



# First WP Records - 1820 to 2015

Joe Hobbs

Version 1.0

First Records for the  
Western Palearctic  
1820 to 2015  
by  
Joe Hobbs

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**Cover:** Least Flycatcher, Stokkseyri, Árnessýsla, Iceland, 6th October 2003.

**Photo:** © Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson.



## Introduction

Beginning with the oldest, this note gives details of the first published record of bird species in the Western Palearctic (*per* BWP borders) from 1820 to 2000, followed by a brief summary of records from 2001 to 2015. The vast majority of early occurrences were either shot, obtained, caught or trapped; regardless of the terminology used that meant they ended up as a prize in someone's trophy case. 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. Full and detailed descriptions are invariably an integral part of the finder's notes that are cited when known.

Species included in a Western Palearctic national list **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 that were made at sea out of sight of land **are printed in this colour**, records that were not identified to species level **are printed in this colour** and first records for the European mainland, rather than the Western Palearctic, **are printed in this colour**.

Quotes taken directly from notes, papers or personal comments **are printed in this colour**. References begin on page 164, some suggested reading is on page 175 and a list of those field guides that are mentioned in this note begin on page 175 and a list of abbreviations used begin on page 176.

## Taxonomy

Scientific nomenclature follows the IOC World List version 12.1 (released in January 2022), that is available online from:

[www.worldbirdnames.org](http://www.worldbirdnames.org)

## Version

Version 1.0.

Joe Hobbs,

May 2022.

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

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## First Western Palearctic Records 1820 to 2000

### American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

**1820 Austria:** Adult, Aspeng, Bucklige Welt, December (Alexander & Fitter 1955), collected.

The specimen is housed in the Natural History Museum, Vienna (Pics. 001-002).



Pics. 001-002.

American Robin, Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Photos: © Alice Schumacher.

### Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*

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

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.

### Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

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

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 author of *The Natural History of German Birds* (1820-1844) and *The Eggs of German Birds* (1818-1828). The specimen is currently housed in the Naumann Museum, Köthen (Pic. 003).





Pic. 003.  
Hermit Thrush,  
Naumann Museum, Köthen.  
Photo: © Stefan Fischer.

### Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius*

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

The bird was 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, 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.

### Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*

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

This bird was captured behind the castle at Lille in northeastern France, near the Belgian border. The specimen is housed at the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle de Lille (Pic. 004).

Some doubts about this record were expressed by Johann Friedrich Naumann, who suggested the location could have been in Germany rather than 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 French Rarities Committee (CHN) in 2007, predating the previously accepted first WP record at Tongeren, Belgium in October 1966 by 139 years.



Pic. 004.  
Yellow-browed Bunting,  
Natural History Museum, Lille.  
Photo: © Christophe Hildebrand.

### **Baikal Teal** *Sibirionetta formosa*

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

These would appear to have been part of an invasion of this Far Eastern dabbling duck to Europe, prior to any known introductions to European wildfowl collections (BWP I).

### **American Wigeon** *Mareca americana*

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

The carcass was discovered in Leadenhall 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 accompany it but this can not be confirmed. American Wigeon is the New World counterpart to Wigeon. The specimen later came in to the collection of John Henry Gurney Sr. (amateur ornithologist and one time Member of Parliament for King's Lynn).

### **Grey Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis*

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

Shot by the bird collector Oelrich Aeuckens, better known as Oelk. Using an intermediate and a certain amount of subterfuge, a rival collector at 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 (Pic. 005).

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.

Pic. 005.  
 Grey Catbird,  
 Institut für Vogelforschung, Wilhelmshaven.  
 Photo: © Jochen Dierschke.



### 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.

### 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 he 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 they went to.

### Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

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

Before he could be entrusted with powder and gun shot, the fowler Claus Aeuckens became an expert marksman with rounded pebbles he carried around in a hunting-bag. On Monday, 6th October 1845, he brought down a small bird in this manner as it flew along a cliff-face on Helgoland. Even though the blow completely crushed the bird against a rock, realising it was unusual, Aeuckens brought Gätke an undamaged wing to inspect. Gätke had no idea what species it 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 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 in Summer 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 a skin that was collected by Dybowsky in Siberia that was labelled *Reguloides* (syn. *Phylloscopus*) *proregulus*, whereupon Gätke immediately realised that the wing Aeuckens brought him back in 1845 came from the same species.

## Black-headed Heron *Ardea melanocephala*

**About 1845 France:** Near Fréjus, Var, during Spring (Cheylan 1979), killed.

Taken by Monsieur Besson, a taxidermist from Hyères. At the time the specimen was preserved in the Jauffret de Draguignan collection and is currently housed at the Muséum de Marseille. The bird is accepted as a genuine vagrant by the CHN.

## White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*

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

Shot by Peter Coveney from Great Horkesley (near Colchester) 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 he 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 then sent it to Edward Newton on 17th July. Newton later returned it to Catchpool after it had been critically examined and identified by the eminent ornithologists, Messrs Yarrell, Doubleday and Fisher. This Far Eastern swift is sometimes known as Needle-tailed or Spine-tailed Swift.

## 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, Helsinki, Pontus Palmgren found a specimen labelled *Tringa Minuta*, Helsinki 18 5/6 47 (*i.e.* clearly indicating a Little Stint), but which Palmgren recognised was in fact an example of the Nearctic Least Sandpiper (Pic. 006).



Pic. 006.

Least Sandpiper, Finnish Museum of Natural History, Helsinki.

Photo: © Courtesy of Luomas, available from <http://id.luomas.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 had been mounted on a base previously used for a Little Stint, and further established that all stint specimens in the museum's collection were collected in Finland, greatly reducing the possibility of some mix up when first labelled. In addition, he found two Turnstone specimens whose labels were identical to the Least Sandpipers that were shot on the same date at Isosaari, an island off Helsinki. Palmgren concluded the label was a genuine misidentification and the bird had been collected in Finland.



Pic. 007.  
**Bonaparte's Gull,**  
Ulster Museum, Belfast.  
Photo: © Stuart McKee.

### **Bonaparte's Gull** *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

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

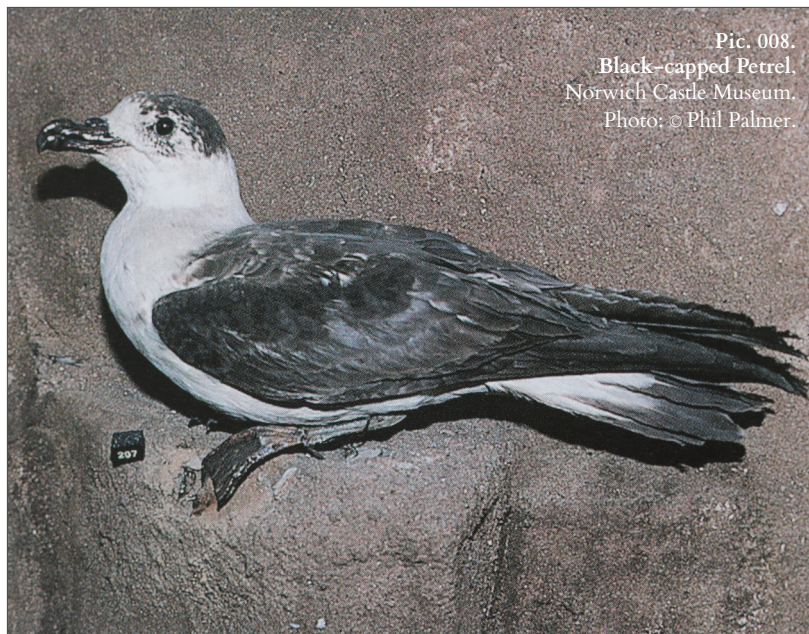
Details were published in the 1848 *Annals of Natural History* (vol. I, p. 192). The gull was shot on a tidal part of the River Lagan in Belfast somewhere between Ormeau Bridge and the Botanic Gardens. William Thompson (author of the *Natural History of Ireland* in four volumes) saw the bird prior to skinning and he took a detailed description and set of measurements (vol. III, pp. 318-319). The specimen is currently housed in the Ulster Museum, Belfast (Pic. 007).

### **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata*

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

John Henry Gurney Sr. purchased what he believed to be a Pectoral Sandpiper that was shot by a man named Wilmot during the last week of September 1848 at a beach area known as the Denes, near Great Yarmouth on the east coast of England. 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. After a time Gurney had come to doubt the authenticity of the bird and suspected 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.

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, happened to see the boy with the dead bird and bought it for Newcome, who arranged for a specimen to be set up (Pic. 008).

About a 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** but nevertheless realised it was new to Britain. The eminent ornithologist John Gould also saw it while it was with Yarrell and he recognised it as a species he had encountered during a crossing the Atlantic, but had no idea if it had been formally described\*. 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) and taken into captivity but died soon after. Identification was provided by the Hungarian ornithologist Salamon Janos Petényi. The specimen was housed in the Hungarian Natural History Museum in Budapest, but 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 to western Europe collectors (probably to Germany) in 1878 and it has been accepted by the Hungarian Rarities Committee as a genuine vagrant.



Pic. 009.  
Buff-bellied Pipit,  
Institut für Vogelforschung, Wilhelmshaven.  
Photo: © Jochen Dierschke.

## Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens rubescens*

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

It was the bird's call that attracted the attention of a **native gunner**, who realising the species was unknown to him, promptly shot it (Pic. 009). The specimen is currently housed in the Landesmuseum, Hannover.

## Eskimo Curlew *Numenius borealis*

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

The curlew was standing on a stone cairn above Durris Forest when it was shot by W.R. Cusack of Durris House. 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 the Aberdeen taxidermist Mitchell and was examined there a few days later by J. Longmuir, and it was he 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 curlew is probably extinct, it was last reliably recorded in the 1960s.

## 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 Helgoland Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler 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 it as the jewel of [Gätke's] collection.

\*Along with five other grass warblers that includes Gray's Grasshopper Warbler, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler has been moved from the genus *Locustella* to *Helopsaltes* following IOC world list, version 8.2.

## Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*

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

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



## Black-throated Green Warbler *Setophaga virens*

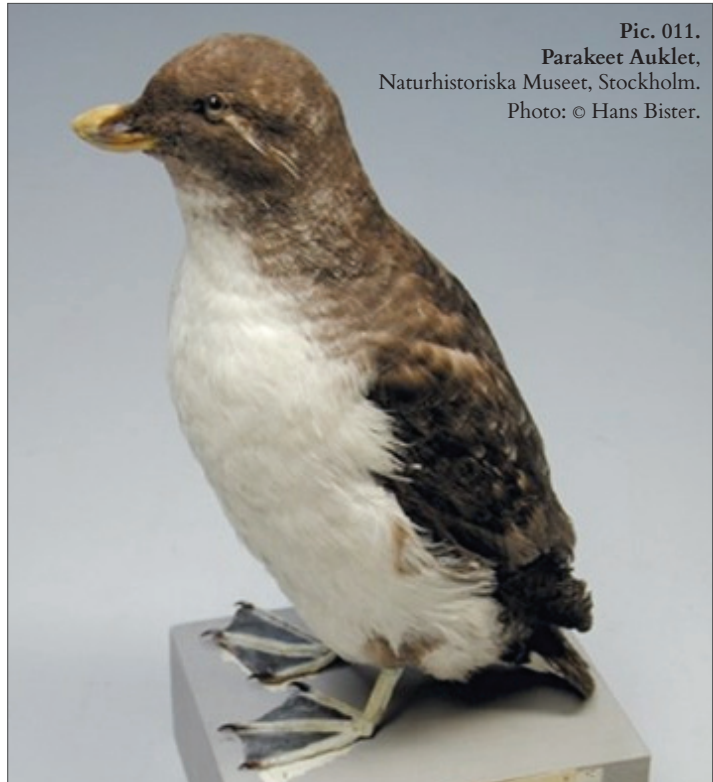
**1858 Germany:** First-winter male, Helgoland, Schleswig-Holstein, 19th October (Gätke 1895), shot.

Taken by a boy using a blow-pipe. The specimen is currently preserved in the Landesmuseum, Hannover (Pic. 010).

## 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 on Lake Vättern, a freshwater lake near Jönköping in southern Sweden.



Pic. 011.  
Parakeet Auklet,  
Naturhistoriska Museet, Stockholm.  
Photo: © Hans Bister.

In his 1880 list of North American birds, J.J. Dalglish erroneously referred to it as 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 in the Naturhistoriska Museet, Stockholm (Pic. 011).

### **Brown Fish Owl** *Ketupa zeylonensis*

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

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. He 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.

It is reported that he saw three other Brown Fish Owls at the same time (Shirihai 1996). In 1879 another was collected at Wadi Hamam, near the Sea of Galilee by Father P. Tepper.

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. 12-13).



Pics. 012-013.

**Brown Fish Owl**, World Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool.

Photo: © 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 Crane** (an alternative name) on the banks of the River Kennet. The specimen was exhibited at a meeting of the Zoological Society on Tuesday, 14th February 1865 by Alfred Newton, Professor of Comparative Anatomy at Magdalene College, Cambridge. Prof. Newton mentioned another that had occurred **far from its usual range in Greenland**.

## **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 prairies 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.

The first record for the Western Palearctic that could be attributed to 'Eastern' Willet was at Mølen and Omlidstranda, Larvik, Vestfold, Norway 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 from 12th to 13th September 1998 (Siblet & Spanneut 1998).

## **Striped Crane** *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*

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

The location of the specimen is not known.

## **Kumlien's Gull** *Larus glaucoides kumlieni*

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

The specimen (Pic. 014) 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 then 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, its identification was translated to **Larus glaucoides glaucoides**, and 'Breckness' mis-transcribed as 'Brackness', a location in Scalfloway, 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 there is that it was obtained from the well known 19th century Orkney collector Edward Hargitt (Prys-Jones 2000).



Pic. 014.

Kumlien's Gull,

Natural History Museum, Tring.

Photo: Mark Adams, © Natural History Museum, London.

## **Abyssinian Roller** *Coracias abyssinicus*

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

The skin is housed in the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, USA. In total there are four records of Abyssinian Roller in Egypt. Apart from this first record, a wing and tail was found at Karkur Ibrahim, Gebel Uweinat, near the Libyan border on 22nd November 1968 and there have been two at Abu Simbel, one on 29th September 1995 with the most recent there from 4th to 5th May 1997.

## **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 undisturbed by 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 obscured a clear view of the bird and to his great annoyance prevented him from getting 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 in to the thorn-hedge and was never seen again. Thus, as far as can be told, it was the first time a first record for the Western Palearctic 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, East Ferry, Cork Harbour, December (Ussher & Warren 1900), shot.

Both were shot by Sir Ralph William Frankland Payne-Gallwey (author, engineer, historian, ballistics expert and artist) in Cork Harbour just off East Ferry during a severe frost. He had previously observed them in the company of Red-breasted Mergansers but had no success approaching them on that occasion. Earlier records in Britain were rejected following a review by the BOURC (2001).

## **Yellow-eyed Stock Dove** *Columba eversmanni*

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

This bird was in the company of Stock Doves when it was shot by N.A. Zarudy. On three or four subsequent occasions that spring he noticed more Yellow-eyed Stock Doves with Stock Doves, easily picking them out on account of their white rump.

Orenburg is very close to the border with the Eastern Palearctic and the museum label does not clearly indicate the precise location where the specimen was taken, however Arkhipov *et al.* (2010) make a very convincing case that it was taken in Europe. 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.

Sub-specific identification was verified using DNA-sequencing. The specimen is preserved at the Zoological Museum, Oslo (Pic. 015).

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 (Hansen 2015).



Pic. 015.  
Siberian Northern Shrike,  
Zoological Museum, Oslo.  
Photo: © Andreas Gullberg.

## Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

**1882 England:** Brighton, East Sussex, 23rd October (Williamson 1977), caught.

While preparing a paper on the identification of larger pipits for publication in the monthly journal *British Birds* (Williamson 1963), Kenneth Williamson visited the Natural History Museum at Tring. Among the pipit specimens he found one labelled *Anthus campestris* (i.e. indicating a Tawny Pipit), which on closer inspection he realised was a Blyth's Pipit (Pic. 016). He informed the museum's staff of his discovery and the specimen (Registration number, NHMUK 1883.10.10.1) was placed with the Blyth's Pipits. Sometime later it was examined by Dr. David Snow and P. Coulston, who were in complete agreement with Williamson's appraisal.



Pic. 016.

Blyth's Pipit,

Natural History Museum, Tring,

Photo: Mark Adams, © Natural History Museum, London.

Pic. 017.

Daurian Jackdaw,

Finnish Museum of Natural History, Helsinki.

Photo: © Courtesy of Luomas,

available from <http://id.luomas.fi/KS.KL2697>.



## **Daurian Jackdaw** *Coloeus dauuricus*

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

Shot early in the month by Mr. Weckman. The specimen was acquired by the Finnish Museum of Natural History, Helsinki soon after and is still housed there (Pic. 017).

## **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 assembled by the Sicilian naturalist and traveller Alessandro Rizza and is preserved in the Classic Lyceum 'T. Gargallo' in Syracuse, Sicily. It was reported to be, but not listed, among Italian specimens of Allen's Gallinule (Arrigoni Degli Oddi 1929). Subsequently it was identified as *P. martinica* by Andrea Corso and Renzo Ientile (1994), however they have raised some questions regarding the origin of the specimen.

## **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. The record was not published by the Spanish Rarity Committee until their 2005 report (Dies *et al.* 2007).

## **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 (the current Chairman of Comité d'Homologation National) 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 taken at the end of the 19th century in the Baie de Somme.



Pics. 018–019.  
Stejneger's Scoter,  
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.  
Photos: © Frédéric Jiguet.



Included in the collection were 11 Velvet and 13 Surf Scoters, all killed between 1869 and 1888, that Marmottan had acquired from local hunters. 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. 018-019).

### **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki*

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

The specimen (Pics. 020-021) is preserved at the American Museum of Natural History, New York where it was acquired from the Natural History Museum at Tring.



Pics. 020-021.

South Polar Skua, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

Photos: Courtesy of © AMNH Department of Ornithology.



## **Green Heron** *Butorides virescens*

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

Late in 1889 Murray Mathew noticed a small heron in Mr. Foot's taxidermist shop in Bath, Somerset that he did not recognise. Upon enquiring he learned it was shot the previous Autumn in Cornwall. Some time later Mathew visited the South Kensington Museum of Natural History where he examined their collection of heron skins, after which he was convinced 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 the bird at Balta Sound while it was clearly in a state of exhaustion, so much so that it died 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 27th 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.

Observed early in 1893 in G.W. Jalland's garden where it was feeding in the company of other birds. Jalland shot it on Monday, 13th February, later sending the carcass to the taxidermist Philip Loten at Easington, Durham to be set 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 as 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.

Shot by J.R. Sheridan of Dugort, Achill Island, who realised he had a similar one in his collection that he had shot while in America in 1873. Sheridan sent it to A.G. More (English ornithologist, who was one time Keeper of the Natural History Division in 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*) stated upon examining the bird ... 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 has meant it has never been treated as a genuine vagrant and the species assigned to Category D1 of the Irish List. The species 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 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, in reality a Lesser Moorhen, and set about putting the record straight.

The specimen was originally part of a collection housed in a Funchal seminary (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* per 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).

## 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 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. 022) is housed at the Natural History Museum, Tring (Registration number, NHMUK 1911.12.23.566).



Pic. 022.  
**Broad-billed Roller**,  
 Natural History Museum, Tring.  
 Photo: Mark Adams, © Natural History Museum, London.

### **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 had been shot by G.H. Caton Haigh near North Cotes on the 1st of the month (coming 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 when he found and shot the first Greenish Warbler for Britain in the same place in September 1896.

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 held at the Museu Carlos Machado, Ponta Delgada, São Miguel. According to Bannerman & Bannerman (1966), it was initially preserved in alcohol, which would be expected to adversely affect that part of the breast that is red.

There are two earlier records in Ireland that haven't passed the wild bird test, however that might just reflect the general consensus of the time that trans-Atlantic vagrancy was unlikely, although some were of the opinion they had both escaped from the same cage. One was shot at Annsbrook, Meath, in October 1845 and the other shot (probably) on the River Cloghoge, Wicklow in November 1845 (Ussher & Warren 1900).

### **Wood Thrush** *Hylocichla mustelina*

**Before 1900 Azores:** Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, sometime before 1900, collected (Bannerman & Bannerman 1966).

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

### **Least Bittern** *Ixobrychus exilis*

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

The whereabouts of the specimen is unknown, although it may have found its way in to a private collection.

### **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus*

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

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

### **Gabar Goshawk** *Micronisus gabar*

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

Both pairs were observed flying along the River Nile during January and February.

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

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

First noticed by J. Watson as it perched on an out-house at Loop Head at 09:00. About one hour later, 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.



Pic. 023.  
Dark-eyed Junco,  
Natural History Museum, Dublin.  
Photo: © Brian McCloskey.

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, 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. 023).

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.*

### **Asian 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.

The 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 also taking 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 Salmijävi's south shore, 40km north of Vaggetem where first seen.



Pic. 024.  
Asian Red-rumped Swallow,  
Zoological Museum Oslo.  
Photo: © Bjørn Olav Tveit.

The specimen (Pic. 024) was acquired by the Christiania Museum (since renamed the Zoological Museum, Oslo). It was 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).

**Sandhill Crane** *Antigone canadensis*

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

Shot while feeding near the shore at Galley Head, having spent a few days previous on some nearby marshy ground. It 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**. Furthermore, it was established that it did not come from Woburn Park, Bedfordshire, England, where all the 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.



Pic. 025.  
Sandhill Crane,  
Natural History Museum, Dublin.  
Photo: © Nigel Monaghan.



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 judged there was no evidence of captive origin and found the specimen to be of the nominate form (Rutledge 1971), and later Rutledge (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. 025).

### **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.

The Yellowlegs was shot by Capt. (later Major) Arthur Dorrien-Smith (the 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.

### **Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius*

**1908 Italy:** Bari, Apulia, date not known (Baccetti *et al.* 2021), collected.

The specimen was discovered in 2012 during a review of the extensive bird collection that was assembled, mainly between 1869 and 1910, by Prof. Vincenzo de Romita. It is preserved in the Pitagora School in Bari (Pic. 026).



It was identified by Cristiano Liuzzi, Fabio Mastropasqua and Simone Todisco (Liuzzi *et al.* 2013) and has been accepted by the COI (Janni & Fracasso 2015). It should be noted that several rare specimens in Prof. de Romita's collection were **regarded as reliable** by Arrigoni degli Oddi (1929).

This is the first European record, elsewhere in the Western Palearctic breeding is restricted to Egypt especially at Wadi el Natrun and it has also been recorded in Israel and Morocco.

### **Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala*

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

Shot in a small garden situated between houses by Hugo Weigold, who described it as **small and inconspicuous and called a thrush-like zi** (Pic. 027). Although he was unable to identify the bird, Weigold realised it was a bunting and the short wing length caused him to suspect Black-faced. 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.



Pic. 027.

**Black-faced Bunting,**

Institut für Vogelforschung, Wilhelmshaven.

Photo: © Jochen Dierschke.

### **Crested Auklet** *Aethia cristatella*

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

This bird was shot by Capt. Ole Andreas Christiansen, the Faroese owner-master of the schooner *Otaria*, while she was fishing on the banks northeast of Iceland some time between 12th and 20th August 1912.

When Capt. Christiansen first noticed the bird it was flying low in the schooner's wake and he 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 on Nólsoy (in the Faroe Islands) to set it up (Pic. 028). The mounted specimen is currently housed in the Universitetets Zoologiske Museum, Copenhagen, where the identification was most likely made.



Pic. 028.  
Crested Auklet,  
Universitetets Zoologiske Museum, Copenhagen.  
Photo: © Joakim Engel.



Pic. 029.  
Audubon's Shearwater,  
Natural History Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.  
Photo: © Robert Flood.



Pic. 030.

Shearwater Specimens (left to right):

Barolo, Boyd's, Audubon's & Manx Shearwaters (all Natural History Museum, Tring, England, apart from Audubon's housed at Natural History Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen).

Photo: © Robert Flood.



### **Audubon's Shearwater** *Puffinus lherminieri*

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

During research 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, 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 (that body of water 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 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 a Manx Shearwater when first acquired, changed sometime later to Barolo). Examining the photographs, Robert was not convinced it was a Barolo and arranged to examine it first hand with the help of the Natural History Museum, Tring where it was loaned. Measurements taken were outside the range of Barolo (too large) and Manx (too small) while the plumage suggested either Boyd's or Audubon's Shearwaters.

The tail appeared relatively long, although damaged tail-feathers made accurate measurements difficult and it proved impossible to examine the underwing without damaging the specimen as the wings were clasped tight to the body (Pic. 030).

J. Martin Collinson (Professor of Genetics at the Institute of Medical Sciences, University of Aberdeen) undertook DNA analysis of a toe-pad sample and determined it was an Audubon's Shearwater, a species that breeds throughout the Caribbean. Furthermore, both measurements taken and those parts of the plumage that could be examined were consistent with Prof. Collinson's finding (Pic. 029).



Pic. 031.  
Brown Noddy,  
Nordfriesisches Museum, Husum.  
Photo: © Klaus Günther.

### **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. 031).

### **Schrenck's Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus eurhythmus*

**1912 Italy:** Adult female, near Bra, Province of Cuneo, Piemonte, 12th November (Salvadori 1912-13), collected.

Taken by a hunter near Bra in northwest Italy, who sent the freshly dead specimen to Carlo Bainotti for setting up. Before Carlo began the process, he forwarded the bird to Tommaso Salvadori to be identified.



Pic. 032.  
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 in Turin) was initially stumped, but eventually recalled he had seen one illustrated 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). Salvadori's initial confusion was possibly caused by the illustration incorrectly annotated as *Ardetta cinnamomea* (possibly indicating Cinnamon Bittern?).

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. 032).

There is an earlier claim of one at either Brandenburg or Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany in the 1890s but it has not been accepted 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).

During the night of 25th/26th September, a number of birds met their end in collision with the Creac'h Lighthouse on the island of Ouessant (16 nautical miles west-northwest of Pointe de Corsen on the Finistère Peninsula). In the morning the light-keeper, Monsieur Duchène, on picking up one of the overnight casualties thought he recognised the species, declaring it was **an infrequent visitor to the light**.





Pic. 033.  
Gray's Grasshopper Warbler,  
Natural History Museum, Tring.  
Photo: Mark Adams, © Natural History Museum, London.

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 assume the bird was an immature Great Reed Warbler and he labelled it as such.

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 the specimen was correctly labelled as a Gray's Grasshopper Warbler. When compared to other skins of that Far Eastern grass warbler in the British Museum (some collected in the Celebes by Dr. Hose and some in the Malay Archipelago by Charles Darwin's compadre, Alfred Russel Wallace) the measurements and plumage details were an exact match. This specimen (Pic. 033) is now held at the Natural History Museum, Tring (Registration number, NHMUK 1929.10.7.1).

\*Along with five other grass warblers that includes Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Gray's Grasshopper Warbler has been moved from the genus *Locustella* to *Helopsaltes* following 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 Jóhannsson 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 that occurred in Britain prior to 1958. This was prompted 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.

The review rejected all but one of these, making a bird on Tresco the first for Britain and the WP, although it is worth noting that Bufflehead was not known to have been imported to European collections until 1936. The specimen is on display in the Isles of Scilly Museum, St. Mary's.

An earlier record near Trstené na Oravě (then a 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 is from the Indian sub-Continent east to extreme southern China. The species is known for its habit of hitching rides on ships and this would appear to be how it has established populations in and around various port cities, principally on the shores of the Indian Ocean. It 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.

### **Black Scoter** *Melanitta americana*

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

Kari Kaunisto (then 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 in advance of adding them to a database. While checking the mounted specimens they noticed one labelled 'Common Scoter' that did not look quite right for that species of sea duck (Pics. 034-035). Indeed, when the specimen was presented to the 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).

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's 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 at the same location on Tresco. It 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 Paganì'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.



Pic. 036.  
Pied Crow,  
Museo Civico di Storia Naturale Giacomo Doria, Genoa.  
Photo: © Enrico Borgo.

### **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla*

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

The whereabouts of the specimen is not known.

### **Pied Crow** *Corvus albus*

**1931 Libya:** Adult male, Jalo Oasis, Al Wahat, 21st to 24th April (Batty 2010), collected.

The specimen is housed in the Museo Civico di Storia Naturale Giacomo Doria, Genoa (Pic. 036).



### **Tickell's Thrush** *Turdus unicolor*

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

The carcass was brought for examination to 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 species.

Instead it was sent 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 (Pic. 037). Despite it being a short distance migrant at best, a thorough examination of the plumage ruled out any possibility of escape, consequently the species is currently assigned to Category B of the German List. To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic.

### **Shikra** *Accipiter badius*

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

Breeding was confirmed as one was found in its nest.



Pic. 038.  
Spectacled Eider,  
University Museum of Bergen.  
Photo: © Terje Lislevand.

### **Spectacled Eider** *Somateria fischeri*

**1933 Norway:** Second-winter male, Vardø, 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 in to 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 in incomplete breeding plumage**.

Assuming it bred near the western limit of its range (possibly near the mouth of the River Lena in Siberia?) and the age to be about one-and-a-half years would mean it departed the breeding grounds by mid-September 1932 at the latest. It's likely the bird was tempted west seeking open and ice-free waters where it could feed, eventually reaching Vardø? The specimen is housed at the University Museum of Bergen (Pic. 038).

### **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris*

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

Although both birds 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. 039). The whereabouts of the second skin is not known.



Pic. 039.

**African Skimmer**, The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, Israel.  
Photo: © Amos Belmaker.



### **Black-and-White Warbler** *Mniotilta varia*

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

Found dead about the middle of the month in Hendry Anderson's garden, this after a period of stormy weather. 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. 040).

### **Scarlet Tanager** *Piranga olivacea*

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

Found dead by Aðalsteinn Helgason at the end of November or early in December. It has been mistakenly referred to as a Greenfinch in some sources. The remains are preserved in the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 041).

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 12th October 1963, that at first glance was mistaken for a Greenfinch. During processing it was very aggressive and once released it was out of sight almost immediately 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 the possibility of confusion with 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 reinstated as Scarlet Tanager.

Pics. 040-041.

**Black-and-White Warbler** (below), National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh.

Photo: © NMS.

**Scarlet Tanager remains** (bottom), Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.

Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.



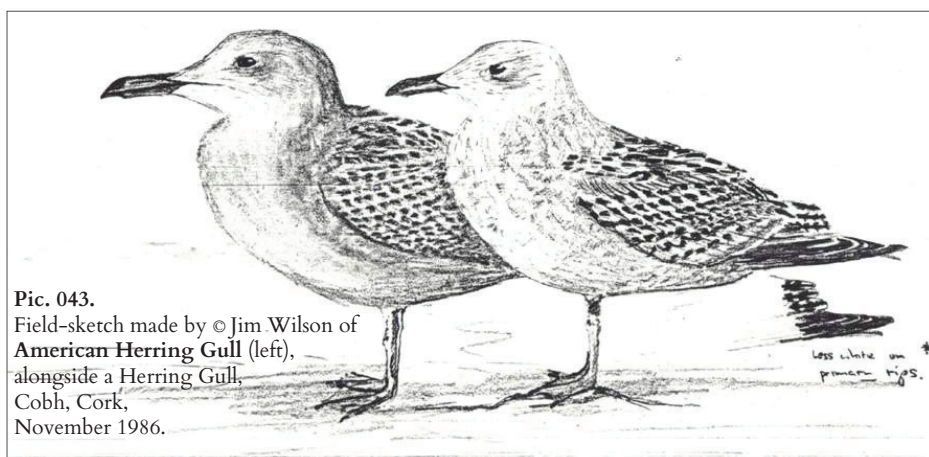
## **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*

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

Shot by Hans Schaanning 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). 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 he first noticed it, 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. 042). The specimen is preserved in the Stavanger City Museum.



Pic. 042.  
Olive-backed Pipit, Stavanger City Museum.  
Photo: © Tomas Aarvak.



Pic. 043.  
Field-sketch made by © Jim Wilson of  
**American Herring Gull** (left),  
alongside a Herring Gull,  
Cobh, Cork,  
November 1986.

## **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 was reported to the Gull Banding Project, 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.

The first on land was an immature bird at Cobh, Cork, Ireland from 16th November to 16th December 1986, found by Cork birder Jim Wilson. 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 gull in Cobh a couple of years previous. Comparing his notes taken on both sides of the Atlantic convinced Jim the bird in 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. 043).



Pic. 044.

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

### **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 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 comparison of features eliminated most European species but Yellow-breasted Bunting (*E. aureola*) remained a possibility, however a more detailed description would be needed to determine that possibility.

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 was some similarities it was clearly not that species. Attention next turned to a description of a Chestnut Bunting that was caught in Belgium in October 1928 (Dupond 1935). This and a 19th century French record have been assigned to Category D by the respective national rarity committees. Comparing the bird with the written description conclusively proved it was a Chestnut Bunting (Pic. 044).

### **Red Fox Sparrow** *Passerella iliaca iliaca*

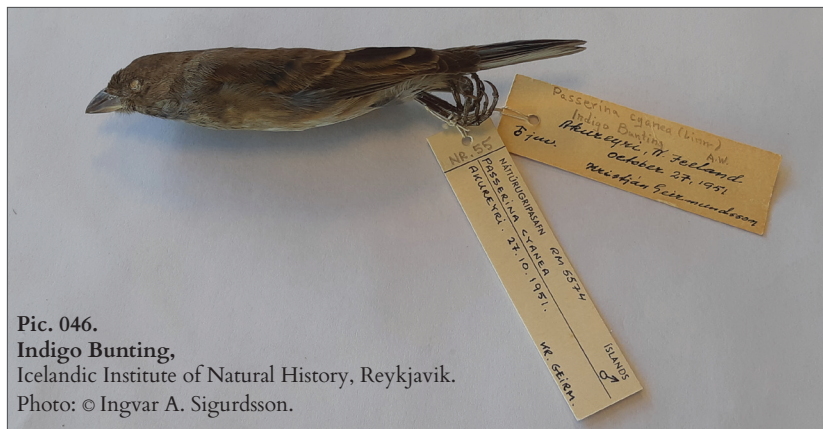
**1944 Iceland:** Male, Laugarholt í Bæjarsveit, 5th November (Pétursson & Þráinsson 1999), collected.

Shot (or possibly found dead) by Björn J. Blöndal. It had spent time in a garden on a farm feeding on rowan berries and was also seen to visit one of Iceland's famous geothermal warm-water streams. The specimen is housed in the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik and is identified to the eastern form *iliaca* (Pic. 045). An earlier record at Liguria, Italy in 1936 was judged to be ship assisted.









Pic. 046.  
Indigo Bunting,  
Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.  
Photo: © 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.

### 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 a Magnificent Frigatebird, which remained unchallenged for 50 years. The carcass was donated to Edinburgh Museum (now part of National Museums Scotland) to be set up as a study-skin and is housed at National Museums Scotland's Collection Centre, West Granton Road, Edinburgh (Pic. 047).



Pic. 047.  
Ascension Frigatebird,  
National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh.  
Photo: © NMS.

The British Birds Rarity Committee was established in 1958 and as this bird was found before then it became part of an ongoing review of pre-1958 records. The reassessment (principally conducted by Grahame Walbridge with Robert [Bob] McGowan undertaking a close examination of the skin at NMS, Edinburgh) took place in 2002 and revealed, somewhat surprisingly, that the features and measurements taken were incompatible with Magnificent Frigatebird! There followed a thorough investigation of the characteristics of all five frigatebird species for the purpose of establishing the identity of the Tíree bird and the outcome determined that it could be attributed to one species only, the Ascension Frigatebird that breeds in the tropical south Atlantic on the tiny Boatswainbird Islet that lies off the north-east coast of Ascension Island, 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 2013.

### **American Black Duck** *Anas rubripes*

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

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 it had already been sold, however following some negotiations with another customer he acquired it. On 12th February, Hudson forwarded it to the Natural History Museum, Dublin where the Rev. P.G. Kennedy S.J. and P.E. Dunn identified it as a Black Duck.



**Pic. 048.**

Male and 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 the 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. 048).

The bird was shot by a farmer named Croke from Listol, near Mullinavat early in the month. 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 on 5th February where it was received by Harry London, an assistant in the shop. London had considerable experience 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 has been discounted in the records.



**Pic. 049.**

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

## **Stilt Sandpiper** *Calidris himantopus*

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

Peter Waterton and Edward E. Jackson were staying at Spurn Bird Observatory (on the east coast of England at the tip of Spurn Point, at the northern entrance to the River Humber), when they noticed an unusual wader on marshy ground just north of Kilnsea that did not match the **description of any wader previously seen there**. They headed back to the Observatory, returning about an hour-and-a-half later along with Ralph Chislett, G.H. Ainsworth and R.F. Dickens, but despite much searching of the area, the bird could not be found. 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 taking flight 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 up to its belly and would swim frequently. One feature that was particularly remarked on by most was the strongly barred underparts, a feature that suggested either Wandering Tattler or Stilt Sandpiper (Pic. 049).

Ralph Chislett collated the various notes taken and drawings made 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 clinched it.

## **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 just 15 yards ahead of him.

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** (Harrison 1955).

The occurrence coincided with a definite migration of large hawks moving south-easterly down the Euphrates. Harrison was aware the bird was well to the north of its usual range but Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen (author of *Birds of Arabia*) pointed out to him that as it is a reptile-eater, **there are plenty of reptiles in the desert to support it on such a journey**.

## **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas*

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

Lundy Island, with an area of just over 1,000 acres, is situated about 12 nautical miles north-northeast of Hartland Point, near the entrance to the Bristol Channel. The island is managed by the Landmark Trust on behalf of the National Trust.

What initially appeared to be a Chiffchaff was observed entering Lundy Island's Helgoland Trap, but that impression was soon dispelled once it was 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, held overnight and released the following day. There were some suggestions it had been around for a few days prior to capture. 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 severe weather conditions 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. On the following day her son David noticed a strange bird which he was unable to identify but 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 the School House bird was a Myrtle Warbler (sometimes known as Yellow-rumped Warbler).

During its stay it established a territory based around the Smith'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 and 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 on-board 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. 050.

Male and female **Ring-necked Duck**, Slimbridge bird is 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).

Opened in November 1946 by Sir Peter Scott, WWT Slimbridge is situated midway between Bristol and Gloucester on the eastern side of the River Severn estuary in south-western England. The reserve 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 house at Slimbridge. It reappeared the following afternoon when it was watched by Hugh Boyd and her husband Sir Peter Scott. Finally on the 14th it was observed for the last time in flight over the Orchard Pen. It later transpired that Bernard King also saw it in the reserve 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, had never been successfully reared in any European collection. Therefore and in all likelihood, it was a genuine vagrant from North America (Pic. 050). Ring-necked Duck is the Nearctic counterpart of Tufted Duck, in whose company it is often found.

A male of the species that was discovered for sale in Leadenhall Market, London in 1801 was supposedly taken somewhere on the Lincolnshire Fens, but it has never been accepted as a vagrant.

## **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, and is the most remote inhabited island in the United Kingdom. In the late 1940s George Waterston (who had first visited the island 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 Valerie Thom, along with some others, disturbed six Whimbrels that were in an area of close-cropped grassland at the southern end of the island. As they flew off Thom remarked that one of the birds was **without a white rump** and was very obviously smaller. During that day and the next they kept track of this group of Whimbrels, often at very close quarters, eventually concluding the odd bird out was an example of the Nearctic form *hudsonicus*.

It remained on the island until the 31st but it proved very difficult to approach after the nominate birds had departed the island on the 29th, and when disturbed would take long flights that usually ended with it landing on some close-cropped pasture, although on rare occasions it headed for weed-covered tidal rocks.

At various times Hudsonian Whimbrel has been treated as a form of Whimbrel or as a full species, which is its current status *per* the IOC. The provenance of some earlier possible records in Iceland (1854) and in 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).

## **Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus*

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

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 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, giving the overall impression of a Great Reed Warbler. When flushed it would quickly dive back in to cover, never revealing much of its appearance, so it was decided that the best chance of identifying it was to trap it and examine the bird in the hand. A mist-net with a portable catching-box was assembled and the bird 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 Great Reed Warbler was purely superficial and with reference to H.E. Dresser's *Manual of Palearctic Birds* and Ernst Hartert's *Die Vögel der Paläarktischen Fauna* it was confidently identified as Thick-billed Warbler. Once released it skulked in the garden in front of the Helgoland Trap for a short while before flying off towards the hillside above the Observatory and was never seen again.

**American Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger surinamensis*

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

Collected by Hákon Vilhjálmsson. 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. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 051).



Pic. 051.  
American Black Tern,  
Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.  
Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.



Pic. 052.  
Tennessee Warbler,  
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. 052).

The first live and second Western Palearctic record was an immature found by Chris Heard and Graham Walbridge near the Double Dyke trap on Fair Isle on 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 until darkness fell there was no further sign of it that day. The following morning Chris and Graham refound it in a potato patch, where it proved far less elusive. After consulting the available literature they identified it as a Tennessee Warbler. It frequented a crofting area where it was seen daily, mainly feeding in the standing crops, 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 to Foulness in February 1958. Black Brant is the northwestern Canadian Arctic, Alaskan and northeastern Siberian form of Brent Goose. Some regard this form as a potential candidate for full species status.

## **Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra*

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

Bardsey Island, with an area of just over a half square mile, lies just over two miles off the tip of the Llŷn Peninsula in the Irish Sea. 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.

Early on Wednesday, 11th September 1957, R. Moss and R. Stjernstedt had brief views of a bird that resembled a **large, bright male Greenfinch** on Bardsey. It dived in to dense cover becoming lost to view before they could get anything on it. Fortunately it was caught by J.D. Gray later the same day in the island's 'Lane' Helgoland Trap and was provisionally identified as a Summer Tanager, which 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.

During its 15 day residence on the island 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 if disturbed it would dive back in to cover pronto. It mostly fed on Blackberries but one time was seen to take a small fly in the air, rather like a shrike. The bird was trapped again on the 15th and 20th September and was found to have put on weight during those dates going from an initial 24.6 to 36.7 grams.

Pic. 053.

Tristan Albatross,

Museo di Storia Naturale, Terrasini, Sicily.

Photo: © Fabio Lo Valvo.



### **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 in the Museo di Storia Naturale, Terrasini, Sicily and arranged for a photograph to be taken (Pic. 053), which clearly revealed it to be one of the wandering albatross superspecies group, now recognised as five full species in their own right. Size alone ruled out Wandering Albatross, but not Antipodean Albatross, however the latter was ruled out on account of its Pacific Ocean distribution making it a most unlikely candidate. Clues to the identification of the specimen were found in Orlando (1958) who quoted the size of the bill as, length 150mm and width ca.39mm, both consistent with Tristan Albatross (that breeds on Gough and the Tristan da Cunha group of islands in the South Atlantic and disperses throughout the south Atlantic at other times), 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.



Pic. 054.

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



### **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis*

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

Eilat is the most southern 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, that includes the Negev Desert, have acquired the reputation for great birding and has hosted numerous first Western Palearctic records.

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. 054). This little gem breeds on islands in the Sea of Japan and Yellow Sea and since the early 1980s has been turning up in north-west Europe.

### **Red-billed Teal** *Anas erythrorhynchos*

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

### **Hume's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei*

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

A *Phylloscopus* warbler that crashed in to the Texel Lightship, moored off the north-west coast of the Netherlands in the North Sea, on the night of 27th/28th November 1958 was collected. The specimen was donated to the Zoologisch 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 (1985). Historically, Hume's Warbler was treated as a subspecies of Yellow-browed Warbler, but it was known that its calls and song differ 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 followed suit 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 Observatory to alert Peter Davis and to their great relief it was still present on their return. The size and its generally 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. The sex was confirmed early on 1st May when it was heard singing just outside the hostel 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 difficult to locate. Its usual haunt was a cliff in South Haven where it was sometimes seen feeding in the short turf near the cliff's edge. It was noted that it hopped when moving slowly, but when disturbed it flew rapidly back under the nearest cover. Apart from a brief excursion to the Gully trap on the 6th, it remained near the Observatory right up to 8th May, then on 9th and 10th May it was observed down by the stream at Vatstrass, after which it was not subsequently seen.

### **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. 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. Particularly puzzling was the bird's repeated trilling call that was unlike any other flycatcher call they knew, described 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 after the 25th.

Niels noticed the bird's pale eye-ring and was aware this feature was indicative of the Far Eastern Asian Brown Flycatcher, and he began to suspect the mystery flycatcher was that species. However, finding a detailed description in the literature proved difficult, but an examination of museum skins turned up a match to clinch the identity, and at the same time ruled out other grey or brown Asian flycatcher species. There are a number of earlier claims that have some credentials but were ultimately judged inconclusive.

### **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri*

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

Taken by Sigurður V. Jónatansson. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 055).



### **Siberian Water Pipit** *Anthus rubescens japonicus*

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

The Siberian Pipit *japonicus* is the Eastern Palearctic form of Buff-bellied Pipit. 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.

### **Cape Teal** *Anas capensis*

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

One was found dead 250km northeast of Kufra sometime before April 1961 (BWP I), possibly in January? Bundy (1976) reports another single bird found dead at Kufra on 3rd April 1961. These would appear to be the first records.

A position 250km northeast of 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 Hálfðán Björnsson. The specimen is preserved in the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 056).



Pic. 056.  
**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker,**  
 Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.  
 Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

The first live and second for the Western Palearctic was a first-winter male found among some scrubby Sallows in the southeast corner of the Great Pool on Tresco, Isles of Scilly, England on 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).

### **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 warden at Skomer Island National Nature Reserve. Reaching the sheltered cliffs above the North Haven landing beach he noticed a **strange bird** about 75 metres from him. 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. 057).

He called his wife Shirley from the nearby warden's house and they both watched it as it moved about the cliff at distances down to ten metres. It remained on the cliff for most of that day, always keeping on the move, sometimes disappearing momentarily in the ivy. On the following morning they searched the cliffs but there was no sign of the strange bird and it was also evident there were far fewer birds about than the previous day.

David and Shirley were at a loss to name the bird and whatever reference material available was no help, nobody else was on the island at the time and they had no means of communicating with the neighbouring island of Skokholm or 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 (in summary) 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.

### **American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla*

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

This bird most likely arrived courtesy of Hurricane Frances, which had brushed the coast of Nova Scotia, Canada a couple of days prior to its discovery on Ouessant, 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 on the eastbound RMS *Queen Elizabeth* that had departed New York for Southampton in October 1961. On the 20th Alan spotted a large raptor, which he identified the following day as a Red-shouldered Hawk, this when the ship was about half-way to Southampton. The hawk remained on-board until the 22nd when it was last seen near the Isles of Scilly. Assuming a steaming speed of 22 knots (easily achievable by the *Queen*) the ship and hawk would have entered the Western Palearctic at 30°W sometime on the 21st.



Throughout its three day stay it fed exclusively on storm-petrels that it 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 *Queens's* after mast. It was clearly ship assisted, but as it did not receive food or shelter from anyone on-board, in the 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 of the record 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 in small grassy fields 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 the bird as it moved about the field. 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 the stone 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. However, after 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 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 deposits of fat 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 of these occurred during summer months and the plumage of each was noted to be very worn, so not surprisingly both 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. A Bird Observatory was established there in 1959 by British birders who were interested in investigating the island's potential for observing and recording bird 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 in 1960 moving to the building known as 'Stroma' just off the island's A1 road during 1961 and 1962. In 1963 it moved to Harbour House in North Harbour, where it remains to this day.

Around midday on Sunday, 7th October 1962, Michael Fogden and Tim Sharrock (managing editor of *British Birds* from 1976 to 2000), 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 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 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 Western Palearctic at 30°W, 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 in to 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 about the ship at that time is recounted in Alan Durand's article in *British Birds* (Durand 1963), a really terrific 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 captivity in European wildfowl collections, so escapes of fully winged individuals can be reasonably expected to occur 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 shot at Furnes is described as a **more likely transatlantic vagrant** (BWP I) and as, **probably also of transatlantic origin** (Snow & Perrins 1996). Either way the language used is not unequivocal and an element of doubt must hang over it given those assessments. However, there is no doubt about a female shot on Flores, Azores in January 1985 as it was ringed in South Carolina in November 1984 (Snow & Perrins 1996).

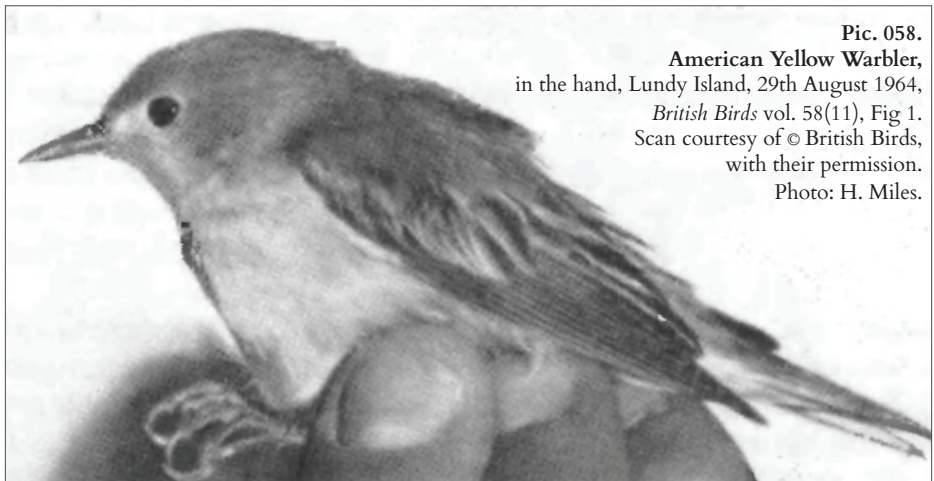
### **American Yellow Warbler** *Setophaga petechia*

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

H. Miles, the newly arrived Assistant Warden on Bardsey 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.

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. 058). Once it was examined in the hand, American Yellow Warbler seemed the most likely identity, but reference material to hand proved inadequate to be certain and deteriorating light in the Observatory precluded a thorough examination so it was decided to hold the bird overnight, but unfortunately it died soon after dawn the following morning.



**Pic. 058.**  
**American Yellow Warbler,**  
in the hand, Lundy Island, 29th August 1964,  
*British Birds* vol. 58(11), Fig 1.  
Scan courtesy of © British Birds,  
with their permission.  
Photo: H. Miles.

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 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 that it was a first-winter American Yellow Warbler.

### **Cape Petrel** *Daption capense*

**1964 Italy:** Immature, Sciacca, Agrigento, Sicily, September (Massa 1974), collected. Cape (or Pintado) Petrel is circumpolar in the Southern Ocean where it is an abundant and widespread species. It was known as a species that was often taken captive by sailors and kept as pets onboard ships. Consequently, old 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 of these).

There are three Category A records in the Western Palearctic. The first was taken at sea off Sciacca, 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 held in private collection. The second was observed by Charles Perez as it flew close-in past Europa Point, Gibraltar on Wednesday, 20th June 1979 and is a Category A record on the Gibraltar list ([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 had been ringed as a pulli in Margate, New Jersey on 28th June 1964. The first live record was also in the Azores, a first-year bird at Fajã dos Cubres on São Jorge from 18th September to 9th October 1997 (Costa *et al.* 2000).

### **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.

### **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, 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. First impressions was of an enormous warbler, **the bird's shape and carriage reminding [both] of a very large Dartford Warbler**. Once on the ground it was more thrush-like, hopping about on strong looking legs, rum-maging about in the leaf-litter and heard to call **chewweek chewweek** several times.

Its most striking and obvious feature was a rufous flank that contrasted with a white belly. Any time it was disturbed it would fly **jerkily away and perch on a fence or wall**, one time landing near some Chaffinches, appearing to be about half-as-big again. After watching it for 30 minutes the decision was taken to make an attempt to trap it. While back at the Observatory to fetch the net, reference was made to Roger Tory 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 it is a rare winter visitor to Iraq and has been a vagrant in Israel and Egypt (Alström & Mild 2003). Masked Wagtail is the central Asian form of White Wagtail.

### **Lesser Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna javanica*

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

This bird was originally identified as an 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* (1996) he identified it from a photograph as a Lesser Whistling Duck, a Tree Duck that is widespread in the Indian sub-Continent and southeast Asia. Several features revealed in the photograph, such as the pristine state of its plumage, along with the discovery that the species was not part of any Israeli zoo's collection during the 1960s ruled out captive origin and it was judged to be a genuine vagrant.

### **Brown Thrasher** *Toxostoma rufum*

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

At 09:30 on Friday, 18th November 1966, C.S.L. Inclendon 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. Back home Inclendon 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 and 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. Clifton and photographed by Dr. D.J. Godfrey. 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.

### **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 (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).

### **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 in the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 059).

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



Pic. 059.  
Acadian Flycatcher,  
Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.  
Photo: © 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. 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 Chandler Robbins, Bertel Bruun, Herbert Zim and Arthur Singer's *Birds of North America* 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 eliminating 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 arrived on the RMS *Queen Elizabeth* when it docked in Southampton in October 1961. It remained for part of the return voyage, dying when the *Queen* was about half way across the Atlantic (Durand 1963).

## **Falcated Duck** *Mareca falcata*

**1968 Turkey:** Male, Lake Van, November (BWP I).

Records of Falcated Duck in the Western Palearctic **that are likely to be genuine vagrants** are listed in BWP I (p. 484). The earliest is a male shot by Capt. Thornhill on the river near Hanna, Iraq on 19th March 1916 (Ticehurst *et al.* 1922). However, doubts have been expressed about the location, which might possibly be Hanna, Esfahan Province in Iran (Khaleghizadeh *et al.* 2017), therefore placing it outside the WP. In light of this, the title of first is passed to the next oldest in the list, the male at Lake Van in far eastern Turkey.

## **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.

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 on Hirta. Using 8x binoculars in excellent light Nick appraised the culprit 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. As it perched there on an overhead cable 12 metres away, he could pick out **a very heavy, pale lime-green beak and a predominantly dull yellow body**. Nick continued to follow it 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. 060).



Pic. 060.  
Evening Grosbeak,  
Hirta, St. Kilda,  
26th March 1969.  
Photo: © Nick Picozzi.

He noticed some feathers on the crown 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 the colour 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 on 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 a 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 Syltefjordklubben Point. 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! First impressions was of a Ruff but then they noticed the long bill, which ruled that out. The mystery bird then joined nine Golden Plover foraging in the grass and they noticed it was as tall as the plovers. It showed the head pattern of a Whimbrel with a dark spot behind the eye but had a straighter and shorter bill. It was heard to call *kly kly*. Using the car as a hide about 20 photographs were taken (Pic. 061). It was looked for again on the 15th but it had departed along with the Golden Plover and was not seen again.

Reference was made to the literature and museum specimens and the photographs were studied by, among others, Gustav Rudebeck of the Zoological Institute, Lund, and Carl Edelstam of the Natural History Museum, Stockholm and it was confidently identified as a Little Curlew, sometimes known as Little Whimbrel.

Pic. 061.  
Little Curlew,  
Hamningberg, Finnmark, 14th July 1969.  
Photo: © Gert Andersson.



### **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 and 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, Álfanes á Mýrum, 7th November (Ólafsson 1986), found dead.

Found dead in a feed enhancer storage room at Álfanes, just north of Tanageres Point, Vesturland. The specimen is preserved at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pics. 062-063). 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).



Pics. 062-063.

**American Coot**, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.

Photos: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.



### **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. Billett were at the southern tip of Farlington Marshes, a few miles east of Portsmouth. At 16:40 a small dark-winged gull approached low along the shore and settled immediately in front of them about 100 yards away. The new arrival clearly agitated some nearby Black-headed Gulls who harassed it to such an extent that after ten minutes of trying to avoid them without success, took flight and departed. It was clear to Smith and Billett 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 while it was 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 turned to 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 bird 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, 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 it was published as such by the BBRC.

### **Red-breasted Nuthatch** *Sitta canadensis*

**1970 Iceland:** Adult male, Heimaey, Vestmannaeyjar, 21st May (Pétursson & Þráins-son 1999), found dead.

Found dead by Egill Árnason. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 064).

The first live, and to date, only other Western Palearctic 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 five metres ahead of them that they could not identify (Aley & Aley 1995). Fortunately it was still present the following day when a number of birders twitched it and identified it as a Red-breasted Nuthatch (Hatton & Varney 1989), a species that breeds across North American conifer forests.



Pic. 064.  
Red-breasted Nuthatch,  
Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.  
Photo: © Yann Kolbeinsson.

## Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*

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

Found by a young Philip Round in the afternoon of Sunday, 8th June 1970 on his home patch of Marazion Marsh, a couple of miles east of Penzance. J.H. (John Henry) Johns arrived shortly after and together they watched the stint for about two hours (Pics. 065-068). It was **much brighter and more strongly scaled on the upperparts than the Temminck's** found there the previous Friday. It was still present on the following day right up to evening time when seen by Philip and others at distances down to six metres. Although neither 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**, indeed none of the submissions to the BBRC mentioned that species, although both Philip's and J.H. John's descriptions made reference to the bird's unusually long toes. A couple of weeks later Philip met Dave Britton at the marsh and was asked 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. He discussed his misgivings with others who had seen the bird and following a re-examination of photographs, checking skins in the British Museum and gaining field experience of the species wintering in Thailand led Philip **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.



Pics. 065-068.

Long-toed Stint, Marazion Marsh, 8th June 1970, *British Birds* vol. 89(1), Plates 8-11.  
Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.

Photos: J.H. Johns.

## **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. It immediately disappeared back in under cover. They managed to flush it a couple more times before it disappeared in to a thicket of gorse and bracken. They had no idea what they had just seen, the best they could come up with was that it looked like 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 like it might have left the island.

K.C. Osborne was staying on the nearby island of St. Mary's at the time and he paid a visit St. Agnes on the 21st. He visited the area around the Pool in the afternoon where he disturbed a very green 'warbler' with yellow underparts that at first he thought might be a large *Phylloscopus*. It was a real skulker but he managed to flush it three times before losing sight of it, but at least managed to note 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 informed them of the bird. Both G.W. and K.D. Edwards headed to the Pool and took up position on an adjacent seawall hoping to connect with the bird but no luck, so at 17:00 they began walking the area, which succeeded in flushing it briefly a few times, before it 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 both Edwards met others at the Pool including K.C. Osborne (but without revealing to anyone their suspicion that the bird was a Hooded Warbler). During the next hour-and-a-half they had fleeting views of the bird before it eventually perched out in full view on a small dead bush for about seven minutes giving excellent views down to eight yards with the sun behind the observers. A number of attempts to trap it were made but they all failed so they left at 13:40 to give it a break. Later that afternoon it was watched again as it fed in among some tamarisks and was finally lost to view at 16:20.

In the discussion that followed all observers were agreed the bird was very probably a female or immature Hooded Warbler but the literature to hand was not sufficiently coherent to absolutely nail that down. 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. Thereafter they were satisfied that the tentative identification of Hooded Warbler was correct and a full account and description of the bird 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.

Pics. 069–070.

Veery, Porthgwarra Valley, 6th October 1970, *British Birds* vol. 65(2), Plate 9.

Scan courtesy of © British Birds, with their permission.

Photos: K. Allsopp.



**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. 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 had been recorded in Britain (seven prior to 1970) and Swainson's, then known as Olive-backed Thrush, in Ireland (two prior to 1970) but this did not appear to be either of these. A decision was taken to leave the bird for 15 minutes to let it settle and alert D. Barker, P. Pearce, K. Pellow and L.P. Williams to its presence. On their return they refound the bird **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. and K. 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*, which showed 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. 069-070) 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 to dive in to a large Elderberry bush, never to be 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.

### **Ross's Goose** *Anser rossii*

**1970 England:** Adult, Plex Moss, Lancashire, 5th December to 17th January 1971 (**BOU Changes to the British List, 29th November 2021** [online announcement, accessed 5th February 2022]).

This bird 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) that was sometimes seen with Gull-billed and Whiskered Terns and Slender-billed Gulls. It was present throughout much of the day at the Marisma de Hinojos and later on at the Paciles Cortados. The bird was not at all shy and came so close that Viggo could even 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*

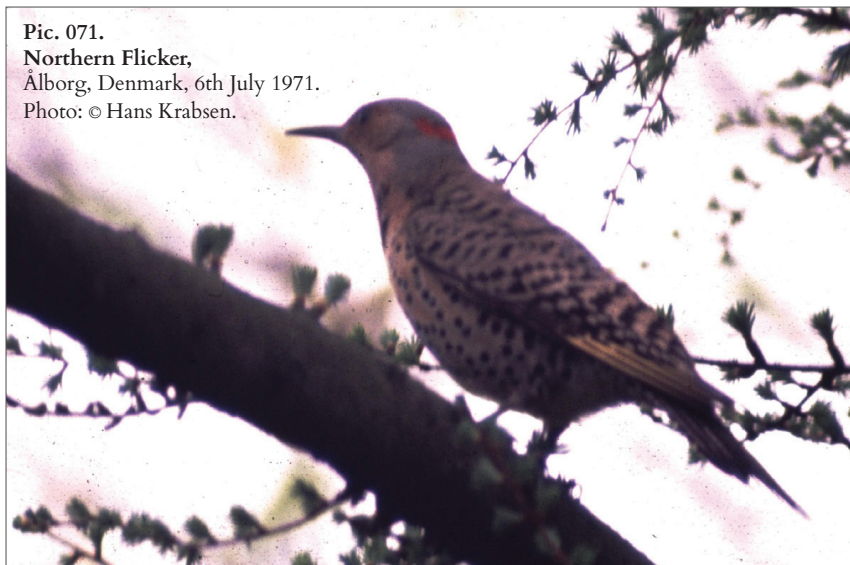
**1971 Norway:** Vardø, Finnmark, 6th July (Kuhn *et al.* 1973).

From 1st to 13th July 1971, German birders Michael Kuhn, Achim Bruch and Wolfgang Stickel went on a birding holiday to Finnmark, northern Norway. At 18:00 on the 6th they were at Vardø in Varanger when they found a dowitcher on a small brackish pool at the southern end of the island.

It fed rapidly using a short drilling action in the company of some Ruff, all departing high to the south-southwest at about 18:45. It was heard to call several times, a three (or less frequently two) *tū-tū-dit*, strongly suggesting Short-billed Dowitcher. The call was recorded and compared with Short-billed Dowitcher sonograms, which proved a match and confirmed the identity.



Pic. 071.  
Northern Flicker,  
Ålborg, Denmark, 6th July 1971.  
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 in to four distinct geographical groups. Any that make it to the Western Palearctic would be expected to come from the southeastern USA group *auratus*, that are also known as Yellow-shafted Flicker. These show yellow on the underwing and undertail 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. 071). Unfortunately the sound of the camera's shutter spooked the bird, causing it to depart and it was never 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 (Ortvad *et al.* 2015) to determine if it should be a part of the Danish List or not and it was duly accepted. Not surprisingly they concluded it **belonged to one of the two relatively similar subspecies *auratus* and *luteus*.**

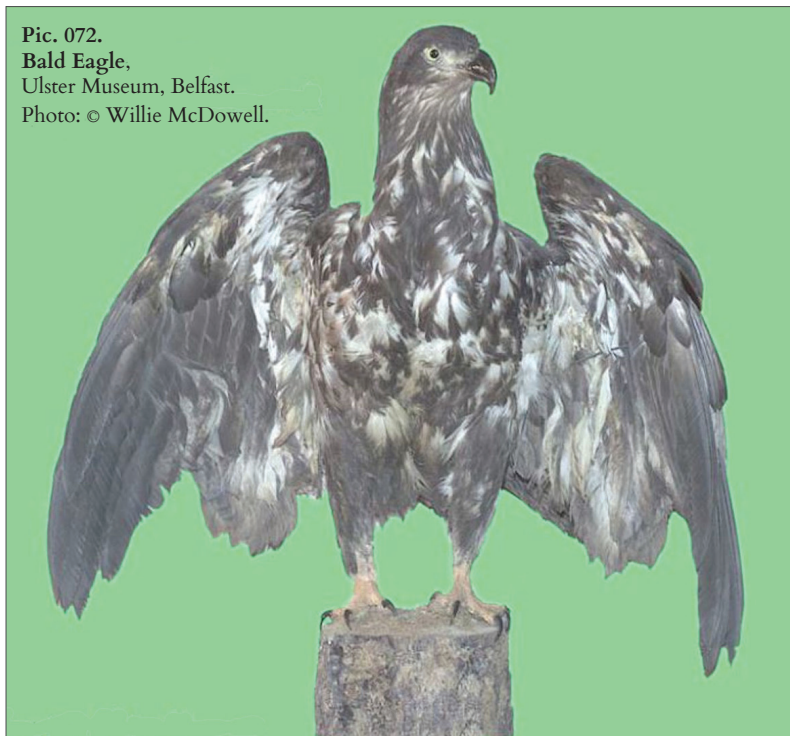
There is an earlier record of a bird that was seen to fly ashore from the RMS *Mauretania* as it approached Cork Harbour, Ireland on 13th October 1962 that had spent much of the transatlantic voyage on-board (Durand 1963). As food and water was provided by the crew, it was assigned to Category D2 of the Irish list. This was the same crossing that transported the Nearctic sparrows mentioned on page 65.

### **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus*

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

Caught by hand. This bird had been ringed on the previous 24th July at Madeleine Islands, Quebec, Canada.

Pic. 072.  
**Bald Eagle,**  
Ulster Museum, Belfast.  
Photo: © Willie McDowell.



**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 his chickens. The specimen was originally identified as a White-tailed Sea Eagle by Dr. Robert Nash of the Ulster Museum, Belfast.

In mid-1990 a picture of the specimen was brought to the attention of Dave Allen (then of the RSPB, now 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 re-identified as a juvenile Bald Eagle (at that time the only 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 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 as a juvenile Bald Eagle. When examined, there were grains of chicken feed found on its body, perhaps confirming the farmer's story? The mounted specimen now resides in the vaults of the Ulster Museum, Belfast (Pic. 072).

Pics. 073-074.

Juvenile **Bald Eagle**, Ballymacelligot, Kerry, November 1987.

Photos: © Richard T. Mills.



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. 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 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 Bald Eagle? After 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. 073-074). At that time it was the first known occurrence in the Western Palearctic, but was pre-dated a few years later when the Fermanagh bird's identity was determined.

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



Pic. 075.

Canada Warbler,

Icelandic Institute of Natural History,  
Reykjavik.

Photo: © Yann Kolbeinnsson.

## Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*

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

This bird was obviously exhausted when it was captured by Sólveig Sveinsdóttir. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 075).

## Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

**1973 Iceland:** 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 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 the bird about ten metres away searching for grubs. It put Iain in mind of the waterthrush genus *Seiurus*\*, and as it lacked a supercilium, 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. 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 to 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 came to the Skerries to see the bird. After some time they found it **feeding along a grassy bank on the shore-line**, but it soon departed, heading to rocky open 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. All four remarked on its striking 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 any success, and he 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 in a fish basket on the deck. Some time later, the boat's skipper described the bird to J.H. Simpson, which left no doubt it had to be an Ovenbird. Unfortunately it was not noticed if it was carrying a leg-ring, but what are the chances of two Ovenbirds present on the Skerries at the same time?

It was accepted by the BOURC as the first authenticated record. The provenance of an earlier record of an Ovenbird's wing protruding from the flotsam on the tideline at Formby Point, Lancashire on 4th January 1969 is not established.

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



## **Snowy Egret** *Egretta thula*

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

Found dead on a ship by Friðþjófur Bragason. The specimen is in the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik. The first live bird was collected on 6th June 1983 by Friðrik Jónsson at Hraunkot í Lóni, A-Skaft, Iceland (Pétursson & Ólafsson 1985).

## **Elegant Tern** *Thalasseus elegans*

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

This bird was first discovered in a Sandwich Tern colony at Banc d'Arguin, a sand-bank 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 after that. 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.



Pics. 076–077.  
**Algerian Nuthatch**,  
Bouafroun Forest, Algeria,  
28th September 2018.  
Photos: © Graham Talbot.





## Algerian Nuthatch *Sitta ledanti*

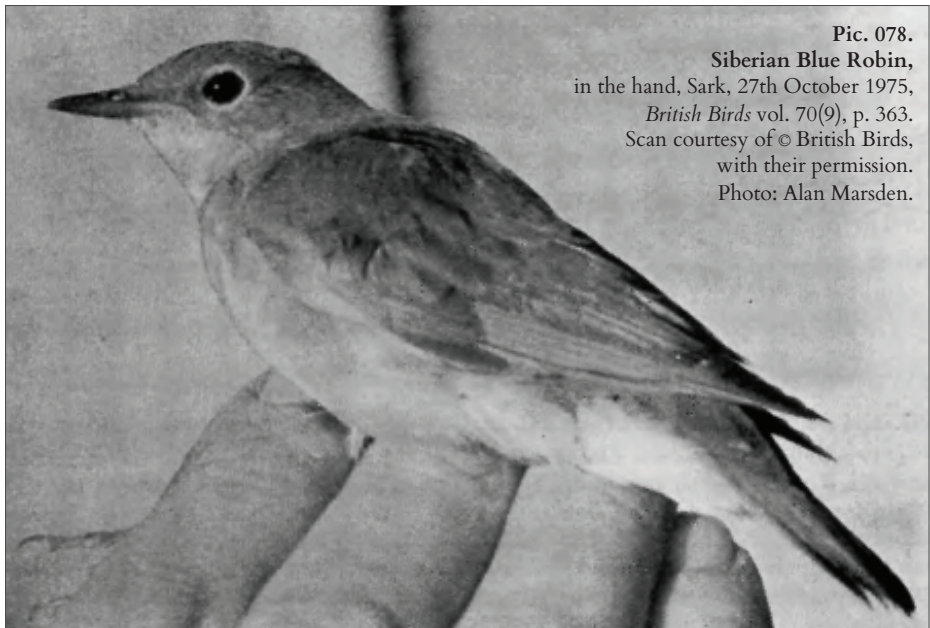
**1975 Algeria:** Djebel Babor, Petite Kabylie, 5th October (Ledant 1977).

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 northeast Algeria. It was formally published the following year and is the most recently described new species for the Western Palearctic (Pics. 076-077). Since 1975 other small populations have been discovered in similar habitat all within 30 kilometres of each other.

## 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 the Banquette Valley on the Channel Island of Sark. At 13:50 he checked the net and discovered it held a small passerine whose identity was a mystery to him. Structurally it resembled a small thrush or a large Robin but the plumage did not match any Western Palearctic thrush or chat. He bagged the bird and summoned assistance in the form of the Marsdens and the Rountrees who all arrived in time to witness Philip examining the bird. At the same time Alan Marsden took some photos (Pic. 078). During handling it remained silent but when released it called *tchak*. After processing the plan was to study the bird in the field but that didn't work out the way they hoped as once released it shot off and was never seen again.



Pic. 078.  
Siberian Blue Robin,  
in the hand, Sark, 27th October 1975,  
*British Birds* vol. 70(9), p. 363.  
Scan courtesy of © British Birds,  
with their permission.  
Photo: Alan Marsden.

To begin with they had no idea of what species they were dealing with and could not find anything similar in a European field guide. They extended their search to literature covering the wider Palearctic, including 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 that also produced other eastern vagrants. 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.

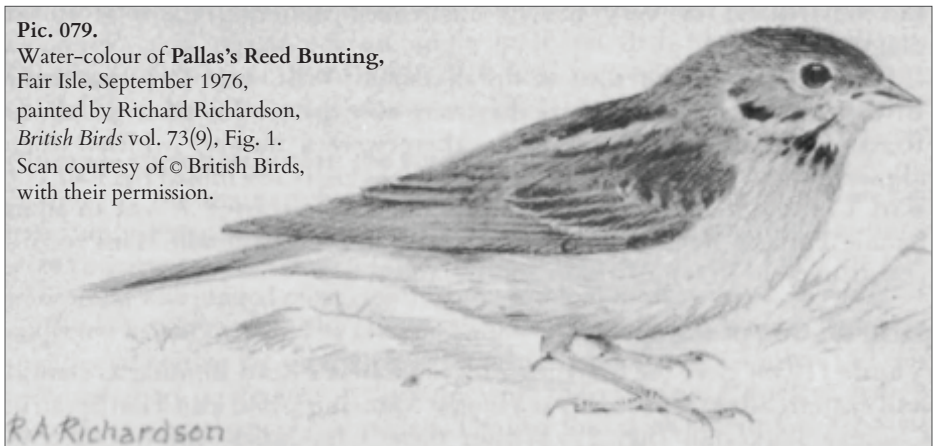
### **Pallas's Reed Bunting** *Emberiza pallasii*

**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 Skerryholm on Fair Isle when he glimpsed a small nondescript passerine fly low from a potato drill for some 20 metres, before diving back in again. Although this behaviour was repeated several times, Roger never got a clear view. Thankfully it eventually revealed itself in full view about 15 metres off **creeping mouse-like through the vegetation**. 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 attempts to get decent views. They left to alert others at the Observatory, returning as soon as possible to try and trap it. While at the Observatory, Roger checked the literature, which at least ruled 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 out. On their return they thoroughly searched the area without success and there was no sign of it over the next few days.

**Pic. 079.**

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



It looked like this was going to be one that got away as their combined notes were not suggesting a species! Six days later on the 5th, 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 the bird. Various options were considered, eventually working on the theory it was Siberian in origin and they spent some time consulting *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? 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 including R.J. (Ron) Johns and Richard Richardson, who later painted a water-colour of the bird (Pic. 079). It was held overnight and released back at Taing the following day.

While 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 found to be more consistent with the former, and the plumage compared favourably with a female Pallas's Reed Bunting, but in the end details of the species in Lars Svensson's *Identification Guide to European Passerines* confirmed it. Once back on the mainland, Bill Oddie and R.J. 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 possibly a synonym of the nominate?) collected in Turkestan most closely resemble the Fair Isle bird. An earlier 1954 Danish record has not been accepted as a wild bird.

### **Canvasback** *Aythya valisineria*

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

Found by Ingólfur Guðnason, Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson, Ólafur K. Nielsen, Kristinn H. Skarphéðinsson and Skarphéðinn Þórisson. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 080).



Pic. 080.

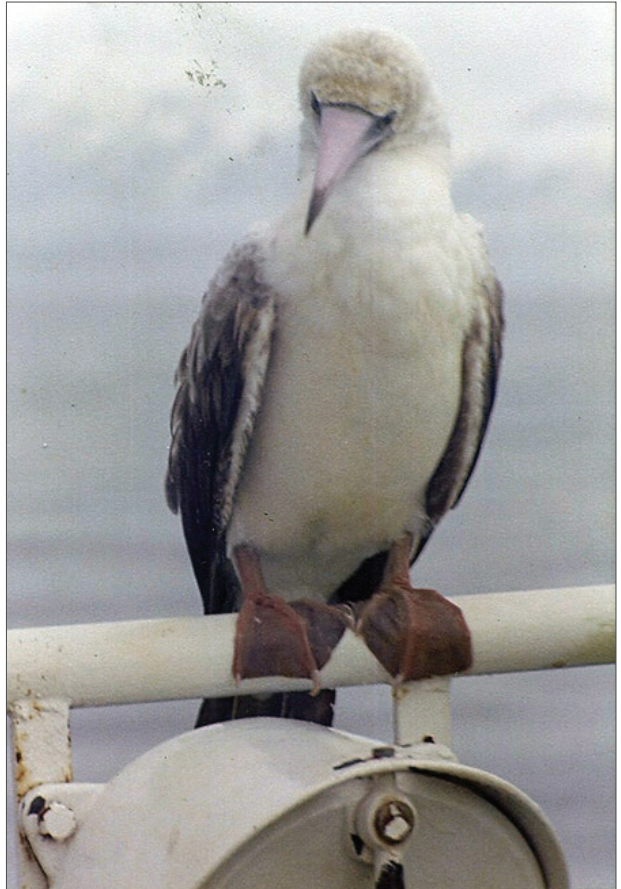
Canvasback, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.

Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

Pic. 081.

Red-footed Booby,  
MV *Causeway*, at sea.

Photo: © Ernest Glyndwr Lewis.



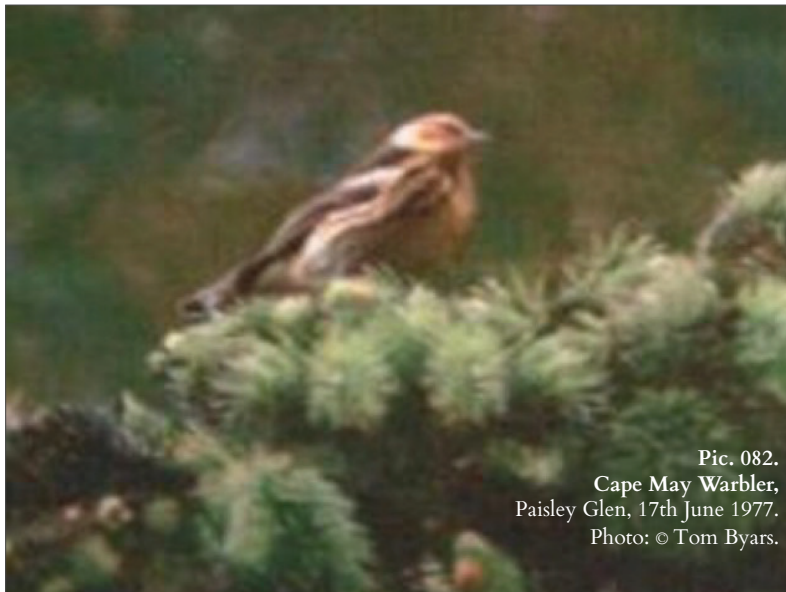
### **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula*

**1977 At sea/Cape Verde Islands:** Immature, in approximate position 17°N, 023°W (12 nautical miles north-northeast of the Farol da Ponta Norte Lighthouse, Sal Island), 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 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 happy on-board as it hitched a ride all the way to Panama. By day it would perch on a bridge deck rail, where Lewis took some pictures of it (Pic. 081), preferring the warmth of the funnel deck to roost (Nuovo 2008).

Just a short 31 years later in July 2008, Lewis decided he would try to discover what the species was and turned to the Italian EBN 'Argonauti' for help, and soon after his photo was posted answers flooded in identifying it as an immature Red-footed Booby.





Pic. 082.  
Cape May Warbler,  
Paisley Glen, 17th June 1977.  
Photo: © Tom Byars.

### **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. At 15:00 he heard an unfamiliar song coming from an overgrown part of the glen. The singer was an exotically coloured warbler-like bird that suggested a Nearctic wood warbler. Once Tom had taken a full description, he fetched his camera and tape recorder and after he took photographs (Pic. 082) and made a sound recording, he informed H. Galbraith of the bird's presence and both watched it up to 19:30 in excellent conditions at close distances. They compared their notes against descriptions and plates in Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* and confidently identified the bird as a Cape May Warbler in breeding plumage. It appeared to be well settled and content, however as others arrived it became shyer and more elusive and when looked for the following day it could not be found nor anytime after.

For much of the time the bird was in full song, delivered both from the tops of trees and low-level scrub, so much so they mistakenly formed the opinion it had taken up territory and would probably stay for some time. The song consisted of four notes repeated intermittently and each phrase, a flat *sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet*, repeated fairly quietly and with a slight nasal intonation lasted a couple of seconds. It spent the time in a small area of open mixed woodland and scrub-filled clearing, feeding mostly in Spruce, Scots Pine and Rowan.

It would appear somewhat fitting that the first Cape May Warbler for the Western Palearctic should be found in Paisley as Alexander Wilson, who discovered the species, 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 it had been 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 the other two 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).

The only other record for the region was a first-year found dead at Newhouse Wood, Herefordshire, England on 28th November 1984 that had been ringed at Cape Lookout in June 1984. In addition, there is a record pending of a Cayenne Tern at Our Lady's Island Lake, Wexford, Ireland in June 2020, which if accepted by the IRBC would be a first Western Palearctic record of the form.

## **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 on the islands. He contacted the other wardens, A.E. Dixey, A. Ferguson, D.E. Mole and A.R. Taylor, who all took field descriptions. They agreed the most distinctive feature was its deep wingbeats **with the emphasis on the down-beat**, much deeper than that of Arctic or Common Terns.

A check of European field guides failed to identify it to species so A.R. Taylor decided to browse the pages of *A Field Guide to the Seabirds of Britain and the World* by G.S. Tuck & H. Heinzel and, although there was no mention of the call, he found Aleutian Tern to be the sole credible candidate. On the face of it this seemed highly improbable as the species breeds in the north Pacific and winters south to Australia, very definitely the other side of the world. As the day wore on it was seen frequently, and the wardens continued to observe it and take notes, as well as grab some photos (Pics. 083-084).

The next day it was less evident in the morning but reappeared in the afternoon and was 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 only afforded about five minutes peace and quiet before nearby birds chased it off.



**Pics. 083-084.**  
**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.



The Farne Islands are at a similar latitude to many of the Aleutian Islands, Kamchatka Peninsula and parts of Sakhalin, all places where Aleutian Tern breeds. The date it occurred on Farne corresponded to the time of their arrival in the Aleutians as stated by B. Kessel & D.D. Gibson in *Status and Distribution of Alaska Birds*. It may be that somehow this bird associated with Arctic Terns on their wintering grounds and migrated north with them to Northumberland.

### **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. 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 the time to take some photographs and at some point in the day he grabbed shots of a presumed Honey Buzzard, which circled several times before continuing south (Pics. 085-086). The bird looked like a fairly normally patterned Honey Buzzard, showing the typical outline of small head and large, broad wings.

Pics. 085–086.

**Crested Honey Buzzard**, Borçka, 25th September 1979.

Photos: © Lasse J. Laine.



On his return home Lasse set about writing an article on raptor migration at Borçka for the Finnish nature magazine *Eläinmaailma* 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 the moult of raptors over many years and he was puzzled by its appearance also. The best they could come up with was a second calendar-year bird that was returning to Africa having departed in the summer, which is at complete odds with expected behaviour. What they did not consider was Crested Honey Buzzard the far-eastern counterpart to Honey Buzzard, and about which not a lot was known back then and details of its appearance would only develop 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 ID paper by Dick Forsman, following his trip to Kazakhstan where he observed 135 migrating Crested Honey Buzzards at Chokpak Pass between the 3rd and 15th September 1993 (Forsman 1994).

Then in September 1995 Dick was browsing his scrapbook of raptor photographs when he happened upon the Borçka bird and straight away resolved the identification, telling Lasse, *by the way, you have a first for the Western Palearctic* as the picture showed an adult female Crested Honey Buzzard, which predated the previously accepted first at Eilat, Israel on 14th May 1994 by almost 15 years.

Pics. 087-088.

**Rough-legged Hawk**, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.

Photos: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.



### **Rough-legged Hawk** *Buteo lagopus sanctijohannis*

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

Collected by Óskar Björgvinsson. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik. This very dark individual's subspecific identity was only resolved after measurements were taken, which showed it to be the smaller, darker and shorter-winged Nearctic form of Rough-legged Buzzard (Pics. 087-088).

### **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 among 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 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 on a sandbank about 200 metres off. 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, along with variable numbers of Dunlin and Kentish Plover that were formed in a tight group keeping ahead of the rising tide. He watched it for about 15 minutes at distances between 30 and 100 metres, during which this time the birds were often disturbed, causing them to take flight frequently. Eventually, the flooding tide caused them all to get up and depart and Steve saw it for the final time. Its appearance was different to any other wader he knew so he left without identifying it but had taken detailed notes and made a couple of field sketches as well as noting the call, a short croaking *krer* and a similar sounding repeated *kri-kri-kri*, which he heard once immediately before it landed.

Back home in England, Steve consulted BTO Guide #17, *Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders* by A.J. Prater, J.H. Marchant and J. Vuorinen and its brief description of Great Knot matched his field notes, allowing him to tentatively identify it as an adult of that Siberian Calidrine. This was confirmed after reference to a translated version of G.P. Dementiev and N.A. Gladkov's *Birds of the Soviet Union*. Finally Steve sent a copy of his notes to Dr. R.J. Raines, who knew the species well having seen them in Australia, and Raines agreed with his identification.

An earlier claim of an adult at Salinas de Sant Antoni, Ebro Delta, Tarragona, Spain in April 1979 was ultimately rejected by the Spanish Rarity Committee.

## **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).



Pic. 089.

Shy Albatross,

The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University,  
Tel-Aviv, Israel.

Photo: © Amos Belmaker.



The bird was first observed off Eilat, 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. The specimen is preserved in the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, catalogue number SMNH-AV.9659 (Pic. 089). This was just the second record for the Northern Hemisphere after another was collected in the north Pacific off Washington, USA in September 1951 (Slipp 1952).

### **Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus*

**1981 At sea/England:** In position 53°06'N, 002°12'E (Shell Oil Platform, Leman Bank, North Sea, 30 nautical miles northeast of Great Yarmouth), 19th June (Parker 1990).

On Friday, 19th June 1981, R. Walden was standing on the deck of the Shell Oil 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 rig's superstructure. Walden had no great difficulty catching the exhausted migrant and it was sent ashore on the next helicopter for release shoreside. 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. 090) and 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.

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 had a forked tail. Cliff Walker was contacted and he measured, photographed and took a description. At that point they discounted White-rumped Swift, as the measurements taken were at odds with that species. The bird was now showing signs of recovery so it was released about 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 that night by Mike and Cliff who, following reference to field guides, concluded it was a Pacific Swift. It was seen for the final time the next day by Cliff at Shadingfield, Suffolk about three miles southwest of the heliport.

Pic. 090  
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.



## **Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum*

**1981 England:** Between Dunwich and Walberswick, Suffolk, 22nd June to 8th July, and, presumed same, Old Hall Marshes, Essex, 6th August to 11th October (Burns 1993).

David W. Burns was on a birding holiday in Suffolk, where on Monday, 22nd June 1981, he was walking the coastal path between Dunwich and Walberswick. Stopping to scan the marsh he picked up what looked like a **brown tern flying directly towards him**, eventually passing right by him. As it flew past he got **excellent views of a chestnut underwing and a creamy-white rump**, immediately putting David in mind of Collared Pratincole. At 11:05 he saw it dropping down in a part of the marsh that was out of bounds to birders. Fortunately, about 20 minutes later he refound it on the ground in an open part of the marsh just off the path. Over the next 45 minutes David took a description and made a few sketches then left to fetch his camera. On his return the bird was in the same place but soon departed **landing in the far distance** so David headed off towards Walberswick and when he got back **was amazed to find the bird in exactly the same spot**. He took a few photographs of it sitting on the deck and one other as it took off from a distance of 15 metres.

During all this time David had not encountered any other birders, so he headed off to Minsmere (RSPB's reserve on the Suffolk coast) in order to alert others but much to his surprise nobody there seemed to express much interest. Later in the day he was in the public hides where he met Zul Bhatia, John Grant and Jenny Berry and after telling them about the bird they decided to go look for it. They met in the car park at Dunwich and located the bird back in the same spot at 20:45. It spent much of the time hunched down, **occasionally moving its head from side to side and bobbing it up and down**, snapping at insects that flew past and on one occasion took off to catch a large moth. That evening David looked up Collared Pratincole in Bruun & Singer's *Hamlyn Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe* and although there were some discrepancies between what he had seen and the description in the field guide he put the news out, which brought a steady stream of birders from the 23rd.



Pic. 091.  
Oriental Pratincole,  
Between Dunwich and Walberswick, Suffolk, June 1981.  
Photo: © Tim Loseby.

On Saturday the 27th, David returned home and on the following 5th July, along with friends, he was at Landguard Point, from where they made their way to Dunwich via Minsmere. At Minsmere he met Zul Bhatia who told him that some were of the opinion the bird was an Oriental rather than Collared Pratincole (Pic. 091). The bird remained until 8th July and what is presumed to have been the same individual was found on 6th August at Old Hall Marshes, Essex, where it remained until 11th October. It was eventually accepted as Oriental Pratincole, a well named species being widespread throughout the Orient.

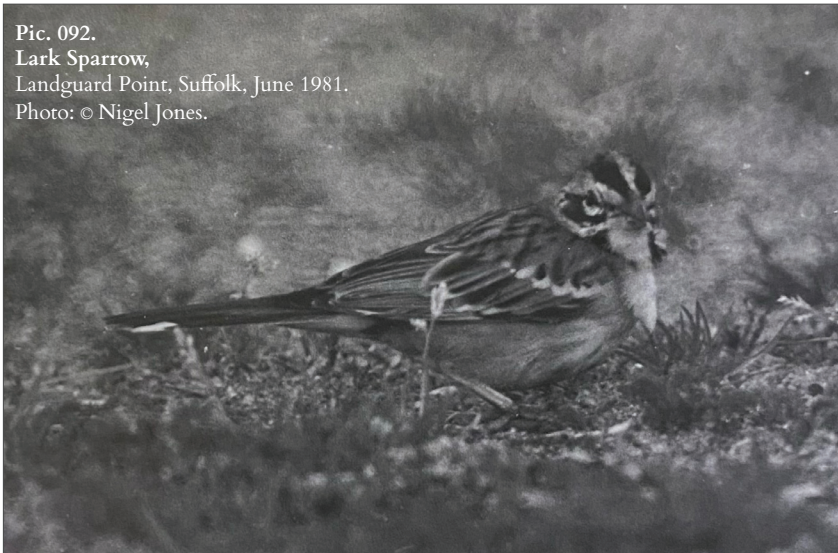
### **Lark Sparrow** *Chondestes grammacus*

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

Landguard Point is on the east coast of England at the entrance to the container port of Felixstowe, Suffolk. There has been a Bird Observatory there since 1984 founded by local birders that 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 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 to settle in a cluster of poppies on a shingle bank about 100 metres away. The Charltons moved closed and got a brief glimpse of the bird peeping out through the foliage and moments later it stood out in the open revealing a startling dark breast-spot. Even though its appearance put them in mind of Rustic Bunting their thoughts turned to Nearctic sparrows having seen many on a trip to the USA a few years previous (Pic. 092).

Pic. 092.  
Lark Sparrow,  
Landguard Point, Suffolk, June 1981.  
Photo: © Nigel Jones.



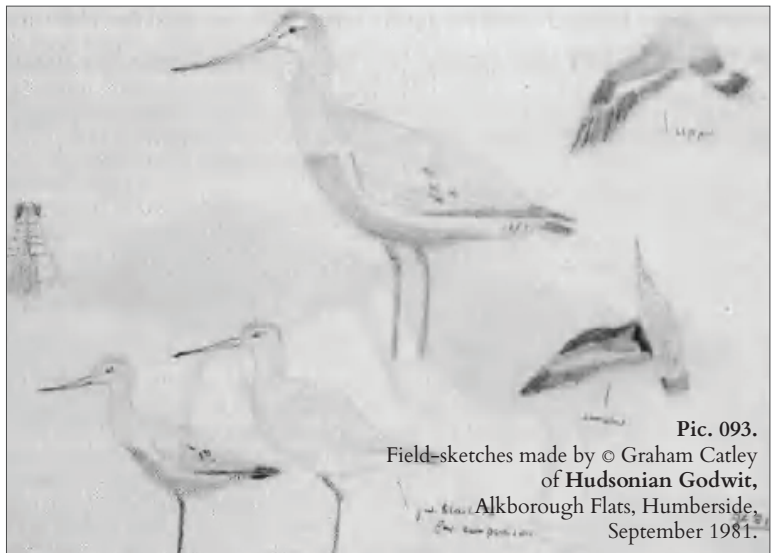
News of the unidentified North American sparrow was circulated, which brought Arthur Westcott and Harry Lee armed with an American field guide to Landguard and it was identified as Lark Sparrow. Over the following eight days many hundreds travelled to see it and were rewarded with **prolonged and sometimes close views** often down to four metres, sometimes on its own, sometimes in the company of House Sparrows and Linnets.

Due to the possibility of escape the record was initially placed in Category D, however sometime later it was promoted to Category A. To date there is just one other published record in the Western Palearctic at Waxham, Norfolk, England from 15th to 17th May 1991.

### **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. As they were all asleep there were few other details showing, but he did notice the smaller bird was much greyer on the back. 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 was to Black-tailed Godwit. 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 23rd but returned again on the 24th, 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 a Hudsonian Godwit.

At Blacktoft it was only seen at high tide when it was mostly 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 nearby Alkborough Flats on 15th September (Pic. 093). The bird attracted **hordes of birdwatchers** to Blacktoft on 3rd October, so when it flew in to the lagoon at high water some disturbance among the crowd put everything up. After a brief reappearance, the Hudsonian Godwit took off out towards the Humber, not to be seen again or at least that's how it seemed at the time. What is presumed the same individual was discovered at Countess Wear, Devon 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. It was Sunday, 27th September 1981 and the first fine day after several of strong westerlies. They spotted a small bird perched close to the top of a *Pittosporum*. First impressions were of a brightly coloured warbler-type with a double white wing-bar, which made Shane suspect it was a North American wood warbler. Before any more detail could be made out it flipped over the shrub and 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 the small orchard behind the post office where it was refound and identified as Magnolia Warbler. It was very lively, constantly flitting and hopping about close to the tops of hedgerows as it foraged.

News was phoned to St. Mary's and chartered boats soon began to arrive and none who made the trip were disappointed as the bird continued to show well. Rather fortuitously it was seen the next day back in Barnaby Lane as some difficulties were encountered gaining access to the orchard. The record was duly accepted as an adult, moulting to winter plumage.

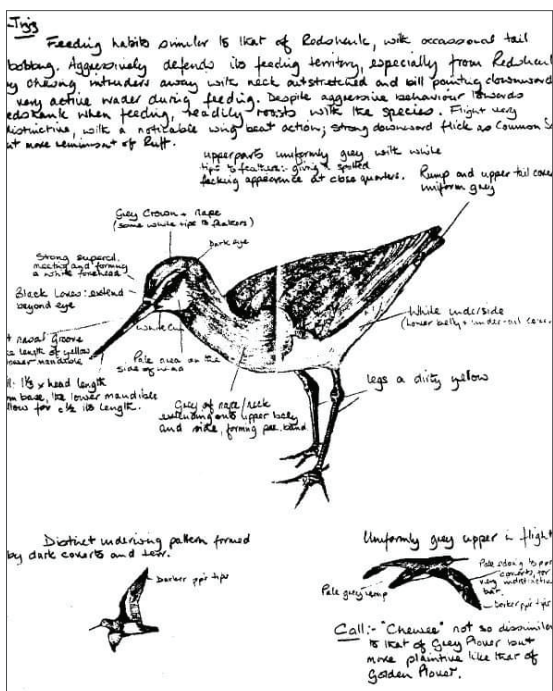


## Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes*

**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 with two voluntary wardens from the Saltings Hide at the 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, it soon returned landing about 250 metres off. On the deck it resembled a Redshank in structure but with a plumage more reminiscent of a 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 for the hide and got it in the telescope, although at a distance, however they did hear it call. It was at this point the possibility it was a tattler was discussed and on his return home Reg consulted *Rare Birds of the West Coast* by Don Roberson, and after studying the tattler photos on page 148, he was almost certain he had seen a Grey-tailed Tattler!

At high tide the following day, Reg and R.Q. Skeen saw it on the estuary and thanks to much better views than before he was happy with his tentative identification (Pic. 094). 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 the news could not be released under any circumstances. This 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.



Pic. 094.

Field-sketches made by © Malcolm Stott of Grey-tailed Tattler, Dyfi Estuary, Dyfed, October 1981.

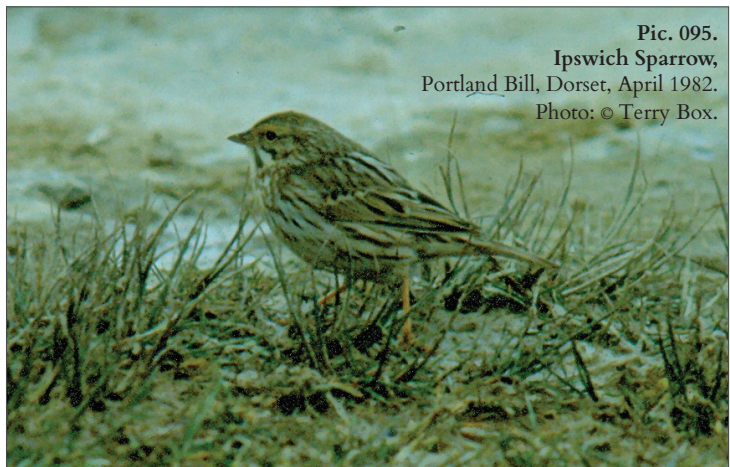
The bird continued to be seen in the area during times of high water but on 23rd October it was buzzed by a Peregrine and seen to fly towards the mouth of the Dyfi, thereafter being observed on the reserve only during spring high tides, until last seen on 17th November. The record was submitted and after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

### **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 saw a small bird land about 15 metres away on Portland Bill (at the southern tip of the tied Isle of Portland on the south coast of Dorset). 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. A suggestion that 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.

Later the 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 in closer and as he did the bird turned to face him, revealing a **small triangular bill and very noticeable yellow supercilium**. Broyd identified it as a Savannah Sparrow, a species he had often seen in North America (Pics. 095-097). 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 seen earlier in the day. The bird remained until 16th April and proved to be very confiding for the several hundred birders that turned up to twitch 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**.



Pic. 095.  
Ipswich Sparrow,  
Portland Bill, Dorset, April 1982.  
Photo: © Terry Box.



Pics. 096–097.

Ipswich Sparrow,

Portland Bill, Dorset, April 1982.

Photos: © John Miller.

On 12th April, it was trapped and ringed by M. Rogers, who took a detailed description and 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, Canada in the Atlantic Ocean) and winters along 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 his results 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 1984 report of the BBRC 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.

\*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 Dalhousie 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).

In summer 1982 a Yellow-headed Blackbird was observed at locations about 35 miles apart in the West Frisian Islands (a chain of islands off the north coast of the Netherlands). 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 he submitted his description to the CDNA, but it wasn't accepted and his notes were mislaid by the Committee.

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 (an 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 Category A record in the Western Palearctic, an adult male collected at Hafnarnes í Nesjum, Austur-Skaftafellssýsla, Iceland from 23rd to 24th July 1983.

### **Atlantic (Schlegel's) Petrel** *Pterodroma incerta*

**1982 Israel/Jordan:** Gulf of Aqaba, off both 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 distant petrel 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 discovered 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 only other record for the Western Palearctic 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 saw 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 which, despite many subsequent searches of the area was the last time it was seen. 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. In this instance the name does not celebrate a person or location, rather it 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; at 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, making the Saltash bird the first for the Western Palearctic.

It was first noticed by E. (Ted) Griffiths early on Monday, 30th August 1982 after it was disturbed from a tall conifer by a couple of Carrion Crows. It called *chack* a couple of times as it *dropped into some small trees*, settling in the lower part of 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 at a distance of four metres as it perched in the open. 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 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 Eilat, near Eilat. It was sometimes with a couple of Cattle Egrets picking at insects on the ground, but when feeding on its own it would create shade by opening its wings rather like 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 were quite possibly this species (Dekker 1981).

### **Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica*

**1982 England:** Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 21st to 27th October, joined by a second from 23rd to 25th (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*. Seen through binoculars it appeared to be a large bat but before anything further could be established it was lost to view.



**Pics. 098–100.**

**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.



About 20 minutes later 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 had a dark (rather than 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 in Spring 1981. He called over Williams and together they watched it for about two hours at distances down to ten metres. To begin with, it fed over houses, later moving to a nearby cliff-top where it probably roosted. 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 widespread over much of central and eastern North American. Once they got home and were able to consult the literature this identity was independently confirmed (Pics. 098-100).

It was observed by hundreds of observers 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 regarded as the Nearctic form of Hen Harrier, known as Marsh Hawk. 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. 101-102). Uncertainties about the identification that required clarification meant the record was not published until the 2006 report of the BBRC. Several earlier claims of this form in the UK are not accepted by the BOURC.

Pics. 101-102.

**Northern Harrier,**

Bryher, Isles of Scilly, 29th October 1982.

Photo: © Barrie Widden.



## Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius*

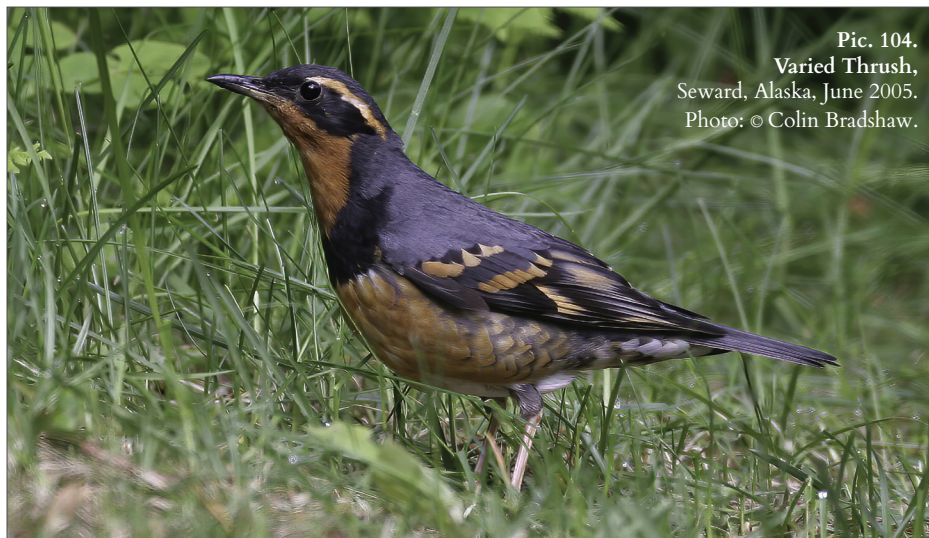
**1982 England:** First-winter, Nanquidno, St. Just-in-Penwith, Cornwall, 9th to 24th November (Madge *et al.* 1990). A grey morph individual, lacking orange pigment.

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. 103). The nearest possible candidate seemed to be Dusky Thrush, but several features did not fit that Far Eastern thrush. Further searches of the area were not immediately successful but on the morning of the 17th 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 none was a match, although the underwing pattern did suggest one of the *Zoothera* species. While studying the literature it suddenly dawned on Steve Madge that the markings would fit the Nearctic Varied Thrush perfectly if the Nanquidno birds's whitish areas were orange and other features 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 the next page (Pic. 104).

It was later discovered to have been present since 9th November when it was seen by Miss Phillips at Nanquidno Farm. It regularly visited the farm to feed on *Cotoneaster* berries and on fallen apples in a small orchard. 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*. There is just one other record for the Western Palearctic, a male at Unaós, Hjaltaðaþinghá, Iceland from 3rd to 8th May 2004.



Pic. 103.  
Varied Thrush,  
Nanquidno, Cornwall, November 1982.  
Photo: © John Miller.



### **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 12th November. 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, Eilat Fields, Eilat, 1st May (Shirihai 1996).

On Sunday, 1st May 1983, Hadoram Shirihai was birding in fields north of Eilat. While scanning a stubble field, a male *Eremopterix* lark sp. landed about ten metres from him. Hadoram knew it wasn't a Black-crowned Sparrow-lark, but apart from that had no idea which species it was!

Despite its highly distinctive appearance it wasn't until January 1986 and following a visit to the Natural History Museum at Tring to examine skins and undertake a study of photographs taken in East Africa that Hadoram was finally able to confirm the identity as a 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 Sussex Wildlife Trust, Rye Harbour Nature Reserve is situated midway between Hastings and Dungeness on the Sussex coast. Its 1,150 acres consists of generally flat and low lying terrain, including areas of shingle that host a Little Tern colony. It was here that a Least Tern took up residence each summer from 1983 to 1992. During these years 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.

It was first noticed by Assistant Warden Pam Knight on 14th June 1983, although it had probably been around for five or six days by then. Even though it was never known to find a mate, it was seen 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 regarded as Least Tern, a full polytypic species. Apart from the call, the main difference with Little Tern was a grey rather than 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.

To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic, however there is a record pending of one that frequented the Little Tern colony at Portrane, Dublin, Ireland from June to August 2021.

### **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. Later the same day a small flock of Swallows was seen arriving over the sea to St. Mary's 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 they all watched as the swallow circled overhead before coming to rest on a roof for several minutes. At this point Crosby realised he had seen the species while on a visit to the USA in 1981 and after a few minutes head scratching identified it as a Cliff Swallow.

By late afternoon a crowd of several hundred had gathered and were enjoying excellent views as it fed low over the 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 depressions, classic conditions for trans-Atlantic vagrancy.

### **Mongolian (Rufous) Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella dukhunensis*

**1983 Israel:** Male, Nizana, Negev Desert, 3rd November (Colston & Shirihai 1986).

During Autumn 1983 Hadoram Shirihai (then of the Nature Reserves Authority in Israel) had ringed over 300 Short-toed Larks in the western Negev Desert where it is a very common spring and autumn migrant. On Thursday, 3rd November 1983, a very unusual lark was trapped with several Short-toed Larks. In the hand it was found to be larger overall with noticeably black legs, this in stark contrast to the pale legs on Short-toed. At the time its identity was a puzzle and it was even considered to be **some unknown species of Calandrella**. It was kept in captivity at the Zoological Gardens in Tel Aviv University until its identity could be established. It lived there for seven months until it died on 8th June 1984 and upon dissection it was discovered to be a male.



Pic. 105.

**Mongolian Short-toed Lark,**

The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, Tel-Aviv, Israel.

Photo: © Amos Belmaker.



Details and photographs of the specimen were sent to Peter Colston at the Natural History Museum, Tring, who identified it to one of the eastern races of Short-toed Lark and most likely *dukhunensis*, since raised to full species status as Mongolian Short-toed Lark. In January 1986 Hadoram brought the specimen to Tring and a direct comparison was made with the **very comprehensive series of *brachydactyla* skins** present in the museum's collection, which confirmed the bird was a **typical example of *dukhunensis* in all respects**. The study skin is preserved in the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, catalogue number SM-NH-AV.9905 (Pic. 105).

**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 in 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 was shot at Þorbrandsstaðir in northeast Iceland on Saturday, 5th November 1983 (Pic. 106). The second was an adult seen at Laugarnes, Reykjavík on 6th April 1984. Four days later it was noticed to have sustained injuries to its legs and was taken in to 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, remaining on-board to enter the Western Palearctic at 30°W. It spent the first few days on the foredeck and forecandle head, where the crew provided it with scraps of food and was subsequently accommodated in the crew's mess room until the vessel arrived off Land's End, when it was put back outside. It clearly felt right at home as it choose not to depart and remained all the way to Avonmouth in the Bristol Channel. 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 the first for Western Palearctic.



Pic. 106.

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 at Souss on both the 12th and 23rd March. 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 up to 12th December. It has been accepted by the Moroccan Rarities Committee as a Category A record. Earlier pre-1919 records from Egypt are generally considered to be feral and the status of one or more at Abu Simbil, 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 birds in fields to the north of Kibbutz Eilat, near Eilat. While releasing birds from mist-nets he noticed two **unusually small larks flying away and calling with an unfamiliar monosyllabic call**. He saw both repeatedly up to 13th October and at least one remained to the end of the month. Hadoram began to wonder **if they were Small Skylarks** (an alternative name), but initially was unable to confirm this. On 14th October he trapped one of them and was given permission to hold the bird in captivity for 24 hours and it was during this time its identification as Oriental Skylark was confirmed. Towards the end of October more Oriental Skylarks 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 the fields at Kibbutz Eilat 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 of these was ringed. He trapped one of this new group in January 1985 and from then to mid-April he observed some of these moving to the fields where the first birds had been observed and ringed. 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).

### **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, that is 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 north 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 (also known as African Comb Duck) and it was obviously a female as it lacked the knob characteristic of the male's bill. The species is found in tropical wetlands of sub-Saharan Africa and is a regular visitor during the rainy and dry seasons to parts of Mauritania that are south of the Western Palearctic border.

### **Persian Shearwater** *Puffinus persicus*

**1985 Israel:** Jaffa Port, near Tel Aviv, 22nd January, and 4th to 6th February (Shirihai 1996).

This shearwater was previously included in the Audubon's Shearwater complex, but is now known to be genetically distinct and is regarded as a full species in its own right. It would seem likely this bird was one of the nominate form that breeds on islands in the Arabian Sea.

### **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 and this was confirmed following reference to the literature.

Its most distinctive 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 inconsistencies between the features described in Shirihai *et al.* (1987) and his own observations and studies of Brown-headed Gull both in Thailand and in museum collections.

## **Cedar Waxwing** *Bombycilla cedrorum*

**1985 Scotland:** Noss, Shetland, 25th to 26th June (McKay 2000).

Clive McKay was employed as a warden at Noss National Nature Reserve, an island east of Bressay, Shetland. In the afternoon of Tuesday, 25th June 1985, Mr and Mrs P. Leward, who were visiting Noss informed Clive they had seen a waxwing while on a walk about the island. The time of year caused him to suspect it was probably an escaped cage bird. Clive set off to the north coast of the island in search of the bird and soon found it feeding in Thrift on the top of a sheltered rocky headland. It was clearly not a Bohemian Waxwing, having no white on the primaries, and possessing pale sulphur-yellow underparts. Relying on a limited knowledge of Nearctic species, Clive suspected it was a Cedar Waxwing. He took a description, then left to alert local birders but found none at home. Next he telephoned Keith Clarkson in Sheffield who had spent time studying Brännich's Guillemots 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 several Nearctic passers had been recorded in Britain in June and he began to consider the real possibility 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, concluding it showed no signs of previous captivity. When looked for on the 27th it could not be found, nor 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 in Nottingham in 1996 led to a re-examination of the status of the bird on Noss, and as a result it was promoted to Category A. To date there have been a further 13 published records for the Western Palearctic, mostly in the Azores.

## **Chestnut-sided Warbler** *Setophaga pensylvanica*

**1985 Scotland:** First-winter, Burn of Feal, 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, hoping to find some migrants. He 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 moving through them, which flew up to a fence where it perched with its tail erect and wings slightly drooped. It then jumped back down among the thistles, working its way through them, before flying back towards the irises, about 200 metres distant. It repeated this cycle a few times, sometimes in one continuous flight and sometimes in stages. When it flew over 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 take-off perch. After about 30 minutes Michael returned home to fetch 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 Michael made a few phone calls, including one to Mike Walker the RSPB warden for Fetlar, who just happened to be on Fair Isle at the time. Mike managed to get off Fair Isle but didn't arrive until after dark. So at first light the following morning (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.

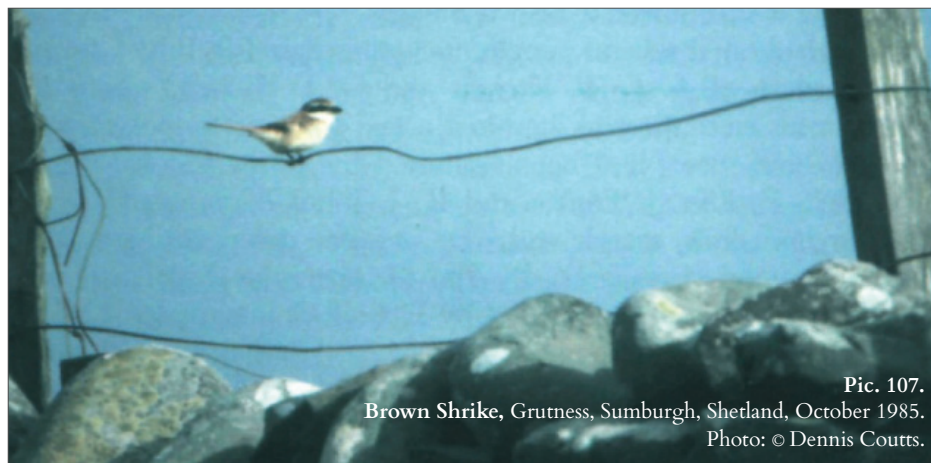
Michael was fairly certain it was a North American wood warbler but did not have access to a North American field guide, so it wasn't until he made a telephone call to birders on Fair Isle for advice that he was able to determine the bird was a Chestnut-sided Warbler, a first for Britain and the Western Palearctic. Later on when he was able to check the literature he aged the bird as a first-year.

### **Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus*

**1985 Scotland:** Adult, Grutness, Sumburgh, Shetland, 30th September to 2nd October (Hume 1993).

On Monday, 30th September 1985, Mark Chapman was checking gardens in Grutness at the very southern tip of mainland Shetland. As he walked towards a small patch bordered by roses, a shrike took off and disappeared around a corner. He followed and found it sitting on a concrete post revealing a **black face mask and bill, and a very prominent pale supercilium. It flew down, showing no wing bar.** It perched briefly before diving into a small Sycamore, becoming lost to view. Mark was almost certain it was an adult Brown Shrike, being practically identical to one he had found at Kergord, Shetland in 1981 (this bird was submitted to the BBRC as an Isabelline Shrike but was ultimately found to be not proven, however it may very well have been a Brown Shrike). Further brief views revealed all the features he needed to convince him he had indeed found a Brown Shrike.

Mark telephoned the news out and even hired a taxi to go find A.F.T. Fitchett and G.J. Fitchett who he had met earlier, and by evening time **excellent views had been obtained by about 12 observers** but this only after an anxious hour-long search in deteriorating weather. By the time it was last seen on 2nd October it had been seen by about 80 and photographed by Dennis Coutts (Pic. 107).



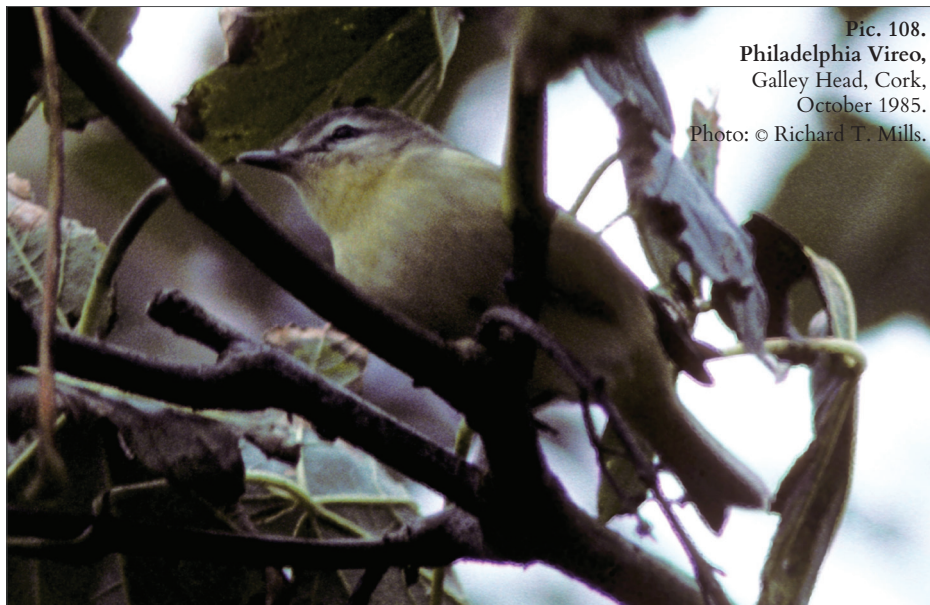
Pic. 107.  
Brown Shrike, Grutness, Sumburgh, Shetland, October 1985.  
Photo: © Dennis Coutts.

## **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra*

**1985 Spain:** Adult, Puerto Sotogrande, Cádiz, 10th October (De Juana & la SEO 1988). Found by E.J. Mackrill at Puerto Sotogrande at the mouth of the River Guadiaro. Probably the same bird was also seen at Torremolinos, Málaga, Spain on 14th December 1985 by A.M. Paterson and was possibly at Torremolinos again on 9th January 1986. These locations are about 50 miles apart, a mere stroll in the park for an ocean wanderer like 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 from Cork 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 of it, 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, he realised that this was one and presumed it was Red-eyed Vireo even though he was puzzled by the yellowish wash on the underparts, but he 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. 108.**  
**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. Initial views made Jim suspect it was a Red-eyed Vireo but when the bird turned to face him he realised that it was a species unfamiliar to him (Pic. 108). They watched the bird for as long as possible but eventually had to leave in order to catch the ferry to Cape. 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. 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. The bird duly obliged by remaining until the 17th October.

### **Wilson's Warbler** *Cardellina pusilla*

**1985 England:** Male, Rame Church, Rame Head, Cornwall, 13th October (Smaldon 1990).

On Sunday, 13th October 1985, Roger Smaldon, Roger Burrridge 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 hedges and trees about Rame Church where all he saw 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**. 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 in to cover!

The others were alerted and hurried back from the headland. All three then searched the area but after two hours without sight or sign of the bird they were beginning to think it had probably scarpered, all the more heartbreaking for Roger Burrridge, as he deduced from Smaldon's description that it was a Wilson's Warbler!



**Pic. 109.**  
**Wilson's Warbler,**  
Rame Head, Cornwall,  
13th October 1985.  
Photo: © Keith Pellow.

Fortunately the gloom soon lifted when Burridge shouted that he had it in the **top-most branches of a small ash tree** about 20 metres from where it was found. They all got very good views for a few minutes, before it disappeared in to cover then dropped further down ending up in an ivy-covered hedge, where it remained for most of the day. About ten others got to see it during that time and Keith Pellow took a photograph (Pic. 109). 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 the BOURC and was accepted on 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).

John Parrott, John Phillips and Viv Wood were on a birding holiday to the Azores in October 1985. Throughout their stay at Lajes on the island of Pico, a Tricoloured Heron was present in **extensive rocky tidal lagoons outside the seawall** from 22nd to 24th October. At 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.** Its arrival coincided with a large movement of Nearctic migrants that autumn, especially notable in Britain and Ireland but also in the Azores where 12 species were recorded.

### **Hume's Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella acutirostris*

**1986 Israel:** Adult, Eilat 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. 110). Although similar to Short-toed Lark, it differed in plumage and in particular, 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.

Pic. 110.  
**Hume's Short-toed Lark,**  
Eilat Fields, Eilat, February 1986.  
Photo: © Hadoram Shirihai.



Pic. 111.

**Hume's Short-toed Lark**, The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History at Tel-Aviv University, Israel.

Photo: © Amos Belmaker.



Hadoram brought the study-skin to the Natural History Museum at Tring the following year with the intention of identifying it. Comparisons with other lark skins in the museum's collection showed 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. 111). Subsequent genetic analysis has determined the bird to be an example of the nominate race and 100% identical to samples collected in Afghanistan (Shannon *et al.* 2022). To date it is the only record for the Western Palearctic.

### **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis*

**1987 England:** First-year male, Jeffrey's Swag, Chasewater, West Midlands, 8th March to 26th April (Holian & Fortey 1992).

Around breakfast time on Sunday, 8th March 1987, J.J. Holian visited Jeffery's Swag, a reservoir that is part of the Chasewater Country Park complex. His intention was to look for a long-staying male Greater Scaup but instead found a **small, immature Scaup-type duck asleep amongst the wintering flock of Tufted Ducks**. He brought it to the attention of A.D. Barter and J.J. Oliver and they spent some time studying the bird, but even after an hour they were unable to put a name to it. By this time, the Greater Scaup had been located on the main pool so they decided to do a compare and contrast. Armed with the Greater Scaup's details they returned to take additional notes of the mystery duck, not an easy task as it was asleep for most of the time. One feature they did manage to pick up on was a **pronounced 'bump' at the rear of its head**. They decided it was probably a Scaup x Tufted Duck hybrid and others who independently observed it came to the same conclusion.

A week later, and while unaware of the mystery bird's presence, J.E. Forley, T.E. Giles, A. Keatley and A.I. Whadey visited the Swag for a quick check on the wildfowl. They soon found the drake Greater Scaup, also spotting a **second *Aythya* some distance away, under overhanging willows**. To begin with, they too opined that it was a hybrid, although Lesser Scaup, the New World counterpart to Greater Scaup, was also **jokingly mused**. Nevertheless, as more details were discerned, including the presence of white on the secondaries and grey on the primaries when seen in flight, Lesser Scaup seemed **increasingly likely**. That evening, Forley and Giles, with the benefit of a slide taken at Slimbridge, became fairly certain the bird was a Lesser Scaup.

News of a first record brought many to Chasewater from near and far, and their collective observations drew attention to and clarified an array of subtle features that needed resolving before a definite identification could be clinched. To that end, on 29th March, Holian visited Slimbridge WWT to study Lesser Scaups in their collection. Although there were no immature birds held at Slimbridge, this exercise and further changes noticed in the bird's appearance that developed over time, eventually confirmed the identification as Lesser Scaup. The BBRC unanimously accepted it on a single circulation of the record, and this decision was subsequently endorsed by the BOURC.

The first confirmed female for the Western Palearctic and the 16th record overall was at Roquito del Fraile, Tenerife in the Canary Islands on from 17th November 1994 to February 1995 (Clarke *et al.* 1995).

### **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. On arrival they were told by the warden that several birders had reported an Orphean Warbler in St. John's Valley (situated near the island's Landing Beach) early the previous morning. The warden had not seen it but did have a note left by the finders that described **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 it. About 15:00 the nets were furled, and most of the group, who by now were feeling the effects of an all night journey to Devon, went and put their feet up. 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 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 would not enter, at one point even sitting tantalisingly close on one of the net's supporting poles! At 19:00 it took off flying towards the next valley and was never seen again.

Although it superficially resembled a large Spotted Flycatcher the description did not match any European species, so it was only after they departed Lundy that a search of field guides from other regions of the world could be carried out. Illustrations of Eastern Phoebe in North American 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. 112.**  
**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 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. 112). Examined in the hand it was obvious the bird was in a very weak condition and died soon 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 in 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. 113-114).



Pics. 113–114.

Savannah Sparrow, Fair Isle, Shetland, 30th September 1987.

Photos: © Tim Loseby.



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**. A copy of *A Guide to Field Identification: Birds of North America* by Robbins, Bruun, Zim & Singer soon arrived, but it didn't provide enough 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 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 WP 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 100), which is quite distinctive being larger and greyer than all other subspecies.

### **Two-barred Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*

**1987 England:** Gugh, Isles of Scilly, 22nd to 27th October (Bradshaw 2001).

Autumn 1987 had not begun well for Colin Bradshaw (stalwart of the BBRC for almost 20 years, including nine as Chairman). He arrived on Scilly too late to see the first British Philadelphia Vireo and third British Hermit Thrush and to make matters worse, a Blyth's Reed Warbler had been trapped near his home patch of Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear on the day he arrived on St. Agnes!

Pics. 115-116.

Two-barred Greenish Warbler, Gugh, Isles of Scilly, October 1987.

Photos: © Colin Bradshaw.



On 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 on their way back to the central fields when a small *Phylloscopus* was noticed flicking through some brambles along the southern edge of the fields. Although superficially like a Yellow-browed, 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 tidal causeway to St. Agnes.

While away, things had become very interesting with Booted Warbler, Red-rumped Swallow and a strange Common Nightingale found near the Post Office. Despite all the activity, Colin managed to corner Alan Dean, John Ridley and Pete Lansdown to discuss the warbler. 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 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 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. 115-116).

Resolving the identification was far from straightforward. At the time Two-barred Greenish was not foremost in the minds of birders as a potential vagrant. Few had much field experience of *plumbeitarsus*, mostly limited to a few spring birds in Siberia. Indeed most 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.



Pic. 117.  
**Ruby-crowned Kinglet**,  
 Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.  
 Photo: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.

### **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** *Regulus calendula*

**1987 Iceland:** First-winter, Heimaey, Vestmannaeyjar, 23rd November (Pétersen 1989), found exhausted.

Found exhausted and later died. The specimen is preserved at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 117). A 19th century claim of an adult male in worn plumage collected at Kenmore Wood, Lough Lomond 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).

Found by Hadoram Shirihai and Bill Laird as it 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 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 after Hadoram examined study-skins at the Natural History Museum, Tring.

### **African Spoonbill** *Platalea alba*

**1988 Spain:** Adult, Es Cibollar, Albufera d'Alcudia, Majorca, Balearic Islands, March to September (Grant 1988).

African Spoonbill is resident throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa. It is an occasional visitor to Yemen, where breeding was attempted and a vagrant in Oman, both outside the boundaries of the Western Palearctic *per* BWP.



An adult was present at Albufera d'Alcudia 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 in flight was seen to be fully-winged. An African Spoonbill found dead on the Ebro Delta in February 1989 was very possibly the same bird (Snow & Perrins 1998). The Spanish Rarities Committee placed the record in Category D.

### **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 housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pic. 118).



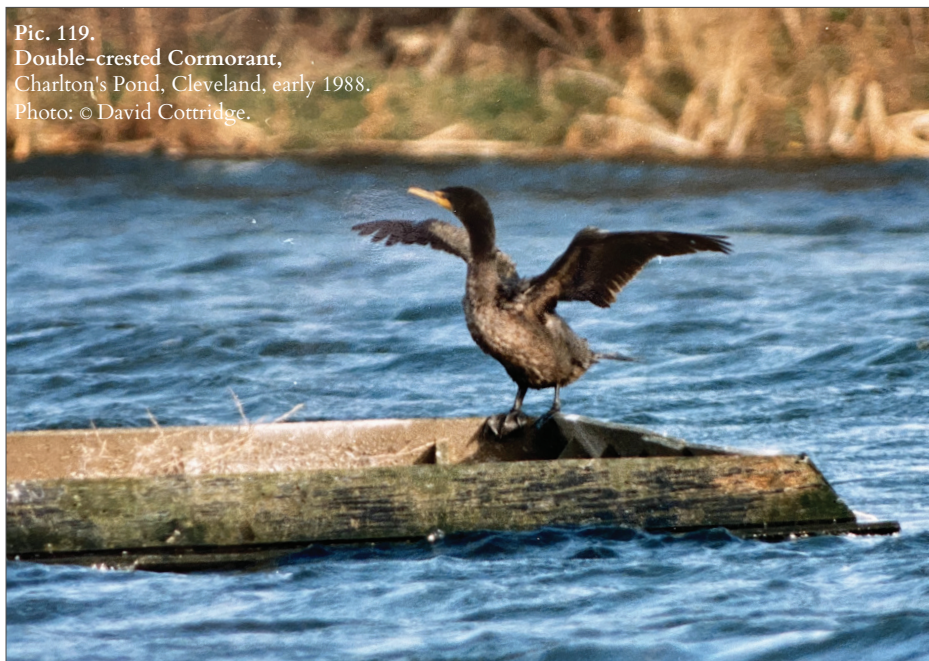
### **Banded Martin** *Neophedina cincta*

**1988 Egypt:** Elephantine Island, near Aswan, 15th November (Clements 1990).

On Tuesday, 15th November 1988, Andy Clements was birding on Elephantine Island (in the River Nile about three miles north of the Aswan high-dam). He was on the northern end of the island in an area of fields and bushes 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. Apart from a single Pale Crag Martin they were all Swallows, including both nominate birds and the Egyptian form *savignii*.

Shortly after, 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. After about six minutes the entire flock departed east across the Nile, eventually becoming lost to view above the town of Aswan. Andy realised he had seen the species previously but could not immediately recall the name! Once back in Aswan he checked *Birds of the Middle East and North Africa* by Hollom, Porter, Christensen & Willis and identified it as a Banded Martin.

Pic. 119.  
Double-crested Cormorant,  
Charlton's Pond, Cleveland, early 1988.  
Photo: © David Cottridge.



### **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).

On Wednesday, 11th January 1989, Martin Blick visited Charlton's Pond, Billingham, during his **January year-ticking cycle**. 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 voluntary 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 about 300 metres off, 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 on 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 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. That evening Williams telephoned Martin Blick to discuss what he had observed. Martin was able to tell him this behaviour was characteristic of the North American Double-crested Cormorant. 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 who had previous experience of the species and all agreed with the identification. It remained to 26th April and was observed and photographed (Pic. 119) by at least 1,400 birders as well as attracting the attention of the media.

### **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. About 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 (Myrtle) 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 his binoculars but the bird was so tame he was able to watch it down to six feet for about three minutes before it flew off. Something that bright must surely 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 quite stunned on page 354, as the realisation that he had just seen a male Golden-winged Warbler sunk in (Pic. 120).

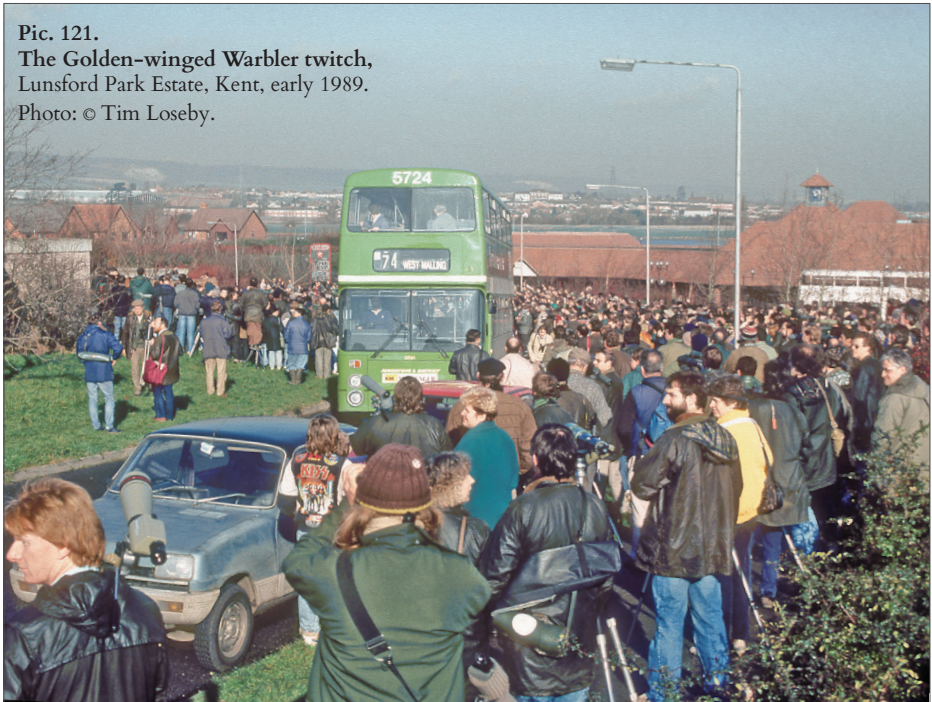


Pic. 120.  
Golden-winged Warbler,  
Lunsford Park Estate, Kent, early 1989.  
Photo: © David Cottridge.

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, but in the afternoon the day 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 last seen it was heading towards some rough ground down by the River Medway, a riverside location that often held wintering Chiffchaffs. Paul reasoned the warbler was spending most of the time there, making the 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.

Huge numbers twitched it, but 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. 121). Although it remained to 10th April (as spring approached there were even reports it was heard in song) it could be difficult to keep track of as it moved quickly from garden to garden around the estate and was easily lost to view. Rather appropriately the last person to see it was Paul Doherty in bushes surrounding Tesco.

**Pic. 121.**  
**The Golden-winged Warbler twitch,**  
Lunsford Park Estate, Kent, early 1989.  
Photo: © Tim Loseby.



Pic. 122.

The Golden-winged Warbler twitch,  
Tim Loseby being interviewed by BBC Radio 4.



Just when it arrived in Britain will never be known and certainly the location and date don't fit with any usual vagrancy pattern but it's 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 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 of it 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. 122).

### **Taiga Merlin** *Falco columbarius columbarius*

**1989 Iceland:** Juvenile male, Akranes, October (Petersen 1992), found dead.

In late October 1989 a small falcon was found dead by Hannes Þorsteinsson in the west Icelandic town of Akranes. It looked like the bird had met its end after it had collided with a house. Upon examination, it turned out to be the nominate form of Merlin, one of three subspecies found across North America. Dissection revealed it to be a male, and its light grey, rather than buff, tail-bands indicated an immature. Its presence was assumed to be courtesy of Hurricane Hugo that had hit Iceland about a month previous. The specimen is housed at the Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik (Pics. 123-124).

The first live and second record for the Western Palearctic overall was a juvenile bird found by Willie McDowell on Cape Clear Island, Cork, Ireland on 29th September 2000. Even though Taiga Merlin is the nominate form, this record is colour coded as a 'well marked subspecies' on account of its extreme rarity in the Western Palearctic.



Pics. 123–124.

Taiga Merlin, Icelandic Institute of Natural History, Reykjavik.

Photos: © Ingvar A. Sigurdsson.



**Pic. 125.**

**Mourning Dove,**

Calf of Man Bird Observatory, October 1989.

Photo: © Ian Fisher

& Calf of Man Bird Observatory.



## **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 off the southwest coast of the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea. They are separated by a narrow stretch of water called the Calf Sound. Previously in private ownership, it was donated 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.

About 11:00 on Tuesday, 31st October 1989, Aron Sapsford drove one of the Helgoland traps set up near the Observatory building. Several Blackbirds were caught and when he went to remove them from the catching box, he noticed a small dove among them that was not much bigger than the Blackbirds (Pic. 125). 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 on examining the plumage found it to be completely fresh. He could find nothing similar in any Western Palearctic field guide, but help was at hand in the form of Ian Fisher who arrived, and on seeing the bird exclaimed *I've seen that before - in the States! I think it's a Mourning Dove*. A quick check of the 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 and photographed and released back to a sheltered part of the Observatory garden. In the afternoon it was seen to feed on some grain that was left out and it seemed to be picking up, but unfortunately it was found dead there the following morning. The specimen is preserved in the Manx Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man (Pic. 126).



**Pic. 126.**  
**Mourning Dove, Manx Museum, Douglas.**  
Photo: © Laura McCoy.



## Thayer's Gull *Larus glaucoides thayeri*

**1990 Ireland:** First-winter, The Lough, Cork City, 21st February, Cork Refuse Tip, 22nd February to 3rd March and Cobh, 26th February to 5th March (Wilson 1990).

While checking gulls at the Lough in Cork City, Jim Wilson noticed an unusual looking gull that resembled a first-winter Iceland Gull in structure but was darker and lacked pale primaries. The bird put Jim in mind of a putative Thayer's Gull he had seen in Galway the previous year and his thoughts turned to that enigmatic gull species and the possibility this was the real deal.



Pic. 127.  
Thayer's Gull,  
Cork Refuse Tip, February 1990.  
Photo: © Paul Archer.

Pic. 128.  
Thayer's Gull,  
Cobh, March 1990.  
Photo: © Killian Mullarney.

However, work commitments meant Jim had to leave before he could investigate further. Fortunately, he refound the bird 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. 127-128). For the remainder of its stay, it divided its time between the refuse tip and Cobh (about ten miles from Cork on Great Island), where it was last observed. During its stay it was seen and enjoyed by a great many birders (Wilson 1990).

At various times Thayer's Gull has been considered a full species, a subspecies of American Herring Gull or (as it currently is *per* IOC's World List) a subspecies of Iceland Gull.

### **Ancient Murrelet** *Synthliboramphus antiquus*

**1990 England:** Adult summer, Jenny's Cove, Lundy Island, Devon, 27th May to 26th June (Campey & Mortimer 1990, Waldon 1994).

Richard Campey and Keith Mortimer had organised an RSPB South West office cruise to Lundy Island for the purpose of seeing the island's Puffins. They departed Bideford on the MV *Oldenburg*, arriving on 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 in to the cove at 13:45. Although an auk, it was clearly not a Puffin, and unusual enough to be something 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 a little further north. 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 managed to pick it up in Richard's telescope it 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 Peter Harrison's *Seabirds, an identification guide*, quickly deciding the bird was either a Crested or Ancient Murrelet, with the illustrations slightly favouring Crested. They returned to the cove only to discover the bird had flown out to sea, but both John and Stan had seen it well by that time and had taken a full set of notes. On the return trip to Bideford, both 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.

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 bird-lines 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 was best looked for in the morning when it flew in to Jenny's Cove to feed. It must have found Lundy Island 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 Port Hellick 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 another 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 other end of the pool where it began hawking insects around some pines and 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.

Jeremy was now faced with a dilemma, he had no idea what he had seen and as no one else was present, he would have to leave the bird if he was going to alert others to what he had found! At 20:00 he drove to Old Town 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.

Fortunately when he returned to the pool it was still present and he watched it among a larger group of Hirundines until dusk. It remained up to the morning of the 10th when it departed with the same group of Hirundines with which it had arrived. It would often perch on rocks and posts, where it was heard to sing a very liquid chirping, suggesting it was a male. It attracted huge numbers, estimated at between 800 and 1,000. Its time of arrival did not fit with any usual vagrancy pattern and it was speculated that its presence among northerly migrating Hirundines suggested it had crossed the Atlantic the previous autumn and adopted their migration patterns, and 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).

Andrew Birch was birding in Kenidjack Valley during the morning of Thursday, 20th September 1990. 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 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.



Pic. 129.  
**Yellow-throated Vireo**,  
 Kenidjack Valley, September 1990.  
 Photo: © James Hanlon.



Pic. 130.  
**Yellow-throated Vireo**,  
 Kenidjack Valley, September 1990.  
 Photo: © Tim Loseby.

He phoned around, eventually getting hold of Richard Millington (assistant editor of *Birding World* over its lifetime and former member of the BBRC) 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 (Pics 129-130). The news was released and by midday the first local birders had arrived. It remained to the 27th and during this time was often 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.





Pic. 131.  
Ethiopian Swallow,  
in the hand, Bet She'an Valley,  
23rd May 1991.  
Photo: © Yoav Perlman.

### **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 Swallows at a roost in the northern Israeli town of Bet She'an. Along with the Swallows, 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. 131). The light was fading fast so all the swallows were taken to Koby Meirom's house nearby, where they were processed and held overnight in ringer's bags. African field guides were independently consulted and all three identified it as Ethiopian Swallow based on a variety of features including a short tail, lack of breast band, dark intrusion to the sides of the breast and rufous patch on the forehead. It was released early the next morning and was never seen again. To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic.

### **Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus*

**1991 At sea:** Adult, Adriatic Sea, 2nd September (Brichetti *et al.* 1995).

Frédéric Jiguet, Eric Ayache and Frantz Barrault were travelling by ferry from the Greek port of Igoumenitsa to Ancona in Italy, a sea voyage that took them across the southern Adriatic Sea. They departed at 11:00 on Monday, 2nd September 1991, arriving the following morning at 07:00. That evening at 19:00 Frédéric noticed a bird far off on the horizon that gradually approached the ferry more or less head-on, eventually passing about 50 metres ahead. At first Frédéric thought it was a Gannet but as it came closer and he began to discern more details he realised it was not.



The silhouette and general appearance was reminiscent of a small albatross or a large Fulmar. Its flight was stiff with rather slow wing beats, reminiscent of Gannet. It had a big round head, long and pointed wings and a short rounded tail. The bill was pale yellowish or pale flesh pink and noticeably large and uniformly thick from base to tip, with a nasal tube stretching about two-thirds the length of the upper mandible. The light was not great, being first observed about one hour before sunset, however the plumage appeared to be fairly uniform from head to tail, a dirty ash-grey, the underparts were not visible to him.

When considering the possible identity, Frédéric ruled out Fulmar, albatross or aberrant Gannet as none fitted what he had observed. He realised the bird's appearance and jizz was reminiscent of one of the Giant Petrels, *i.e.* Northern (*M. halli*) and Southern Giant Petrel that are circumpolar in the southern Oceans. About a month later Frédéric watched footage of a Southern Giant Petrel filmed in flapping flight in Adélie Land, Antarctica and he noticed the flight action and silhouette corresponded perfectly with the bird seen on 2nd September. Other features supporting Southern Giant Petrel included, the lack of contrast between the face area and the crown, nape and neck and the uniform colour of the bill.

Initially published as *Macronectes* sp. by the COI, later while they were preparing the Italian Checklist of the CISO-COI it was accepted as Southern Giant Petrel. There is an earlier record of Giant Petrel at sea off northwest France in 1966 that was not identified to species (page 69).

### **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 southern tip is the village of Landsort, where the oldest lighthouse in Sweden is situated. There is a Bird Observatory on the island whose organising committee was set up in 1988, although ringing started on a small scale as far back as the late 1970s.

On Thursday, 10th October 1991, Björn Söderlund took the pilot boat to Öja with two tasks in mind. First to look for a Radde's Warbler that had been reported there and to photograph the lighthouse for a newspaper article he was writing. The Radde's was quickly located and after some time around the northern part of the island he struck out for the lighthouse. In a narrow valley just north of Landsort he 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 culprit revealed itself; it was a small compact and silvery grey *Phylloscopus*-like bird with a short neck and a white bib. It headed for a sheltered spot in the valley and settled near some rolled-up nets. As he watched it from a distance of about 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. It was still calling and was constantly flicking its wings and tail nervously. It flew down to the ground allowing Björn to notice how extremely short the primary projection was, making the tail seem much longer than it really was.



Pic. 132.  
Plain Leaf Warbler,  
in the hand, Landsort, 10th October 1991.  
Photo: © Anders Haglund.

Björn returned to the harbour, where he had left his backpack and field guide, and taking it out began browsing the pages hoping to identify what he had just seen, eventually concluding it most closely resembled a Booted Warbler! Time was moving on and he was conscious of the need to let others know about the bird as he would soon have to catch the boat back to Stockholm, so he headed to the Observatory. At that time the staff consisted of Anders Engström, Fredrik Forsberg and Bosse Holst with Anders Haglund and Magnus Jäderblad staying there as guests. Only Anders was present when he got there, the rest were all out and Anders 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 there so he showed it to all those waiting to head off. Just then the bird called and Björn immediately recognised it as the same squeaky note he heard earlier. It also became obvious it was not a Booted Warbler due to the absence of white edges to the tail feathers! The Observatory staff had now arrived 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 had the first idea what species it was but fortunately Fredrik remembered hearing about Plain Leaf Warbler, an Asian *Phylloscopus*, and checking the literature available they were able to compare its wing formula with the published data and found they were a match. 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, 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 (Pic. 132). One very significant feature that helped confirm the identity were the bird's olive green soles. The warbler was released close to the Observatory in a small copse of trees on the southern part of Landsort known as Södra Lunden. As darkness was beginning to fall it 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 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. However, five days later Björn was back at Landsort and heard the squeaky call again, which was repeated with the same frenzy as the last time. 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 the 10th only as its presence could not be determined by call alone. An earlier 1963 record from Jordan has since been rejected.

### **Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago delicata*

**1991 Northern Ireland:** Juvenile, near Coleraine, Derry/Londonderry, 28th October (Milne & O'Sullivan 1998), shot.

The specimen was sent to Michel Devort in Bordeaux, France, who was studying Common Snipe skins at the time, and he made the identification. Previously treated as a subspecies of Common Snipe, now regarded as a full species.

### **Glaucous-winged Gull** *Larus glaucescens*

**1992 Canary Islands:** Third-winter, La Restinga, El Hierro, 7th to 10th February (De Juana & SEO 1998).

This bird was found and photographed by Domingo Trujillo in the harbour at the fishing village of La Restinga, on the southernmost tip of El Hierro. The record has been accepted by the Spanish Rarities Committee (Pic. 133-134).



Pics. 133-134.  
Glaucous-winged Gull,  
La Restinga, El Hierro, February 1992.  
Photos: © Domingo Trujillo.

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, Morocco (Bakker *et al.* 2001). La Restinga and Essaouira are 550 miles apart and considering the extreme rarity of Glaucous-winged Gull in the Western Palearctic it is not inconceivable that the same individual was involved in both records.

A previous report of Glaucous-winged Gull involves a leg-ring found at Lake Zürich, Switzerland in early November 1969 that had been fitted to a juvenile on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada in July 1969 (Snow & Perrins 1998). No trace of the bird was ever found; it's possible the ring was somehow transported by accident to Switzerland from Canada, perhaps 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 to the 21st. While attempting to identify the shearwater, Hadoram corresponded with Northern Ireland birder Ian Sinclair, then resident in South Africa. Their investigations led them to a specimen of a very similar shearwater collected at Durban, South Africa in January 1987 that was preserved in the Durban Natural Science Museum and which had so far remained unidentified. Observations of shearwaters in the Mozambique Channel off South Africa, and further north off the Seychelles seemed to match the Durban specimen, which became the type specimen for Mascarene Shearwater *P. atrodorsalis*, a species new to science published in Shirihai, Sinclair & Colston (1995). The vernacular name was selected on the basis of a second specimen found at the Natural History Museum, Tring collected at Réunion, *i.e.*, one of the Mascarene Islands in the western Indian Ocean.

However, subsequent developments in the identification of the Audubon's Shearwater's subspecies *bailloni* eventually led to this bird being identified to this form, which has since been raised to full species status as Tropical Shearwater, whose subspecies were previously subsumed within the Audubon's Shearwater complex. For the full story and sequence of events that led to the identification of the Eilat shearwater see Hadoram's note in *Birding World* (Shirihai 2001).

Pic. 135.  
Streaked Shearwater,  
off North Beach, Eilat, Summer 1992.  
Photo: © Yossi Eshbol.





## **Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas*

**1992 Israel:** Two or possibly three, off North Beach, Eilat, Gulf of Aqaba, 21st June to September (Morgan & Shirihai 1992).

Summer 1992 was a bumper year for seabird observations in the Gulf of Aqaba. On Sunday, 21st June 1992, Hadoram Shirihai, John Morgan and Bill Fletcher took a small boat two miles out in to the bay to try get better views of the small shearwater found on the 18th (see Tropical Shearwater on the previous page). While watching Cory's Shearwaters at 09:00, a party of shearwaters flew past that included a smaller darker bird with a pale face. In the excitement John and Bill, who were paddling, tried to turn and see the bird and nearly capsized the skiff! It was tentatively identified as a Streaked Shearwater and this was confirmed over the next hour as closer views were obtained (Pic. 135). It was later realised that at least two, and possibly three, were present, remaining to at least mid-September. One, possibly from this group, over-summered the following year from early May to June. An earlier claim of one in April 1981, also off Eilat, was not accepted by the Israeli Rarities Committee.

## **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 and headed for a shallow freshwater pond surrounded on three sides by *Phragmites* and an area of exposed silt on the remaining side. 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 the bird fed on the silt bed.



Pic. 136.  
Three-banded Plover,  
Gebel Asfar, March 1993.  
Photo: © John Tidy.

There was no doubt about the identification, Richard had seen Three-banded Plover previously in Namibia, Tanzania and South Africa. Its distinctive plumage ruled out confusion with other *Charadrius* plovers recorded in Egypt. 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. 136).

**White-winged Scoter** *Melanitta deglandi*

**1993 Iceland:** Adult male, Foss, Fossfjörður, 3rd June (Garðarsson 1997).

On Thursday, 3rd June 1993, Arnþór Garðarsson drove to Korpandarstegg, near the town of Foss in Fossfjörður, south of Arnarfjörður in northwest Iceland. There he discovered an adult male White-winged Scoter (then 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).



Pics. 137-138.

Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross,  
north-northeast of Halten, 13th April 1994.

Photos: © Jostein Sjørgård.

## **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).

Photographed at sea by Jostein Sörgård, the skipper of a fishing boat (Pics. 137-138). The bird remained around the boat for about three hours. The record was published as Yellow-nosed Albatross, which has since been split as Atlantic and Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses and this individual has subsequently been identified as Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross by the NSKF.

This is the first confirmed record for the Western Palearctic. There are some old records that are probably this species; off Iceland in about 1844, off France in August 1889, about 40 nautical miles south of Cornwall, England in April 1985 and 300 nautical miles west-southwest of Cape Clear Island, Ireland on 5th December 1986, but none of these can be verified.

## **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 reedbeds 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!**' He immediately considered Tufted Puffin, but since the views were so brief and the sheer improbability of a north Pacific Alcid on Laholmsbukten Bay in June meant he could not contemplate making such a claim.

Over the coming week he visited the estuary daily and often thought about what he had seen, whatever it was, he was at least happy 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 what they had just seen. It then became lost to view but after about 30 minutes they saw it again, this time it was 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 a Puffin, however as it was never seen in the company of others a direct comparison was not possible but they did conclude it was an adult in breeding plumage. In the days after the 8th it was searched for intensely by a large number of visiting birders but it was never seen again.

Pic. 139.

Cape Gull, Jardin des Plantes Zoo, Paris, January 1995.

Photo: © Frédéric Jiguet.



### **Cape Gull** *Larus dominicanus vetula*

**1995 France:** Adult, Jardin des Plantes Zoo, Paris, January and probably in to February (Jiguet *et al.* 2004, Jiguet 2003).

During January and probably for some time in February, a large dark-mantled, white-headed gull visited the Jardin des Plantes Zoo, situated by the River Seine in central Paris. Although it was observed to feed with captive Herring and Yellow-legged Gulls (it was even observed displaying to a Yellow-legged Gull) it was not part of the zoo's collection. 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 trying to identify it.

They initially considered it was an aberrant Lesser Black-backed Gull, a small Great Black-backed Gull or a hybrid but they were all eventually ruled out as their overall structure, pattern on the primaries and bare-part colourations were incompatible with the Paris bird and they turned their attention to the Southern Hemisphere Kelp Gull. Recent publications describing the various forms of this gull confirmed features displayed by the Paris bird such as its 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 (Pic. 139). The record has been accepted by the CAF, initially placed in Category D, later elevated to Category A.

Cape Gull was added to the Western Palearctic breeding avifauna in April 2009 at Khnifiss Lagoon Island, southern Morocco, where at least two pairs of Cape Gull and a mixed Cape x Yellow-legged Gull pair bred (Bergier *et al.* 2009).



## **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis*

**1995 Italy:** Adult male, Pilone di Cannitello, Calabria, 29th April (Corso & Dennis 1998).

On 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 narrow body of water that separates the eastern tip of Sicily from southern Italy. At 16:15 he was counting passing Honey Buzzards and Red-footed Falcons when he noticed what he thought was an adult Red-footed Falcon flying towards him. He got it in the telescope, instantly noticing something odd about its wings; it appeared the underwing-coverts were missing! As the bird came closer he soon realised they were not, rather they were strikingly white. It was then lost to view departing with four Red-footed Falcons. Although Pete was puzzled by its appearance he decided it was just a male Red-footed with aberrant markings.

That evening he returned to the raptor 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 of *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 (Italian ornithologist from Sicily and author of *Avifauna di Sicilia*) 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 perfectly demarcated*, which ruled that option out. Two years later on 4th May 1997, the second for the Western Palearctic 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 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 his holiday cottage near Sennen Cove to Land's End and back. When they had 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 turned 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 erratically moving bird meant that he could only manage a *few seconds of blurred and shaky video* over a period of five minutes shooting. 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 of the (now defunct) genus *Dendroica*, some of which he had previously seen in North America. He initially considered Blackpoll Warbler as it was the most regularly occurring (27 British records previous to October 1995) but it was too bright, so that was ruled out. He had 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 with him and browsing both he ruled out any of the North American warblers illustrated in their pages. But 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 a *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 offshore 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 that weather system was responsible for the bird's appearance as well no fewer than seven species of North American wood-warbler and 175 Monarch butterflies (52 of them in Cornwall) in 1995.

### **Redhead** *Aythya americana*

**1996 England:** Adult male, Bleasby, Nottinghamshire, 8th to 27th March (Dennis 1998).

Mark Dennis learned of Bearded Reedlings reported at a former gravel-pit in Bleasby, about ten miles northeast of Nottingham. He got there at about 15:45 and headed for that part of the 100-acre gravel-pit 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, which he realised was a drake Redhead. From a distance of 100 metres through 10x42 binoculars, Mark settled down to take a description, using Pochard for a direct comparison, then headed back to his car. He was certain it was a Redhead but could not help but wonder how it got there.



Pic. 140.  
Redhead & Pochard,  
Bleasby, Nottinghamshire, March 1996.  
Photo: © Iain Leach.

Pics. 141-142.

**Redhead**, Bleasby, Nottinghamshire, March 1996.

Photos: © Iain Leach.



After about ten minutes he telephoned some others in the area, managing to get hold of two, John Hopper (the County Recorder) and Bernie Ellis, who eventually arrived. Together they had good views of the bird as it **fed, preened and courted a female Common Pochard within the small flock** (Pic. 140). The bird was not carrying leg-rings and the wings showed no evidence of captive damage. 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 weeeooo**. 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 allowed public viewing and the news was released on the Nottinghamshire Birdnews service. It remained for 20 days to 27th March, when it departed along with the local Pochards.

Not surprisingly there was some debate about the bird's origins. It was not ringed and behaved in a way reminiscent of a wild bird (Pics. 141-142). It was established that the species was not especially common in western European wildfowl collections and 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 after a single circulation of the BBRC it was accepted and admitted to Category A of the British List.

The first female for the Western Palearctic was a first-winter found by Andrew Stevenson and Angus Hogg on Loch Tangasdail, Barra, Outer Hebrides, Scotland from 20th September 2003 to 15th April 2004 (Scott 2004).

### **Soft-plumaged Petrel** *Pterodroma mollis*

**1997 Israel/Jordan:** Off both the North Beach, Eilat and Aqaba, 25th March (Andrews *et al.* 1999, Shirihi 1996).

In the afternoon of Tuesday, 25th March 1997 very large numbers of birders were seawatching from North Beach, Eilat. At about 17:30 a petrel was seen to fly over the bay from Aqaba towards Eilat eventually coming within 400 metres of the beach. At least 30 birders managed to get on to it, enjoying good views for five minutes in excellent light. Erik Hirschfeld (co-author of the *World's Rarest Birds*) and others immediately suggested that it was a Soft-plumaged Petrel, rather than one of the various Atlantic island gadfly-petrels and this despite the lack of a complete breast band.

After Hadoram had examined skins in the Natural History Museum, Tring and gained considerable experience of the species at sea, he concluded the bird was a Soft-plumaged Petrel, a species that breeds on Southern Hemisphere islands as far apart as Tristan da Cunha in the south Atlantic to the Antipodes Islands off New Zealand. The record has been accepted by both the Jordanian and Israeli committees.

There is just one other record for the Western Palearctic, 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. 143). When last observed it was heading east in the direction of Vadsø.

**Pic. 143.**  
**Soft-plumaged Petrel & Arctic Skua,**  
Varangerfjorden, 6th June 2009.  
Photo: © Graham Catley.





### **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 Aqaba Sewage Works when his attention was drawn to a small greyish duck asleep among the local Garganey and Teal. It soon lifted its 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. Together they watched it for 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 is 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 in the nearby Hammar Marshes, but their origin cannot be definitively known (Snow & Perrins 1998).

### **Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus*

**1997 Mauritania:** Adult male, Zira Islet, Banc d'Arguin National Park, 23rd April to 25th September (Pineau *et al.* 2001).

On Wednesday, 23rd April 1997, a large adult 'black-backed' gull (accompanied by a Yellow-legged Gull) was seen briefly on Zira Islet in the Banc d'Arguin National Park.



Pics. 144–145.  
Kelp Gull  
(with Yellow-legged Gull, below),  
Zira Islet, Banc d'Arguin NP.  
Photos: © Olivier Pineau.



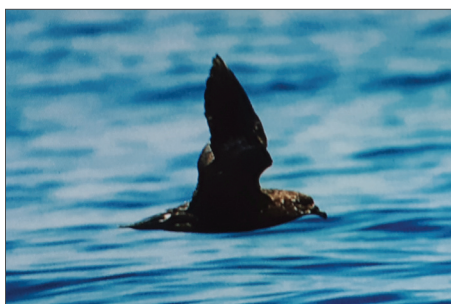
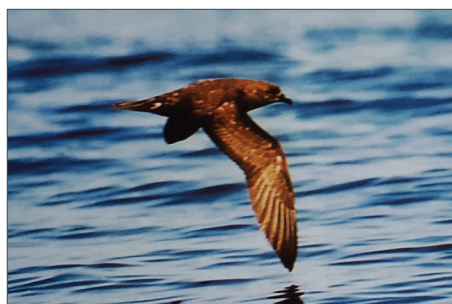
It didn't look quite right for Great Black-backed Gull, its more gentle expression and yellow legs seemed to rule that species out. It was at the same place again on the following 30th May, still in the company of a Yellow-legged Gull, when both were seen on the ground and in flight (Pics. 144-145). It was slightly larger than the Yellow-legged and noticeably bigger than Lesser Black-backed Gulls present. Following reference to the literature it was identified as a Kelp Gull and from its behaviour (apparently paired with the Yellow-legged Gull) was presumed to be a male. They were seen together again on 2nd July and were still present right up to 25th September. Thereafter they were observed at various times until last seen in December 2007. Although they gave every appearance of a pair, breeding was never recorded.

This was the first occurrence of the nominate form, the coastal western and southern African form *vetula*, known as Cape Gull was at the Paris Zoo in 1995 (page 141).

### **Trindade Petrel** *Pterodroma arminjoniana*

**1997 At sea/Azores:** Dark morph, ten nautical miles south of Pico, 18th July (Dubois & Seitre 1997).

On Friday, 18th July 1997, Roland and Julia Seitre observed a dark *Pterodroma* petrel in calm conditions, ten miles south of the island of Pico. Three or four strong wingbeats sent it gliding towards them, never more than three or four metres above the sea. It passed close by their boat, then drifted off to a distance of 200 metres before returning and circling the boat three times as close as 20 metres, finally departing after five minutes. It was about the same size as the Cory's Shearwaters in the vicinity, but the body was much lighter and the wings narrower (Pics. 146-149).



Pics. 146-149.

Trindade Petrel, 10 nautical miles south of Pico, Azores, July 1997.

Photos: © Roland Seitre.

It was tentatively identified as Herald Petrel\* based on Roland and Julia's previous experience of the species at Round Island in the western Indian Ocean and subsequent analysis of photos taken and careful scrutiny of its flight pattern confirmed this. The bird appeared to be in moult as there were some white spots on both the upper and underparts, possibly suggesting it was a second calendar-year?

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-dje) 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* on Trindade Island while on passage from Naples to Montevideo, it retains the original scientific name following the split.

### **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 was a Cerulean Warbler discovered by Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson at Eyrarbakki on the southwestern coast of Iceland. It was found sheltering among trees and shrubs in a garden where it often gave excellent views, especially when it dropped down to the ground to feed. It was trapped 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. 150-151). 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.



Pic. 150.  
Cerulean Warbler,  
Eyrarbakki, Árnessýsla, October 1997.  
Photo: © Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson.







## **Palm Warbler** *Setophaga palmarum*

**1997 Iceland:** Immature, Stokkseyri, Árnessýsla, 5th to 10th October (Práinsson 1997).

This was the third of three Nearctic wood warblers found in Iceland during the autumn of 1997. It was found by Gaukur Hjartarson and Ríkarður Ríkarðsson during the afternoon of Sunday, 5th October 1997 at Stokkseyri, which is just a few miles further down 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 better 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 North American form *hypochrysea*, which is yellower on the flanks (Pic. 152). There was no attempt made to trap it and it was enjoyed by 15 birders, a well attended twitch by Icelandic standards. To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic. The headless remains of a Palm Warbler found on the tideline at Walney Island, Cumbria, England on 18th May 1976 is considered to be of uncertain provenance.

## **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel*

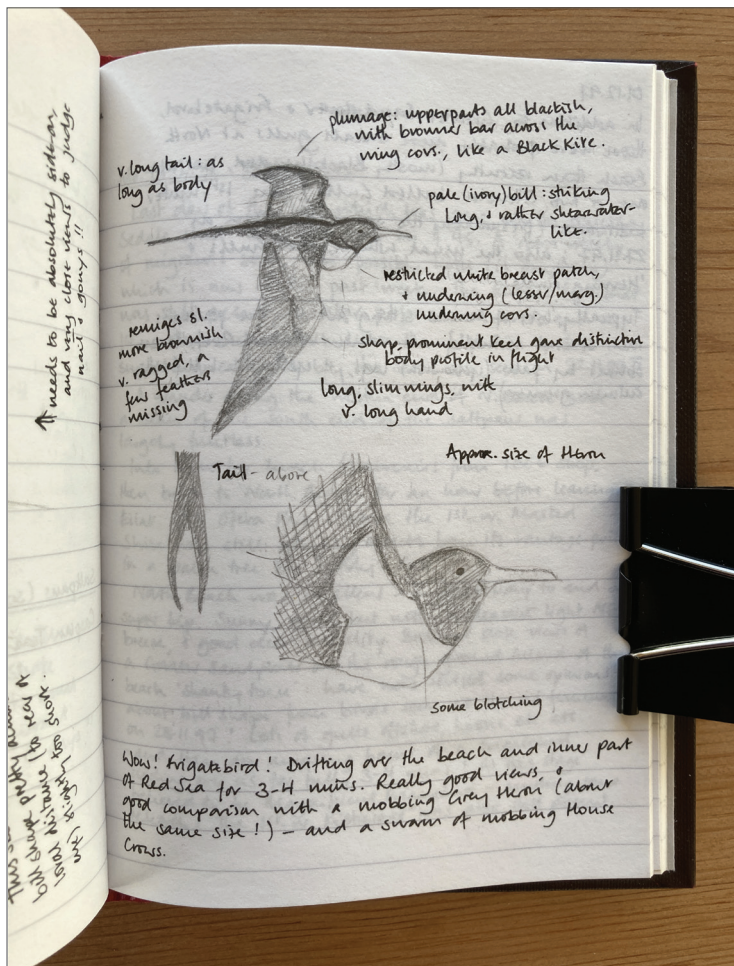
**1997 Israel:** Immature male, North Beach, Eilat, 1st December (Riddington & Reid 2000).

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. They scanned through 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 it was sufficiently close for [both to] mentally [...] compile some reasonably detailed field notes. After about four minutes it slowly drifted away out over the sea. They immediately began taking a description and drawing sketches, hoping not to overlook any important feature (Pic. 153). 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, leaving them just enough time to catch the airport coach to Ovda Airport to get 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 Committee.

Pic. 153.

A page from Roger Riddington's note book, showing the Lesser Frigatebird at Eilat, December 1997.  
Photo: © Roger Riddington.



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 patterns on the underwing and underbody, which were significant features in identifying it to species and rule out 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. There are two other records since, the second was also at North Beach Eilat on 6th May 1999 (possibly the same bird?) and the third was an immature seen at the port of Mina Al Zour, Kuwait on 10th April 2008.

## Long-billed Murrelet *Brachyramphus perdix*

**1997 Switzerland:** First-winter, Lake Zurich, near Zollikon, Meilen, December (Maurmary & Knaus 2000).

Sometime between the 15th and 18th December 1997, Urs Bäumlér, a local fisherman, extracted a dead bird from a fishing net on Lake Zurich about 40 metres from the shoreline 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.

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 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. 154-155). This becomes the fifth and most recent 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).



Pics. 154-155.

Long-billed Murrelet, Naturhistorisches Museum, Basel.

Photos: © Peter Knaus.





Pic. 156.  
Southern Pochard,  
KM20, north of Eilat, April 1998.  
Photo: © Hadoram Shirihi.

### **Southern Pochard** *Netta erythrophthalma*

**1998 Israel:** Probably an adult female, KM20 salt pans, north of Eilat, 22nd April to at least 8th May (Shirihi 2000).

On Wednesday, 29th April 1998, Hadoram Shirihi 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 that. 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 (editor of *Birding World*), 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 pattern of a white crescent running down its face and neck (Pic. 156).

Southern Pochard is found on two continents, the nominate form in South America and *brunnea* in Africa from the Ethiopian highlands south to the Cape of Good Hope and the obvious source of the Eilat bird. They are generally sedentary but will undertake dry season 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 all they had for their troubles were some of the local Brown Boobies, so Kris decided to take a walk and look for 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 Verdes, indeed there was one sitting in a breeding cavity in nearby rocks for comparison!

By this time Kris had come back and learned of the bird, 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. It would seem logical from the location that it was one of the two Atlantic subspecies, *i.e. ascensionis* from tropical South Atlantic islands or *catesbyi* from the Caribbean. The closest breeding site to the Cape Verdes is on Fernando de Noronha (*catesbyi*) 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 Kazakhstan/Russia border on the Maly Uzen' River in Saratov Oblast. Near the village of Dryamsky they noticed a flock of 14 gulls circling high above, that soon flew down and landed in ploughed fields. Two of the group 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 group using binoculars and spent time comparing them with other nearby gull species, including Great black-headed, Black-headed and Little. They attempted to get in 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, when they were first noticed, an unfamiliar sound that initially brought them to Vladimir and A.N.'s attention, and again when departing.

They were a medium sized gull, larger than Black-headed and significantly smaller than Great Black-headed with a dark hood, broad white eye-crescents, a red bill and legs and all showed a similar 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 and immediately exhibited an urgent desire to reunite, would suggest they were a migrating flock. 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.

### **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 calm conditions and blue skies, and the consensus among birders was that the storm must have blown something mega to Cape.

On Wednesday morning there were just three birders on the island, a sign of the times. Observatory Warden Steve Wing offered Dennis Weir a lift to the north end as he was going to have a look at the Alderwood, but Dennis declined. 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. 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 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 the garden. It dropped back out of view, but a short time later repeated this action, each time rising about ten feet in the air. At that point Dennis had no idea what he was looking at, but something that bright could *only be a Yank*.



**Blue-winged Warbler**, Cape Clear Island, Cork, October 2000,  
Pics. 157-158.  
Videograbs: © Stuart McKee.

Eventually the shaking stems of the nettles yielded 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 then 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 that no words were exchanged. Eventually Willie appeared and they had a nervous wait until the bird flew back down and into the nettle patch.

Realising that Dennis was not entirely happy with his putative identification, Willie suggested to him 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. One of the most stunning birds ever seen on Cape (Pics. 157-161). 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. 159-161.  
**Blue-winged Warbler,**  
Cape Clear Island, Cork, October 2000,  
Videograb (left): © Paul Hackett.  
Photos (below): © Phil Palmer.



# First Records 2001 to 2015

## 2001

### **Intermediate Heron** *Ardea intermedia*

**Italy:** Adult, Maccarese Fish Ponds, near Rome, 30th May 2001 (Taube & Grylle 2001). First European record. Scarce but regular at Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania just inside the Western Palearctic.

### **African Crane** *Crecopsis egregia*

**Canary Islands:** Adult, Parque Garcia Sanabria, Santa Cruz, Tenerife, 23rd to 24th November 2001 (Lorenzo 2002).

Found exhausted, taken in to care but died the following day.

## 2002

### **Swinhoe's Snipe** *Gallinago megala*

**Russia:** Male, Yuzhnaya Mountain, Yengane-Pe Ridge, Polar Urals, 23rd to 24th June 2002 (Morozov 2004).

This bird was observed displaying on the 23rd and 24th June just under 20 miles inside the Western Palearctic border. An earlier 1998 record from Israel is now rejected by the Israeli Rarities and Distribution Committee.

### **Bermuda Petrel** *Pterodroma cahow*

**Azores:** Ilhéu da Vila, Santa Maria, 17th to at least 21st November 2002 (Bried 2003), trapped.

The same individual (the ring number was checked each time) returned to the same location during November 2003 and during the night of 12th/13th December 2006 (Bried & Magalhães 2004).

The Bermuda Petrel or Cahow remained unrecorded for over 300 years until 1951 when Robert Cushman Murphy discovered 18 breeding pairs in Castle Harbour, Bermuda (Murphy & Mowbray 1951). A recovery program was set up by David Wingate (who subsequently devoted his life to saving the species) including the construction of 'Tropicbird proof' nesting burrows on rocky islets in Castle Harbour.

## 2003

### **Short-billed Gull** *Larus brachyrhynchus*

**Azores:** Adult, Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, 18th February to at least 24th February 2003 (Alfrey & Ahmad 2007).

Previously treated as a subspecies of Common Gull.

### **Oriental Plover** *Charadrius veredus*

**Finland:** Adult, Alajoki, Ilmajoki, 25th May 2003 (Rannila 2003).

This one-day bird was initially thought to be a Caspian Plover.

### **Least Flycatcher** *Empidonax minimus*

**Iceland:** Juvenile, Stokkseyri, Árnessýsla, 6th to 7th October 2003 (Kolbeinnsson 2003), caught.

This bird flew in to Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson's house in Stokkseyri where it was captured. It was examined and identified in his kitchen, held overnight and released the following morning in Jóhann Óli's garden (cover photo). The only record for the WP.



### **Alder Flycatcher** *Empidonax alnorum*

**Iceland:** Kverkin Plantation, Eyjafjöll, 10th October 2003 (Kolbeinsson 2003), trapped.

Coming just four days after the first Least Flycatcher. This individual managed to attract a total of 14 birders making it one of the largest twitches in Iceland at that time.

### **Streak-throated (Indian Cliff) Swallow** *Petrochelidon fluvicola*

**Egypt:** Ras Umm Sid, Sharm el Sheikh, 19th November 2003 (Checklist of the Birds of Egypt).

Accepted by the Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee in their first report.

## **2004**

### **Purple Martin** *Progne subis*

**Scotland:** First-winter, Butt of Lewis, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 5th to 6th September 2004 (Coyle *et al.* 2007).

The second for the Western Palearctic was found on Flores in the Azores on the same day the bird on Lewis was last observed. A previous record of a female shot near Dun Laoghaire, Dublin, Ireland a short time before March 1840 is not regarded as a genuine vagrant and has been assigned to Category D.

### **Chestnut-eared Bunting** *Emberiza fucata*

**Scotland:** First-winter, Skadan, Fair Isle, Shetland, 15th to 20th October 2004 (Shaw 2008).

Originally thought to be a Little Bunting.

### **Rufous-tailed Robin** *Larvivora sibilans*

**Scotland:** First-winter, Bull's Park, Fair Isle, Shetland, 23rd October 2004 (Shaw 2006), trapped.

Also known as Whistling Nightingale or Swinhoe's Robin.

### **Chinese Pond Heron** *Ardeola bacchus*

**England:** Adult, Eccles-on-Sea, Norfolk, 31st October 2004 (Gantlett 2004).

An earlier record of a summer plumaged bird shot at Hellesylt, Møre og Romsdal, Norway during the Autumn of 1973 is assigned to Category D.

## **2005**

### **Amur Wagtail** *Motacilla alba leucopsis*

**England:** Adult male, Vane Tempest Colliery, Seaham, Durham, 5th April 2005 (Addinall 2010).

Amur Wagtail is a far-east Asian form of White Wagtail.

### **Daurian (Pink-backed) Starling** *Agropsar sturninus*

**Netherlands:** First-winter male, Oost-Vlieland, Vlieland, Friesland, 11th to 12th October 2005 (Giljam & van Ouwkerk 2005).

Some earlier records are either treated as escapes or assigned to Category D.

### **White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus*

**Azores:** First-winter, Ribeira do Gaivao, Corvo, 22nd to 23rd October 2005, and, presumed same individual, Ribeira da Ponte, Corvo, 23rd November 2005 (Alfrey 2005). All five Western Palearctic records to date have been on Corvo in the Azores.

## **American Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster*

**Azores:** First-year, Ponta Delgada, Flores, 30th October 2005 (Jiguet & Zucca 2005). The Nearctic form of Barn Swallow that is widespread throughout North and Central America.

## **2006**

### **Village Weaver** *Ploceus cucullatus*

**Egypt:** Adult male, El Faros Garden, near Abu Simbel, 1st May 2006 (Crochet *et al.* 2012).

The same individual was probably seen at Lake Nasser the previous 2nd April. Previous records from the Cape Verde Islands and Portugal are presumed to involve introduced birds.

### **Daurian Redstart** *Phoenicurus aureus*

**Russia:** Pechoro-Ilychskiy Reserve, Upper Pechora, 18th September 2006 (Ryabitsev 2008).

An earlier record near the Low Light, Isle of May, Fife, Scotland in April 1988 was not accepted as a genuine vagrant and assigned to Category D.

### **Forest (Tree) Wagtail** *Dendronanthus indicus*

**Kuwait:** Al-Abraq Al-Khabari, 10th October 2006 (Pope *et al.* 2006).

Despite numerous searches for the bird on subsequent days it was not seen again.

### **American Woodcock** *Scolopax minor*

**France:** First-winter, Sorges-en-Périgord, Dordogne, 28th October 2006 (Ferrand *et al.* 2008), shot.

To date, this is the only record for the Western Palearctic.

## **2007**

### **Pacific Diver** *Gavia pacifica*

**England:** First-winter, Farnham GP, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, 12th January to 4th February 2007 (Mather 2010).

Previously treated as a subspecies of Black-throated Diver.

## **2008**

### **Purple Sunbird** *Cinnyris asiaticus*

**Kuwait:** Two immature males, Ras Al Subiyah, 5th to 19th January 2008 (Al Hajji *et al.* 2008).

These were joined by a third bird on 10th & 11th January.

### **African Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus baeticatus*

**Libya:** Western Lakes, near Benghazi, May 2008 (Hering *et al.* 2010).

Discovered breeding. Identity was confirmed using DNA analysis.

### **American Swallow-tailed Kite** *Elanoides forficatus*

**Azores:** Vigia das Feteiras, São Miguel, 24th August to 7th September 2008 (Jara *et al.* 2010).

There is an earlier record on Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, from 19th to 23rd March 1993 that was assigned to Category D. There are at least five old 19th century records from Britain whose credentials are dubious.

**White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus*

**Spain:** Immature, Tarifa, Cádiz, 7th September 2008 (Diez *et al.* 2011).

Photographed in flight with Griffon Vultures.

**American Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus carolinensis*

**Iceland:** Sub-adult male, Hafnarfjörður, Gullbringusýsla, 22nd September 2008 (Strandberg 2013).

The North American form of Osprey.

**Stejneger's Stonechat** *Saxicola stejnegeri*

**Sweden:** First-winter male, Öja, Södermanland, 2nd October 2008 (Haas 2017), trapped.

Later found dead. Identity confirmed using DNA analysis.

**Slaty-backed Gull** *Larus schistisagus*

**Lithuania:** Adult, Dumpiai Klaipeda, 17th to 20th November 2008 (Pareigis 2008).

What is presumed to be the same individual was seen approximately 100 miles away at Riga, Latvia from 13th to at least 18th April 2009.

**2009**

**Asian Koel** *Eudynamys scolopaceus*

**Kuwait:** First-winter, Abdali Farms, Ouda Al-Bathali, 22nd to 28th February 2009 (Al-Sirhan 2010).

This bird was probably present for a month previous.

**African Openbill** *Anastomus lamelligerus*

**Egypt:** Immature, Crocodile Island, Luxor, 26th May 2009 (Steffen 2010).

**Horned Puffin** *Fratercula corniculata*

**Norway:** Hornøya, Finnmark, 10th August 2009 ([Hornlunde – ny art for landet](#) [online note, accessed February 2022]).

This record has been accepted as a genuine vagrant by the NSKF, and will be formally published in their next report.

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron** *Nyctanassa violacea*

**Azores:** Immature, Angra de Heroismo Marina, Terceira, 25th October 2009 (Haas 2017).

What is presumed to be the same individual returned to Angra de Heroismo in 2010 from 24th to 28th July and again in 2011 from 5th January to 18th April and on 8th December.

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis*

**Azores:** Female, Lagoa Branca, Flores, 30th October, and, presumed same Cabo da Praia, Terceira, 31st October 2009 (Mitchell 2017).

Unlike the majority of records, which are assumed to be fully-winged escapes from wildfowl collections, this bird was judged to be a genuine vagrant.

**Dickcissel** *Spiza americana*

**Azores:** Two, Ponta Delgada, Flores, 6th November 2009 (de Vries 2011).

An earlier record of an adult male at Måløy, Kinn, Vestland, Norway on 29th July 1981 was previously included in Category A, but following a review by the NSKF was re-assigned to Category D.

### **Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii*

**Kuwait:** Al-Abraq Al-Khabari, 19th November 2009 (Al-Sirhan 2010).

This species apparently bred in Kuwait in the past but there are no documented records to confirm this. An earlier 2004 record from Egypt is considered 'not proven' by the EORC and another in Belgium in July 1988 was judged to be an escape.

## **2010**

### **Dresser's Eider** *Somateria mollissima dresseri*

**Ireland:** Male, Glasagh Bay, Fanad Head, Donegal, 2nd January to 21st February 2010 (Farrelly & Charles 2010).

The same individual is presumed to have returned off the Inishowen Peninsula, Donegal in June 2011. Dresser's Eider breeds along the east coast of North America from Labrador to Maine.

### **Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

**Kuwait:** Jahra Farms, 3rd to 10th April 2010 (Al-Sirhan 2010).

### **Lincoln's Sparrow** *Melospiza lincolnii*

**Azores:** Middle Fields, Corvo, 12th to 13th October 2010 (Monticelli *et al.* 2018).

### **African Mourning Dove** *Streptopelia decipiens*

**Egypt:** Two, Nefertari Hotel, Abu Simbel, 28th December 2010 to at least 1st August 2011 (De Rouck 2011).

Most likely a pair as they were reported to be displaying to each other.

## **2011**

### **Bruce's Green Pigeon** *Treron waalia*

**Egypt:** Kornish Al Nile, Luxor, 3rd January 2011 (van der Veen 2011).

Identification established from a photograph.

### **Black-backed Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola calcarata*

**Turkey:** Van, Eastern Anatolia, 17th to 18th May 2011 (Occhiato 2011).

There were possibly two birds present. This is the eastern Iran to central China form of Citrine Wagtail.

### **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica*

**At sea/Madeira:** 15 nautical miles northeast of Madeira, 8th August 2011 (Correia-Fagundes & Romano 2011).

### **Mugimaki Flycatcher** *Ficedula mugimaki*

**Italy:** First-winter, Passo della Berga, Bagolino, Brescia, 6th October 2011 (Janni & Fracasso), trapped.

A 1991 record from Humberside, England was assigned to Category D.

## **2012**

### **Tropical Mockingbird** *Mimus gilvus*

**Gibraltar/Spain:** Transport Department Garages, Waterport, February to early April 2012, and, presumed same, Algeciras, Cádiz, 7th August, and other dates to 14th March 2013 (Bonser 2012).

Not considered a genuine vagrant and assigned to Category D.



### **Yellow Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis*

**Egypt:** Wadi Lahami, Hamata, 24th April in to May 2012 (Hering *et al.* 2013).

A bird was heard calling on 24th April 2012. On 26th April, two males were trapped and the following month a third male with a brood patch was trapped. A small breeding population has since become established along the Red Sea.

### **Dark-sided Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sibirica*

**Iceland:** Höfn, Hornafjörður, 1st to 5th October 2012 (Brynjólfsson *et al.* 2020).

This bird was initially considered to be an unusually fresh Spotted Flycatcher, a correct identification was not established until 2016. An earlier 1982 record of a bird trapped on the island of Helgoland, Germany was judged to be an escape.

### **Eastern Kingbird** *Tyrannus tyrannus*

**Ireland:** Kilmurvey, Inishmore, Aran Islands, Galway, 5th October 2012 (Delaney 2012).

The second for the Western Palearctic was found just under a year later on 24th September at Inishbofin, another island off County Galway in the west of Ireland.

### **Prairie Warbler** *Setophaga discolor*

**Azores:** Lighthouse Valley, Corvo, 20th to 23rd October 2012 (Monticelli *et al.* 2018). To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic.

## **2013**

### **Common Grackle** *Quiscalus quiscula*

**Netherlands:** Kamperhoek, Flevoland, 8th April 2013 (Slaterus 2013, 2014).

Seen in flight by five birders as it headed northeast over a migration watch-point. Probably of the subspecies *versicolor*, aka Bronzed Grackle.

### **Wahlberg's Eagle** *Hieraetus wahlbergi*

**Egypt:** Pale-morph juvenile, near Ras Shuqeir, 120 kms north of Hurghada, 3rd May 2013 (Waheed 2016).

Identification not established until May 2014 from a photograph.

### **Yellow-throated Warbler** *Setophaga dominica*

**Azores:** Ribeira do Poço de Água, Corvo, 16th to 17th October 2013 (Monticelli *et al.* 2018).

To date this is the only record for the Western Palearctic.

### **White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis*

**Morocco:** Gleb Jdiane, Oued Dahab, 5th to 6th December 2013 (Jacobs *et al.* 2018).

## **2014**

### **Pacific Eider** *Somateria mollissima v-nigrum*

**Norway:** Vardø, Finnmark, 19th February to 18th April 2014 (Olsen *et al.* 2016).

Pacific Eider breeds along the Arctic and Pacific coasts of northeast Siberia and northwest Canada and Alaska. Many male Pacific Eiders show a black 'vee' pattern over the throat, which is reflected in the scientific name.

### **Variable Wheatear** *Oenanthe picata*

**Kuwait:** Liyah Reserve, 24th March 2014 (KORC 2015).

An earlier 1986 record from near Eilat, Israel is no longer accepted.

### **Northern Shrike** *Lanius borealis*

**Azores:** Juvenile, Lighthouse Valley, Ribeiras da Ponte and Poço de Água, Corvo, 18th to 30th October 2014 (Jones 2014).

The Siberian subspecies *sibericus* is also on the Western Palearctic list after the first record was shot at Hamar, Innlandet, Norway on 5th November 1881 (see page 23).

## **2015**

### **Golden Nightjar** *Caprimulgus eximius*

**Western Sahara:** Male, near the KM48 post on the Aousserd to Dakhla Road, 3rd May 2015 (Dyczkowski 2016), killed.

Collided with a car and was killed. An earlier report of one on 6th June 1955 at Guelta Zemmour in Oued Dahab, Western Sahara, was not accepted by Thévenot *et al.* (2003) because the species was **considered a Sahel resident** and therefore **a possible** sighting only, a rather short-sighted conclusion in the Author's opinion. Breeding of Golden Nightjar in the region was subsequently confirmed on 17th March 2019, when an adult was observed protecting two young at Oued Chiaf, about 55km northwest of Aousserd.

### **Eastern Wood Pewee** *Contopus virens*

**Azores:** Lighthouse Valley, Corvo, 18th to 20th October 2015 (Monticelli *et al.* 2018). A second Eastern Wood Pewee was found at nearby Poco D'Água, Corvo just two days later. All three Western Palearctic records to date have been found on Corvo.

### **Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus*

**Kuwait:** Royal Family Farm, near Salmi, 9th November to at least 2nd December 2015 and subsequent years (KORC 2016).

## **Online resource**

A searchable database of historic rare bird occurrences in Britain is available through the **Historical Rare Birds** website. The data-set traces its origins to K.A. Naylor's published privately, *A Reference Manual of Rare Birds in Great Britain and Ireland*, now maintained online for all to use.

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## Abbreviations used

aka: also known as.

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').

Capt: Captain, *i.e.* the person in command of a ship or boat.

CDNA: Commissie Dwaalgasten Nederlandse Avifauna (Dutch 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).

EBN: Enterprise Broadcast Network.

eds.: Editors.

EORC: Egyptian Ornithological Rarities Committee.

GONHS: Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society.

Gm: In taxonomy, indicating the species was described by J.F. Gmelin.  
GP: Gravel pit.  
i.e.: *id est* (Latin for 'that is').  
IOC: IOC: International Ornithological Community (see *British Birds* 114(6): 315 for the origin of the name).  
IRBC: Irish Rare Birds Committee.  
KORC: Kuwait Ornithological Rarities Committee.  
km: Kilometres.  
Ltd.: Limited, indicating a private limited company in business  
mm: Millimetre.  
MV: Merchant Vessel.  
NHM: Natural History Museum.  
NMS: National Museums Scotland.  
NPWS: National Parks and Wildlife Service in Ireland.  
NSKF: Norsk Sjeldenhetskomite for Fugl (Norwegian Rare Bird Committee).  
Obs: Bird Observatory.  
pp: Number of pages cited in a reference.  
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 Protection of Animals.  
SJ: Society of Jesus, aka the Jesuits.  
sp: Species.  
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).  
WP: Western Palearctic.  
WWF: Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.