

Skomer Island

Bird Report 2023



Ymddiriedolaeth Natur
De a Gorllewin Cymru
Wildlife Trust of
South & West Wales

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Skomer Island National Nature Reserve is owned by Natural Resources Wales and managed by The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. More details on visiting Skomer are available at www.welshwildlife.org.

Data Usage Policy

Skomer seabird demographic data is submitted to the SMP database each year. WTSWW remain committed to making seabird data from Skomer available free of charge for individual interest and academic requests and datasets can be downloaded from the SMP Online Portal. Our annual reports can also be found on the WTSWW website.

Requests for data for commercial (development) purposes are chargeable and commercial users must contact WTSWW before proceeding to download or interrogate any Skomer data. The modest fees charged for data release contribute towards the fieldwork costs (including the experienced staff and specialist equipment) involved in collection, verification and management of data, and help to ensure the security of future monitoring.



A dewy morning, South Stream – L.Newman

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SKOMER ISLAND



Legend

- rock outcrops
- field walls
- Public footpaths



Contents

Island rarities summary 2023	7
Skomer Island seabird population summary 2023	8
Skomer Island breeding land-birds population summary 2023	9
Systematic list of birds	10



Sunrise, Captain Kites – L. Newman

Skomer Island Bird Report 2023

The island was staffed between 2nd March and 17th November. During this time, a total of 142 bird species were recorded. A total of four additional subspecies were confirmed during the year.

Island rarities summary 2023

Species	Island status	Last recorded
Cattle Egret	2 nd island record	1996
Glossy Ibis	2 nd island record	2021
Sanderling	8 th island record	2018
Grey Phalarope	11 th island record	2018
Glaucous Gull	15 th island record	2020
Nightjar	15 th island record	2022
Hoopoe	23 rd and 24 th island records	2022
Nightingale	10 th island record	2016
Common Rosefinch	21 st island record	2017



Puffins, The Neck – L.Newman

Skomer Island seabird population summary 2023

Eleven species of seabird regularly breed on Skomer. It was a good year for Puffins with the population surpassing 40,000 individuals for the first time in recorded history. It was a poorer year for the other auks with the Guillemot and Razorbill populations both dropping. Fulmars dropped significantly and it was also a tough year for the Kittiwakes and Lesser Black-backed Gulls but the Herring Gull and Great Black-Backed population increased. Further information can be found in the Skomer Seabird Report (Newman, L. *et al.* 2023).

Species and count units	Totals for 2023	Totals for 2022	% change from previous count	5-year % change
Fulmar (AOS)	472	538	-12.27	-16.90 ¹
Cormorant (AON)	0	0	0	-100
Shag (AON)	5	4	+25	+38.89
Lesser Black-backed Gull (AON) ²	5,912	6,672	-11.38	-4.89
Herring Gull (AON)	278	266	+4.51	-7.15
Great Black-backed Gull (AON)	121	114	+6.14	+8.62
Black-legged Kittiwake (AON)	1,291	1,544	-16.39	-12.19
Guillemot (IND)	29,141	31,790	-8.33	-0.49 ³
Razorbill (IND)	10,080	10,192	-1.10	+16.81 ⁴
Puffin (IND)	42,513	38,896	+9.30	+30

Data on the seabirds' breeding season has been compiled from the Skomer Seabird Report 2023.

Notes:

1. No census carried out in 2019
2. New methodology from 2020 onwards
3. No census carried out in 2020 and 2018
4. No census carried out in 2020 and 2019

Count units used in this table:

AOS – Apparently Occupied Site
AON – Apparently Occupied Nest
AOT – Apparently Occupied Territory
IND – Individual

Skomer Island breeding land-birds population summary 2023

The below data was collected by island staff during the breeding season, mostly through the annual Breeding Bird Survey, mapping territories along set transects across all parts of the island at least four times between early-April and mid-June. In addition, many breeding territories are noted during daily patrols.

A total of 31 species of 'land-bird' bred on Skomer this year.

Species	2023	2022	5-yr % change
Canada Goose	11	11	-22.5%
Shelduck	2	2	-9.1%
Gadwall	1	0	100%
Mallard	1	5	-77.3%
Shoveler	3	2	25%
Common Pheasant	8	12	-7%
Common Buzzard	5	4	13.6%
Moorhen	6	3	15.4%
Oystercatcher	59	73	3.1%
Eurasian Curlew	3	4	7.1%
Wood Pigeon	5	3	47.1%
Short-eared Owl	3	1	-16.7%
Peregrine	4	2	66.7%
Red-billed Chough	7	6	34.6%
Magpie	3	3	-34.8%
Jackdaw	64	30	131.9%
Carrion Crow	23	22	88.5%
Raven	4	4	-24.5%
Skylark	0	1	-100%
Barn Swallow	9	7	50%
House Martin	1	1	150%
Common Whitethroat	7	11	-46.2%
Sedge Warbler	25	28	-30.9%
Wren	81	94	3.1%
Blackbird	9	13	18.4%
European Stonechat	4	5	17.6%
Northern Wheatear	27	31	10.7%
Dunnock	10	11	-19.4%
Pied Wagtail	4	3	66.7%
Meadow Pipit	95	133	-13.2%
Rock Pipit	20	19	-9.9%
Linnet	5	1	31.6%
European Goldfinch	0	1	-100%
Reed Bunting	0	2	-100%

Systematic list of birds

Status categories

Vagrant – one to ten records

Rare – 11 to 40 records

Scarce – one to five records per year

Uncommon – six to 50 records per year

Fairly common – 51 to 250 records per year

Common – 251 to 1000 records per year

Abundant – 1001 to 2500 records per year

Very abundant – more than 2500 records per year

Note: Statuses are given in an island context, not a national context.

Breeding categories

Very rare breeder – one to ten breeding records

Rare breeder – 11 to 40 breeding records

Scarce breeder – one to five breeding records per year

Uncommon breeder – six to 50 breeding records per year

Fairly common breeder – 51 to 250 breeding records per year

Common breeder – 251 to 1000 breeding records per year

Abundant breeder – 1001 to 2500 breeding records per year

Very abundant breeder – more than 2500 breeding records per year

Count units and terminology used in this report

AOS – Apparently Occupied Site

AON – Apparently Occupied Nest

AOT – Apparently Occupied Territory

IND – Individual

BBRC – British Birds Rarities Committee

WRP – Welsh Records Panel

NRW – Natural Resources Wales

List of contributors mentioned within the report

Name	Initials	Name	Initials	Name	Initials
Ceris Aston	CA	David Astins	DA	Leighton Newman	LN
Mike Wallen	MW	Ted Wallen	TW		

Notes

The species order for this systematic list is taken from 'The British List' published by the BOU in Jan 2013.

Cover photo – Shelduck – L. Newman

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Rare. 15 previous records, involving 16 birds. Last recorded 2022

The only record of the year was of four on North Pond on 12th May with two remaining the following day.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Uncommon breeder. First bred 1993

The first record of the year was of eight birds on 2nd March. Sightings were almost daily for the rest of the season albeit with some gaps in records in August, October and early November.

A total of 11 pairs nested on the island in 2023, this being the same as 2022 and 2021. The five-year trend for this species is one of decline (-22.5%), having decreased from a five-year average of 14.2 pairs. The first eggs were found on 2nd April and the first goslings on 5th May. Four chicks were thought to have fledged.

Month	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Max count	24	23	37	27	19	32	96	78	7

Table 1 Monthly maxima of Canada Goose 2023.

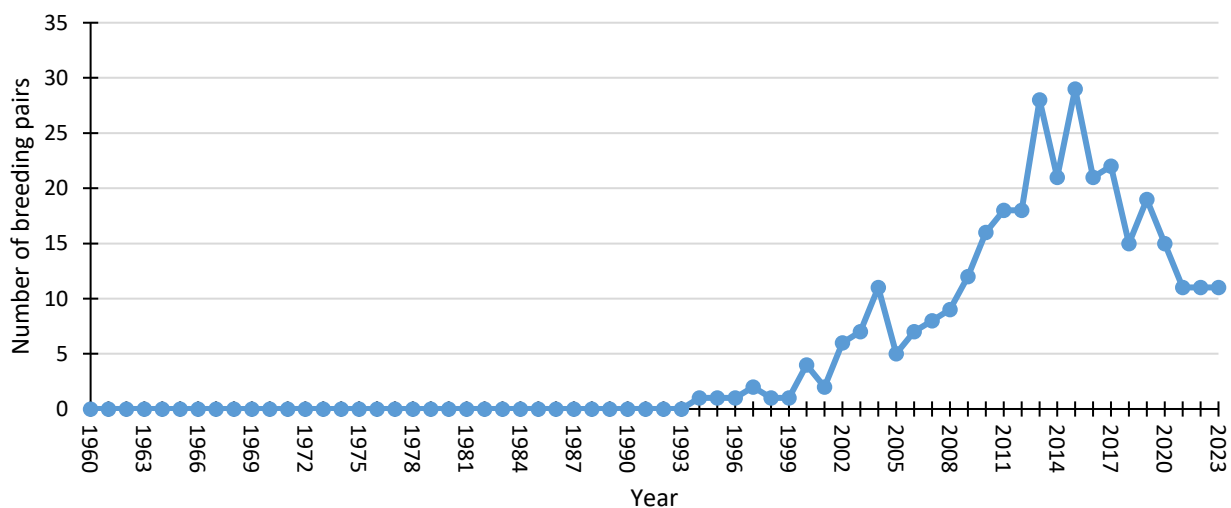


Figure 1 Numbers of breeding Canada Geese

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce breeder (maximum three pairs). First bred 1969. Scarce migrant

The first record of 2023 was of two birds together on North Pond on 19th March. There were two further records in March, both concerning a pair of birds. Sightings became more regular from mid-April through until the end of the breeding season in mid to late-June. During this time, numbers of Shelduck on the island peaked at nine individuals on 15th May.

Two pairs nested on the island this year. The first chicks of the year (nine) were seen on North Pond on 22nd May. This brood then moved to Green Pond where there were seven on the 23rd and 24th and three on the 25th, after which no further chicks were seen.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*
Uncommon migrant

Wigeon were first recorded on 3rd March with six at Moorey Mere. Six were also present the next day with no further sightings until three on 11th March. These were the sole spring records followed in autumn by two birds on North Pond on 18th October.



Wigeon, Moorey Mere – L.Newman

Gadwall *Anas strepera*
Rare and sporadic breeder (maximum two pairs). Last confirmed breeding 2004

Three on North Pond on 25th April were the first to be seen on Skomer since 2014. This was down to two the following day but amazingly they stayed on to attempt to breed through May. Sightings throughout May mainly consisted of a male but occasional records of the female pointed to her incubating near North Pond. There were no chicks seen and the final record of the year was on 1st June. This is the first breeding record since 2004.



Pair of Gadwall, North Pond – L.Newman

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Rare and sporadic breeder (maximum two pairs). First bred 1968. Fairly common, sometimes common migrant

The first record of the year was 18 on Moorey Mere on 3rd March. Sightings through March and April remained sporadic with a couple of days' worth of sightings followed by up to four days with no records. Numbers during this period peaked at 29 on the 11th of March. There were no records in May or July with June records concerning two on North Pond on the 18th, 25th, 26th, 27th and one on the 29th. Autumn records started on 15th August with three seen on Green Pond. Records were regular throughout the rest of autumn with numbers peaking in late October and early November: 66 on 28th October and 89 on the 2nd of November. Ten birds on North Pond on the 16th of November, the day before leaving Skomer, became the final sightings of the year.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Uncommon breeder (maximum 18 pairs 1978 and 2000). Fairly common migrant

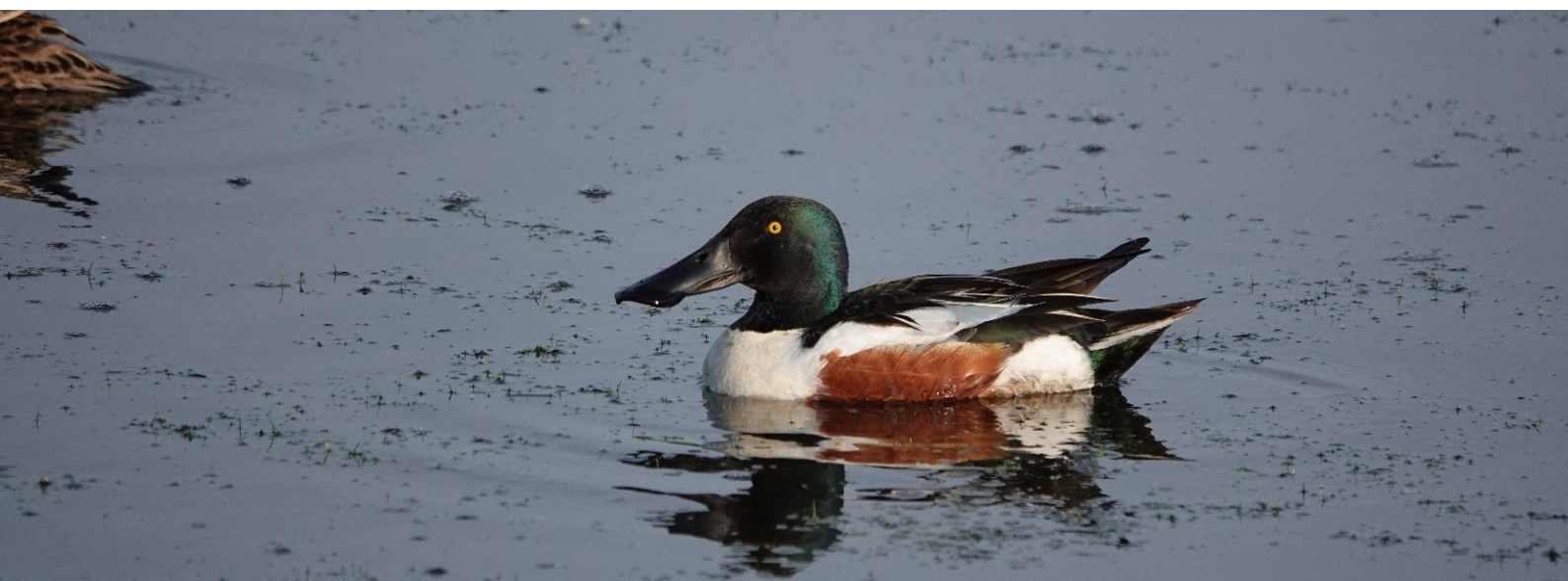
There was only one confirmed breeding record in 2023 with a brood of seven seen on North Pond on 2nd and 3rd May.

The first record of the year was of a single bird on North Pond on 3rd March. Sightings were frequent throughout the spring with numbers peaking at 12 on 12th May. Sightings became less regular in June and even more sporadic in July before being absent in August. Autumn records started on 2nd September with two on North Pond. Further September sightings were limited to two on 7th and 8th and a single bird on the 26th of the month. Records in October and November were more frequent with numbers peaking at 44 on 16th October and 26 on 1st November. The final record of the year concerned three birds on North Pond on 16th November.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Scarce breeder (maximum six pairs). Uncommon migrant

Three pairs are thought to have bred this year. The first sign of the breeding season getting underway was on 10th April where two drakes were seen fighting and displaying on North Pond. The first brood of ducklings were seen on 14th May with five on North Pond. What is likely to have been the same brood was seen again on 21st May, now consisting of two chicks. A new brood the following day, consisting of eight ducklings, was seen on North Pond. The first chicks to be seen on Moorey Mere were a brood of four ducklings seen on 25th and 26th May.



Male Shoveler, Moorey Mere – L. Newman

The first Shoveler record of the year came in the form of two on North Pond on 28th March. This increased to four the following day but returned to two for the remaining days of the month. Records were almost daily through April, May, and early June, ending on 14th June. During this time there was a peak count of ten on the 7th and 23rd April. There were no records in July or August with only one record in September (one bird on the 7th). October and November proved to be more fruitful with birds seen on and off through these months, peaking at eight birds on North Pond on 9th October. The final record of the year was of two birds on North Pond on 11th November.



Female Shoveler, Moorey Mere – L.Newman

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*
Common migrant

There were no spring records with the first birds of the year, seven off North Haven, being seen on 2nd August. There was one further record in August concerning five birds on the 15th. September contained the bulk of the records for the year with records on nine days. 54 on the 9th and 53 on the 17th were the high counts of the month. October had four records: 20 on the 8th, 20 on the 12th, 15 on the 17th and 20 again on the 18th. These were the final records of the year.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*
Uncommon breeding resident. Released for shooting during 19th century with population surviving today

Present throughout the season with eight pairs breeding. The first chicks of the year (three) were seen at Bull Hole on 24th June. Further chicks were seen on 5th, 9th, 10th, 12th, and 29th July.

Pheasants were seen daily throughout the season. Peak counts from the spring consisted of 13 birds on 5th March and 5th May. Peak counts from the autumn months consisted of 15 on 27th July, 16 on 20th and 25th August, 31 on 17th September and 12 on 27th October and 12th November.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*
Common breeder. First confirmed breeding 1960

The whole island population was 472 AOS, 66 fewer than 2022. Productivity in 2023 was 0.22 – a decrease on 2022 (0.39) and the lowest value on record. The first egg was seen on 21st May and the first chick on 29th June.

Present from the start of the season with 16 birds noted in North Haven on 2nd March on the team’s arrival. Numbers reduced in September as birds headed to sea to complete their post-breeding moults. Two birds on 20th September were the final record of the month and the last to be seen until 22nd October when a bird was seen passing offshore. There were three back on the cliffs in North Haven on 31st October followed by birds investigating the empty cliffs on eight further days in November.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*
Very abundant breeder, largest colony in the world

Manx Shearwaters were present for nearly the entire season, first being recorded on 10th March. Birds were then recorded more or less daily until numbers started dropping off in October and records became more sporadic. Single birds were recorded on three days in November, with the final record on 16th November.

Within the standard annual census plots, the number of responses (1,080) was 167 fewer than 2022 (1,247) and the fewest responses since 2010. The first egg was found on 26th April by the Oxford Navigation Group.

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*
Rare visitor, most recently 2020

One seen from Skomer Head (LN) on 1st August was the first record of this southern species since 2020.

European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*
Fairly common breeder. Full census conducted 2016

Birds were caught in July and August as part of an ongoing research project at Tom’s House. Elsewhere, records mainly concern sightings at breeding colonies; these consist of five at North Haven on 23rd May, 21 at Tom’s House on 18th July and one again at Tom’s House on 13th August. Two birds were seen at sea, one off North Haven on 19th August and one off the Garland Stone on 21st September.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*
Very abundant visitor. Abundant breeder on nearby Grassholm

Recorded most days through the season. Although nearby Grassholm supports the third largest colony in the world, numbers of Gannets seen around Skomer were reduced this year after the impacts of Avian Influenza (HPAI) in 2022. Monthly maxima are reported below in Table 2. A clear reduction in numbers was apparent through late October and November, presumably reflecting the departure of the Grassholm population.

Month	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Max count	20	36	33	35	59	60	32	20	3

Table 2 Monthly maxima of Northern Gannet 2023.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Uncommon breeder. Fairly common migrant

No Cormorants bred on Skomer in 2023. The first birds of the year were seen on 10th March with three off the Wick. From then onwards records consisted of between one and four birds seen irregularly through the season. There was a clear movement of birds seen in mid-August with 25 on 15th and 19 on 16th.

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*
Uncommon breeder, with majority breeding on nearby Middleholm

In the 1960s/70s the shag colony on Skomer was concentrated on Shag Hole Bay, on the north side of the Neck. Over a period of years these moved to Middleholm and by the early nineties, shags had more or less ceased to breed on the main part of Skomer. A few pairs, however, have continued to breed on the north coast of Skomer, at the base of Double Cliff, and on the Garland Stone. In 2023 there were five nests on Skomer, three at Double Cliff, one on the Garland Stone and one on the Mew Stone. Of the easily observable nests, the Garland Stone nest fledged three chicks on 8th July and the Double Cliff nests fledged five chicks between them.

Present throughout the season, between one and eight birds were recorded most days with the final bird of the season seen on the 17th of November. There were no large counts of shags seen off Skomer in 2023 with eight birds the maximum seen in any one day.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
Vagrant, one previous record. Green Pond April 1996

What is just the second island record was found on North Pond on 7th August (CA).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
Scarce visitor although becoming uncommon. First recorded 1996. Last recorded 2022

Records started in July with two birds over the Farm on the 18th. In August there was one on the 1st, 3rd, and 5th with two on the 6th. There were four further singles seen on the 11th, 14th, 17th, and 18th August with the final record of the year seen on 3rd September.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
Fairly common migrant

There were no spring records in 2023 with the first record of the year coming on 20th July with one seen from the Farm. One at Tom's House on 25th July was the only other record of the month. There were four records in August, three single records on 4th, 9th and 22nd and two birds on the 16th. September saw the highest day count of the year with eight on the 2nd followed by one on 4th, two on 7th, one on 13th, 15th, and 16th, three on 17th and then one on 20th, 21st, 23rd and 30th. There were three singles in October, all concerning single birds with the final record of the year coming on the 24th of October.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Vagrant. One previous record involving one bird in 2021

On 13th May, 17 Glossy Ibis were seen heading north along the west coast of Skomer by Mike and Ted Wallen. This is just the second record for Skomer and comes just two years after the first. It perhaps comes as no surprise after the well documented droughts in southern Spain that this species was recorded this year, however, a flock this size would have been impossible to imagine.



Glossy Ibis flock – M.Wallen

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Scarce visitor

Two on North Pond on 16th August were the sole records of the year.



Little Grebe, North Pond – L.Newman

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Previously a scarce migrant now fairly common. First record 1995, annual since 2010

The first record of the year came on 10th March with one seen over the Farm. This was followed by one further March record on the 26th of another single bird, this time at the Wick. Spring records continued sporadically until 19th June having peaked at three birds on 12th May. Autumn records started on 2nd September with two birds at the Wick. Birds were then seen four more times in September, 13 times in October and eight times in November with the highest count of the year, five birds, on 11th November and the final record of the year, two birds, on 16th November.



Red Kite, Captain Kites – L.Newman

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce migrant

There were no spring records with the first record of the year, seen from the Farm, on the 25th of July. There were no more records until 13th August when a string of records, concerning between one and three individuals, continued through almost unabated until the 7th of October. Of these records, there was one adult male, one adult female and at least two juveniles so these records consisted of at least four birds.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Uncommon migrant

First seen on 3rd March with a ring-tail at Bull Hole, sightings of single birds continued until the 22nd when two ring-tails were seen in North Valley. Records then returned to single birds through until the 15th April, with the only other sighting before the autumn being of two birds on 13th May. Autumn sightings started in September with a single bird seen on 1st, 2nd and 4th, then a single bird also seen on 20th September. Records then became more regular from mid-October onwards with two ring-tails frequently seen together and a male seen on 15th and 16th of October.



Hen Harrier, North Pond – L.Newman

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Uncommon migrant, though can be fairly common in some years

First seen on 7th March in North Haven, there were four further sightings of individuals spread through March. April saw ten records peaking at two birds on the 3rd and 23rd of the month. There were no further records until a single bird seen at the Wick on 3rd August. August saw four further records, again peaking at two individuals on 14th. Sightings were then more regular in September and October with birds seen regularly through both months, peaking at three on 4th and 11th September. November saw just two records: a single bird on the 4th and a single bird on the 7th which was the final record of the year.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Scarce breeder, though uncommon in some years (maximum eight pairs 1954). Fairly common migrant, particularly in the autumn

Five pairs nested on Skomer in 2023. Pairs nested at Amy's Reach, Robert's Wick, South Plateau, the Table and Wick Basin. The first signs of the breeding season getting underway was a pair mating on the Table on 8th April. The first bird on a nest was seen on 23rd April at Amy's Reach. The first chick was seen on 7th June at the Table

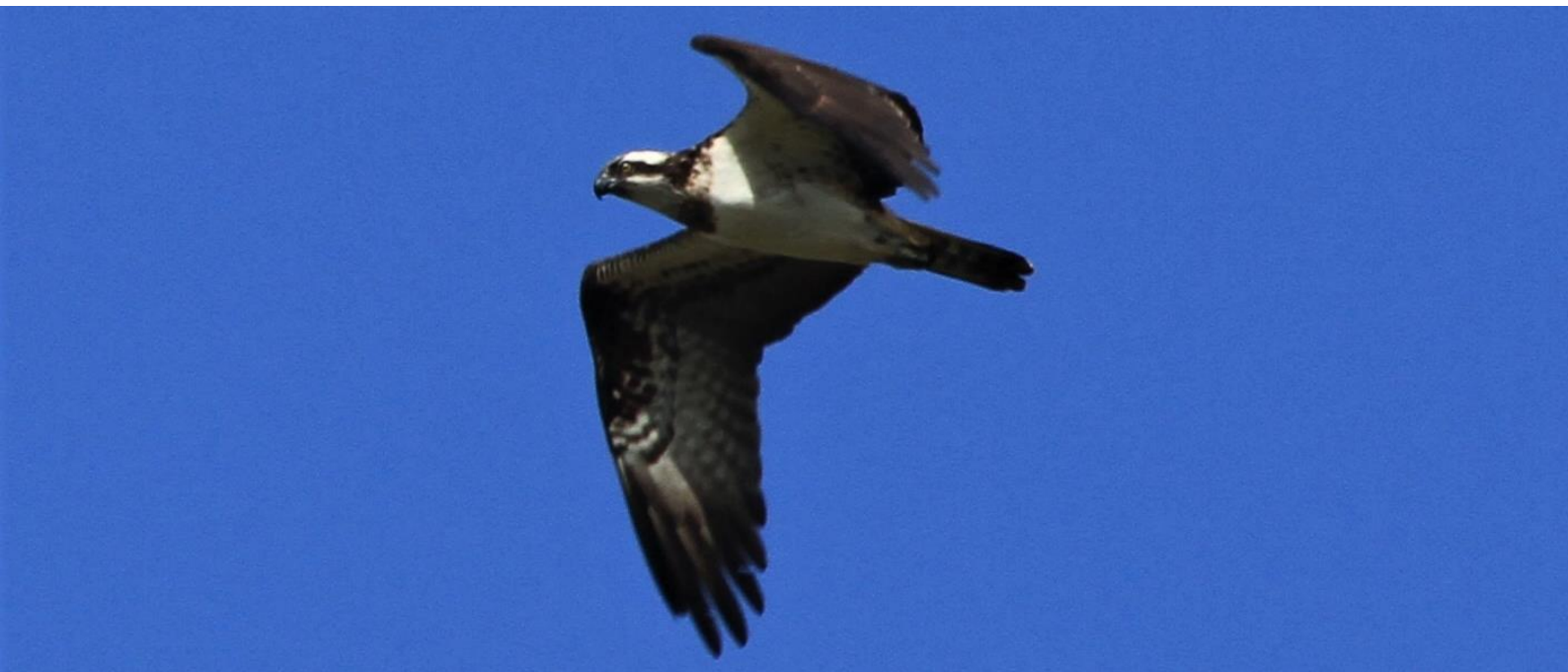
Noted from the 3rd of March, birds were recorded almost throughout the season. Counts of between one and six were common through the season with peak counts for the year coming in August and September with 13 on 16th August and 15th September. The final record of the year came on 17th November with two seen.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
Rare migrant, though becoming scarce

Four records in 2023. The first was of a bird over Green Pond on 3rd May, followed by a single bird west of the Farm on the 11th of May. There was a single bird off Skomer Head on 3rd June and a single bird at the Wick on 21st October.



Osprey, The Wick – L.Newman



Osprey – M.Wallen

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Very rare breeding species, one record 2013. Fairly common migrant

First noted on 3rd March when two were heard, one at Moorey Mere and the other at North Haven. In what proved to be a quiet spring, there were only four other records which included singles on 11th March, 14th and 17th April, 15th May, bringing the spring records to a close.

Autumn records started on 7th September with two birds, one in North Valley Willows and one at the Farm. Birds were then recorded on most days through until the end of the season peaking at seven birds on 21st September.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Uncommon breeder, though scarce in some years

Present throughout the season, the first record of the year was on 3rd March and the last on 16th November. Autumn counts were the greatest, in particular August which had 484 records of Moorhen. The highest count of the year, 40, came on 20th August and was flanked by counts of 38 on the 16th and 36 on the 22nd.

Six pairs of Moorhen nested in 2023. The first nest-building birds were noted at Moorey Mere on 16th April followed by a pair seen mating, also at Moorey Mere, on the 19th of April. The first chicks were a brood heard at North Valley Crossing on 28th April which was confirmed to be a brood of seven on 30th April.



Moorhen, North Pond – L.Newman

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Very rare breeder. Three previous breeding records, between 1996 and 2000. Scarce migrant

After a blank year in 2022, Coot had a bumper year on Skomer with birds present on North Pond through August into early September. An individual first seen on 3rd August remained on North Pond until the 18th when it was joined by a second bird for four days. After the departure of the second bird the single Coot remained until 1st September. There was then a gap in sightings until two were seen on 9th September followed by another gap in sightings until a single bird was back on North Pond, this time only for a day, on 21st September.



Coot, North Pond – L.Newman

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostrrelagus*
 Fairly common breeder

Present throughout the season, with 59 breeding pairs mapped. This is down on the 73 pairs of 2022. The first chicks of the season were seen on 24th May.

Spring counts were much reduced compared to 2022 (maximum of 174) having only peaked at 76 birds in March and 60 in April. As is usual, birds had started making the journey up onto the island plateau by late March and birds were on breeding territory in April. The largest count of the autumn was 61 birds on 31st October.

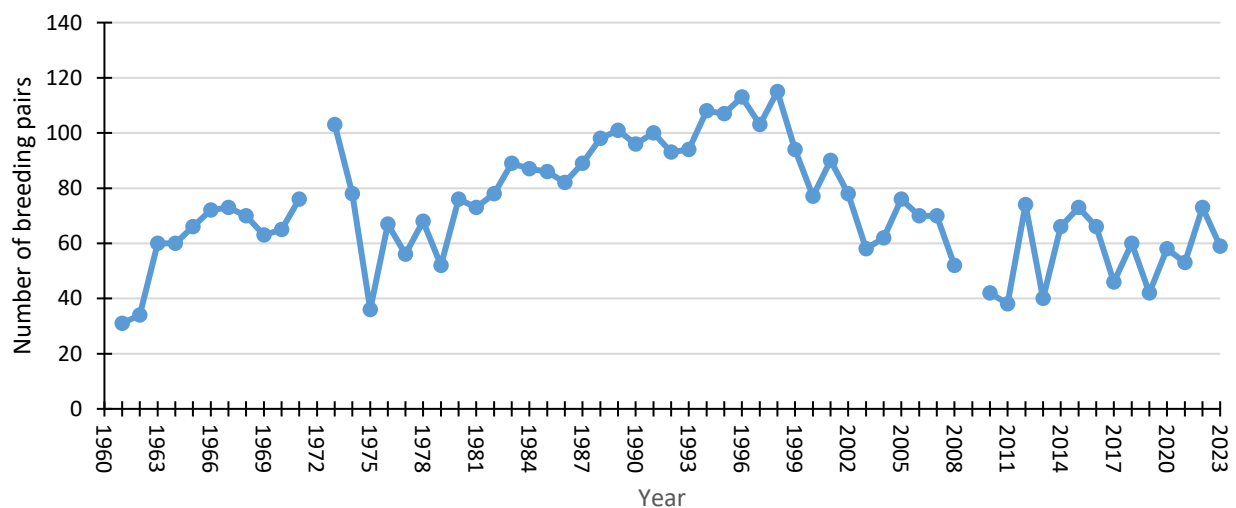


Figure 2 Breeding pairs of Oystercatchers



Oystercatcher, Moorey Mere – L.Newman

European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*
Uncommon migrant

Records were scattered throughout the year with the first sighting coming on 2nd April with 31 birds at the Wick. The next record was of a single bird at North Pond on 11th May followed by a single on 16th August and two on 7th and 8th September. Singles on 15th and 29th September rounded out the records for the year.



Golden Plover – T.Wallen

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
Uncommon migrant. Bred annually on the island until 2000

Two records in 2023 consisted of a single bird at North Pond on 16th May and a single bird over the Farm on 12th July.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*
Uncommon migrant, though scarce in some years

Two spring records consisted of 13 birds seen on a sea watch from Skomer Head on 15th May followed by a single bird on 27th May. Autumn saw a single bird on 14th August, two birds on 7th and 8th September and singles on 11th, 13th, and 15th September.

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Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
Common spring and autumn migrant. Rare in winter

The first record of the year was a bird at the Farm on 15th April. During the rest of April and May there were sightings of between one and six birds with a peak count of ten on the 6th and 7th May. There was a single June record of one bird on the 11th, and no July records. August records started on the 9th with a single bird at Pigstone Bay. There were then between one and six birds seen regularly until the 14th September which was the final record of the year. The high count of the year was 11 birds on 6th September.

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Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*
Scarce breeder. Common migrant

Birds were present throughout the season with three pairs nesting on Skomer. The first displaying bird was seen on 9th April with three birds seen also mobbing nearby birds. The first chicks (two) were seen on 20th May in the fields east of the Farm. Seen sporadically through May and June, a single chick was seen again on the 7th and 11th July with the chick seen to have fledged on 19th July. Other sightings of possible chicks include an agitated pair at Bull Hole on 28th May which suggested chicks nearby.

Birds in the spring and autumn are bolstered by migrating birds. The following counts are the peak from each month:

Month	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Max count	18	12	10	6	11	16	18	20	16

Table 3 Maximum daily counts of Eurasian Curlew through each month.





Adult Curlew and chick, Shearing Hays – L.Newman

On 26th September we noted a colour-ringed Curlew on North Pond which was recorded up until 17th October. Its details are as follows:

“LC is a very exciting sighting. It's the first curlew from the 2023 release cohort that has been seen away from the Wash. It was released at Sandringham on 17/08/2023. Great to have Skomer as the first sighting!”



Colour-ringed Curlew at North Pond – L.Newman

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
Scarce migrant

The first record of the year was a flock of five birds which stayed on Mooney Mere for two days from the 16th to the 17th of April. There were further flocks seen in May with two on the 4th, eight on 7th, two on 10th and one on 12th. The only other record of the year was of a single bird on North Pond on 14th and 16th August.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*
Scarce migrant

There were two records in May, the first concerning four birds on the 3rd followed two days later by two birds on the 5th. The only other record of the year was of three birds flying over North Valley on 9th October.

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Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
Common migrant

Spring records were sporadic, with the first record on the 3rd of March (four birds) and only four other days with records in March. April saw two days with records, with the high count of the spring being eight birds on the 7th. The last record of spring was two birds off Skomer Head on 15th May.

Autumn records began on 16th August with one on North Haven beach. Records were much more regular through September, October, and November with the high count of the year coming on 5th October with 20 birds in North Haven. The final record of the year came on 15th November.

Knot *Calidris canutus*
Rare migrant

A productive autumn by Skomer's standards. The first autumn record was on the 19th of August with one bird on North Pond followed by two on North Pond on 6th September and two seen from Skomer Head on the 8th. The final record of the year was of a single bird at Wick Stream on 21st September.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*
Vagrant. Eight previous records, most recently September 2018

Five seen from a Skomer Head sea watch on 15th May (MW, TW) are just the eighth record for Skomer and the first since 2018.

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Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
Uncommon migrant

First noted on 15th May with five seen from Skomer Head and two at Moorey Mere. Further records in May consisted of singles on 19th, 20th and 27th and two on 23rd, 28th and 31st. There were four June records which included two on Moorey Mere on the 1st, ten on the Neck on the 5th and singles on North Pond on 6th and 8th June. The only other records of the year came in a run in September when one on North Pond on the 4th became three by the 6th which dropped to two on the 7th until their departure on the 13th.

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Dunlin, Moorey Mere – L.Newman

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Uncommon spring and autumn visitor. Scarce in some years

Two records this autumn both of which were at their usual roost site on the Neck. Four were seen on the 16th of October and eight were seen on the 24th of October.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Vagrant. Ten previous records, involving 13 birds. Most recent record 2018

One seen sitting on the sea off North Haven on 27th September (LN) is the 11th record for the island.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Uncommon migrant

The first record of the year was a single bird at South Stream on the 9th of April. Further spring records consisted of a single in North Haven on 20th and 22nd April and a single on North Pond on 28th May. Autumn records started on 20th July with a single in North Haven which was still present the following day. The rest of the autumn records were of single birds apart from three seen on the 8th of September. The final record of the year was a single bird on the 10th of September.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Scarce migrant

The one and only spring record was of a single bird over North Valley on 19th April. Autumn records were restricted to just four individual sightings on 17th and 18th August and 6th and 8th September.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*
Scarce migrant

The first record of the year came on 6th August with a single bird over North Haven. The only other record was of a single bird over the Farm on 11th November.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*
Scarce migrant, though uncommon in some years

There was a single spring record of one bird over North Haven on 15th April. During autumn there was a single bird on 5th July and 25th August and two birds on North Pond on 30th August. The year's records were rounded out by a single bird in seen from Skomer Head on 10th and a single bird over South Haven on 11th September.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*
Uncommon spring and autumn migrant, scarce in some years

The first record of the year, a single bird in North Valley Willows on 7th March was the only spring record. Autumn contained just three records with single birds seen on 22nd October and 2nd and 16th November.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*
Common migrant

The first record of the year was on 2nd March. Birds were recorded regularly until mid-March when sightings became more sporadic. One west of the Farm on the 19th of April was the final record of the spring. Five birds on 10th August were the first of the autumn followed by two on 29th and 30th August. September and October had more regular sightings of Snipe and counts peaked at six on the 9th of October. The last sighting of the year was on 16th November.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*
Scarce migrant, though uncommon in some years. Sighting frequency heavily affected by observer coverage and effort

Two birds seen from North Haven on 3rd August were the only records of the year.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*
Scarce migrant

A single bird seen from the Garland Stone on 26th September is the first to have been seen since 2021.

Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*
Very abundant breeder

The first bird of the year was seen on 3rd March in South Haven, followed by 22 seen on the 4th. This is the earliest ever record on Skomer, beating the previous earliest record (6th March, 2019, 1994, 1993) by three days. A total of 42,513 individual Puffins were counted in April. This represents an increase of 9.30% on 2022 (38,896). The last bird of the breeding season was seen on 16th August with one further sighting on 28th September, a distant passing bird, representing the final record of the year.



Atlantic Puffins, Garland Stone – L.Newman

Razorbill *Alca torda*
Very abundant breeder

First seen on 3rd March with 2,750 counted around the island. An individual in North Haven on 17th November was the final record of the year. 10,080 individuals were counted in 2023; this represents a decrease of 1.1% compared to 2022. Productivity was 0.44 fledglings per active and regular nest site which is a decrease on 2022 (0.47) and below the previous five-year average of 0.53.



Razorbill, North Haven – L.Newman

Guillemot *Uria aalge*
Very abundant breeder

Birds were first seen on 3rd March with 100 seen around the island. Attendance at the cliffs was sporadic through March and April with birds finally settling towards the end of April. Birds were then present through until 20th July when sightings dropped in number and regularity. The last records of the year were of two individuals on 12th November. In contrast to previous years, no big attendances at breeding colonies through late-October or November were noted.

29,141 individuals were counted in 2023, which is an 8.33% decrease on 2022. Productivity was 0.70 which is a decrease of 0.03 when compared to 2022 and below the five-year average productivity of 0.72.



Guillemots, The Amos – L.Newman



Guillemot chick, The Amos – L.Newman

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Scarce migrant, though uncommon in some years

The first record of the year was of a single bird at the Wick on 22nd June. Autumn sightings were limited to ten birds seen in Jack Sound on 21st September and singles in North Haven on 3rd and 11th October.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Scarce migrant. Possibly under-recorded, with many records of 'Commic' tern in the logs likely to have mostly involved this species

The only record came in the form of one 'Commic' tern (either Common or Arctic) seen in Jack Sound on 21st September.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Abundant breeder

1,291 AON were counted in 2023, which is a decrease on the previous year's 1,544. Productivity was 0.37, a decrease compared to the previous year (0.63), and below the average productivity for the last five years (0.67). No large movements during the autumn were noted.



Kittiwake collecting mud, Wick Stream – L.Newman

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Bred at North Pond between 1965 and 1970, maximum 25 pairs. Abundant migrant, particularly in the autumn

There were no spring records with the first autumn records coming on 6th August with three seen, followed on the 7th by seven seen flying over North Valley. It is very unusual to see Black-headed Gulls flying over the island during the summer and it is thought that these birds came from failed colonies due to Avian Influenza (HPAI). Birds were seen at sea during September, October and November and peaked at 25 on 7th October with the final record of the year coming on 14th November.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Uncommon visitor. This species has undergone a remarkable change in status, being considered a vagrant on the island (less than ten records) as recently as 2007

Just the three records in 2023 with a single bird seen off South Stream on 16th July, two off Skomer Head on 7th October and five off North Haven on 19th October.

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Common Gull *Larus canus*

Uncommon visitor

One on North Pond on 9th March was the first record of the year with the rest of the spring records consisting of singles seen on 6th, 7th and 19th April. Autumn records were limited to a single bird on 25th September and three on 19th October.

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Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Very abundant (but declining) breeder

The whole island population estimate was 5,912 AON which is 11.38% lower than 2022.



Lesser Black-backed Gull, The Wick – L.Newman

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Common (but declining) breeder

This year's whole island count of 278 AON is an increase of 12 AON compared to 2022. Productivity was 1.18 which is the highest since 1997.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

Rare migrant. Fourteen previous records, most recently November 2020

One seen on North Pond on 6th April (DA) was almost certainly the same bird seen commuting through South Haven on 19th April (LN).



Glaucous Gull, South Haven – L.Newman

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Fairly common breeder

121 AON were counted in 2023 which is seven more than 2022. Productivity was 1.6, which is below the five-year average of 1.73.

Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Fairly common visitor

One at the Wick on 27th May was the first record of the year. Birds were recorded in May, June, July, August and September. June was the peak month for sightings with 24 birds noted. The maximum count of the year was four on 22nd July.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Scarce breeder, though uncommon in some years. Common migrant, particularly in late autumn

Present throughout the season with birds first recorded on 3rd March. Five pairs were proven to have bred.

The highest count of the spring was of 27 birds on 9th April. The largest count of the autumn was 2,240 on 11th November.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
Uncommon migrant

First recorded on 8th April with one at the Farm. Birds were then recorded in every month through until September. During this time the peak day count was five birds on 13th May and the peak monthly count was 30 birds also in May.



Collared Dove, The Farm – L.Newman

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*
Scarce migrant, becoming rare. Last recorded 2019

One found in Shearing Hays on 1st June (CA) is the first record of this once annual migrant since 2019.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*
Rare and sporadic breeder. Last confirmed breeding record 1991 (possibly 2002). Scarce migrant

A poor year with just two records; a single bird in North Valley on 19th April and a single bird in Abyssinia on 5th May.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*
Scarce and sporadic breeder. Last breeding record 2007

Two records, one of a single bird on 26th March at the Farm and then a single bird in North Haven on 1st November.

Little Owl *Athene Noctua*
Previously scarce breeder now a rare visitor. Previously, between one and two breeding pairs, maximum six pairs 1985

In a surprising return to the island, Little Owl made an appearance on the year list for the first time since 2018. First seen on 2nd June at the Farm it was seen again at the Farm on the 5th and 7th. There were no sightings in July. August records all related to a bird on End Wall Ridge which was seen regularly through late August into early September before the end of sightings on 11th September. There were then no further sightings until the final sighting of the year on 15th November at the Farm.



Little Owl, End Wall Ridge – L.Newman

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Scarce breeder, though uncommon in some years. Maximum 14 territories 1993. Uncommon migrant

Three pairs bred on Skomer in 2023. Unusually, there were no March sightings with the first bird of the year seen on 2nd April. The first displaying birds were seen on 17th April, west of the Farm. The first chicks to be heard hissing in the bracken were on the 30th of May at North Valley Rise. The first fledglings seen were on 2nd July in North Valley. Chicks were also heard at Bull Hole on 8th July. It is unclear how many chicks fledged.

Birds were seen through autumn, albeit with less regularity until the final sighting on the 15th of November. Peak counts in August, September and October were of four birds.



Short-eared Owl, North Valley – L.Newman

Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Historical breeder (pre-1946). Rare migrant. Fourteen previous records, involving 15 individuals, most recently 2022

One record in 2023 of a tail-less bird flying up through South Stream and over Captain Kites on 10th October.



Nightjar, South Stream – L.Newman

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Common migrant

The first record of the year came on 5th May with one bird over North Valley. Sightings were regular throughout May with a peak count of 15 on 11th. Sightings dropped off in June but picked back up in July with a peak day count of 19 birds on 19th. There were three August records: a single bird on the 7th, five on the 10th and a single bird on the 18th. The final record of the year, and only September record, was a single bird on the 6th.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Rare migrant. Twenty-two previous records, most recently one in 2022

A minimum of two birds but possibly three on Skomer in 2023. The first, a spring bird was seen east of the Farm on 20th and 21st April (LN). The second record of the year came on 6th September at the Mew Stone, found by the visiting Young Birders group, and was seen at Bull Hole the following day. There was then a gap of eight days until the next and final sighting of a bird at the Farm on 15th September.



Hoopoe, Calves Park – L.Newman



Hoopoe – T.Wallen

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Rare migrant. Eleven previous records, most recently September 2022

A single bird in South Haven on 2nd September was the first record of the year. There were then singles on 7th and 8th September before two on 10th followed again by singles on 11th, 17th and 23rd September and 6th October.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Scarce migrant, though uncommon in some years

An exceptional year which started in April with a bird seen at Bull Hole on the 20th. There was then an eleven-day period in September in which ten of those days contained at least one record of Wryneck. The peak count during this time hit an amazing six on the 9th of September with four birds at the Farm and two in North Valley. A full breakdown of the eleven days is as follows:

Date	6 th Sep	7 th Sep	8 th Sep	9 th Sep	10 th Sep	11 th Sep	12 th Sep	13 th Sep	14 th Sep	15 th Sep	16 th Sep
Count	1	4	3	6	2	3	0	1	3	3	1

Table 4 Day counts of Wryneck through mid-September



Wryneck – T.Wallen

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Scarce migrant, previously a rare migrant with only five records up to 2007

The first bird was seen in North Valley on 6th August. All records this year referred to single birds. There were 6 bird days in August, three in September, eight in October and ten in November.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Scarce and sporadic breeder. Last breeding attempt 2013. Uncommon migrant, though fairly common in some years

There were no March records, and spring records were sparse. The first record of the year came on 19th April followed by singles on 20th, 24th and 28th April and 16th, 20th and 21st May which rounded out the spring. Autumn records started on 7th August with a single bird at Pigstone Bay. Records were then regular through until the 16th of November, the last record of the year, with numbers peaking at six birds on 5th September.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*
Uncommon migrant

The first bird of the year was seen on 12th March with a bird at Payne's Ledge. There were two more records in March, both single birds on the 14th and the 24th. April saw eight records, all of single birds and there was a single record of a bird at the Amos in May (18th). The first autumn record came in August with one at the Garland Stone on 7th. There were no further records until four sightings in September. There were three sightings in October and seven in November with the final record of the year coming on 16th November.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*
Scarce breeder. Maximum four pairs 1998 and 2003. Uncommon migrant

Present throughout the season with four territories held. Territories were held at the Garland Stone, Protheroe's Dock, High Cliff and Bull Hole. The first breeding behaviour was seen on 9th April with a food drop and display seen at Garland Stone. The first chicks (two) were seen at Bull Hole on 7th June with a single chick seen at High Cliff on 15th June. The first fledged chick was seen on 26th June, at High Cliff. No chicks were seen at Protheroe's Dock or Garland Stone.

Peak counts were of seven birds on the 14th of September and six birds seen on 18th April and 13th September.

The bird below, seen at the Wick on 8th October and again at the Amos on 11th November, is wearing an orange colour ring. Details have been sent off and we await the story of where this bird has come from!



Colour-ringed Peregrine, The Wick – L.Newman

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*
Scarce breeder. Fairly common visitor from the mainland

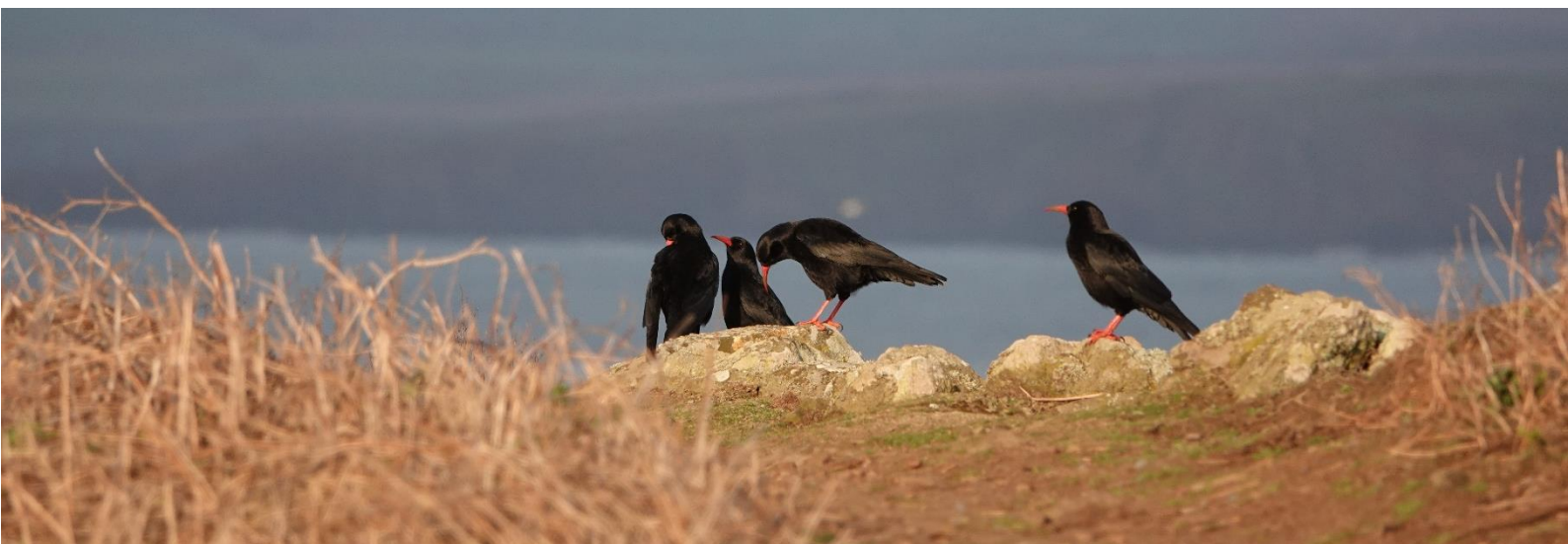
Seven territories were held with pairs attempting to breed at: Amy's Reach (three chicks), the Wick (one chick), Welsh Way (one chick), South Castle (one chick), the Amos (failed), the Lantern (failed) and Payne's Ledge (failed).

The first nest building was seen on 14th March at the Lantern with further nest building seen at the Wick on 25th March. The first mating was seen on 1st April. The first fledged chicks were seen on 20th June with three at North Haven and one at Welsh Way. In total, six chicks fledged.

The highest count of the spring was 33 birds on 6th and 31st May both of which included a flock of 21 birds at North Haven. The highest counts of autumn include 39 on 19th August, 41 on 19th September, and 42 on 29th September.



Chough, The Wick – L.Newman



Chough, Captain Kites – L.Newman

Magpie *Pica pica*
Uncommon breeder

Present throughout the season, with three pairs nesting. This is below average (4.6) for the previous five years. On 19th April, two birds were seen nest building and acting territorially at Moorey Mere. The following day a nest was also noted in North Valley. The only fledglings noted were two seen on 8th June in South Stream. There are no confirmed fledglings from the other nests, however, a few counts above two at Moorey Mere could relate to family groups.

The high count of the year was 18 birds on 5th September.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*
Fairly common breeder, though not censused every year. Fairly common to common migrant

Present throughout the season, with 64 pairs. This is a dramatic increase from 30 pairs in 2022 which possibly relates to under recording of nesting pairs in previous years. A project investigating Jackdaw breeding numbers and success will be introduced in 2024 to investigate this.

Month	Mar	Apr	May	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Max count	147	65	66	35	250	520	100

Table 5 Monthly maxima of Jackdaw.



Jackdaw, North Haven – L.Newman

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*
Uncommon migrant

Two records in 2023. The first was of two birds over North Pond on 19th April and the second was of one bird at North Haven on 22nd October.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*
Uncommon breeder

Present throughout the season, with 23 pairs nesting. This is the highest number of pairs since 1968 when there were 26 pairs. First noted nest building on 25th March at Tom's House and first noted sitting on the nest on 14th April at the Gap in the Wall. The first chicks were seen on 12th May at the Garland Stone.

High counts included 50 on 1st September and 49 on 8th October.

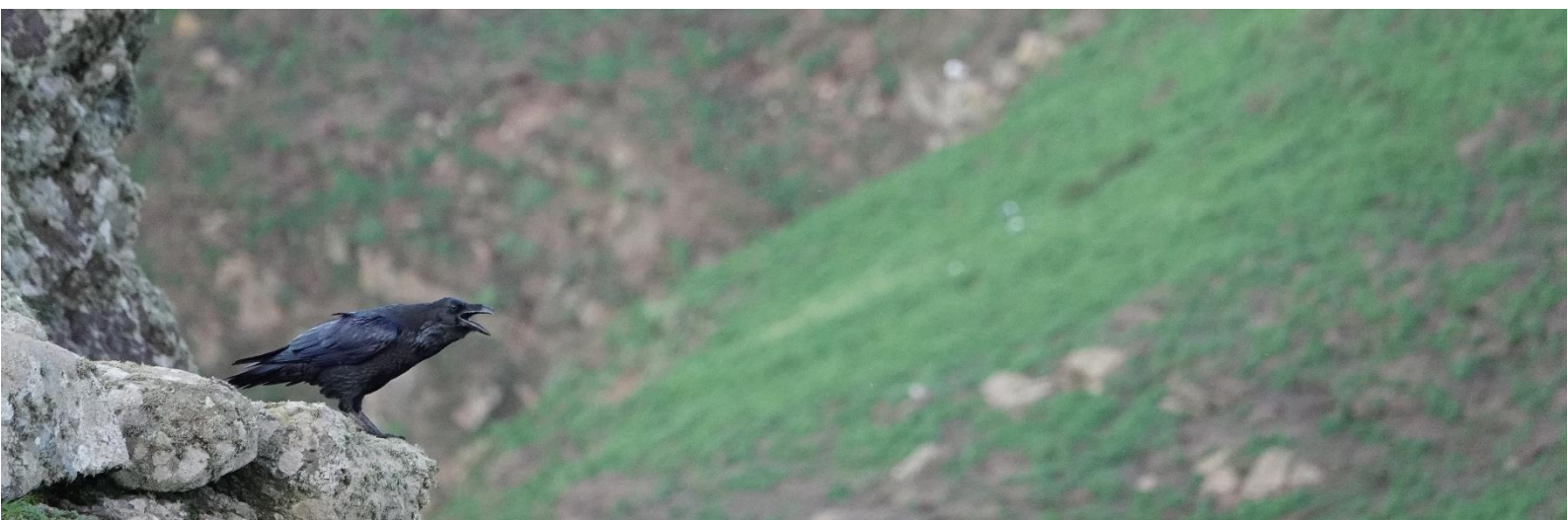
Hooded Crow *Corvus corone*
Rare migrant

One seen in the fields west of the Farm on 7th April was the first record since 2021 followed by a second record on 23rd April at Skomer Head.

Raven *Corvus corax*
Scarce breeder. Fairly common autumn visitor

Four pairs nested on Skomer in 2023. Birds nested at Matthew's Wick, Pigstone Bay, Double Cliff and the Wick. A well-built nest was noted on 3rd March with birds clearly having started to build before the team's arrival on the island. A bird was in attendance at the nest at the Wick on 5th March, but the first bird seen on the nest was on 14th March at Matthew's Wick. Nesting material was seen being carried throughout March to all nest sites and the first confirmed food carry was seen on 7th April. Four chicks were seen in the Matthew's Wick nest on 14th April. Young were out of the nest by early May with a sighting of four individuals at Pigstone Bay on 28th April possibly relating to fledged chicks. The Wick and Pigstone Bay fledged two chicks apiece and Double Cliff and Matthew's Wick fledged three chicks each.

Peak counts for the year were much reduced on previous years. The peak for spring was 12 birds on 7th April and 26th May. There was, as usual, an arrival of birds onto the island in the autumn but numbers were much reduced. The peak counts from the autumn are as follows: 23 on 3rd and 23rd August, 28 on 30th August and 19 on 17th September. Numbers had returned to the breeding population by mid-October, with the high count from then until the end of the year being eight birds.



Raven, Captain Kites – L.Newman

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*
Fairly common migrant

The first record of the year was on 18th March with four seen. This was followed by six more sightings of between one and two birds until 31st March. April saw records on seven days, peaking at three individuals and finishing on 18th April. There were then no more records until a single bird on 21st August. Records were then regular until the final record of the year on 16th November. During this period, the peak counts on the island were 16 on 15th October and 34 on 22nd October.



Goldcrest, North Valley – L. Newman

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce autumn migrant, though uncommon in some years (at least 65 previous records). Rare spring migrant

Two records this year, one in spring on 27th March and one in autumn on 23rd October, both in the mighty Ivy at North Haven.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Fairly common autumn migrant

No spring records but autumn more than made up for the lack of records in spring. The first record of the year was of a single bird at the Farm on 30th September. October saw records on most days, peaking at nine individuals on the 15th. Records continued into November with the final record of the year being a single bird seen at the Farm on the 16th.



Blue Tit, The Farm – L.Newman

Great Tit *Parus major*

Uncommon migrant. Scarce in some years, and occasionally absent

No birds were seen in the spring but, again, autumn more than made up for the lack of spring records. The first bird of the year was a single bird seen on 25th September. This was followed by birds recorded on 15 days in October, peaking at five birds on the 18th. November saw records on four days peaking at two on the 16th which was the final record of the year.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Bred annually until 2018. Previously an uncommon breeder. Common autumn migrant

No pairs bred in 2023. The only singing birds were noted on 10th March at the Farm and at North Haven and east of the Farm on 31st May and 1st June. The final spring record came on 3rd July, having not been recorded since 18th June. The first birds of autumn weren't seen until 8th September when there were three at Skomer Head. There were four more days with Skylarks recorded in September peaking at 9 on 23rd September. Movements of birds were recorded regularly through October and November with high counts in the table below.

Date	9 th Oct	10 th Oct	15 th Oct	22 nd Oct	25 th Oct	31 st Oct	11 th Nov
Max count	156	181	348	134	205	263	153

Table 6 Peak counts of Skylark. Highest count of the year in bold.



Skylark, Skomer Head – L.Newman

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*
Common migrant

Two birds on 18th March were the first record of the year followed by three more records in March. April records were more regular, peaking at 24 on the 7th. May saw three records with the final birds of spring seen on 21st May. Autumn birds started to pass through on 17th August with two over North Valley. There were three more records in August with four on 26th the peak count and final record of the month. September saw records on a handful of days with the peak count of the year of 41 birds on the 7th, and the final record of the year of four birds on the 29th.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
Uncommon breeder. Very abundant migrant

Nine pairs bred in 2023, with eight pairs nesting at the Farm and one in Moorey Mere hide. The first prospecting birds were noted on 29th April and the first nesting material was noted on 21st May. The first eggs were noted in Moorey Mere on 5th June, the first chicks on 17th June, and the first fledged chicks noted on 30th June.

First recorded on 26th March. Sightings were then near daily until late October. Peak spring counts were 150 on 11th May and 95 on 17th April.

The first movement of autumn was noted on 15th August with 35 birds at the Farm. The high counts of autumn are detailed below.

Date	11 th May	7 th Sept	10 th Sept	13 th Sept	21 st Sept	1 st Oct
Max count	150	300	130	500	300	531

Table 7 Peak counts of Barn Swallow. High count of the year in bold.



Swallow with nesting material, Moorey Mere – L.Newman

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Bred during the late 1960s/early 1970s, and again in 2021. Common migrant

The first bird of the spring was seen on 26th March, with the next not being spotted until 7th April. Sightings were then frequent throughout the rest of April with a maximum count of 20 on the 17th. The maximum count in May consisted of 23 on the 23rd. The first birds of the autumn were noted on 15th August with five birds seen, one at the Farm and four at North Haven. High counts of the autumn were 61 on 7th September. The final bird of autumn was recorded on 3rd October at North Haven.

The first pair prospecting around the Farm was on 2nd May with the pair using a nest box regularly from the 10th May onwards. The first chick was noted in the nest on 11th July with three chicks fledging on the 24th of July.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Scarce migrant, though not recorded annually

In the first record since 2019, Long-tailed Tits made an appearance on the Skomer list in 2023. Ten birds, first seen at Matthew's Wick on 15th October, had reduced to six at North Valley Crossing the following day. The final record of the year was on 11th November. Throughout this time period, birds would go missing for several days, increase and decrease in flock size and be seen all over the island so it's unclear how many individuals this autumn contained. The peak count from the autumn was 15 birds on 4th November.



Long-tailed Tit, North Valley – L.Newman



Long-tailed Tits, South Haven (The intrepid five cross South Haven) – L.Newman

Yellow Browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*
Scarce autumn migrant. Most recently 2022

A single record of a single bird at the Farm on 22nd October.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*
Very rare and sporadic breeder, noted 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2021. Abundant migrant

First recorded on 18th March, with two birds present. Birds were frequently recorded throughout the rest of the month, with high counts of 18 on 26th and 15 on 28th March. Birds were recorded on most days in April with a high count of 22 on 3rd being the highest count of the year. Birds were recorded regularly through May and June and were heard singing around Green Pond. The last bird of the spring was recorded on 17th June in North Valley.

Autumn migration started on 5th September with one bird seen at the Farm. Birds were then recorded frequently throughout September, October and into November. The last record was of a single bird at North Haven on 15th November. The high count of the autumn was 8 on 8th September.

Siberian Chiffchaff *P. c. tristis*

Rare migrant. Further records of 'eastern' birds possibly relating to this subspecies. However, owing to confusion regarding the identification of this sub-species in the past, this may represent a false status

The first record of the year was two vocal birds seen on 9th October, one at North Pond and the other at North Valley Crossing. There were further records on 12th and 15th October.



Siberian Chiffchaff, Moorey Mere – L.Newman

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Abundant migrant

The first birds of the year were three seen on 2nd April with 15 seen the following day. Records were regular through the rest of April with day counts peaking at 66 on 17th. Regular records continued into May albeit becoming less regular as the month went on and the calendar ticked over into June with the final record of the spring being a singing bird at North Valley Crossing on 8th June.

It was a little over a month until the first records of autumn started with lemon-yellow birds appearing from 20th July onwards. Records were again regular through the following two months before ending on 8th October. During this period, the peak day count was 20 on 8th September.

There were two records of birds showing traits of 'northern' Willow Warblers. Both records were in April, the first on the 17th and the second on the 26th.



Willow Warbler, North Valley – L.Newman

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*
Fairly common migrant

A male in North Haven on 18th March was the first record of the year and was over two weeks earlier than any other of its species. April records began on 3rd with two birds, followed by one on 4th and 5th. There was then a gap of ten days before more regular and numerous sightings from mid-April onwards. Four birds on 15th built to ten the following day and 19 by 17th but these counts were eclipsed by a count of 161 on the 18th; needless to say, this was our highest count of the year. Single-digit counts continued from 21st April onwards until the final record of the spring, a single male at Moorey Mere on 1st June.

A single bird on 6th September was the first of autumn and started what was a regular run of records of between one and nine birds until the 24th of October. The only outlier during this period was the highest count of autumn, 26 birds on 21st September. November records involved one bird on 11th and 12th before two birds on 15th brought the year's records to a close.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*
Uncommon migrant

One at the Farm on 15th September was the only record of the year.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*
Scarce migrant

The sole spring record was of one bird at North Valley Crossing on 25th May. There were two autumn records: a bird at North Haven on 14th September and a bird at North Valley Crossing on 8th October.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
Uncommon breeder, though scarce in some years

The first record of the year came on 17th April with one at North Pond followed by a big arrival of 14 birds on the 18th which was the largest count of the year. Birds were then seen nearly daily through until the end of the breeding season with the final record of the year coming on 21st September. No high counts of the autumn were noted.

A total of seven breeding pairs were mapped during Breeding Bird Surveys and other observations. This is four pairs fewer than 2022. The first bird carrying nesting material was seen at the Farm on 4th May with the first fledged birds seen on 28th June.



Common Whitethroat singing, The Farm – L.Newman

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*
Very rare, cryptic breeder, last record 1981. Uncommon migrant

The first record of the year was of five on 18th April; three birds reeling at the Farm and two around North Pond. There was one the following day and two on the 20th. The next and final record of the year was a single bird on 14th May.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
Uncommon breeder. Uncommon migrant

A total of 25 breeding pairs were recorded in 2023 which is three fewer than 2022.

The first bird of the year arrived on 10th April, followed by three birds on 18th. From this point onwards, sightings were almost daily until the final record of the year on 10th September. The high counts of the year were of 24 birds on 11th May and 2nd June.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*
Uncommon migrant

The year started with singles on 25th and 26th April at Moorey Mere and North Pond respectively. May contained four days with records, peaking at two birds on 1st. There were two records in June, both of single birds on 2nd and 4th. Autumn records began on 30th August with a single bird at North Valley Crossing. September contained the bulk of the records of the year with records on nine days mainly in the first half of the month and peaking at eight on 8th September. The final records of the year were of a single bird in the Ivy on 8th and 9th October.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*
Fairly common breeder

Present throughout the season from the first day of arrival. There were 81 territories mapped, 13 fewer than 2022. The first chicks of the year were noted on 16th June at North Haven.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
Very abundant migrant

First noted on 4th March with three logged. Records were sparse for the rest of March with singles on 5th, 8th, 14th and 26th the only other records. Records were equally sparse in April and May with five in early-April and two in May – one on the 4th and two on 26th. June records started on 8th with a bird west of the Farm, with records then becoming more regular until 3rd September. During this period, flocks consisted of juveniles and adults, presumably from local breeding birds. Numbers peaked at 60 individuals in both June and July, and 200 in August.

There was then a break in sightings from 3rd September until 9th October. Birds were then regularly seen until 17th November with peak counts below:

Date	22 nd Oct	27 th Oct	30 th Oct	31 st Oct	3 rd Nov	6 th Nov	7 th Nov	10 th Nov	11 th Nov
Max count	220	260	250	700	280	460	330	300	260

Table 8 Peak autumn counts of Starling.



Autumnal Starlings, North Valley – L.Newman

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*
Uncommon migrant

An exceptional spring with April producing records on nine days peaking at 15 birds on 18th. Records began on 11th with a single male at the Farm which stayed for two further days. There were also singles on 16th and 17th before a count of 15 on the 18th. This included a flock of ten birds seen at the Farm, one in East Bog, one at Skomer Head and three at the Wick. Four were recorded on the 19th and 20th with six on the 21st the final record of spring.

Autumn records started on 18th September with a single bird on the Neck, seen at North Haven on the 19th and 20th. The only other record of autumn was a bird at North Valley Crossing on 25th October.



Ring Ouzel, The Farm – L.Newman

Blackbird *Turdus merula*
Scarce breeder, previously uncommon. Common migrant

First recorded on 2nd March, nine pairs bred on Skomer this year. This is four pairs fewer than 2022. The first birds carrying nesting material were seen on 19th March and the first food being carried was recorded on 30th April. The first fledged young were noted on 10th June.

Separating breeding birds from spring migrants is difficult but a count of 16 on 17th April was likely to involve migrants. Autumn migration started on 25th September with 15 logged. October saw a few other counts in the teens but nothing matching 29 on the 2nd of October. The highest count from November was 17 on 11th and the 12th.



Blackbird, The Farm – L.Newman

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Fairly common, occasionally common migrant

Two spring records, both of single birds on 16th and 26th March. Autumn records returned to normality after last year's count of over 3,000 birds in a day. The first record was of a single bird on 16th October, followed by one on 21st and 22nd and two on 29th, with five on 31st October being the final records of the year.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Scarce and very sporadic breeder. Common migrant

The first record of the year (two birds) was on 4th March. Birds were present on five days in March with a high count of three on the 5th. April only saw two records with a single bird on 18th and three birds on 20th. There was a single May record of a bird singing at the Farm on the 27th, and there was a single bird logged in June on the 8th. There were no records in July, August, or September. Autumn records started from the 2nd of October onwards with birds recorded regularly until the team's departure. The high count from this period was ten on 22nd October. The final record of the year was of six birds on 16th November.



Song Thrush, Moorey Mere – L.Newman

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*
Common migrant

A single bird at Moorey Mere on 11th March was the first record of the year and the only spring record.

Autumn started with three logged on 13th October. There were no big arrivals of Redwing this autumn. The highest count of the year was 21 birds on 16th October. Records were regular through October and November with the last record of the year on 16th November.



Redwing, South Valley – L.Newman

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*
Uncommon migrant

The only record of the year was of a single bird over Captain Kites on 11th November.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*
One breeding record 1985. Common migrant

The first bird of spring was at the Farm on 4th May. There were gaps in sightings until another single on 12th before sightings became more regular on 20th May. Records continued from 20th May until 6th June, peaking at 11 on 25th and 9 on 31st May. Autumn records began on 15th August with two birds at the Farm. There were five further days with Spotted Flycatchers recorded in August and seven days in September with the peak count from the autumn being four individuals on 23rd August. The final record of the year was three birds on 9th September.



Spotted Flycatcher – T.Wallen

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Last confirmed breeding record 1994. Very abundant migrant

Present on the day of arrival with two birds noted. Birds were seen throughout March and are likely to have been overwintering birds with numbers fluctuating between one and seven individuals. There were only two sightings in April, both of single birds on 18th and 23rd.

The first bird of autumn was an adult seen on 4th August. There was then a gap of five days until six birds were recorded on 9th. From the 9th August onwards records were almost daily with the peak of birds passing through the island in September and October. The final record of the year was two at the Farm on 17th November. Selected high counts of the autumn are below:

Date	10 th Sept	14 th Sept	15 th Sept	17 th Sept	2 nd Oct	9 th Oct
Count	30	48	40	38	51	32

Table 9 Peak autumn counts of Robin. Highest count of the year in bold.



Robin, The Farm – L.Newman

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*
Vagrant. Nine previous records, most recently May 2016

A bird found singing in the Blackthorn in North Valley on 13th May (MW, TW) is the first record since 2016.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*
Uncommon migrant

Two records in spring with a female on 18th April and an adult male on 19th April. Autumn records consisted of one on 23rd August, one on 3rd and 4th September, five on 6th, one on 7th and two on 9th September.



Pied Flycatcher, The Farm – L.Newman

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*
Uncommon migrant

Spring records all concerned single birds in April with birds logged on 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 13th, 16th, 22nd and 25th. Autumn records were sparse with two birds on 24th October, one the following day, and a single bird on 11th November.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
Uncommon migrant

Spring records started on 18th April with a male at the Farm. There were three further records in April, all of single birds, on 20th, 22nd and 26th. May saw three records, one female at the Farm on 4th and 5th and one at North Valley Willows on 19th. There were no June records with a juvenile at the Farm on 20th July being the next record. The rest of the autumn records were restricted to August and September with both months containing four days with records. The high count of the autumn was three on 15th August and the final record of the year was a single bird on 26th September.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*
Uncommon migrant

There were three spring records, the first, a single bird at North Valley Rise on 18th April, the second a single bird on Gorse Hill on 30th April, and the third, three birds on 1st May. There was a mid-season record of a Whinchat on 30th June, also at Gorse Hill. Autumn records started on 16th August with one bird west of the Farm. There was one further August record on 23rd before a run of single birds from the 6th to the 11th September, interspersed with two on the 9th, brought the year's records to a close.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*
Scarce breeder. Uncommon migrant

Four pairs bred which is one pair fewer than 2022. Singing was first noted on 21st March, nesting material was first noted on 7th April, birds carrying food were first seen on 29th April, and the first fledglings – three at North Valley Crossing – were seen on 6th June.

Present throughout the season with migrants mixing with breeding birds, the peak spring count was ten on 18th March and the peak count of birds in the autumn was 14 on 8th September. The final record of the year was on 16th November with one seen at North Haven.

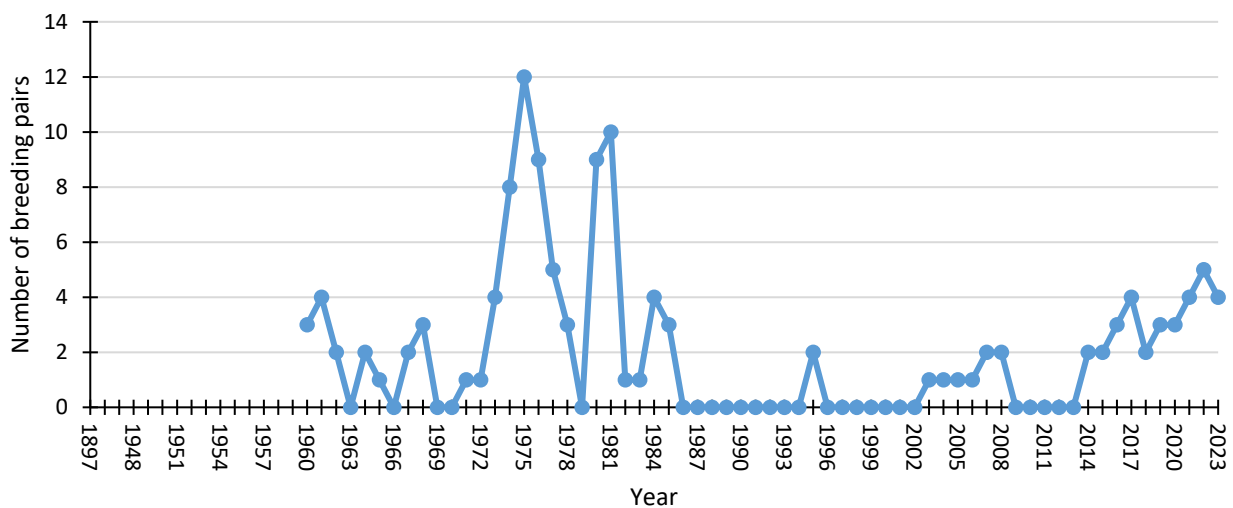
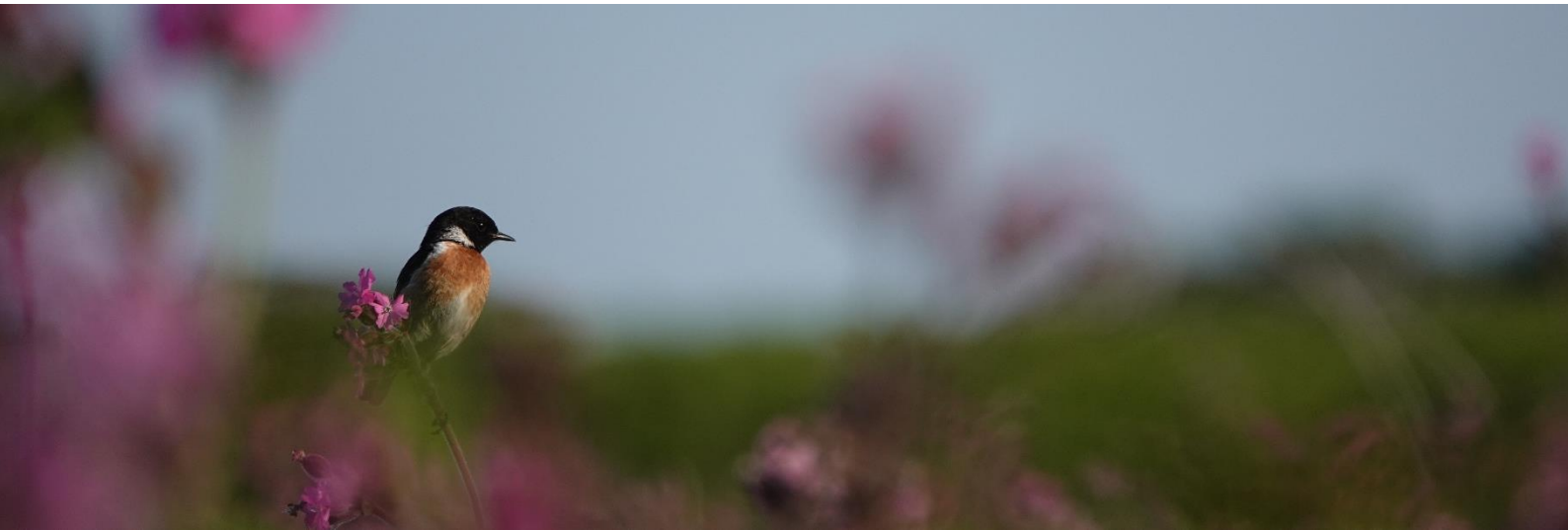


Figure 3 Number of breeding Stonechat



Stonechat, The Farm – L.Newman

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*
 Common migrant. Uncommon breeder

A total of 27 pairs were recorded breeding in 2023. This is a decrease of four pairs on 2022 but is above the five-year average of 24.4 pairs. Birds were noted as being paired up by mid-April and the first nesting material was seen being carried on 23rd April. The first food being carried was noted on the 20th of May and the first fledged young were seen four days later on South Plateau on 24th May.

The first bird of the year was seen east of the Farm on 17th March and peak spring counts can be found below. Birds were recorded nearly every day from then right through spring, summer, and autumn. The highest count of the autumn came on 14th August with 21 recorded and the final record of the year came on 21st October.

Date	2 nd Apr	17 th Apr	18 th Apr	19 th Apr	20 th Apr	21 st Apr
Max count	20	33	43	34	74	29

Table 10 Peak spring counts of Northern Wheatear. High count of the year in bold.



Northern Wheatear – L.Newman

'Greenland' Wheatear *O. o. leucorhoa*

Uncommon migrant

First noted on 18th April with five present. There were further records on 20th (50), 21st (five) and 30th (15) April and one on 11th May. There was one autumn record on 22nd September.



Greenland Wheatear, South Stream – L.Newman

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Uncommon breeder. Fairly common autumn migrant

Present throughout with 10 pairs mapped. This is a decrease of one pair on 2022 and below the five-year average of 12.4 pairs. Birds were first noted singing on 11th March and started nest building on 22nd April. The first fledged birds were seen on 6th June at the Farm.

Counts of between one and eight were typical through most of the spring with a high count of 11 on 17th April. The highest count of the autumn was 21 on 8th October. The final record of the year was on 16th November.



Dunnock, The Farm – L.Newman

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Bred sporadically between 1965 and 1969. Uncommon migrant

The first record of the year was of three on 20th April followed by one on 21st and two on 22nd. May saw records on 10 days peaking at three on 1st. There were no further records until 10th August when 11 were seen at the Farm. Four on 12th and five on 15th August were the only other records from the month and the last until seven were seen at North Pond on 8th October. October saw records on 9th (two), 15th (35), 16th (two), 22nd (two) and seven on 25th. These were the final records of the year.



House Sparrows, The Farm – L. Newman

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima*

Uncommon migrant

The first record of the year was a bird over North Valley on 17th April. This was followed by a bird at the Garland Stone on 5th May and one at Moorey Mere on 13th May. The only other record of the year is of a bird seen over North Pond on 5th September.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Uncommon migrant

A single bird on 18th June was the first record of the year and the only record up until three on 4th September. Records were then condensed into the six weeks following with a peak count of seven birds on 9th September and the final record of the year, three birds, on 25th October.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Scarce breeder. Fairly common migrant

Present from 10th March onwards with four pairs nesting, one up on 2022, and above the five-year average of 2.4 pairs. The first birds carrying nesting material were seen on 24th April, food was seen being taken to the nest at the Farm on 25th May, and two chicks were seen at the Farm on 5th June.

Spring counts varied between one and 14 individuals. Notable autumn influxes occurred on 22nd August with 21 birds and on 23rd September with 25 birds. Not quite making it into November, the final record of the year was on 28th October.

White Wagtail *M. a. alba*
Uncommon migrant

There were no spring records. The first records in autumn came on 4th September with six at North Haven. September saw ten further records, peaking at ten on the 6th. There was only one record in October, of two birds on North Pond on the 2nd.

Unidentified, 'fly-over' wagtails, are noted as pied/white wagtails. Of this genre, in April, there were four on 7th, two on 8th, one on 16th and five on 20th. There was one fly-over in May on the 4th (one bird). Autumn records mainly centred around September with ten on 5th, five on 6th, one on 7th, two on 11th and three on 13th. The only other record of the year was four on 8th October.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*
Uncommon migrant

April contained all of the spring records with singles on 16th, 17th and 18th followed by another on 28th. Autumn records concerned one on 27th August, and singles on 4th, 8th and 9th September.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*
Fairly common breeder. Abundant migrant

Present throughout the season, with 95 breeding pairs. Birds were first noted singing on 12th March and nest building on 20th April.

Spring passage is often camouflaged in the breeding population and no large flocks were noted. Autumn passage is a similar story but counts of 69 on 10th and 57 on 14th September, and 85 birds on 9th October are likely to consist of migrants.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*
Uncommon breeder. Fairly common migrant

Present throughout the season with 20 pairs breeding. This is an increase of one pair on 2022 but below the five-year average of 22.2 pairs.

Counts of 28 on 15th September and 20 on 18th and 19th September and 31st October are likely to involve some migrants.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
Uncommon migrant

There were no spring records. Autumn records start on 8th October with two noted. Further records from the year were of one bird on 15th, two on 16th and one on 22nd October, and one on 11th November.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*
Common migrant

Three records from the spring: a single bird at the Farm on 18th March, a single bird at Pigstone Bay on 3rd and a single bird at the Farm on 22nd April.

The first autumn records started on 25th September with one at North Pond. From 2nd October onwards birds were recorded regularly until 16th November. High counts consisted of 50 on 12th and 53 on 31st October.



Chaffinch, North Valley Willows – L.Newman

Common Rosefinch *Erythrina erythrina*
Rare migrant. Twenty previous records. Most recently June 2017

One found in North Valley Willows on 14th September (DA) is the first record since 2017.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*
Uncommon migrant, though fairly common in some years

Two spring records, the first a single bird at the Farm on 12th May and the second, two birds over North Haven on 17th. Autumn records consisted of single birds on 22nd August, 8th and 22nd October, and 3rd November.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Scarce and sporadic breeder. Very abundant migrant

Five pairs nested in 2023, this is four more than 2022 and above the five-year average of 3.8 pairs. The first singing males were noted on 22nd April followed four days later by the first birds seen carrying nesting material. The first sign of fledged chicks was seen on 12th June when an adult was seen feeding a juvenile bird.

The first record of the year was of one bird on 24th March. Birds were recorded on most days through the year, albeit with decreasing regularity in late October and November, with the final sighting of the year on 11th November.

Date	14 th Apr	15 th Apr	17 th Apr
Max count	29	29	40

Table 11 Peak spring counts of Linnet.

Date	10 th Sep	14 th Sep	18 th Sep	12 th Oct	15 th Oct	11 th Nov
Max count	46	107	44	104	47	45

Table 12 Peak autumn counts of Linnet. Highest count of the year in bold.



Linnet – L.Newman

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

Uncommon migrant

In 2023 there were four on 11th May, one on 14th May and one on 26th May. There was also one on 2nd July. Redpoll sp., not assigned to species (usually flyovers), included two on 26th and one on 27th June as well as one on 9th September.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
Abundant migrant

First noted on 18th March with a single bird east of the Farm. Birds were present regularly through the spring with a high count of 28 on 17th April. The first record of more than 12 birds in autumn comes on 6th September with 54 birds. October saw more records with counts of 24 on 12th, 33 on 14th and 49 on 21st eclipsed by 137 on the 15th. November saw just two records, a single bird on the 4th and ten birds on 11th. These were the final records of the year.



Goldfinch, The Farm – L.Newman

Siskin *Spinus spinus*
Uncommon migrant

There were no spring records. Autumn records started with one at South Stream on 5th September followed by 23 on 8th and five on 9th September. October saw more regular records which peaked at 82 on 20th, with 79 on 12th coming close to snatching first place. November saw four records, three of which were single birds – the fourth was 19 birds on 11th. The final record of the year was on 16th November.



Siskin, North Haven – L.Newman

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*
Scarce breeder. Uncommon migrant

No birds attempted to breed on Skomer this year. A male, intermittently singing in North Valley during April was the only breeding evidence. This is the first year they have not bred since 1994.

The first birds of the spring were recorded on 25th March with one at North Pond. Numbers remained low throughout the spring with a high count of three on 7th May. There were two records of birds in June, one in July and one in August. Records became more frequent in September with birds seen on four days through the month. October saw 17 days with records and the peak count of autumn (six) on 22nd. November had two days with records, with the final bird of the year seen on 11th November.



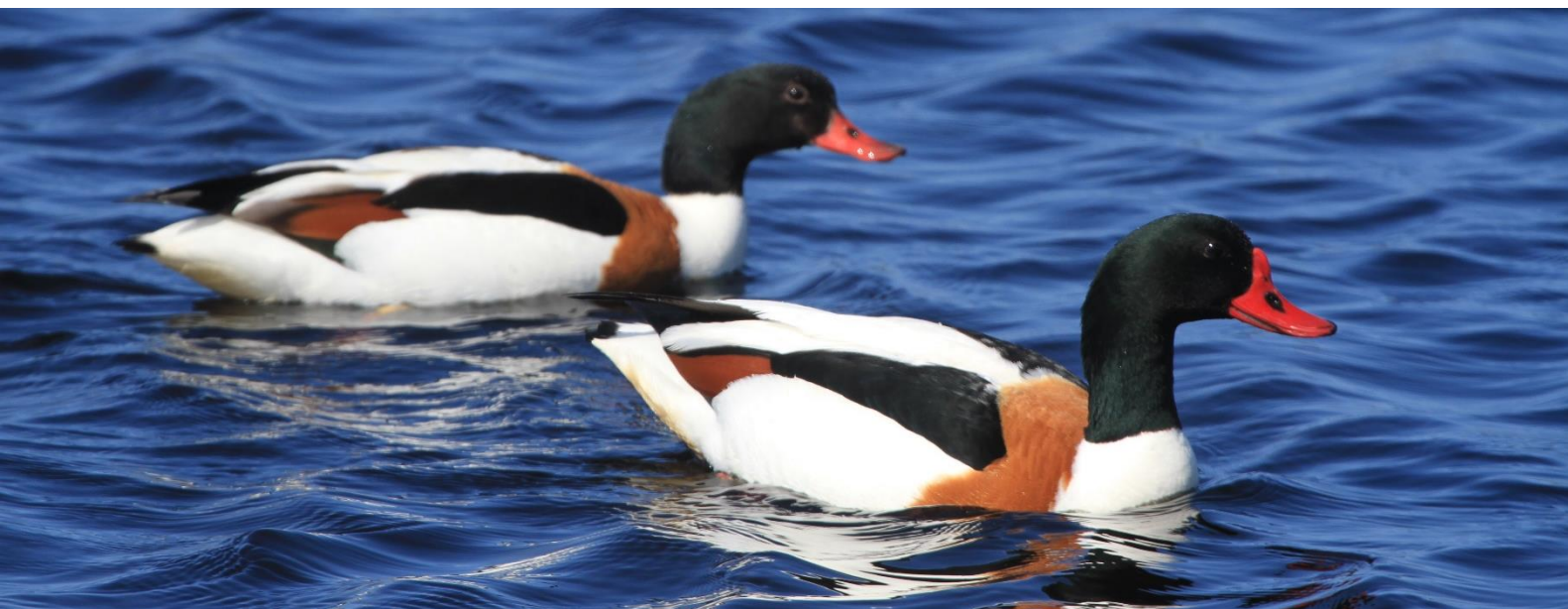
Figure 4: Number of breeding pairs of Reed Bunting

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Shelduck pair – M.Wallen



Bluebells, North Valley Rise – L.Newman

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Grant funding for seabird monitoring costs received through the Nature Networks Fund, Round Two, (a Welsh Government grant administered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in Wales.) This is the second round of funding for Skomer seabird monitoring received through this scheme.



Grant funding received from the Friends of the Pembrokeshire National Park in May 2023 for the purchase of two telescopes and tripods for long-term volunteers to use for seabird monitoring and skills training.



The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and University of Gloucestershire also wish to acknowledge the partial financial contributions of the JNCC Support Company. The Seabird Monitoring Programme is funded jointly by BTO and JNCC, in association with RSPB, with fieldwork conducted by both non-professional and professional surveyors.



Skomer is one of 4 key sites for seabird monitoring in the Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) and the only one in Wales. Fair Isle, Canna, Isle of May and Skomer all deliver an enhanced level of seabird monitoring each year, including studies of abundance and breeding success, but also adult survival, phenology and diet. The work is conducted by WTSWW staff and seasonal fieldworkers employed by both WTSWW and the University of Gloucester.