos: © Paul French.

Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea*

2019 Azores: First-winter male, Ribeira do Cantinho, Corvo, 4th to 8th October (Doniol-Valcroze *et al*. 2025, Tipper *et al*. 2021).

Storm Lorenzo crossed the Atlantic and hit the Azores during the first week of October 2019. The only birder present for much of this time was Jean-Pierre Jordan and on Friday, 4th October, he decided to try his luck in Lighthouse Valley, but failed to find anything notable there. He pushed on, heading for the top of the Ribeira do Cantinho, where on arrival he started pishing. A bird popped up in front of him that Jean-Pierre immediately identified as a Prothonotary Warbler, a New World wood warbler that breeds throughout much of eastern North America (Pics. 353-354).

Jean-Pierre took some photos, then broadcast news of a first Western Palearctic record to the wider birding community. It was present the next day and irregularly up to 8th October, when it was noticed to be in a very bad condition, flapping along and feeding on lower brambles only, and the consensus was that it probably died during that night.

A possible earlier record concerns a bird that came aboard the Faroese trawler *Enniberg* while in a position approximately 250 nautical miles southwest of Iceland, sometime in June or July 2010. It remained on board for about 24 hours and was photographed by Esbern Christiansen (his photo is published in *British Birds* 105(6): 346). It is not known if it entered the Western Palearctic at 30°W longitude or not, but was most likely in the vicinity of the boundary.



Pics. 355–356.
Connecticut Warbler, in the hand, Aldeia da Cuada, 12th October 2019. Photos: © Thijs Valkenberg.



Connecticut Warbler *Oporornis agilis*

2019 Azores: First calendar-year male, Aldeia da Cuada, Fajãzinha, Flores, 12th October (Monticelli *et al*. 2022), trapped.

On Saturday, 12th October 2019, a year after finding the first Western Kingbird for the Western Palearctic, Thijs Valkenburg extracted a Connecticut Warbler from a mist-net at Aldeia da Cuada on the Azores island of Flores (Pics. 355-356). Connecticut Warbler is a notoriously skulking species, so it is possible its presence might never have been detected were it not for the ringing project undertaken by Thijs. Indeed, after it was processed and released, it was never seen again. The bird's arrival came in the wake of a series of low-pressure systems that moved swiftly across the Atlantic from late September into the first week of October 2019.

Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*

2019 England: Sennen, Cornwall, 23rd October to 14th November (Lees *et al*. 2022, Moran 2020).

In October 2019, Nick Moran was on a family holiday at Cape Cornwall in the extreme southwestern corner of England. At 16:38 on Wednesday, 23rd October, he received a *WhatsApp* message from Dawn Balmer stating, American Buff-bellied Pipit at Sennen in fields behind Sennen School. It was first noticed earlier in the day by Paul St Pierre, who had spread the word. By the time Nick arrived at the school, the pipit flock were going to roost in a nearby area of long grass. Nick picked up what he assumed was the Buff-bellied Pipit as it dropped into the field, but what he saw in his scope was at odds with what he expected. He returned the next day and along with others discussed the pipit's possible identity without reaching a consensus, but at least satisfied themselves it was not a Buff-bellied. The only sound it made was a clipped, quite high-pitched *chep*, sometimes given in a series of about three or four [notes], which was recorded by, among others, Toby Phelps. Nick was aware that the southern Asian Paddyfield Pipit was twice found in the UAE and he had even searched for one of these when leading a *Sunbird* tour to the region, but the UAE is a very long way from Sennen!





Pics. 357–358.
Paddyfield Pipit, Sennen, Cornwall, 12th November 2019.
Photos: © Michael McKee.

On his long drive home to Norfolk, he could not help but wonder what Paddyfield Pipit sounds like. James Lidster heard a recording of the pipit's *chep* call and made Magnus Robb (of the Sound Approach) and Thijs Fijen aware of it. On 31st October, having analysed the call, Magnus ruled out both Richard's and Blyth's Pipits, before adding, the bizarre thing is, it's a dead ringer for Paddyfield Pipit! That was difficult to process, a largely sedentary pipit thousands of miles from its home range (Pics. 357-358), but further proof was forthcoming on 6th December when the results of DNA analysis of its faecal matter determined it was identical to multiple Paddyfield Pipits from the Western Ghats, India!

When the record was assessed, the BOURC decided, after considerable deliberation and debate, that, while the identification was proven, there were many doubts surrounding the bird's origin and so placed the record and species in Category D.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

2019 Kuwait: Jahra Pools Reserve, 14th to 22nd December (Pope 2020).

Mike Pope visited Jahra Pools Reserve during the morning of Saturday, 14th December 2019. The reserve had only just reopened following extensive repair work to roads damaged by torrential rains the previous December. He saw a variety of ducks, waders and gulls, Flamingos, Common and Pied Kingfishers and many Greater Spotted Eagles, all species typically found in Kuwait during winter months. After a couple of hours, Mike decided to check out one of the reserve's quieter tracks that is bordered by tall reeds on either side. The track passed by a junction that was closed off with tape, but at the intersection Mike noticed a medium-sized, dark bird standing in a small pool of water on the other side of the tape (Pic. 359).



Pic. 359.
White-breasted Waterhen, Jahra Pools Reserve, December 2019.
Photo: © Mike Pope.

Mike slowed his car to a stop and the bird turned to face him, showing all white underparts and he immediately realised it was a White-breasted Waterhen, a species of rail found across much of south and southeast Asia he had previously seen in both India and Sri Lanka. As Mike turned off the car engine, the bird ran under cover and became lost to view. After what seemed like a very long and frustrating time waiting, although was probably only about five minutes, it showed itself again near where Mike had first noticed it. The bird was very wary, even the sound made by Mike's camera spooked it, but as it gradually moved further away it seemed to relax a bit. The news was broadcast on the local *WhatsApp* group and many got to see it that same day and over the coming days. It was still around on 18th December, then went missing for a few days until finally seen on 22nd December. The record was accepted by the KORC and published in their 2019 report.

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*

2020 Scotland: Scapa Beach, Orkney, 25th May (Foubister 2020).

On Monday, 25th May 2020, Robert Foubister took an early morning walk along Scapa Beach, at the southern side of the Kirkwall isthmus on Mainland Orkney. He was hoping for Yellow Wagtails and offshore cetaceans, but had no luck with either. However, at about 07:30, as he scanned the sea on his way back he spotted something in the sky. He first picked out an eagle-like white beak, which struck him as unusual. But this was no bird of prey, so Robert decided to take some photos (Pics. 360-361). When he first noticed the bird it was flying along the east coast of Scapa Flow, just below Gaitnip Farm [then it] headed over Scapa Bay to the west coast of the flow and up over Lingro Farm, where it gained height [and circled] above the fields, then headed back east over Scapa Bay before finally disappearing from view as it flew towards the airport. These observations lasted just a couple of minutes and all Robert could say for sure was that it was something different to normal. Reviewing the photos in the camera's LCD screen he began to wonder, judging by the shape of the tail, if it possibly was a skua? Regardless, he was happy to wait until he got back home when he could study his photos, so he carried on with his walk, later finding a Golden Oriole, which he assumed would be his best bird of the day.





Pics. 360–361.
White-chinned Petrel, Scapa Bay, Orkney, 25th May 2020.
Photos: © Robert Foubister.

As soon as Robert got back home, he posted the Oriole images on the local birder's *Facebook* page, then thought he might as well upload the mystery bird images also. This turned out to be a very fortunate decision as it was soon identified as a White-chinned Petrel, a species that breeds at sub-Antarctic islands from South Georgia east to New Zealand and is circumpolar in the Southern Ocean at other times of the year. This species is estimated to be the seabird most often killed as a result of commercial fishing activities. The record was accepted by the BOURC and published in the BBRC's 2020 report (Holt *et al*. 2021). As well as being a first for the Western Palearctic, it was also the first member of the genus *Procellaria* (four species of shearwater-like petrels) for the region.

Cayenne Tern *Thalasseus acuflavidus eurygnathus*

2020 Ireland: Female, Sgarbheen Island, Our Lady's Island Lake, Wexford, 12th to 25th June, photographed (Dowdall 2020).

On Friday, 12th June 2020 Jim Dowdall travelled to Wexford on business. Realising he had some time between meetings he headed for the large mixed tern colony at Sgarbheen Island on Our Lady's Island Lake. As the country was not long out of lockdown most tern species were year-ticks for Jim and it didn't take him long to find both Arctic and Common Terns. As Roseate Tern was also a possibility he decided to hang on and while scanning the colony on Sgarbheen he picked up a few terns that were bathing in the lake in front of the car park. The nearest was clearly a Sandwich Tern, but the one beside it had a yellow bill! It then flew onto Sgarbheen where he got better views and it became clear that apart from bill colour it was very similar to Sandwich Tern, allowing him to rule out Lesser Crested and Elegant Terns. Jim had previously seen Cayenne Tern in Argentina and this bird reminded him of the mainly South American subspecies of Cabot's Tern.







Pics. 362–364.
Cayenne Tern,
Our Lady's Island Lake,
Wexford, June 2020.
Photos: © Paul Kelly (left),
© Brian McCloskey (above).

By the time other birders arrived it had gone missing but was relocated the following morning by Kieran Grace and was seen on and off throughout the week. However, it wasn't until the following weekend when a series of good quality photos, taken by Paul Kelly and Killian Mullarney, showed all the features needed to confirm the bird's identification as Cayenne Tern, a first Irish and Western Palearctic record (Pics. 362-364). Following the release of IOC World List version 14.2 (August 2024), both New World subspecies of Sandwich Tern were raised to full species status as the polytypic Cabot's Tern (see page 116). Cabot's Tern (the nominate form), breeds along the east coast of North America and northern Caribbean locations and Cayenne Tern breeds from southern Caribbean locations to Argentina. Cayenne Tern will once again be lumped with Sandwich Tern when AviList's unified global checklist of birds is adopted.

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus*

2020 Kuwait: Moulting juvenile, Jahra East Outfall, 10th September (Birds of Kuwait Bird List, available online at birdsofkuwait.com [accessed June 2020]).

During the morning of Thursday, 10th September 2020, AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan received a photograph and text on *WhatsApp* from Rashed Al-Hajji, asking if he could identify a bird he'd seen earlier that day at the Jahra East Outfall, an area of extensive reed-beds and grassy coastal marsh-lands near Judailyat at the extreme western shore of Kuwait Bay. Even as he was reading the text, Rashed called again, saying he now realised the bird was a Bay-backed Shrike (Pics. 365-366), a widespread resident breeder in parts of south-central Asia and the Indian subcontinent and a first Western Palearctic record. AbdulRahman immediately left for Jahra and searched the area for some time without finding the shrike. He called Rashed for help, who directed him to an area of dense reed-beds, which was the place where Rashed had first seen it. Fortunately and after some time, the bird came to the fringes of the reed-bed and showed itself, allowing AbdulRahman to grab some photos. Others arrived during the same afternoon but it never showed, nor at any time after that.



Pic. 365–366.
Bay-backed Shrike, Jahra East Outfall, 10th September 2020.
Photos: © Rashed Al-Hajji.



Pic. 367.
Preuss's Cliff Swallow,
near Santa Maria, Ilha do Sal,
13th September 2020.
Photo: © Uwe Thom.

Preuss's Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon preussi*

2020 Cape Verde Islands: Immature, Santa Maria, Ilha do Sal, 13th to 16th September (Thom & Ebels 2022).

On Sunday, 13th September 2020, Uwe Thom found an unfamiliar swallow species near a small sewage treatment plant close to Santa Maria, a town at the southern tip of Sal Island. He took photos of the bird and on the basis of these, Uwe identified it as Preuss's Cliff Swallow (Pic. 364), a locally abundant Afrotropical Hirundine found over parts of western and central Africa from Guinea-Bissau to the Central African Republic. The bird remained for four days and was last seen on 16th September. A combination of an overall brownish plumage and pale mottling on the closed wing aged it as an immature.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher *Empidonax flaviventris*

2020 Scotland: First calendar-year, Tiree, Argyll, 15th to 23rd September (Bowler 2020, 2021, 2022).

A fast-moving North Atlantic depression struck Tiree (the outermost of the Inner Hebrides) early on Sunday, 13th September 2020. Despite conditions seeming ideal for a North American bird or two, when John Bowler (the RSPB Officer stationed at Tiree) headed out that afternoon to check his local patch at Balephuil he found nothing new, apart from a Lesser Whitethroat and a small influx of Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The following day (Monday), John found a fresh juvenile Common Rosefinch in his garden and thanks to a building ridge of high pressure the winds began to slacken, causing his bird-finding thoughts to turn to drift migrants from the east, rather than vagrants from the west. All very sound and logical reasoning, however, on the morning of Tuesday, 15th September 2020, when John pulled back his lounge curtains he was struck dumb by the sight that greeted him, for in exactly the same willow where the rosefinch had been the previous day, a boldly marked flycatcher [was] just a few metres away. Realising it was an *Empidonax* flycatcher, he grabbed his camera and took a few record shots just to make sure [he] wasn't hallucinating.

Pics. 368–370.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Balephuil, Tiree, September 2020.
Photos: © Sam Viles (below left & right), © John Bowler (bottom).







He reasoned it was either a Least or a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and the yellow suffusion below and rich green upperparts [...] quickly pronounced it to be a first-winter Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (Pics. 368-370), a species that John had previously seen while birding in Mexico and Belize. The worsening Coronavirus situation at that time meant that careful 'crowd control' management of visiting birders would be obligatary. Thanks to the considerable help of others and while at all times observing Scottish COVID-19 guidelines, about 120 birders saw the bird under strict socially distanced twitching. However, access to the gardens was prohibited from midnight on Friday, this following concerns expressed that Covid-19 would be introduced to Tiree otherwise. The bird remained for nine days until last seen on the 23rd. During the time it spent on Tiree it fed voraciously on a wide range of insects including [his] neighbours' honeybees and showed no concern at all for the close attention it received.

Pic. 371.
White-throated Swallow, Skaka, Al Jawf Province, 24th June 2021.
Photo: © Nader Al-Shammari.



White-throated Swallow *Hirundo albigularis*

2021 Saudi Arabia: Immature, Wastewater Lake, Sakākā, Al Jouf, 24th June.

Sakākā, the capital of Al Jawf Province, is in northwestern Saudi Arabia, just north of the An Nafud desert. Most of Saudi Arabia lies outside the boundary of the WP (BWP borders), however not Sakākā, which is at a higher latitude than Kuwait City. On Thursday, 24th June 2021, Saudi Arabian birder Nader Al-Shammari headed to the eastern part of Sakākā where his favourite birding site was, a large area of water treatment plants and reed-beds. On arrival, he noticed a group of Barn Swallows and Sand Martins and in their midst an odd looking swallow. It was obviously in an extreme state of moult and was flying noticeably slower than other Hirundines present. Nader took a description and grabbed some photographs (Pic. 371), which he shared with others. The consensus was he had found a White-throated Swallow, a species that breeds in the southern part of the African continent, from Angola and Zambia south to the Cape. The presence of a full breast band with a greyish flank ruled out the similar Ethiopian Swallow.

This individual was in a very poor state, showing ragged outer primaries and inner secondaries and the feathers on the distal part of the tail were almost reduced to the shaft. The bird at Sakākā represents the most northerly ever recorded, a first for Saudi Arabia, Asia and the Western Palearctic. In the absence of a rarity committee, birders can decide for themselves if the state of its plumage rules out genuine vagrancy.

Kamchatka Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus examinandus*

2021 Finland: Kilpisjärvi, Enontekiö, Lapland, 18th July (Lehikoinen 2021).

Pic. 372.
Kamchatka Leaf Warbler, Kilpisjärvi, 18th July 2021.
Photo: © Petteri Lehikoinen.



On Sunday, 18th July 2021, Petteri Lehikoinen, Aleksi Lehikoinen and Hanna Laakkonen returned to Kilpisjärvi, a village in Finland's northwestern 'arm', following a tough but rewarding annual waterbird monitoring expedition to the montane tundra. Early the following morning some of the survey team left to return home, but Petteri, Aleksi and Hanna remained for a few more days to take part in 'Arctic Fox nest monitoring' training at Kilpisjärvi Biological Station, but first, a trip to the local grocery store was needed. Before setting off they took some time to admire the local scenery that stretched as far as the Swedish and Norwegian sides of the Scandinavian Mountains. Hanna and Aleksi were already in the van and Petteri was just about to join them, when he heard a distant song phrase which [he] did not recognise. Intrigued, he waited for a while and the phrase repeated. He called to Hanna and Aleksi saying, I might have heard a Greenish Warbler singing in the distance. Aleksi got out and joined him to listen, and both agreed it wasn't a Greenish Warbler, but apart from that they couldn't put a name to it.

As they approached the bird, the song became clearer, so they tried to record it on their phones. Just then, a Willow Warbler began singing from the same spot, and for a moment they wondered if what they heard was the Willow Warbler occasionally singing an aberrant song. A male Great Tit came into view, and that became a suspect also, but not for long, and as it departed another bird appeared, which looked like an Arctic Warbler, causing Petteri's heart to skip a beat (Pic. 372). He ran back to the car to fetch camera and mist-net, while simultaneously trying to find recordings of recent Arctic Warbler splits, i.e. Japanese and Kamchatka Leaf Warblers. Petteri suspected Kamchatka Leaf Warbler the more likely of the two, and much to his surprise, when he played a recording of the song it sounded very similar to the bird singing behind him.

Pic. 373.
Kamchatka Leaf Warbler, in the hand, Kilpisjärvi, 18th July 2021.
Photo: © Petteri Lehikoinen.



At that point, he realised this could get very serious! By the time he got back to the car the bird had been silent for a short period, although he could see it was still present. Petteri played a recording of Kamchatka Leaf Warbler for Hanna and Aleksi and the bird immediately responded with a virtually identical phrase. It was in a small Mountain Birch forest patch in the middle of the village, and as it was getting late there was the real possibility it would stop singing and depart the area, so prompt actions were needed if the bird was to be properly documented. Aleksi sound-recorded and photographed the bird, while Hanna and Petteri set up a mist-net. Not having a Kamchatka recording to play on a loop beside the mist-net, Petteri instead opted to play an Arctic Warbler's song to see what the bird would do? It came closer, but did not really react to it and after staying still for a moment took off heading away from the playback, but accidentally hit the other end of the net and was trapped!

At that point Jyrki Lehto and Esko Pasanen arrived on the scene, which was rather fortunate as Esko was carrying ringing equipment, which Petteri had not brought when they set out for the grocery store. A call was made to Roni Väisänen in order to discuss the important measurements that [they] should note down to help identify the bird. They set about the task of measuring and ringing the bird, and that done, released it back where it was first heard singing. When examined in the hand (Pic. 373), they found the bird was in very good condition with a full muscle score and considerable fat stores, suggesting that the bird was still migrating. Compared with Arctic Warbler, it appeared brighter and more yellowish than any Petteri had previously seen in Finland or Russia during the summer months. A short time later they had to leave the site but even as they departed they could hear the bird singing. They took as many details of the bird's appearance and calls as possible and found them to be a perfect match for Kamchatka Leaf Warbler.

Despite this, it all seemed too good to be true, a far-eastern warbler, never before seen in the WP, had dropped into a remote village in Finland, and but for Petteri stopping to admire the view would probably never have been discovered! It was found again the following day about 500 metres from where first observed, and fortunately it remained throughout the day and into the late evening, which meant that even those twitching it from southern Finland managed to get there in time to tick it. The record was subsequently assessed and accepted by the Finnish National Rarities Committee and published in their 2021 report (Toivanen *et al*. 2022).

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*

2021 Azores: Fojo, Corvo, 25th September (Doniol-Valcroze *et al*. 2025, Robb *et al*. 2024).

Early on Saturday, 25th September, Pierre-André Crochet and Paul Doniol-Valcroze left Corvo's Comodoro Guest House and headed for one of the largest wooded areas on the island at Fojo, situated on the eastern side of the island. The site is very popular with birders, having hosted some of the best North American birds ever found on the island. They headed up the valley, stopping every now and again to scan the canopy and play a mobbing tape.







Pics. 374–376.
Warbling Vireo, Fojo, 25th September 2021.
Photos: © Paul Doniol-Valcroze.

After 30 minutes of birding and climbing, during which time all they had seen were some Blackcaps and Azorean Chaffinches, they reached a large sunny clearing surrounded by tall trees over 20 metres high. Each took a different side of the clearing and began scanning the treetops and Pierre-André started playing the mobbing tape. Within 30 seconds, a small and bulky bird popped out, quickly flew from the wood, and landed just in front of Paul, clearly looking for the source of the recording (Pics. 374-376).

It was obviously a vireo, exhibiting the characteristic bulky body, thick grey bill and well marked face, but which one? At least Red-eyed, the most frequently occurring, could be quickly ruled out due to the absence of green tones, grey cap and black head. There followed, an investigation into the identity and as a result it was realised to be a Warbling Vireo, a species that breeds across much of North America, wintering south to Mexico and Central America. The record was accepted by the Comité Português de Raridades and published in their 2022 report.

Crimson-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda rhodopyga*

2021 Egypt: Abu Simbel, 28th December (Kiepsch *et al*. 2025).

While on a morning walk by an old overgrown fish farm near the port of Abu Simbel (on Egypt's Red Sea coast) on Tuesday 28th December 2021, Michael Mills flushed two Crimson-rumped Waxbills that were in dense vegetation along a water channel. One of these was seen in flight, the other sat perched for a few seconds just three metres away, before diving under cover and out of sight. Michael was very familiar with the species, having observed them previously on many occasions and despite the fleeting views, he was confident they were Crimson-rumped Waxbills, a polytypic species of eastern sub-Saharan Africa from Sudan south to Malawi. Apart from one seen briefly in flight as it headed further down the channel, they remained under cover and out of sight for the remainder of time spent there, although he did hear numerous calls [coming] from the dense vegetation. Attempts to get a photograph failed, however he did manage to record the calls, which on the face of it, would appear to be sufficient evidence to confirm a first for the WP. However until the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee formally assess this and subsequent Crimson-rumped Waxbill sightings at the same or nearby locations in April 2023, August 2024 and May and August 2025 (including photographic evidence) the record must remain for the duration as pending.

There is an earlier observation from December 1996 near Aswan (Egypt) made by Detlef Robel. He observed a flock of eight at an island in the River Nile downstream of the Aswan dam. Although his written description (there were no photographs) adequately described the species, the record was eventually (20 years later) rejected by the EORC.

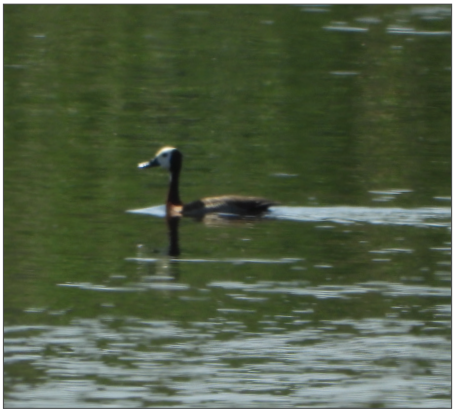
White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

2022 Libya: Adult, Al-Saket, near Misrata, 24th May (Elsowayeb & Etayeb 2022).

On Tuesday, 24th May 2022, a White-faced Whistling-Duck was present on the sewage treatment plant lagoon at Al-Saket in Misrata, a port on the Mediterranean coast of Libya, about 200km east of Tripoli. Fortunately, Abd Alati Elsowayeb was present and took photos of the bird both swimming and at the fringes of the lagoon in among reeds (Pics. 377-378).

Pics. 377–378.
White-faced Whistling Duck, Al-Saket, near Misrata, 24th May 2022.
Photos: © Abd Alati Elsowayeb.





Although this colourful and attractive species of tree duck is known to be a popular addition to wildfowl collections, this individual did not show any signs or behaviour associated with previous captivity. Earlier records, e.g. two shot near Barcelona (sometime before 1915), one obtained on Tenerife (late 1960s), one in Mallorca (December 1973), one at the Ebro Delta (April 1984) etc., have all been treated with suspicion and assigned to Categories D or E. However this individual would appear to have wild bird credentials. In the absence of a rarity committee, birders can decide for themselves the potential for genuine vagrancy in this instance.

Should it ever emerge not to be the case, an adult that was first observed and photographed on 23rd July 2023 (remaining into 2024) near Santa Maria at the southern tip of Sal in the Cape Verde Islands would become a viable alternative candidate for the first record (Thom & Ebels 2024).

Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii*

2022 Tunisia: North of Mateur, near Ichkeul National Park, at least 21st July to 22nd September (El Golli *et al*. 2023).

On Friday, 21st July 2022, Zoubeir Ayadi discovered an Abdim's Stork near a waste transfer centre north of Mateur, which is just outside Ichkeul National Park in northern Tunisia. Zoubeir was the director at the transfer centre and he subsequently learned from colleagues that the bird had been seen in the vicinity sometime earlier and probably since about 14th July. It continued to be seen feeding and moving throughout the area until at least 10th August and it was during this time Zoubeir captured the bird on video (Pics. 379-380). Unfortunately it was found dead near the centre on 22nd September, possibly killed by poachers. A very sad end for a first Western Palearctic record.

Abdim's or White-bellied Stork is the small to medium sized species of stork. It breeds across much of the Sahel and in parts of the southern Arabian Peninsula. It is a trans-equatorial migrant, spending the non-breeding season in southern Africa. Presumably this bird overshot its intended destination and crossing the Sahara, ended up in Tunisia.





Pics. 379–380.
Abdim's Stork, Near Mateur, July 2022.
Videoscans: © Zoubeir Ayadi.



Pic. 381.
Southern Carmine Bee-eater, Kızılırmak Delta, near Samsun, 21st May 2023.
Photo: © Nizamettin Yavuz.

Southern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides*

2023 Turkey: Kızılırmak Delta, near Samsun, 21st to 22nd May (Türkiye Kuş Kayıt Komitesi, Rare Species 2023).

This bird was found and photographed by Nizamettin Yavuz during field work undertaken for the Kizilirmak Delta Monitoring and Data Management Project. It remained to the following day when it was observed by E. Bıyıkoğlu. It was accepted by the Turkish Bird Records Committee as a Category A record [accessed March 2025], (Pic. 381). Previously lumped with Northern Carmine Bee-eater *M. nubicus*, this species is found across sub-equatorial Africa. Following breeding it is known to disperse widely, however generally towards South Africa, rather than in the opposite direction towards north Africa and Europe.



Pic. 382.
Hooded Crane,
near Samara, September 2023.
Photo: © Vadim Ladanov.
It's not possible to tell if it is carrying leg-rings or not.

Hooded Crane *Grus monacha*

2023 Russia: Berezovyi Gai, near Samara, Samaskaya oblast, September.

A Hooded Crane was photographed by Vadim Ladanov in September 2023 (tarsiger quotes 4th October) about 20 miles south-southwest of Samara (Pic. 382). Unfortunately the legs are obscured in the photo, so it's not possible to check for leg-rings, possibly indicating captive origin?

Hooded Crane is a migratory species found in far-eastern Asia, wintering in China and Japan. There are extralimital records in the USA. In the absence of a rarity committee, this record must remain in limbo and birders can decide for themselves the potential for genuine vagrancy.

Mourning Warbler *Geothlypis philadelphia*

2023 Azores: Lighthouse Valley, Corvo, 25th to 28th September (Robb *et al*. 2025, Stronach 2023).

Hurricane Lee crossed the Atlantic in mid-September 2023, this during a time of peak migration. Recognising the potential it held to deliver Nearctic warblers, Peter Stronach and Bob Swann travelled to Corvo, arriving on 22nd September. It wasn't long until they found Chestnut-sided Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, American Redstart, two Black-and-White Warblers and five American Cliff Swallows. On 24th September they were joined by Corvo regular, Pierre-André Crochet and early the following morning all three took a taxi to Lighthouse Valley in the north of Corvo. As they headed up the valley they stopped at a small gully and started pishing; almost immediately a Black-and-White Warbler showed itself.

Pierre persuaded the others to head for the top of the valley, a place of dry-stone walls, thick *Hydrangea* hedges and patches of brambles that provides little cover. This site is often overlooked in favour of the lower valley where cover is plentiful, mainly comprised of Laurels and Junipers. Reaching the upper valley, more high-pitched pishing prompted a warbler in a nearby juniper to respond. Unseen, it quickly made its way through a *Hydrangea* towards them. Realising it was about to emerge, Peter went for his camera while Pierre and Bob kept track of it until Pierre shouted, it's a Connecticut! Typically and before Peter could get a clear photo it moved back under cover.

Pics. 383–385.
Mourning Warbler, Corvo, Azores, September 2023.
Photos: © Vincent Legrand.







Connecticut Warblers are notoriously skulking, the possibility it would never be seen again was very real and Peter's photos were blurred to such an extent they did not clearly show the eyering, however both Pierre and Bob were convinced the eyering was complete. By this time it was 08:30, so nothing for it but to wait and hope and thankfully, the bird resumed calling but only for short periods at a time and it continued to remain hidden throughout. Help was clearly required, so Pierre left to get phone reception and spread the news. While he was away, Peter and Bob managed to record the call a couple of times. With the news out, it wasn't long before other birders were on the way, the first to arrive were the Swedish team of Jesper, Olaf and Mårten. They spread out encircling the brambles and hedges where it had been seen and waited. Their patience paid off and were eventually rewarded with views of the bird in flight before it flew across a five metre gap between hedges allowing Mårten to get some photos from about 40 metres and later on he managed to grab another as it landed in brambles.

The photos were scrutinised, especially checking the eyering, the colour of the belly and the length of the undertail coverts. That night Peter checked *Xeno-Canto*, however he couldn't find any Connecticut calls [...] that matched, but he did find Mourning Warbler calls that did! The photos and recordings were sent to three North American experts and the verdict was one in favour of Connecticut and two for Mourning. The recordings were of good quality and might have been enough to clinch the ID, however they wanted a clear image of the bird to be absolutely certain. There was nothing for it but to head back out and wait it out and it took 20 hours over four days in the field to finally clinch it. The photo showed a broken eyering most noticeable in front of the eye, and yellow on the throat. There were no doubts about it, they had found a Mourning Warbler, a first for the Western Palearctic! The bird continued to show well in the good weather ensuring everybody that came saw it and better photos were obtained, including some eye melting shots from Vincent Legrand (Pics. 383-385 & cover).

Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis*

2024 Mauritania: Near Nouadhibou, Cap Blanc, 8th to at least 5th April (BirdGuides 2024a).

This Afrotropical species was found on Friday, 8th March 2024 by a group of Polish birders; Hubert Stelmach, Zbigniew Kajzer, Paweł Kołodziejczyk, Sebastian Michałowski and Michał Skąpski. It frequented gardens on the outskirts of Nouadhibou (previously known as Port-Étienne), a town on the Atlantic coast that is close to the southern border of the Western Palearctic (Pic. 386). It was seen again on 14th and 24th March by Jonathan Scragg (per eBird) and on 5th April by Thierry Jansen, Benedict MacDonald, Erica Jan Alblas and Vince Halley-Frame (per netfugl.dk). When searched for on 15th and 16th April it was not seen.



Pic. 386.
Grasshopper Buzzard, near Nouadhibou, March 2024.
Photo: © Zbigniew Kajzer.

Pics. 387–389.
Himalayan Vulture, Mount Yerablur, Armenia, April 2024.
Photos: © Ani Sarkisyan & Artem Muradkhanyan.





Himalayan Vulture *Gyps himalayensis*

2024 Armenia: Presumed adult, Mount Yerablur, Syunik province, April (BirdGuides 2024b).

This bird was by found and photographed by Ani Sarkisyan and Artem Muradkhanyan at Mount Yerablur, Syunik province in the far southeast of Armenia (Pics. 387-389). Identification was further confirmed by raptor expert Dick Forsman.

The species is found in mountainous areas of south-central Asia, including the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau. It is known to forage over fast areas and although normally considered sedentary there are extralimital records as far east as Iran and the UAE and the presence of a second Western Palearctic record, first seen near Tallinn, Estonia in June 2024, and (probably the same bird) at Sand, Troms, Norway the following October tips the balance of probabilities in favour of a wild bird and not an escape.

Red-breasted Swallow *Cecropis semirufa*

2024 Denmark: Rørtang Overdrev, Helsingør (aka Elsinore), Zealand, 9th to 11th May (Olsen *et al*. 2025).

In 2024 Danish birder Mikkel Høegh Post was challenged to keep a more diligent watch on his local patch, situated about 2km from the coast near Helsingør, a city in extreme northeastern Zealand. To begin with he was not especially excited about the prospect, as he normally concentrated on prime birding hot-spots and found the idea boring and almost foolish.

Nevertheless, on Thursday 9th May 2024 he set out on his usual circuit. Reaching the half-way point he noticed some swallows at the place known as the 'Horse Paddocks'. Among them he noticed a bird that for half-a-second resembled a Common Swift, but soon appeared more like a rather robust and powerful swallow with a slow and powerful flight and unlike the accompanying local and very vocal Swallows, remained silent.

Pics. 390–392.
Red-breasted Swallow,
Rørtangvej, Denmark, May 2024.
Photos: © Helge Sørensen.







Against a dark sky he made out a pale red rump and a light throat, making Red-rumped Swallow a possibility, a species he had never previously found in Denmark and therefore worth putting on *Bird Alarm*, which he did. His camera gear was about ten minutes away in his car, so he hurried back to fetch it and by the time he returned the sun had come out. He took plenty of photos and checking them he realised there was no black undertail and the tail was akin to a Swallow, with white internal markings, furthermore the underparts were orange and it displayed a strange head pattern. Realising this was no Red-rumped Swallow, Mikkel posted a disclaimer on *Bird Alarm* stating, the bird is back and in good light and appears to be a Swallow with a pale orange rump and light throat. Others began to arrive and a discussion about the bird's identity ensued, but in the end all they could say for certain was that nothing like it had ever been seen in Denmark before. Returning home he uploaded some of his photos, along with a description, to a Danish birding group on *Facebook* under the title 'annoying swallow'.

As the afternoon wore on Mikkel's online pictures were poured over by Danish birders anxious to nail the identity. At about 15:00 links to the sub-Saharan Red-breasted Swallow began trending and once Mikkel followed them he realised the species looked spot on for [his] bird – the tail pattern, face pattern/mask and all. He returned and reconnected with it just as the first twitchers began arriving, who were clearly happy with the identification, a first record for the Western Palearctic (Pics. 390-392). The bird remained to the 11th.

Pics. 393–396.
Indian Golden Oriole, Holy Island, Northumberland, 21st May 2024.
Photos: © John Alderson, www.johnaldersonimages.co.uk.



Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo*

2024 England: First-summer male, Snook, Holy Island, Northumberland, 21st May (Read 2024).

Along with his girlfriend Megan, Marc Read took a short trip to the northeast in May 2024. On Tuesday, 21st May Megan organised a trip to the Farne Islands, however as their departure was not until midday they decided to spend the early morning at Holy Island (aka Lindisfarne). Crossing the causeway (only accessible at low tide) they parked up at the Snook car park; conditions looked right for migrants with overcast skies and a light northeasterly wind. Moving to the edge of the car park Marc raised his bins in the direction of Snook House and scanned the nearest bush. There he saw a male Reed Bunting that seemed rather agitated by a yellow leaf, then the leaf moved and revealed what looked like a black wing. He raced back to the car for his scope, shouting to Megan something like, **** me, there's a Golden Oriole. It looked tired and sat motionless in full view for about 15 minutes, only making tiny movements when the Reed Bunting came too close. Mark took some photos, which he posted on *BirdGuides*, feeling certain local birders would be interested as the species is less than annual in Northumberland and the last one on Holy Island was as far back as 1992. Marc estimated it was a first-summer type as the wings were not completely black. It flew down and took a caterpillar, then moved to a bush further off, now appearing to be revived somewhat.

By this time it was about 08:15 and while sending his photos to Josh Jones and Kit Day, he lost sight of it and a search of the area failed to refind it. However, about 30 minutes after they left, *BirdGuides* reported the bird was still present. They made their way to Seahouses and from there to Inner Farne, where they spent about an hour watching seabirds. On the return trip Marc flicked through his photos and videos and noticed the eyestripe [extended] behind the eye a lot. A few months back, he saw a photo on 'X' of an exotic oriole that prompted him take a closer look at Indian Golden Oriole, and he remembered that one of the main differences with Eurasian Golden Oriole was the black mask extending behind the eye, which made Marc wonder if he'd just found an escaped cage bird! Josh Jones sent him images of Indian Golden Oriole that looked very similar to the Holy Island bird and he pointed out its range was comparable to Sulphur-bellied Warbler, a species recently added to the British list.

Birders were contacting Josh asking him to look up the identification features that should be checked for, i.e. shorter primary projection, eyestripe extending behind the eye, longer bill with a slightly downcurved tip, the amount of yellow in the tail and all of these were features of the Holy Island bird (393-396). *BirdGuides* posted a message stating the bird was a possible Indian Golden Oriole. It was incredible, but was looking very much like Marc had not only found a first British record but a first for the Western Palearctic also! Unfortunately only those that got to Holy Island early in the day saw the bird, the many that travelled later dipped and there was negative news right up to dusk, it was a one-day wonder. In the introduction to the 2024 rare bird report it was described as accepted by the BBRC (French *et al*. 2025), it is now up to the BOURC to determine if the species should be added to the British List.

Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma baraui*

2024 France: Lège-Cap Ferret, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, 10th October (Rey 2024).

Early on Thursday 10th October 2024, French birder Guillaume Rey headed to Lège-Cap Ferret on the Bay of Biscay with the expectation of observing storm-driven seabirds in the wake of Hurricane Kirk. He made his way to a position on sand dunes that overlooked the beach and where he had great views out to sea. At 08:20 he picked up a very interesting-looking, long-winged seabird among a group of Sandwich Terns that was heading in a northerly direction about 300 metres offshore. Guillaume realised it was a *Pterodroma* but the species eluded him.

Desertas Petrel was the most likely, however this bird showed a largely white underwing in contrast to the dark underwing of Desertas. Zino's Petrel was also a candidate as some can show a lot of white in the underwings, but nothing like what Guillaume observed. He took a series of photos, which proved fortuitous when it later came to clinching the identity. They showed it was much larger than Sandwich Tern, which was also visible in some of the images. It had slate-grey upperparts, a dark cap, a dark 'M' pattern across the upperwings and darkish uppertail coverts and tail. The underwings were largely white with a dark leading edge to the hand, and the forehead, face and underbody were white (Pics. 397-402). The bird continued away to the north, eventually becoming lost to view. Back at home Guillaume checked the literature, soon ruling out Zino's Petrel as the amount of white in the underwing was too extensive when compared to the Cap Feret bird. Bermuda Petrel was also dismissed as the mystery bird was capped and not hooded. The possibility it was a species from beyond the Atlantic Ocean appeared too far-fetched to even contemplate.

Pics. 397–402.
Barau's Petrel, off Cap Ferret, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, 10th October 2024.
Photos: © Guillaume Rey.



He sent the photos to Hadoram Shirihai, who replied with the astonishing revelation that the bird was a Barau's Petrel, an Indian Ocean gadfly-petrel that breeds at Réunion, a first for France and the Western Palearctic. Guillaume also sent the photos to Bob Flood and Dani López-Velasco and both agreed with the identification. He knew he had seen something special but found it hard to grasp the enormity of what he had seen off Cap Ferret. The record remains with the CHM for formal acceptance and publication.

Blue-billed White Tern *Gygis candida*

2025 Wales: Llanberis, Caernarfonshire, 27th February (Anon 2025).

A member of staff at the Royal Victoria Hotel, Llanberis (situated at the foot of Snowdon and about ten miles distant from the Irish Sea) picked up a White Tern in the hotel garden on Thursday 27th February 2025. Fortunately, wildlife filmmaker Sam Whitton was filming in the area at the time and as he was leaving the hotel that morning, the hotel groundskeeper walked in holding the bird.

Pics. 403–404.
Blue-billed White Tern, Llanberis, Caernarfonshire, 27th February 2025.
Photos: © Sam Whitton, samwhitton.co.uk.





Sam could tell it was poorly but still had some energy, pecking at the fingers of its rescuer (Pics. 403-404). He arranged for it to be taken into care at a local veterinary practice where it was found to be underweight and in a very poor condition. Although initially responding to the expert care and attention it received, it did not survive and sadly died on the following Saturday.

White Tern is described as polytypic with four subspecies by IOC version 15.1. However AviList 2025 raised these to full species status as the monotypic nominate Atlantic White Tern, monotypic Little White Tern (Pacific Ocean islands breeder) and polytypic Blue-billed White Tern *Gygis candida*, which the Llanberis bird is judged to be an example of. The nominate form breeds at various Indian and Pacific Ocean sites. The record has yet to be assessed by the BBRC, time will tell if it passes the genuine vagrant test.

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica*

2025 Kuwait: Al-Abraq Al-Khabari, 18th May (Alfrey 2025).

In the company of Vincent Legrand and Julien Hainaut, Peter Alfrey travelled to Kuwait in May 2025, primarily to take part in a pelagic organised by Omar Al-Shaheen off Al Khiran (near Saudi Arabia border). The pelagic was a great success and included six Short-tailed Shearwaters, which seemed appropriate as Omar was one of those that found the first Western Palearctic record in May 2014 (see page 239). Next they turned their attention to exploring the desert wildlife and finding some Western Palearctic ticks. On Sunday, 18th May, the final day of their trip, they headed for the oasis at Al-Abraq farm (where multiple first WP records have been found in the recent past), hoping for Desert Monitor Lizard. The drive did not go smoothly, for as they turned on to the desert road leading to Al Abraq the car got stuck in the sand; thankfully Vincent managed to get them unstuck and back on the track.

Pics. 405–407.
Lesser Striped Swallow, Al Abraq Oasis, 18th May 2025.
Photos: © Vincent Legrand.







Now they faced a conundrum, should they continue and risk getting stuck again, which could have dire consequences, as they were a long distance from anywhere, without back-up and in the desert's scorching heat (42°C). In addition, recent sandstorms had covered and concealed the usual tracks to the oasis. Nothing ventured nothing gained, so Vincent announced he would take a long run at the track and drive at full speed across the desert. The plan worked and despite some hairy moments along the way they eventually tore into the oasis doing about 80kph. In the hope of attracting migrants they turned on a tap, allowing water to run into a small channel, then went looking for the lizard but got stuck in the sand again, so back to the main pool and tap, where Peter started scanning from the car, soon picking up a strange hirundine perched on the trees at the back of the pool.

He quickly got a record shot, which showed a bird slightly larger than a Sand Martin and smaller than the surrounding Swallows, then alerted the others saying, there's a Red-rumped Swallow. Peter thought it might be an Eastern Red-rumped Swallow, but Vincent immediately noticed it had an all-red head which meant it wasn't any type of Red-rumped Swallow! When the bird took flight it showed heavily streaked underparts and large white areas in the tail, mild panic turned into pure adrenalin. Peter booted up his *Birds of the World* app and started browsing the swallows, while Vincent fired off some superb shots of the bird, both in flight and perched (Pics. 405-407). Julien remembered that Streak-throated Swallow was previously recorded in Kuwait and as that species was found as close as Pakistan and India it became a possible candidate. However, when Vincent's photos were studied and compared with images found on *Birds of the World*, they realised the streaking on the Al Abraq bird was too extensive and the structure was all wrong for Streak-throated Swallow. Peter then scrolled through African swallows finding Greater Striped Swallow, which seemed more likely but not quite, so moved onto Lesser Striped Swallow. This was altogether a much closer match with dense streaking on the underparts, white markings at the base of the rectrices and a red head and ear coverts.

The photos were circulated among friends, including Ed Stubbs and the *BirdGuides* team of Marc Read and Chris Townend and news was posted as a presumed Lesser Striped Swallow on the Kuwait birders *WhatsApp* group. Of the local birders, Omar Al-Shaheen was first to arrive, soon followed by AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan, Humoud Al-Shayji and Mohammad Alazmi. By this time the general consensus was they had found a Lesser Striped Swallow, a large and partially migratory Hirundine that breeds in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, Marc Read did a bit of digging and discovered the species had been recorded in nearby Oman. Significantly, there were no previous records in Kuwait or the Western Palearctic, it was a first and a hat-trick of first WP records for Peter Alfrey, following Short-billed Gull in 2003 (see page 195) and White-eyed Vireo in 2005 (see page 205), as well as the second Eastern Wood Pewee (see page 243). This was a fitting end to an epic trip and they made the journey back across the desert without ever getting stuck, thanks to Vincent's amazing driving. The bird was not seen again, it was a one-day special. The record has been accepted by the KORC, although has yet to be formally published in a report.

Pics. 408–409.
Great Crested Flycatcher,
Tingwall, Shetland, 16th October 2025.
Photos: © Hazel Ulstad.





Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus*

2025 Scotland: Tingwall, Shetland, 13th to 16th October (Ulstad 2025).

On Thursday 16th October 2025, Shetland resident Hazel Ulstad received a phone call from nearby friends telling her of a 'peerie'* bird in their garden at Tingwall Valley and would she like to come over take a look and get a photo. Hazel regularily feeds birds in her garden as well as looking out for unusual birds. She got there around 16:00 and just 30 minutes later the mystery bird appeared, which she was told had been present since the 13th. It was flitting about between the fence line and trees flycatching and sometimes feeding on the ground. Hazel managed to take some photos which eventually identified the bird as a Great Crested Flycatcher, a richly coloured *Myiarchus* flycatcher that is common in deciduous forests of the eastern North America (Pics 408-409).

* peerie is a Shetland term for small.

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Abbreviations used

°C: Celsius.
aka: also known as.
app: An application/program suitable for use on a mobile device.
AMNH: American Museum of Natural History (in New York).
asap: As soon as possible.
BBRC: British Birds Rarity Committee.
BOC: British Ornithologists' Club.
BOU: British Ornithologists' Union (founded in 1858).
BOURC: British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (the committee responsible for maintaining the British List, the official list of birds recorded in Great Britain).
BTO: British Trust for Ornithology.
BWP: Birds of the Western Palearctic (full title: Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa: The Birds of the Western Palearctic), nine volumes published by Oxford University Press between 1977 and 1996.
ca.: Circa (with dates or measurements indicating 'around' or 'approximately'). Latin, from circum = around.
Capt: Captain, *i.e.* the person in command of a ship or boat.
CDNA: Commissie Dwaalgasten Nederlandse Avifauna (Dutch Rare Birds Committee).
CB: Citizens band (radio).

CEO: Chief Executive Officer.
CHM: Commission d'Homologation Marocaine (Moroccan Rare Birds Committee).
CHN: Comité d'Homologation National (French Rare Birds Committee).
COI: Commissione Ornitologica Italiana.
DAK: Deutsche Avifaunistische Kommission (German Rare Bird Committee).
DNA: Deoxyribonucleic Acid (molecule that contains the genetic code of birds).
DOFS: Dansk Ornitologisk Forening Sjældenhedsudvalget (Danish rarity committee)
EBN: Enterprise Broadcast Network.
eds.: Editors.
e.g.: Is short for 'exempli gratia', which indicates some relevant examples follow.
EORC: Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee.
et al.: Abbreviation of the Latin term 'et alia', meaning 'and others'.
etc.: Short for 'etcetera', Latin word that means 'and so forth'.
GONHS: Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society.
Gm: In taxonomy, indicating the species was described by J.F. Gmelin.
GP: Gravel pit.
ha: hectare.
i.e.: Short for '*id est*' (Latin for 'that is').
ID: Identification, as in identification paper.
IOC: International Ornithological Community (see *British Birds* 114(6): 315 for the origin of the name).
IOCN: Iraqi Organization for Conservation of Nature.
IRBC: Irish Rare Birds Committee.
IRDC: Israeli Rarities & Distribution Committee.
KORC: Kuwait Ornithological Rarities Committee.
km: Kilometres.
Ltd.: Limited, indicating a private limited company in business.
ml: Millilitre.
mm: Millimetre.
ms: A title used before a woman's name, which doesn't specify marital status.
MV: Merchant Vessel.
NHM: Natural History Museum.
NIBRC: Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee.
NMS: National Museums Scotland.
NPWS: National Parks and Wildlife Service in Ireland.
NSKF: Norsk Sjeldenhetskomite for Fugl (Norwegian Rare Bird Committee).
Obs: Bird Observatory.
p. or pp.: Page number or number of pages cited in a reference.
pers. comms.: Personal comments.
Prof: Professor.
Rev: Reverend (an honorific title, most often placed before the names of Christian clergy and ministers).
RMS: Royal Mail Ship.
RSPB: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.
RSPCA: Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
sic.: *sic erat scriptum*, Latin for 'thus it had been written', meaning that the quote prior was transcribed as found in the original source.
SJ: Society of Jesus, aka the Jesuits.
Sr: Senior (used to distinguish a man from his son when they both have the same name).
St.: Saint, e.g. as part of a place name.
syn: Synonym (a taxonomic name which has the same application as another).
UAE: United Arab Emirates.

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
Vol: Volume.
WP: Western Palearctic.
WWT (Slimbridge): Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.