Skomer Island

Bird Report 2014
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](http://www.welshwildlife.org). Seabird monitoring on Skomer Island NNR is supported by JNCC.
The season started on 12th March and ended on 26th November. A total of 162 species were recorded in 2014, plus six distinct subspecies, one escape and three hybrids.

### Island rarities summary 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Island status</th>
<th>Last recorded</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blyth’s Reed Warbler</td>
<td>1st island record</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Iberiae' Yellow Wagtail</td>
<td>1st island record of this subspecies</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Nelson’s' Gull *2</td>
<td>1st island record</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyr Falcon *2</td>
<td>1st island record</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesser Yellowlegs</td>
<td>2nd island record</td>
<td>August 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Kite</td>
<td>2nd island record</td>
<td>May 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Goshawk</td>
<td>2nd island record</td>
<td>April 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert Wheatear</td>
<td>2nd island record</td>
<td>November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabine’s Gull</td>
<td>3rd island record</td>
<td>October 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenish Warbler</td>
<td>4th island record</td>
<td>September 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kingfisher</td>
<td>6th island record</td>
<td>August 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-headed Bunting</td>
<td>6th island record</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mute Swan</td>
<td>6th island record</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-tailed Skua</td>
<td>7th island record</td>
<td>6th October 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-headed Wagtail</td>
<td>7th island record</td>
<td>22nd May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland Gull</td>
<td>9th island record</td>
<td>2007</td>
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</table>

*1 – hybrid between Herring Gull and Glaucous Gull  
*2 – proven escape
Skomer Migration Highlights
by Liam Langley

Spring

Spring migration on Skomer in 2014 was an argument for the old adage “quality over quantity” with a relative lack of scarce migrants tempered by the discovery of some good island rarities. In a good year for the species nationally, a Blyth’s Reed Warbler discovered in the North Haven ivy on 26th May was the pick of the bunch. This constituted the first record for the island and was frequently heard to sing. Coming in a close second in terms of island rarity value, the islands 2nd ever Black Kite was another fantastic find on the morning of 16th May as it drifted east along North Valley and was subsequently picked up over Martin’s Haven. From a national perspective, Skomer’s 6th Black-headed Bunting was another top-drawer rarity. Although the female-type was present around the farm from 21st to 24th May, circumstances conspired to unfortunately thwart mainland birders who were unable to access the island for most of the duration of the bird’s stay due to inclement weather. Another treat for island birders was provided by a Greenish Warbler and a Red-backed Shrike which arrived on 7th and 8th June respectively. These species are more commonly encountered as autumn drift migrants on the east coast and the warbler in particular was an excellent find, constituting just the 4th record for the island.

Aside from these headline birds, spring 2014 provided relatively slim pickings for the would-be rarity finder. A sub-adult Spoonbill seen on 14th and 17th March constituted the 11th record for the island whilst two Little Egrets on 19th June constituted a good record of this still rare species. Raptor passage in spring was almost non-existent, although a Red Kite on 14th March was notable in a quiet year for this species. Spring wader passage was highlighted by a Bar-tailed Godwit over West Pond on 29th April and a Grey Plover seen and heard on 15th and 16th April. Early spring is traditionally a good-time for ‘white-winged’ gulls and this rang true on Skomer in 2014 with an immature Iceland Gull on April 1st and a couple of immature Glaucous Gulls later in the month providing the only records of these Arctic waifs. A Turtle Dove seen around the farm on 18th and 20th May was the years only record and one can only wonder how many more individuals of this rapidly declining species are likely to grace Skomer in the future. Common Cuckoo is another declining migrant which had a poor year with only two records on 26th May and 18th June. On a more positive note, it was a good spring for scarce Yellow Wagtail races with a smart Blue-headed Wagtail on 19th May eclipsed by potentially the first island record of a “Southern” (Iberiae) Wagtail which dropped into Moorey Mere on 15th May. A substantial fall of Willow Warblers on 15th April made for very entertaining birding on the island, with 118 counted. Two records of Hooded Crow on 24th April and 14th May were a relative novelty this side of the Irish Sea. Last but by no means least was a male Lapland Buntings which spent five days along the main track from 30th March onwards; a real treat in full summer plumage.

Autumn

In stark contrast to the spring, autumn 2014 provided a veritable bounty of rare and scarce birds. The title of bird of the autumn probably goes to the juvenile Lesser Yellowlegs which was found early in the morning of September 11th feeding along the edge of North Pond. The bird proceeded to give incredible views throughout the day, showing down to 5m from the research hide and sparking a mini-twitch among the island’s residents. The bird was still present early the next morning but flew off calling at 07:50. It was relocated at nearby Marloes Mere several days later on 15th. Another fantastic island record was an immature Goshawk, only the 2nd for Skomer. The bird was found on 8th August circling over the North Valley before it gained height and drifted off east towards the mainland. An entirely unexpected record was a Common Kingfisher which was seen dashing across North Haven on the morning of 3rd September and constitutes only the 5th record for the island. As autumn was drawing to a close, the island managed to squeeze in one final rarity with a Desert Wheatear on The Neck on 28th October, constituting only the 2nd record of this smart late autumn vagrant for the island. Another highlight of autumn 2014 was an excellent (by island standards) seabird passage observed from the Garland Stone on the morning of October 19th. Despite the reputation of Skomer as something of a sea-watching black-spot, birds logged included three Balearic Shearwaters, nine Arctic Skuas and a Bonxie moving out of the bay into the teeth of a strong
westerly gale between 07.00 and 09.00. The highlight of the morning however was a juvenile Sabine's Gull among the huge flocks of Kittiwakes, this being only the 3rd island record of this delicate pelagic species.

The autumn was also relatively productive for wildfowl with Skomer's 6th Mute Swan seen circling over North Valley on 12th October before leaving the island. This followed a pair of Pale-bellied Brent Geese which flew through Jack Sound on 2nd October and a juvenile Garganey which spent several days from 12th September with the Teal flock on North Pond. Despite reasonable observer effort, the rest of the autumn's sea-watching was quiet, with highlights of a single Balearic Shearwater on 7th November and a Sooty Shearwater seen from a rib in St. Bride's Bay on the evening of 30th July as it rafted amongst the assembled Manxies. One can only postulate whether this southern wanderer was tempted to make a nocturnal pass of the island to investigate the cacophony produced by the huge population of breeding Shearwaters. A Little Egret on 9th November was the only autumn record whilst a Quail flushed from the neck on 6th August was a good record of what is probably an under-recorded species. In contrast to spring, autumn 2014 produced some good raptor records, with a female-type Marsh Harrier seen moving west up North Valley on the morning of 30th August the highlight. Other notable records include the second Red Kite of the year on 2nd October and an Osprey which moved south through North Haven on 20th August. High water levels throughout most of the autumn conspired to produce ideal feeding conditions for waders on North Pond and regular morning visits lead to a great autumn on Skomer for this group. Aside from the aforementioned Lesser Yellowlegs, wader passage was headlined by a Ruff on 8th September and two beautiful juvenile Little Stints on 5th and 12th September which gave incredible views from the research hide. A nice supporting cast included two Greenshanks, three Green Sandpipers and a single Wood Sandpiper which flew east over Green Pond on the morning of 25th July. Elsewhere a Knot roosted on rocks off the South Plateau on 15th and 20th September and the year's only Jack Snipe was present in East Bog on 14th September. October saw a record influx of Mediterranean Gulls into Broad Sound, with 66 counted on 16th representing by far the largest count of the species on record. Other good non-passerine records included a Barn Owl on 14th September and a juvenile Long-tailed Skua which flew south through North Haven on 21st October.

Autumn 2014 on Skomer will long be remembered for the wealth of scarce passerines found across the island thanks to high levels of observer coverage. A period of light easterly winds in the first week of September caused things to kick off when a juvenile Ortolan Bunting was found at the farm on the morning of 2nd September. This extremely vocal juvenile quickly moved on. However lightning struck twice when another was discovered roosting in the Chicken Shed on 10th which also promptly moved on. It was also a great autumn for Hippolais warblers on the island, with an Icterine Warbler found in the North Valley willows on the afternoon of 2nd September closely followed by a Melodious Warbler seen around the farm the next day. This was followed by two more Melodious Warblers found in the East Bog willows on 26th September and 2nd October respectively. Wryneck is another classic autumn drift migrant and it was a great autumn for this cryptically patterned woodpecker, with at least four individuals recorded between 3rd September and 16th October. Another good record was a smart 1st winter Red-Breasted Flycatcher which spent a day feeding in the willows around North Valley Crossing on 19th September. Lesser Whitethroat is an uncommon visitor to Skomer and this year only two were recorded; on 16th-18th of September and 29th-31st October. Barred Warbler seems to be a late autumn speciality on Skomer and true to form, the years only bird was found on 25th October around North Valley Crossing. More traditional late autumn fare included four Yellow-browed Warblers from 11th October onwards and a Firecrest in North Valley from 16th to 18th November. From a sub-specific standpoint, at least 6 Siberian Chiffchaff candidates represented a good year for the island, while an acredula Northern Willow Warbler was also noted. A single Blue Tit was recorded between 22nd-29th September, this being the sole representative in a poor year for the tit family. Another generally sedentary species which has increased markedly in recent years is Great Spotted Woodpecker, and a bird on 18th November represents the 21st island record of this former vagrant. It was also a quiet year for scarce finches with a single female Bullfinch on 18th November, although three autumn records of Lapland Bunting represent a decent showing for the island.
### Skomer Island seabird population summary 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species and count units</th>
<th>Totals for 2014</th>
<th>Totals for 2013</th>
<th>% change from 2013</th>
<th>5 year % change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fulmar (AOS)</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>+10.54</td>
<td>+4.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cormorant (AON)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-14.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shag (AON)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesser Black-backed Gull (AON)</td>
<td>8432</td>
<td>8132</td>
<td>+3.6</td>
<td>-11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herring Gull (AON)</td>
<td>440</td>
<td></td>
<td>+2.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Black-backed Gull (AON)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>84</td>
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<td>-9.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black-legged Kittiwake (AON)</td>
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<td>1045</td>
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<td>-22.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guillemot (IND)</td>
<td>23493</td>
<td>20862</td>
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<td>Razorbill (IND)</td>
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<td>Puffin (IND)</td>
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<td>19280</td>
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Data on the seabirds breeding season has been compiled from the Skomer Seabird Report 2014.

### Skomer Island breeding land-birds population summary 2014

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<thead>
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<th>Species</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada Goose</td>
<td>21 pairs</td>
<td>28 pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelduck</td>
<td>2 pairs</td>
<td>1 pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallard</td>
<td>3 pairs</td>
<td>4 pairs (minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoveler</td>
<td>2 pairs</td>
<td>2 pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teal</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>2 pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Pheasant</td>
<td>Many</td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Buzzard</td>
<td>5 territories</td>
<td>5 territories (minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Kestrel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 pair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peregrine</td>
<td>3 territories</td>
<td>3 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Rail</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Moorhen</td>
<td>4 (minimum)</td>
<td>4 (minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oystercatcher</td>
<td>66 territories</td>
<td>40 territories (minimum)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eurasian Curlew</td>
<td>3 territories</td>
<td>3 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Pigeon</td>
<td>4 territories</td>
<td>2 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-eared Owl</td>
<td>3 nests</td>
<td>4 territories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Owl</td>
<td>1 pair</td>
<td>1 pair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skylark</td>
<td>4 territories</td>
<td>6 territories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barn Swallow</td>
<td>8 nests</td>
<td>7 nests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rock pipit</td>
<td>24 territories</td>
<td>25 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meadow Pipit</td>
<td>97 territories</td>
<td>c. 80 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pied Wagtail</td>
<td>2 pairs</td>
<td>4 pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunnock</td>
<td>10 territories</td>
<td>12 territories (minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Wheatear</td>
<td>15 territories</td>
<td>22 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackbird</td>
<td>2 territories</td>
<td>7 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species</td>
<td>Territories</td>
<td>Nests, Pairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Whitethroat</td>
<td>26 territories</td>
<td>18 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedge Warbler</td>
<td>44 territories</td>
<td>32 territories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Chiffchaff</td>
<td>2 territories</td>
<td>1 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wren</td>
<td>64 territories</td>
<td>62 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magpie</td>
<td>2 nests (minimum)</td>
<td>6 pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-billed Chough</td>
<td>3 pairs</td>
<td>3 pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrion Crow</td>
<td>9 nests</td>
<td>5 nests (minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Raven</td>
<td>4 nests</td>
<td>4 nests (minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Linnet</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed Bunting</td>
<td>4 territories</td>
<td>4-5 territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonechat</td>
<td>2 nests</td>
<td>0</td>
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**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

**List of contributors mentioned within the systematic list**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Initial</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eddie Stubbings</td>
<td>EMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason Moss</td>
<td>JWM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam Langley</td>
<td>LPL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ollie Padget</td>
<td>OP</td>
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**Notes**
The species order for this systematic list is taken from ‘The British List’ published by the BOU in Jan 2013.
**Status categories**

Vagrant – one to 10 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

**Breeding categories**

Very rare breeder – one to 10 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
**Systematic list of birds**

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*  
*Vagrant*  

An adult was seen on the morning of 12th October (EMS, JWM et.al.) as it circled twice over North Valley before leaving the island. This represents only the 6th island record, involving 10 individuals, and the first since 2003.

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*  
*Uncommon breeder*  

Present all season, with 21 pairs breeding across the island; a decrease on last year’s 28 pairs. The first goslings were recorded on 27th April on North Pond. Only small numbers of young were seen on the island, suggesting they had a relatively poor breeding season. Numbers increased in the autumn with September being the busiest month as birds commuted to and from the mainland each morning and evening. Monthly peak counts are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max count</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
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*Fig. 1  Maximum monthly counts of Canada Goose*
Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

*Rare visitor*

The only record this year concerned two birds of the pale-bellied race B.b. *hrota* seen flying through Jack Sound on 2nd October (EMS et.al.). This is only the 20th record of the species for Skomer, and the first since 2013.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

*Scarce breeder*

First recorded on 12th March with typical counts through the summer ranging between two and five birds. Two pairs were proven to breed on the island, with the first ducklings (a brood of between 10 and 12) seen on North Pond on 21st May with another brood of three on Moorey Mere on 7th June. The Moorey Mere chicks weren’t seen again after 8th June, and were probably predated by gulls or corvids, but remarkably nine young fledged from the North Pond pair. One on 31st July was the final sighting of the year, with no migrants noted in the autumn.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

*Uncommon spring and autumn migrant*

A quiet spring, with a male on 8th April the first of the year. Further sightings were of single birds on 9th, 11th and between 13th and 15th April, and one on 24th May. Five birds on 2nd September were the first of the autumn, followed by four males on North Pond on 18th and a single on 23rd. One on 4th and three females on 8th October were the final records of the year.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

*Scarce but sporadic breeder (maximum 1-2 pairs). Uncommon migrant*

Two birds seen flying over South Pond on 3rd May were the first of the year, with sporadic sightings of between one and two birds made throughout the month. Though sightings mostly consisted of a male and female in apparently suitable breeding habitat at South Pond, it is believed that no breeding attempt was made.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

*Scarce and sporadic breeder (maximum 1-2 pairs). Common spring and autumn migrant*

Small numbers of Teal overwinter on Skomer each year, and 2014 was no exception with eight birds present on North Pond on the warden’s arrival. Small numbers lingered throughout March and April and counts peaked at 25 on 27th March. Sightings became sporadic from mid April onwards and one on 12th May was the final record of the spring. The first returning autumn bird arrived on 12th August, with another single on 26th followed by a further five on 26th and 27th. September saw almost daily sightings, with a flock of between 10 and 15 becoming resident on North Pond. High counts during the month include 21 on 12th, 29 on 13th, 24 on 14th and 41 on 15th. Birds present throughout October, with high counts of 33 on 10th, 37 on 13th and 32 on 19th. Numbers peaked for the year in November, with high counts of 65 on 10th, 84 on 15th and 80 on 18th. The flock was present on North Pond through to the end of the season, and many will likely overwinter there.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

*Scarce to uncommon breeder. Abundant spring and autumn migrant*

Present throughout the season. Small numbers of migrant birds on the island throughout March and April, with peak counts of seven on 23rd March, 12 on 14th April and nine on 15th and 22nd April. Sightings during the summer, presumably from the breeding population, comprised of a minimum of three pairs. First ducklings were noted on 3rd April. Twelve birds were noted on 17th July. Between one and four birds were noted on 10 days in August, while September produced sightings on 14 dates, peaking at 25 on 18th. A flock was present daily on North Pond in October, peaking at 79 on 9th. Numbers reduced steadily through to the
end of the month. November saw another influx of birds onto North Pond, with over 50 on six days and a years peak count of 82 on 16th. Present up until the wardens departure, a small number of birds will likely remain to winter on the island.

**Pintail Anas acuta**
*Rare and sporadic breeder. Uncommon migrant*

The first record of the year was of three birds on North Pond on 7th September, with further sightings of three on 12th, two on 18th, three females on 23rd and singles on 25th and 26th September. The final records of the year all came in November, with singles noted on 10th, between 15th and 20th and on 22nd of the month.

**Garganey Anas querquedula**
*Rare migrant*

The only record of this scarce species concerned a juvenile on North Pond which lingered for four days from 12th September (JWM). This represents the 15th record for the island, and the first since 2012.

**Shoveler Anas clypeata**
*Scarce breeder. Fairly common migrant.*

Six on 12th March were the only record for that month. April and May saw almost daily sightings of between one and eight birds roaming between the main areas of freshwater on the island. Sightings became infrequent in June and July, and presumably involved lingering breeding stock. Two pairs are known to have bred, with a female and small chicks seen in South Haven on 19th May and another family of 10 small ducklings seen at North Valley Crossing on 27th May. No young were proven to have fledged this year. A bird on 27th August was the first sighting of the autumn, while small numbers were present on most days in September, including peak counts of seven on 12th and 14th, 13 on 18th, 16 on 19th and 11 on 25th. Seen on seven dates in October, with a maximum of three on 3rd and the last bird noted on 25th. November produced sightings on four dates, with a peak count of six on 22nd and the last sighting occurring on 23rd.
Tufted Duck *Athya fuligula*
*Scarce and sporadic breeder. Scarce to uncommon migrant*

Only one record this year, with two birds noted on 12th November. Last suspected breeding in 2009

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*
*Common visitor*

The first record of this smart black sea duck was of a flock of 23 in St Brides Bay on 22nd April. The next sighting was of a flock of 20 on 28th May, while June produced three sightings; 40 on 17th, two seen from the Dale Princess on 27th and 40 on 30th. Sightings were more frequent in July with flocks recorded on eight dates, peaking with 50 on 18th and 22nd and 30 on 23rd. August saw sightings becoming less frequent, with a flock of 30 on 5th and 18 on 27th the only records. September produced sightings of five on 7th, 17 on 10th, 14 on 11th, seven (four males and three females) on 15th, a single bird off Skomer Head on 20th, six on 23rd and seven on 24th. October produced sightings of between one and five on seven dates, with the exception of 13 on 12th.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*
*Rare migrant*

There was one record of this cryptic skulker on Skomer in 2014, involving a bird flushed from the Neck on 6th August (EMS). This sighting constitutes the 14th record for the island and the first since 2006.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*
*Uncommon breeder*

Present throughout the season, with a peak counts of 22 on 22nd November and 17 on 18th September and 15th November. The first chicks were noted on 22nd June and, whilst no breeding census was conducted, the species appears to have had a reasonably successful year.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*
*Scarce migrant*

The first record of the year was of a bird flying past North Haven on 29th March, followed by another single on 2nd April, also past North Haven.
Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

*Scarce migrant*

The first sighting of this impressive diver was of three on 14th March, with almost daily sightings of up to two birds occurring between 23rd March and the months end. Sightings of singles were made on five dates during the first half of April, with the final spring sighting occurring on 9th April. The first of the autumn concerned an adult in breeding plumage past North Haven on 6th October. Birds were then noted on five dates in November, with two seen on 24th (Jack Sound and in front of Martins Haven) and 25th (both south-east past North Haven). The last sighting was on 26th November, as the wardens departed the island.

**Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis***

*Common breeder*

Present on the cliffs on the wardens arrival to the island. The first egg was noted on 15th May, first chick on 10th July and first fledgling noted on 31st August. There was a mean total of 556 Apparently Occupied Sites (AOS) which is an increase from 503 in 2013. The overall trend appears to be one of potential stabilisation in the islands population, following a decline from the peaks of the 1990’s and 2000’s (see graph below). The number of birds on the cliffs dropped through August as the young fledged and adults departed to moult, and regular sightings came to an end on the 26th September. One bird was noted in Skomer waters on 10th October, with larger numbers first arriving on 22nd, and were present through to the beginning of November. However birds weren’t noted on the cliffs until 9th November, where they remained through until the end of the season.

![Fig. 2 Fulmar population data 1960 – 2014](image)

**Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus***

*Very abundant breeder*

First heard in North Haven on 19th March, with a count of 37 birds both heard calling and seen in torchlight between North Haven and the farm on the night of the 31st. A minimum of 10,000 were present in St Brides Bay on the evening of 26th April, with ‘thousands’ again noted on 14th July. The first egg was discovered in the North Haven study plot on 30th April, with the first chicks noted there on 22nd June and the first fledglings on 26th August. Productivity in the Isthmus study plot was 0.71 chicks per pair, this being up on the 0.65 five-year average, and the highest value since 1998. Census of the island shearwater plots produced 1258 responses from 4441 suitable burrows. *Puffinosis* was first noted on 14th September, with
seven young birds showing symptoms. High levels of predation were noted throughout the September period of peak fledging, with a notable increase in freshly predated carcasses noted across the island through the month. These high rates of predation coincided with periods of high abundance of Great Black-backed Gulls, Common Buzzards, Ravens and Magpies, all undoubtedly taking advantage of the abundant prey available. Numbers of birds gathering on the water around the island dwindled in September and October, with peak sea counts of 200 off North Haven on 12\textsuperscript{th} September and 100 in St Brides Bay on 8\textsuperscript{th} October, while an adult was still feeding a chick on 22\textsuperscript{nd} October. Last record of the year was on 11\textsuperscript{th} November, with one heard calling over North Haven.

**Balearic Shearwater** *Puffinus mauretanicus*
*Rare visitor, though in recent years has become a scarce to uncommon migrant*

Three different individuals were noted flying past the Garland Stone during a three hour seawatch between 0700 and 0900 on 19\textsuperscript{th} October (JMW), in strong south-westerly winds. The occurrence also coincided with a large movement of Kittiwakes, and appeared to involve seabirds which had been forced into St Brides Bay overnight by the strong onshore winds. A fourth bird was seen on 7\textsuperscript{th} November (EMS) flying west past North Haven in the morning. These represent the 23\textsuperscript{rd} to 26\textsuperscript{th} records for the island.

**Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus*
*Rare visitor*

One of these impressive trans-hemispheric travellers was noted amongst rafting Manx Shearwaters in St Brides Bay on the evening of 30\textsuperscript{th} July (LPL et al.). This constitutes the 19\textsuperscript{th} record, and 22\textsuperscript{nd} individual for the island.

**European Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus*
*Fairly common breeder*

Present at the North Haven colony from 5\textsuperscript{th} May, when two were seen. Further after-dark counts of flying adults during the season include two noted on 18\textsuperscript{th} and a single on 24\textsuperscript{th} May, 12 on 18\textsuperscript{th} June, two on 1\textsuperscript{st} and a minimum of three on 18\textsuperscript{th} July. As part of a continuing project to estimate breeding adult survival of Storm Petrels on Skomer, four ringing visits were made to the Tom’s House colony in July and August. A total of 47 individuals were encountered with 19 of these being retraps from previous years.
Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*
Very abundant visitor, and abundant breeder on nearby Grassholm

Recorded offshore most days. Highest count was 81 on 27th May. Sightings declined through October, though small numbers were seen right through to the last day of the season.

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

Birds present at nest sites from start of season. Higher counts during the year include eight on 26th May and 10 on 18th July. All other records from March through the summer probably derive from local birds. An unusual record involved a juvenile which landed in the Farm courtyard on 2nd August, where it remained for a short while before departing to the north. There were six Apparently Occupied Nests on the Mew Stone, a slight drop from seven in 2013. At least nine juveniles fledged from these nests, producing a productivity of 1.5 chicks per pair. Sightings became infrequent in October, with the final sighting being of one on 4th November.

**Fig. 3  Cormorant population data 1960-2014**

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

Small numbers of Shags were seen throughout the season. The island breeding population this year is believed to be approximately three pairs, though this may be an underestimate, as no nests could be physically located at Double Cliff. One pair bred on the Garland Stone, producing three chicks, while five recently fledged chicks were seen at the foot of Double Cliff on 18th July, implying that at least two pairs attempted to breed there. As has been the case for many years, the largest population of Shags remains on Middleholm, where they continue to be monitored annually by the South Pembrokeshire Ringing Group, this year being no exception. Twenty-three nest sites were located this year, producing a productivity of 2.1. This population figure is a significant decline on the 36 nests recorded there in 2013, and can likely be attributed to high adult mortality resulting from the severe winter storms which preceded the season.
Two records this year. The first concerns two birds which were logged flying over the island towards South Pond on 19th June (EMS et al.). The second involves a single bird seen flying over the sea past North Haven on 9th November (EMS). These birds constitute the 16th and 17th records (involving 20 individuals) for the island.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
*Fairly common migrant*

The first record of the year wasn’t until 13th June, when two were seen, followed by six on 15th. Individual birds were then seen sporadically through to the end of the month and throughout July. Only one bird was seen in August, on 6th. In September there were sightings on eight dates, with daily maximums of five on 5th, seven on 14th and five on 15th. Four on 19th September were the last of the year.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*
*Rare migrant*

This year produced two incidences of this species, probably involving the same wandering individual. The first sighting was on 14th March (JWM) when a sub-adult bird in breeding plumage was found on North Pond before flying east towards the mainland. The second record occurred on 17th March (JWM) as a bird was seen circling high over North Haven. Assuming these sightings refer to the same bird, this becomes the 11th record for Skomer, and the first since 2011.
Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
*Scarce migrant*

The sole records for 2014 concerned a juvenile found on North Pond on 5th September where it stayed for just the one day, followed by another bird on the sea in North Haven on 11th September.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*
*Vagrant*

A bird was spotted circling high over the Farm on 16th May (EMS et. al.), being mobbed by what appeared to be the islands entire Oystercatcher population, before flying east over Martins Haven. Pending acceptance by the WRP, this will become the 2nd accepted island record, following a bird seen on 20th May 1998.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*
*Scarce migrant*

Despite a relative upsurge of records in recent years on the island, there were only two records of this majestic bird of prey in 2014. The first involved a bird circling high over North Valley on 14th March, before flying towards the mainland. The next record concerned a juvenile bird which roamed the island on 2nd October. This species has been visiting the island more frequently in recent years, and has been annual since 2010. See table below.

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*Fig. 5*  Total records of Red Kite since 1995

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
*Scarce migrant*

The first and only record of the season was of a juvenile bird seen on the 30th August, flying west through North Valley. Unfortunately it was only seen by two observers and did not linger.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*
*Uncommon migrant*

Presumably the same immature individual was seen on three consecutive days from 13th March, followed by another bird on 31st March. A female-type seen on 13th April was the final sighting of a fairly quiet spring.
Autumn passage produced four records, with a ring-tail seen on 29th October and a juvenile bird seen on 5th, 16th and 17th November, probably roosting near North Pond on the latter date.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*  
*Vagrant*

This powerhouse of a hawk was recorded on the evening of the 8th August (JWM et al.) in North Valley, spending a short while flying back and forth along the valley being mobbed heavily by gulls before flying south-east along the edge of North Castle and then being seen distantly over the mainland. This bird represents the 2nd island record, following a bird recorded on 27th April 2010.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*  
*Fairly common migrant*

Two birds seen on 19th March were the first sightings of the year, followed by singles on 22nd and 23rd, 25th to 27th and on 30th to 31st of the month. Sightings occurred on 13 dates in April, involving at least 11 individual birds, while two sightings in May (6th and 16th) constituted the final sightings of a good spring passage for the species. A lone bird on 20th August signalled the start of autumn passage, with sightings on a further eight days during the month, including two birds on 28th. September produced almost daily sightings of between one and two birds, with a peak of three on 21st and 22nd. October produced sightings of one to two birds on a further 25 dates. Singles noted on four dates in November, with the last of the year recorded on 23rd.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*  
*Scarce breeder. Fairly common migrant, particularly in the autumn*

Present all year with up to 10 present most days. The peak spring count was of 13 on 15th June, which may have involved some migrants. Numbers increased further in the autumn when large flocks arrived to take advantage of the abundant feeding opportunities provided by the fledging Manx Shearwaters. Peak autumn counts include 16 on 2nd, 17 on 8th and 15 on 27th September and 18 on 10th October (highest count of the year). Five breeding territories were mapped (Pigstone, South Plateau, Bull Hole, Waybench and the Neck) with chicks fledging successfully from the South Plateau and Waybench nests. A notable piece of observed behaviour involved an adult bird which was seen to catch an adult Puffin in flight on 9th June at South Plateau, where it proceeded to eat it.
**Osprey Pandion haliaetus**  
*Rare migrant*

One of these impressive fish-eating raptors was recorded over the island in 2014, with a bird on 20th August noted flying west over North Haven. Presumably the same individual was seen over Skokholm the same day. This constitutes the 20th record for Skomer, and the first since 2006.

**Common Kestrel Falco tinnunculus**  
*Breeds sporadically in small numbers. Uncommon migrant.*

No breeding attempt was noted in 2014. The first record of the year concerned a bird seen on 13th and 14th March, with further singles seen on 21st and 25th. The sole May report was of a bird noted by a visitor at the Garland Stone on 16th. June produced singles on four dates, while July produced seven further records, also all of single birds. August saw an increased frequency of sightings, with records on 14 dates, including two on 20th and 28th. Birds were noted almost daily in September, with three present on seven dates and a peak of four on 24th. October then saw between one and two birds on all bar one date. Up to two noted almost daily through November, until the seasons end.

**Merlin Falco columbarius**  
*Uncommon migrant*

First noted on 18th March, with a bird lingering until 19th. A female was present on 26th and another single was seen on 30th March. Recorded on two dates in April, with a single bird on 27th and 28th; these representing the last sightings of a relatively quiet spring. The first autumn migrant wasn’t noted until 14th October, with further singles on 16th, 25th and 27th. November then produced sightings on 10 dates until the seasons end, with two noted on 16th and 23rd.

**Hobby Falco subbuteo**  
*Scarce migrant, not recorded every year*

An adult seen flying east over North Haven on 14th September was the first of the year. A second record concerned a juvenile flying over South Stream on 6th and 7th October.

**Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus**  
*Scarce breeder. Uncommon migrant*

Between one and six noted almost daily through the season, these sightings concerning mostly breeding stock. A higher count during the year concerned eight on 18th April (including at least one clear migrant noted passing Skomer Head). Three pairs held territory on the island this year, At Protheroe’s Dock, Double Cliff and High Cliff. However only the Protheroe's Dock pair were confirmed as successful. The nest was located on 14th May and one chick fledged from there, with the young male being seen on several dates from 27th June.

**Water Rail Rallus aquaticus**  
*Possibly breeds very sporadically in small numbers. Fairly common migrant*

Following last year’s bumper spring, 2014 was slightly disappointing, with singles on 16th-18th March the only spring records. September saw the first autumn migrants arrive, with between one and three birds noted almost daily from 7th, and high counts of six on 19th and five on 24th. Regular sightings continued in October, with between one and five birds noted on all but five dates and a years peak count of seven on 11th. November continued to produce near daily records of between one and six birds, with seven on 23rd and 25th the last records of the year.
Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
*Uncommon breeder*

Present throughout the season, with peak spring counts of six on 14<sup>th</sup> April and seven on 25<sup>th</sup> April, and peak autumn counts of 15 on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 13 on North Pond on 26<sup>th</sup> September and 14 on 20<sup>th</sup> October, again all on North Pond. A minimum of four pairs were confirmed, with first chicks noted on 11<sup>th</sup> May and first fledglings on 3<sup>rd</sup> July.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*
*Fairly common breeder*

Present all year. Maximum spring roost counts included 146 on South Stream rocks on 14<sup>th</sup> March and 141 in the same location on 16<sup>th</sup> March. Roost counts declined by the end of April as breeding pairs formed and birds took up breeding territories. Sixty-six pairs were mapped this year and, though productivity wasn’t monitored, it appeared to be an average season, with small numbers of chicks fledging. Autumn counts were never as large as in the spring, with high counts of 60 on 9<sup>th</sup> October and 50 on 13<sup>th</sup> November.
**European Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*
*Uncommon migrant*

There were four spring records, with two on 18th and 21st May, a singleton on 24th of that month and one on 18th June. September produced one on 5th, two on the Neck on 24th and one on 29th, while October produced one over Broad Sound on 13th and another on 29th. Two on 16th November were the last of the year.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*
*Rare migrant*

The sole record on the island was of presumably the same bird seen and heard on consecutive days on 15th and 16th April (EMS et al.). This is the first record since one on 8th October 2005.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*
*Uncommon migrant. Has bred in the past*

This species last attempted to breed in 2000 and is now an uncommon visitor to Skomer. The first of the year was recorded on 20th April, with a further singleton seen on 14th May and another on 30th June. July saw four fly over North Castle on 2nd and another two birds on 18th. The autumn produced just one record, that being a bird seen on North Pond on 19th November.

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*
*Uncommon migrant*

There were two spring records on the island, both of calling fly-over birds, on 14th and 16th May. The first of the autumn was a juvenile bird on North Pond on 26th and 27th August. September produced records of singles on 4th and 11th and another single between 14th and 18th, joined by a second bird on 15th. These were the last records of the year.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*
*Common migrant*

The first of the year was a sighting of two on 14th April, with frequent sightings throughout April and May, peaking at nine on 5th May and 12 on 14th May. There were just two records of singles in June, on 10th and 14th, with a further two records in July on 16th and 25th. The frequency of records increased again in August, with the first autumn returnee arriving on 25th, followed by a year’s peak of 16 on 28th and two more on 30th. September produced sightings on 15 dates, with peaks of six on 2nd and 15th and eight on 14th. One on 18th September was the last record of the year, with apparently no birds set to overwinter on the island.

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*
*Scarce breeder. Common migrant*

Present throughout the season, with breeding territories at Gorse Hill, Pyramid Rock and Abyssinia. Two chicks were reared to fledging by the Gorse Hill pair. Both other pairs produced young, but none succeeded in fledging. Migrants noted occasionally throughout the spring, including high counts of 20 on 14th, 15th and 19th March, 19 on 15th April and 18 on 6th May. Autumn passage commenced in July with 30 on 11th. Counts of 15 on two days in August certainly involved non-breeding migrant birds, while September saw a further increase in numbers, with 40 on 1st and 27 on 14th the highest counts, the former being the years highest count. Counts of more than 10 were noted on three dates in October, but numbers again increased in November with counts of more than 20 noted on six days before the end of the season.
Bar-tailed Godwit \textit{Limosa lapponica}
\textit{Scarce migrant}

The sole record of this impressive world traveller was of a single bird flying over West Pond calling on 29\textsuperscript{th} April.

Turnstone \textit{Arenaria interpres}
\textit{Common migrant}

Present on the day of arrival on the island, with five in North Haven on 12\textsuperscript{th} March. Small numbers were present through the month, peaking at six on 27\textsuperscript{th}. Recorded on 15 dates in April, again peaking with six on 7\textsuperscript{th}. Numbers tended to dwindle into May, though the years peak count occurred during the month, with 23 seen on 13\textsuperscript{th}. We had to wait until 11\textsuperscript{th} August before returning autumn passage birds arrived with small numbers noted sporadically through August and September, except higher counts of 10 on 5\textsuperscript{th}, 13 on 26\textsuperscript{th} and 16 on 30\textsuperscript{th} September. Recorded on most days in October and November with high counts of 17 on 4\textsuperscript{th} October, 15 on 6\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} October and 15 on 12\textsuperscript{th} November.

Knot \textit{Calidris canutus}
\textit{Rare migrant}

The sole record this year concerned a bird found roosting amongst Oystercatchers off the Wick on 15\textsuperscript{th} September. Presumably the same bird was noted on the southern rocks of South Plateau on 20\textsuperscript{th} September. This record constitutes only the 18\textsuperscript{th} for the island.

Ruff \textit{Philomachus pugnax}
\textit{Rare migrant}

One record this year of a female bird on North Pond on 8\textsuperscript{th} September. This comes on the back of a record of a male at Moorey Mere on the 7\textsuperscript{th} May 2013. Despite there being well over 30 records of this species on the island, these two records represent the first since one was seen on North Pond on 13\textsuperscript{th} April 2006.

Dunlin \textit{Calidris alpina}
\textit{Uncommon migrant}

First record of the year was of three on 21\textsuperscript{st} April, while records on 10 dates in mid to late May included a spring peak count of six on 13\textsuperscript{th}. The first autumn returnees were noted on 14\textsuperscript{th} August, with three on North Pond. Records then consisted of one on 18\textsuperscript{th}, one juvenile on 26\textsuperscript{th} and two the following day. Noted on 23 dates in September, with between one and two frequently present and higher counts of five on 4\textsuperscript{th}, three on
12th, 19th and 22nd and six on 13th. October produced one record of a single bird on 31st. The final record fell on 7th November, with two fly overs.

**Purple Sandpiper** *Calidris maritima*  
*Uncommon visitor*

Two records in May concerned four on the rocks at South Castle on 4th and four in the same place on 13th. The first autumn sightings involved two on 24th September, while October produced four on 1st (one Rye Rocks and three Shag Rock) and one at the Basin on 26th. The last record of the season was of two birds on 3rd November.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*  
*Scarce migrant*

There were two records of this diminutive little wader, both in September. The first was of a juvenile that arrived on 5th and spent two days on North Pond. The second record was of another juvenile on North Pond on 12th September.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*  
*Uncommon migrant*

First of the year was recorded on 19th April, with two the following day. Spring passage was light, with singles between 3rd and 4th and between 15th and 16th May the only records. Autumn passage commenced on 2nd July with one present, followed by further records of single birds on four dates during the latter half of the month. There were seven records in August, including two on 4th. September produced sightings on 10th and 12th, with two present on 11th, and two on 18th. These were the last sightings of the season.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*  
*Scarce migrant*

The first record of the year was of a bird flying over North Valley on 3rd May. Further sightings include one on 19th June, one on 24th August and one on 3rd September, this representing the final record of the year.

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*  
*Scarce migrant*

A vocal bird on 5th September and another single on North Pond on 14th September were the only records of 2014.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes*  
*Vagrant*

A juvenile of this rare transatlantic vagrant was discovered on North Pond on 11th September (LPL et al.), where it showed very well for the whole day in front of the research hide. It was still present early the following day, but flew off calling at 07:50. A juvenile bird discovered at Marloes Mere on the mainland on 15th was likely to have been the same relocating bird. This record has been accepted by the BBRC, and constitutes the second island record, following one found on 7th August 1969.
Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
*Scarce migrant*

The sole record this year was of a bird which flew over Green Pond early in the morning of 25th July. Following on from one in 2013, these are the first records since 2008.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*
*Uncommon migrant*

A good year, with eight records involving at least nine birds. The first of the year was a bird on Moorey Mere on 19th June, followed by one on 18th July, one on 22nd and 23rd July, two on 5th and 6th August, three on 20th August and one on 8th September.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minimus*
*Scarce winter migrant*

There was only one record of this species in 2014, with one seen in East Bog on 14th September.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*
*Uncommon migrant*

First noted on 31st October, with one present. Further singles were then noted on four dates in November, with the last sighting falling on 18th.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*
*Common migrant*

Between one and three noted through most of March, with peak counts of four on 14th and five on 15th. Numbers dwindled through April, with sightings on only six dates all involving singles except for six noted on 8th. One on 3rd and 6th May were the last spring sightings. Autumn returnees were first noted on 4th August
with one bird followed by three on 5th and further singles on 22nd and 31st. September saw sightings become much more frequent with between one and three on 21 dates with the exception of five on 11th and 16th and six on 19th. October was a bit quieter with only small numbers noted on 15 dates and one higher count of nine on 22nd. November Produced the bulk of the year’s sightings with birds present on most days and higher counts of 12 on 15th and 17th and 13 on 22nd.

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*
*Uncommon migrant*

The first record was of one on 4th May, this being the only spring sighting. The autumn also only produced one record, though the count of nine birds flying south past the Garland Stone between 07:00 and 08:30 on 19th October is the joint record day count for the island, matching nine seen on 3rd September 1992.

**Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus*
*Vagrant*

A juvenile bird on 21st October (JWM) was spotted circling over the North Haven sales point before flying over the North Haven building, into South Haven and then out of sight. This represents the seventh record for the island, following one on 6th October 2011.

**Great Skua** *Stercorarius skua*
*Scarce migrant*

One was observed flying past the Mew Stone on 24th April, while further singles were seen offshore on 3rd and 6th May. The sole autumn record concerned one seen flying south off the Garland Stone on 19th October.

**Puffin** *Fratercula arctica*
*Very abundant breeder*

One on the sea on 18th March was the first of the season, with numbers building slowly through to the months end, but not noted to reach significant numbers until 4th April, when 3,917 were counted. First recorded on land on 3rd April, but didn’t settle properly until early May. Two whole island counts were conducted, on 17th and 18th April, producing 18,237 and 14,875 individuals respectively. The larger of the two counts is 5.4% down on 2013’s record count. Productivity on the Neck study plot was 0.53 chicks per pair, this representing a 25% decrease on 2013’s figure. A productivity study conducted for the first time at the Wick produced a figure of 0.63. It is intended that this plot will be studied again in 2015. The first egg was found on 19th May. One adult was spotted carrying fish on 4th (indicating that the first eggs had hatched), followed by three on 14th and large numbers carrying fish on 23rd June. The first ‘puffling’ was seen out of the burrow on 17th July. A mid-summer whole island count was conducted on 15th July and produced a total of 10,488 individuals. Numbers of adults on land dwindled at the end of July, with only ‘a few on land’ on 4th August and 14 counted on 15th August. One was seen still feeding young on 26th August, this being the last sighting and record of the season. Severe storms over the 2013/14 winter saw many thousands of Puffins washing up dead in France, Spain and the west coast of Britain. It was also generally a poor and extremely late breeding season for Puffins on Skomer in 2014.
Fig. 6  Puffin population data 1988-2014


J. Moss ©
**Razorbill Alca torda**  
*Very abundant breeder*

Present on the cliffs on the day of wardens arrival and proceeded to come and go through the early spring. None were noted on the cliffs during periods between 22nd and 23rd March, between 5th and 8th and between 20th and 21st, and they were again noted as 'as good as absent' on 26th April. Despite these comings and goings, first mating was noted on 9th April. Very few were on the cliffs on 2nd May, but the following days saw birds settle properly for the summer. The whole island count produced a population mean of 6,541 individuals. This represents a decrease of 1.83% from 2013's total. Productivity was poor this year, at just 0.27. The first egg was noted on 12th May, with the first chick seen on 16th June and first 'jumpling' on 29th June. Around 80% cliff occupancy on 4th May. The whole island population counts produced a mean total of 23,493 individuals, up 12.61% on 2013’s count. Productivity was calculated at 0.63, this being the same as in 2013 and slightly lower than the overall mean of 0.68 (1989 – 2014).

**Fig. 7  Razorbill population data 1962-2014**

**Common Guillemot Uria aalge**  
*Very abundant breeder*

Present on the cliffs on the date of wardens arrival to the island, the birds came and went with remarkable synchronisation with the Razorbills, being absent from the cliffs between 22rd and 23rd March, 5th and 7th, 20th and 21st April and 'as good as absent on 27th April. Around 80% cliff occupancy on 4th May. The whole island population counts produced a mean total of 23,493 individuals, up 12.61% on 2013’s count. Productivity was calculated at 0.63, this being the same as in 2013 and slightly lower than the overall mean of 0.68 (1989 – 2014). First seen mating on 1st April. First egg was seen on 5th May with four birds on eggs on 8th. First chick was seen on 10th June and first 'jumpling' on 28th June. Numbers on the cliffs declined rapidly through the end of July, with very few remaining at the start of August, though a chick was still present at Bull Hole on 2nd. One adult on the cliff on 9th August was the last of the summers breeding birds. Autumn sightings offshore were sporadic, with the only significant count being 20 on 19th October. Birds returned to the cliffs at the Garland Stone on 22nd October, with 40 counted there and 200 counted the next day there and at the Basin. After a brief absence birds again returned to the cliffs on 16th November, with 400 at the Wick. Birds were present around the island on 26th November, this being the last sighting of the season.
Fig. 8  Common Guillemot population data 1962-2014

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*
*Uncommon migrant*

The first of the season was a sighting of nine birds on 17th April. This was followed in July by one on 21st and four flying across the Isthmus on 23rd. One on 2nd August was the final sighting of the year.
Sabines Gull 
*Xema sabini*

Vagrant

A juvenile bird was seen flying past the Garland Stone during a seawatch between 07:00 and 08:30 on 19\textsuperscript{th} October (JWM). The sighting occurred during a large passage of Kittiwakes which appeared to have been pushed into St Brides Bay during strong south westerly winds the previous day. This represents only the 3\textsuperscript{rd} record for the island, following individuals on 20\textsuperscript{th} November 1996 and 3\textsuperscript{rd} October 2011.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*

*Very abundant breeder*

Present on the wardens arrival to the island, with a count of 1,000 made on 21\textsuperscript{st} March. The whole island counts produced an island population figure of 1,488 occupied nests, this being a 42.4\% increase on 2013’s figure, though still representing a significantly reduced population figure, being 20\% below the islands 10 year mean. Productivity stood at 0.64, this being slightly above the islands monitoring average of 0.63 (1989 – 2014). Breeding success was severely hampered at the South Stream colony this year due to persistent predation of nests by a Carrion Crow, resulting in only 23 large chicks being produced from 89 apparently occupied nests. Birds were first noted nest building on 12\textsuperscript{th} April, with the first egg seen 19\textsuperscript{th} May, first chick seen on 24\textsuperscript{th} June and first fledgling on 27\textsuperscript{th}. Small numbers of birds remained on the breeding cliffs into early September, but were gone by 11\textsuperscript{th}. From then sightings were sporadic, with significant counts during the autumn of 200 in Broad Sound on 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1,383 south past the Garland Stone in a 1.5 hour seawatch on 19\textsuperscript{th} and 430 south past the Garland Stone on 21\textsuperscript{st} October. Small numbers were noted through November, with two seen on 26\textsuperscript{th} as the wardens left the island.

![Fig. 9 Kittiwake population data 1960-2014](image-url)
**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

*bred in the past. Abundant visitor, particularly in the autumn*

The first record of the year was of two on 14th March, followed by 28 seen on 16th March. Following a blank April birds were seen only sporadically through May and June (peaking with five birds on 22nd May). Sightings increased during July as failed or finished breeders began to disperse (along with the first juveniles) into Skomer waters. The first juvenile was seen on 18th July, while peak counts during the month included 13 on 9th, 66 on 10th and 15 on 20th. August was quieter with sightings of singles only on 11th and 12th. September saw sightings increase again with birds recorded on 19 dates and peak counts of 14 on 3rd, 28 on 4th and nine on 8th. Almost daily sightings through October saw high counts of 200 on 14th and 100 on 15th. November again saw almost daily sightings until the seasons end, with a peak of 200 birds in Jack Sound on 26th.

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*

*uncommon autumn and winter visitor*

A record year. The first record of 2014 involved a juvenile bird seen flying over South Stream on 29th July. This was followed in September by four records of singles, probably involving three birds, on 7th, 12th (a juvenile bird in North Haven, followed by presumably the same bird on 17th, also in North Haven) and one on 30th. October saw a remarkable run of records, with a large flock of gulls lingering in Broad Sound containing record numbers of Mediterranean Gulls. Following one on 2nd, the 13th produced a count of 32 (mostly adults), with 38 on 14th. These counts were eclipsed on 16th when 66 were counted, again mostly involving adult birds. This represents by far the largest count of the species on record, eclipsing the previous record of 20 on 18th November 2012. One was noted past the Garland Stone on 19th, and a juvenile was seen on 24th. Noted on four occasions in November, with two on 11th and 17th, one on 18th and finally seven in Jack Sound on 26th.

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*

*uncommon visitor*

The first record of the season was of one on 24th July off the Garland Stone. Another single was seen on 6th September. Noted on three dates in October, with two on 14th followed by 11 on 15th (highest count of the year). A single bird on 27th was the last of the month. One was noted on 9th November, followed by two in Jack Sound on the 26th, these being the last sighting of the year.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

*very abundant breeder*

Present from the wardens arrival on the island, with birds abundant and on territory from the start. Eggs were first noted on 23rd April. The mean population estimate for 2014 was 8,432 breeding pairs, obtained through systematic counts of island sub-colonies in combination with whole island eye-counts and the application of a correction factor. This is 3.6% higher than the 2013 figure, but 11.2% lower than the current five-year average (2009 – 2013). Productivity was estimated to be 0.57, this being a significant increase on that of 2013, and the highest figure since 2010. Numbers dropped through September, with sightings becoming sporadic in November and the last sighting being of one on 21st November.
One was noted on 18th March at North Pond, while probably a different individual was seen near the Wick on 4th May.
**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

*Common breeder*

Present throughout the season. First noted mating on 17th April and first eggs confirmed on 23rd April. A total of 440 apparently occupied territories were counted this year, representing a decrease on the 491 territories noted in 2012 (unfortunately a census was not conducted in 2013). Productivity was calculated at 0.52, this being substantially lower than the figure obtained in 2012 (0.86) and lower than the island average of 0.71 (1962 – 2013). Numbers increased in the autumn, with high counts of 600 on the south side of the Neck on 13th October, 95 in North Haven on 13th and 120 on 15th November.

**Fig. 11 Herring Gull population data 1960-2014**

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**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucoides*

*Vagrant*

A first winter bird was logged flying over North Castle in the morning of 1st April (JWM). This is the ninth Skomer record, and the first since 2007.

**Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus*

*Vagrant*

A faded first winter bird was seen on 15th March (JWM), coming to the large evening gull roost at North Pond, with presumably the same bird returning on 17th and 19th March. April then produced another immature bird over the neck on 21st (EMS). These represent the 10th and 11th records of the species for Skomer and the first since 2005.

**‘Nelson’s Gull’ (Hybrid between Glaucous Gull and Herring Gull)**

*Vagrant*

Two birds which arrived together on 18th March (JWM, EMS), coming to the island during an evening roost of large white headed gulls, showed some features consistent with this hybrid type. This represents probably the first record of this hybrid on Skomer.
Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

*Fairly common breeder.*

Present all season, with a total of 107 AONs recorded, this being a significant increase on the 84 recorded in 2013 and 7% higher than the 10 year mean. Productivity was 1.88 this year, this being the highest figure obtained since recording began in 1996. Mating and nest building were first noted on 9<sup>th</sup> April, with first eggs found on 21<sup>st</sup> April and first chicks seen on 20<sup>th</sup> May. Flocks began forming in September, with a count of 248 on 20<sup>th</sup>. Further large day counts during the autumn include 245 on 4<sup>th</sup>, 116 at the Basin on 17<sup>th</sup> and 138 at the Wick on 19<sup>th</sup> October.

**Fig. 12  Greater Black-backed Gull population data 1960-2014**

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*

*Fairly common visitor*

The occasional feral pigeon or lost racing pigeon was noted on the island during 2014, with the first record being of one on 3rd May. Small numbers were then seen throughout most of the year, with peak counts of 42 flying north on 26th May, nine on 8th June and eight on 29th October, this being the last record of the year.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*

*Previously bred in small numbers, until 1988. Scarce migrant*

One on the 10th April was the only spring record. Similarly there was only one autumn record, with one arriving on 31st October.

**Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*

*Uncommon breeder. Common autumn migrant*

Between one and nine birds recorded almost daily throughout the season, with peak spring counts of 15 on 16th May, and 10 on 12th June. Four pairs are thought to have bred on the island. First fledged young noted on 14th July. Autumn passage began at the end of October, with 550 recorded flying east on 31st. November passage was subdued, with counts of 27 on 2nd and 115 on 9th the only records of note. The last record of the year was of one on 16th November.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

*Uncommon migrant*

The first sighting of the year was of a single bird on 14th March, followed by sightings of up to two birds on 12 days in May. June produced one on 1st, three on 8th and a further single on 17th, while July produced a single bird on 18th. September saw two birds arrive on 13th with one still on 14th, one on 17th and another single on 27th, this being the years final record.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

*Scarce migrant*

One was seen by the Harold Stone on 18th May, followed by the same or another bird on 20th May at the Farm. These are the years only records of this rapidly declining UK breeding species.
**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

*Scarce migrant*

A poor year with only two records. The first record involved a vocal bird in the North Valley willows on 26th May, followed by another single bird present for two days from 18th June.

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*

*Scarce and sporadic breeder*

The only spring record was of a bird at the farm on 15th which unfortunately met a sad end when it was found dead in the loft space of the hostel. It appeared to have spent much of the winter on the island, with fresh pellets found in various parts of the farm complex. The only other sighting this year was of a bird seen on 14th September found roosting in the North Valley willows.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*

*Scarce breeder*

First noted on 27th March, and singles only seen very sporadically in April. Sightings became more frequent in May and June. One pair bred on the island, fledging two chicks. Storm Petrel remains were discovered in the nest. Singles noted on four days in October, and three days in November, with the last sighting of one on 25th November.

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*

*Scarce to uncommon breeder. Uncommon migrant*

Seen throughout the season. Three pairs bred, with a pair at North Valley Rise, the Harold Stone/East Bog area and on the Neck. First chicks found in the nest on 6th May and first fledgling seen on 25th May. All three pairs bred successfully, rearing at least six chicks. The highest counts of the year both occurred in November, with six noted on 11th and a minimum of six on 25th.

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*

*Common migrant*

First record was of three on the 1st May, followed by sightings of between one to nine on a further 17 dates, with the exception of 13 on 7th, 16 on 15th, 21 on 16th (the years highest count) and 14 on 19th May. June then saw sightings on 14 dates, with peaks of eight on 22nd, 12 on 24th and seven on 25th. July produced sightings on 11 dates, with most occurring in the latter half of the month, including monthly peak passage of 15 on 19th and 10 on 22nd. August produced sightings on five dates, with a peak of 14 on 27th. The final records were of singles on 15th and 16th September.

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo athis*

*Vagrant*

A rather unexpected sighting concerned a bird which was seen flying through North Haven during morning boats on 3rd September (JWM). This is the 5th island record, and the first since 2007.

**Great-spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopus major*

*Scarce migrant*

One female was discovered on 18th November (EMS) in North Valley and another was recorded at East Bog on the 23rd (EMS). These are the 21st and 22nd records for the island of a species which has seen its status change from extreme rarity to annual visitor in a short space of time.
**Wryneck Jynx torquilla**

*Scarce drift migrant*

A good year for this scarce but annual drift migrant, with at least four individuals recorded, all in the autumn. The first was a bird found on 3\textsuperscript{rd} September (JWM) which lingered for three days at the farm. The 13\textsuperscript{th} then saw a run of daily sightings until 18\textsuperscript{th}, involving at least two birds. The first was an individual found by overnight guests at Captain Kites on 13\textsuperscript{th} which lingered there until 16\textsuperscript{th}. The 13\textsuperscript{th} also saw a bird discovered at Bull Hole which was also seen there on 14\textsuperscript{th} (JWM). This or another bird was then seen at Bull Hole on 17\textsuperscript{th}, after two days of absence. A bird was found at the Farm on 18\textsuperscript{th} September (JWM) which, while it may well have been a new bird, the chances that it may be a bird from the previous days relocating cannot be ruled out. Finally one was discovered near the Harold Stone on 13\textsuperscript{th} October (JWM). Another sighting of a bird at the Farm on 16\textsuperscript{th} October was presumed to be the same bird relocating. There have now been a minimum of 66 records of Wryneck on Skomer since the first was recorded in 1965.

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**Red-backed Shrike Lanius collurio**

*Rare drift migrant*

A female was found in the morning on 8\textsuperscript{th} June (JWM). The bird showed well by the hill water tank at the Farm. However, mobbed heavily by a variety of resident birds, the bird became mobile and wasn’t seen after lunchtime. Subject to acceptance by the WRP, this will represent at least the 27\textsuperscript{th} record for the island.

**Magpie Pica pica**

*Uncommon breeder*

Only two Magpie nests were found on the island this year, though the island breeding population is probably much larger than this. High counts during the season include 20 on 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 21\textsuperscript{st} and over 35 on 26\textsuperscript{th} September, and between 30 and 35 roosting in North Valley between 4\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} October.
Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

*Scarce breeder. Fairly common visitor from the mainland*

Three pairs nested on the island, with a pair at the Wick Basin, one in the Lantern and one at South Castle. Nest building was first seen at the Wick Basin on 13th April. Fledged young were only confirmed from the Lantern pair with a chick, attended by two adults, at the nest site on 20th June. In addition to the islands breeding birds, numbers were frequently bolstered by birds coming across from the mainland, with counts of up to 16 not infrequent throughout most of the year. The highest count of the year was 21 on 14th March.

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Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

*Fairly common breeder. Very abundant in the autumn*

Present throughout the season. No formal census was performed, though the species is clearly an abundant breeder. Monthly maximum counts are shown below in fig. 13. Jackdaws with ‘white collars’, sometimes known as ‘Nordic’ Jackdaws, were seen in Spring and Autumn. Individuals showing signs of being of the race *C. m. monedula* were seen and photographed around North Haven on the 3rd of April and again on the 15th of November.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>1p</td>
<td>1p</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>300</td>
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*Fig. 13* Maximum monthly counts of Jackdaw

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

*Uncommon migrant*

The first record was of two birds over the island on 31st March, these being the only spring records. The first autumn sighting was of eight on 27th September. October then produced records of 10 west over the Central Fields on 9th, five on 10th and 11th, 12 on 12th and eight on 14th, the latter being the last sighting of the year.
Carrion Crow Corvus corone
*Uncommon breeder. Fairly common migrant*

Present throughout the season, with eight nests located in various areas across the island. Nest building first noted on 20th March, first eggs on 13th April and first fledglings on 29th May. One individual noted targeting the Kittiwake colony at South Stream, decimated this population at the egg stage, resulting in very poor productivity for the gulls. High counts through the season include 22 on 26th March, 60 on 11th and 20 on 24th October.

Hooded Crow Corvus cornix
*Rare visitor*

Two records, with a bird at Captain Kites on 24th April (OP et al.) and another at the Basin on 14th May (JWM). Both birds appeared to be pure. These are the 18th and 19th island records, and the first since 2012.

Common Raven Corvus corax
*Scarce breeder. Common autumn visitor*

Present throughout the season, with four pairs nesting at the Basin, Matthews Wick, Mew Stone and Pigstone Bay. First eggs were noted at the Basin on 14th March, with first chicks on 9th April and first fledglings on 14th May. During the autumn large numbers of birds gathered on the island to take advantage of the abundant food and scavenging opportunities provided by the fledging Manx Shearwaters. The first sign of numbers building up was when 30 were counted on 28th July. Between 20 and 45 were frequently encountered during August, and frequently as many as 55 in September, with higher counts of 64 on 18th and 57 on 28th September. October saw lower counts on average to the months end, though the highest count of the year was made at the start of the month, with 75 on 4th. No more than eight were counted in November, with birds present to the seasons end.
Goldcrest  *Regulus regulus*  
*Fairly common migrant*

Two present on the day of arrival to the island, with small numbers present throughout March, peaking at five on 14th and 31st. Sightings were infrequent in April, with sightings on only six days, peaking at five on 9th. May produced one sighting of a single bird on 3rd. The first returning autumn migrant was seen on 2nd September, with sightings being almost daily during the month, the peak count being eight on 24th. Present on 26 days in October with peak counts of eight on 11th and 14th. Between one and four birds present on 11 days in November, until the last day of the season.

Firecrest  *Regulus ignicapillus*  
*Scarce migrant*

Only one record this year, with one bird found at the North Valley Crossing on 16th November. The next day, the same, or possibly a second bird was seen in the trees further down in North Valley Willows, where it remained until the 18th.

Blue Tit  *Cyanistes caeruleus*  
*Scarce migrant*

The only record of the year concerned a 1st winter bird which was first found in the Ivy at North Haven, before being seen between East Bog, North Valley and the Farm between 22nd and 29th September (though it wasn't noted on 23rd or 25th).

Skylark  *Alauda arvensis*  
*Scarce breeder. Common migrant*

Birds were present and singing on the wardens arrival to the island, with small numbers (between one and five) seen throughout the spring. No spring passage was noted. Three pairs held territories this year, representing a continued and severe decline in numbers on the island. Despite the fine weather, no breeding success was noted. Autumn passage commenced in the second week of September, with two on 10th being the first after a long absence. There was a high count of 35 on 22nd September. Passage really peaked in October with the highest counts of overhead migrants, including 50 on 5th, 95 on 11th, 101 on 12th, 79 on 14th and a years maximum of 465 west on 22nd October. November also produced a few good passage days, with high counts of 39 on 2nd, 60 on 9th and 34 on 16th.

Sand Martin  *Riparia riparia*  
*Common migrant*

The first record of the year occurred on 25th March, when two were seen, followed by four on 30th. April saw frequent sightings, on all but 12 days, with peak counts of 24 on 9th, 38 on 10th and 17 on 23rd. Small numbers (between one and seven) were seen on 13 days in May, with the exception of 10 on 15th. The sole June sighting was of one on 17th. Autumn passage commenced on 4th August, with three further sightings during the month peaking with five on 22nd. September saw sightings of between one and 18 birds on 17 dates, with the exception of 31 on 2nd, 26 on 4th and 100 on 19th, this latter count the highest of the year. The last sighting of the year was of one on 22nd September.

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

First recorded on 2nd April, with virtually daily sightings through to the last record of the year on 14th October. See table below (fig. 14) for peak spring passage. Eight pairs bred on the island, with seven pairs at the Farm and one in the North Haven garage (this pair laid two eggs but abandoned them soon after and did not build another nest). Many pairs succeeded in having second broods at the farm this year. Autumn passage began on 31st August, with 12 migrants noted travelling east in addition to the remaining breeding.
Birds. Passage then continued with gusto throughout September, with peak counts recorded below (fig. 15). October saw passage involving three-figure counts on five dates, the highest count being 390 on 11th.

<table>
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<th>4th May</th>
<th>6th May</th>
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*Fig. 14* Peak spring counts of Swallow

<table>
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<th>15th Sep</th>
<th>16th Sep</th>
<th>19th Sep</th>
<th>21st Sep</th>
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<td>14,280</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>4,100</td>
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</table>

*Fig. 15* Peak autumn counts of Swallow

**House Martin Delichon urbicum**  
*Common migrant*

First recorded on 13th April, with two birds moving through, passage was then noted on a further 41 spring days, with peak counts of 32 on 13th, 19 on 14th and 16 on 18th May. None were recorded in July, with the first autumn record being of three birds on 7th August. Birds were noted on a total of 32 autumn dates, with peak passage recorded below in fig. 6. The last record of the year was of six on 11th October.

<table>
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<th>14th Sep</th>
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<td>59</td>
<td>61</td>
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*Fig. 16* Peak autumn counts of House Martin
Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

*Vagrant*

One was discovered in the North Haven Ivy on the afternoon of 7\textsuperscript{th} June (EMS), where it showed well on occasions, but was gone the following day. Pending acceptance by the WRP, this will be the 4\textsuperscript{th} island record, following individuals in 1990, 1996 and 2012.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

*Scarce migrant*

A good year with four records. The first of the year arrived in the east bog willows on 11\textsuperscript{th} October (JWM), where it remained for the rest of the day. The next record occurred on 29\textsuperscript{th} (EMS), with two birds discovered on the island, one of which lingering until 2\textsuperscript{nd} November. Finally another was found on 11\textsuperscript{th} November (EMS). These represent the 23\textsuperscript{rd} to 26\textsuperscript{th} records for the island.
**Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

*Abundant migrant*

Present on the island when the wardens arrived on 12th March, with between one and eight birds recorded on 74 spring days, with the exception of peak counts of 27 on 30th and 21 on 31st March, 14 on 3rd and 13 on 9th April. Two pairs are believed to have probably bred on the island, with a recently fledged juvenile seen at the farm on 18th July and another pair which summered in North Valley (including a bird trapped and ringed there with a brood patch on 25th July). Autumn produced sightings on 81 dates with the years highest count of 34 on 22nd September, along with further high counts of 20 on 14th, 22 on 19th, 19 on 21st and 18 on 26th September.

**Siberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus c. tristis*

*Rare migrant, though possibly under recorded in the past*

Birds showing features of this race were recorded on 12 dates between 27th October and 11th November (all EMS), a fairly typical late showing for this race. Records included two birds on 29th and 30th October and 2nd, 4th, 5th and 10th November. Judging from the distribution and timing of sightings, there were at least six birds involved. These records are subject to acceptance by the WRP.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

*Abundant migrants*

Spring passage started with three on 29th March, followed by a good count of 52 birds the following day. Further high counts during the peak passage periods in April include a years peak of 118 on 15th followed by 34 on 17th, 27 on 19th, 52 on 22nd and 33 on 23rd. Smaller numbers continued to pass through the island throughout May (peak of 16 on 12th), with a single bird on 1st June the last spring record. The first southbound juvenile migrants arrived in mid-July with six lemon yellow juveniles on 17th. Birds were recorded on a further 59 autumn dates with peak counts of 46 on 25th and 12 on 29th July, 10 on 4th and 17 on 28th August and 25 on 2nd, 17 on 3rd, 35 on 14th and 17 on 15th September. The final record was of one on 14th October.

**'Northern' Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus t. acredula*

*Vagrant*

There were three records (involving five individuals) of birds fitting the description of the pale 'Northern' acredula race of Willow Warbler, with three birds found on 30th March (EMS), one noted on 22nd April (EMS) and one on 10th and 11th October (JWM) in the East Bog Willows.

**Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria*

*Vagrant*

One was discovered nearby the North Valley Crossing on the evening of 25th October (JWM). Pending acceptance by the WRC, this will be the 10th record for Skomer, following one in 2013.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

*Common migrant*

The first migrant of the year arrived on 29th March, with birds then recorded on a further 33 days in the spring, including peak counts of 26 on 15th (the years highest count), 9 on 17th, 10 on 19th and 14 on 22nd April. The last record of the spring fell on 21st May. July produced records of single birds on three dates, while August saw just one sighting on 30th. Sightings were more frequent in September, though counts never exceeded six birds. October produced sightings on 21 dates, with a peak count of seven on 22nd. One to two noted on four November dates, with the final sighting on 16th.
**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*
*Uncommon migrant*

There was only one record in the spring, of a single bird in the Moorey Mere willows on 26th May. Autumn then produced records of single birds on 4th August, 2nd to 5th, 15th to 16th, 19th and 25th September.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*
*Scarce migrant*

There were at least two records of this uncommon passage migrant, the first involving a bird in the large Blackthorn at North Valley Crossing on 16th September. Presumably the same bird was also present there on 18th. The next arrived on 29th October, with presumably the same bird again on 31st.

**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*
*Uncommon breeder*

The first birds of the year arrived on 17th April, with two birds appearing. Sightings were then virtually daily from then on through the summer, with breeding birds settling into territories. Peak spring counts were of 29 on 14th and 21 the following day, presumably involving some passing migrants. Twenty-six territories were mapped this year, an increase on the 18 recorded in 2013. Sightings rarely exceeded 10 in the autumn, with the exception of 12 on 28th August and 15 on 4th September. The last record of the year was of one on 22nd September.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*
*Uncommon migrant*

The first of the year arrived on 21st April, with two the following day. This was followed by singles on 24th and 25th April (singing on the latter date). One on the 4th May and two on 6th May were the last records of the year.
**Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina*
*Rare migrant*

One was discovered in the North Valley willows on the morning of 2\textsuperscript{nd} September (JWM, LPL), where it showed well for much of the day. Pending acceptance by the WRC, this represents the 17\textsuperscript{th} island record, and the first since 2010.

**Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta*
*Rare migrant*

Three records this year. The first was found at the farm on 3\textsuperscript{rd} September (LPL, JWM, EMS) (remarkably a day after an Icterine Warbler had been discovered on the island) where it remained only briefly before being lost before lunchtime. The second bird was discovered in the East Bog willows on the morning of 26\textsuperscript{th} September (JWM), where it remained only briefly. The final record concerned a bird seen in the East Bog Willows between 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} October (JWM). After a short absence, presumably the same bird was seen again on 10\textsuperscript{th}(EMS). Pending acceptance by the WRC, these birds will represent the 12\textsuperscript{th}, 13\textsuperscript{th} and 14\textsuperscript{th} records for Skomer, and the first since 2008.
**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*  
*Uncommon breeder. Uncommon migrant*

One singing in the North Valley on 16th April was the first of the year, with sightings becoming daily from 22nd April, as birds settled into territories virtually instantly. High spring counts included 30 on 12th, 40 on 13th, 45 on 14th (highest count of the year) and 27 on 16th May. An impressive 44 territories were mapped this year, up on 32 in 2013 and equalling the count made in 2012. The first fledglings were noted on 22nd June. Sightings became infrequent from 19th September, with counts in the autumn exceeding double figures on only one occasion, with 14 on 3rd September. The last record was of two birds noted on 1st October.

**Blyth’s Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum*  
*Vagrant*

One was found in the North Haven ivy on 26th May (EMS, OP et al.) where is showed well on occasions and was often heard in full song. If accepted by the BBRC, this will become the first record for Skomer.

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*  
*Uncommon migrant*

One on 30th March was the earliest ever recorded on the island, with the previous earliest occurring on 11th April 2004. Further spring records included one on 17th and 27th May (both singing) and 1st and 8th June. Autumn then produced singles on 4th, 18th, 25th September and 1st and 8th October; the latter being the final record of the year.

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*  
*Fairly common breeder*

Present all season. Sixty-four territories were mapped, two more than the previous season. Nest building was noted at Moorey Mere on 22nd April, with the first fledglings were noted on 1st June.
Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
*Very abundant migrant*

Present in all months except May, with a long absence from the 24<sup>th</sup> April to 9<sup>th</sup> June. Spring counts were low, never exceeding 19, but numbers increased in early autumn as roving bands of up to 90 juveniles began to arrive from the mainland, roosting mostly in the willows by the North Pond research hide in July and August. Larger numbers of south-bound birds began migrating through later in the autumn, with high counts in October of 260 on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 447 on 22<sup>nd</sup>, 725 on 24<sup>th</sup> and 450 on 31<sup>st</sup>. November produced some impressive days of passage, as illustrated below in fig. 17. The final record of the year was on 25<sup>th</sup> November, when 210 were seen.

![Figure 17 Peak November Starling counts](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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<td>2,490</td>
<td>1,846</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>550</td>
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Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*
*Uncommon migrant*

Spring produced three records, involving at least four birds. The first record was of two birds on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, followed by a smart male on 15<sup>th</sup> April. The final record of the spring concerned a female at the farm between 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> May. Autumn produced four individuals, with a male on 15<sup>th</sup> October, a female on 29<sup>th</sup> October, another female on 15<sup>th</sup> November and a 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird on 19<sup>th</sup> November, this being the last of the year.

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

Only two pairs bred on the island this year, the lowest breeding population since 1967. Passage was non-existent in the spring, with counts never exceeding the resident population. While birds were present throughout most of the autumn (most sightings probably relating to the resident breeding birds) passage was very subdued, with October producing a peak count of only 21 on 28<sup>th</sup>, and not exceeding six on other October dates. November fared slightly better, with sightings of between one and 18 on most dates and higher counts of 30 on 16<sup>th</sup>, 19 on 18<sup>th</sup>, 26 on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20 on 20<sup>th</sup>.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*
*Scarce and very sporadic breeder. Common migrant*

Spring passage was poor with sightings on 19 days in the spring and maximum counts of three birds on two days in March. An unusual midsummer record concerned a single bird on 26<sup>th</sup> July, while another relatively early bird arrived on 2<sup>nd</sup> August. Autumn migration began in September, with two birds on 28<sup>th</sup> followed by a
single on 29th. Sightings were more frequent through October, with peak counts of 30 on 11th, 20 on 24th and 30 on 29th. There were almost daily sightings of between one and 14 through November, to the last day of the season. Higher counts during the month include 28 on 5th, 24 on 9th, 29 on 15th, 25 on 16th and 28 on 22nd.

**Redwing Turdus iliacus**
*Common migrant*

As with Song Thrush, very little spring passage was noted, with sightings of singles on two dates in March and a group of three on 4th April the only spring sightings. The first autumn migrants didn’t arrive until 11th October (involving three birds), after which small numbers (not exceeding 12 birds) were seen on most days with the exception of higher counts of 30 on 14th, 25 on 15th and 120 on 22nd. There were almost daily sightings of between one and 12 through November until the final day of the season, with the exception of 42 on 19th.

**Mistle Thrush Turdus viscivorus**
*Uncommon migrant*

First of the year was a single bird on the Neck on 12th October, followed by another single in the same location on 14th. November then produced two birds on 11th followed by three on 16th.

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

The first record of the year on 19th April represents the 3rd earliest arrival date for the island, following birds on 24th March 1997 and 17th April 1985. The next sighting wasn’t until the more typical date of 12th May, when six birds arrived. Sightings occurred on a further 14 dates in May, with a peak of eight on 13th, 15th and 16th. June produced single birds on 5th and 18th while July saw one record of a single on 17th. Autumn saw sightings on 21 dates, with September being the peak month of passage. Peak counts include 18 on 14th and 19 on 15th (this being the highest count of the year) with the final record being of one on 26th September.

**Robin Erithacus rubecula**
*Last breeding record 1994. Very abundant migrant*

Present on the wardens arrival on the island, between one and seven birds were seen throughout March. Numbers dwindled through April, with sightings of no more than two birds on just nine dates, while May produced singles on a further nine dates. The next record wasn’t until July, with singles on three dates from 29th. Sightings then picked up through August, though counts only exceeded six on two dates, with 14 on 28th and 20 on 31st. September, October and November saw good numbers of birds throughout, with between eight and 60 birds seen daily and peak counts of 64 on 18th September, 69 on 1st and an impressive
101 on 11th October. Two were noted on 26th November, and will probably form part of a small island wintering population.

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*
*Uncommon migrant*

First recorded on the early date of 19th April, with a further individual on 23rd April representing the last record of a quiet spring. The first record of the autumn concerned two birds on 3rd September, with further singles on 11th, 13th and 22nd.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*
*Rare migrant*

There was one record of this smart *Ficedula*, concerning a 1st winter found on 19th September (JWM) at the North Valley Crossing, where it spent most of the day amongst the willows. Pending acceptance by the WRP, this represents the 18th record for the island, and the first since 2011.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*
*Uncommon migrant*

First record was of a smart male bird at the farm on 12th March, with a female later on 22nd and 23rd. One female arrived on 16th April, while May produced a male on 5th-6th and a female on 20th. The first autumn migrants arrived in October, with a female on 27th and two birds on 31st. Noted on four days in November, with singles on 1st (female), 9th, 18th (male) and 19th (female), the latter being the last of the year.
Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*  
*Uncommon migrant*

The first arrival of the year concerned five birds (three males) on 15th April, with a single male remaining the following day. Birds were present on a further seven dates in the spring, with all records involving single birds except for three on 21st April (two males) and two on 15th May. The final spring record occurred on 16th May. Autumn passage was extremely poor, with the sole record concerning a 1st winter male on 19th September.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*  
*Uncommon migrant*

First recorded on 24th April, with further sightings on 18th and 24th May representing the only records in spring. A good autumn saw one on 22nd August followed by sightings on 16 dates in September, including peak counts of five on 4th, eight on 13th and 14th, 10 on 15th and five on 20th September. October produced two records of single birds, with one on 8th being the last of the year.

European Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*  
*Scarce breeder. Uncommon migrant*

Between one and four birds present throughout most of the season, with pairs breeding at North Valley Rise and Gorse Hill. Both pairs bred successfully, with the Gorse Hill pair succeeding in rearing two broods. This is the first confirmed breeding record since 2007. The highest counts of the year occurred in October, with migrant birds supplementing the islands resident population. These peaks involved nine on 10th, 17 on 11th and eight on 18th and 19th. Present throughout November in small numbers, with the last record being of two on 24th.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*  
*Common migrant. Uncommon breeder*

First of the year was noted on 14th March, when two were discovered. Noted on a further 12 dates during the month, peaking at eight on 28th. Recorded daily thereafter until the end of September as the islands breeding population settled into their territories. Peak spring passage counts are displayed below in fig. 18. A total of 15 pairs nested on the island this year, representing a decrease on the 22 pairs recorded in 2013. First noted feeding young on 12th May, with first fledglings on 26th May. Autumn passage first noted in September when 20 were logged on 13th, followed by 23 the following day and a count of 37 on 15th. The only other significant count of the year was of 20 on 21st September, with numbers dwindling through the rest of the month. Between one and four were noted through October until the last sighting of the year on 19th October.

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<th>18th April</th>
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<td>27</td>
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*Fig. 18* Peak spring passage counts

‘Greenland’ Wheatear *Oenanthe o. leucorhoa*  
*Uncommon migrant*

Birds showing features of the Greenland, Icelandic and NE Canadian race *Leucorhoa* were seen in both the spring and autumn, with the first five noted on 15th April followed by two on the following day. May then produced birds on four dates, with six on 3rd, ‘several’ on 4th and two on 5th and 6th. September produced three on 14th and up to two on the 15th.
**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti*

*Vagrant*

A smart male bird was found on the Neck on 28\(^{th}\) October (EMS). Subject to acceptance by the BBRC, this represents the second record for the island, following one found on 15\(^{th}\) November 2011.

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*

*Uncommon breeder. Fairly common autumn migrant*

Present all season with 10 breeding territories mapped, this being down on 12 in 2013. First fledglings were noted on 29\(^{th}\) May, and first fledglings from 2nd broods on 2\(^{nd}\) September. High counts indicating passage include 27 on 11\(^{th}\), 12 on 12\(^{th}\) and 14 on 14\(^{th}\) and 29\(^{th}\) October. Present until the last day of the season.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

*Uncommon migrant*

First record of the year concerned a male at the farm on 10\(^{th}\)-15\(^{th}\) June. September produced three records, involving one on 2\(^{nd}\), three on 22\(^{nd}\) and two on 25\(^{th}\). October records involved six on 11\(^{th}\), nine on 12\(^{th}\) at the farm and one flyover on 29\(^{th}\). The sole November record involved at least one bird heard flying over on 25\(^{th}\).

**House/Tree Sparrow hybrid**

An apparent hybrid House x Tree Sparrow arrived at the Farm with the flock of nine House Sparrows on 12\(^{th}\) October.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava flavissima*

*Uncommon migrant*

First record was of a single bird on 24\(^{th}\) April, with further sightings in May of singles on 6\(^{th}\), 17\(^{th}\), 20\(^{th}\) and 21\(^{nd}\). Autumn passage commenced on 25\(^{th}\) July, with a juvenile at the Farm. September then produced records on seven dates, all concerning single birds except for five on 11\(^{th}\) and two on 17\(^{th}\). One on 18\(^{th}\) September was the final record of the year.

**Blue-headed Wagtail** *Motacilla f. flava*

*Vagrant*

A male of this smart continental race was noted on 19\(^{th}\) May (EMS, JWM et. al.). This is the 7\(^{th}\) record of this race for the island, and the first since 22\(^{nd}\) May 2012.
'Iberiae' Yellow Wagtail Motacilla f. iberiae
Vagrant

A male bird showing many features of this rare southern subspecies was discovered in the evening of 15th May (EMS, JWM et al.) on Moorey Mere, where it could be watched hunting flying insects very actively. If accepted by the BBRC, this will become the first record of this race for Skomer.

Grey Wagtail Motacilla cinerea
Fairly common migrant

The first of the year was a single bird on 17th March, this being the only spring record. July produced records on 14th, 17th and 18th (a female), while August produced singles on a further three dates at the end of the month. September saw a distinct increase in occurrence, with sightings on 26 dates and peak counts (mostly involving fly-over birds) of eight on 5th and 8th, 10 on 7th, 11 on 10th and nine on 23rd. Between one and four birds were recorded on 17 dates in October. One on 24th November was the only record during the month, and the last of the year.

Pied Wagtail Motacilla alba yarrellii
Scarce breeder. Fairly common migrant

Present throughout the season with spring peak counts of seven on 29th March and eight on 1st April and 1st May. Two pairs bred on the island, with one at the Farm and one above the North Haven Landing. Nest building was noted on 4th April with birds carrying food on 18th May and the first fledglings noted on 19th June. The Farm pair successfully reared two broods. Summer peak counts included 14 on 24th and 12 on 25th July, these counts undoubtedly involving the islands juveniles. Peak counts during the autumn include 18 on 24th August and 2nd September, 22 on 3rd September and 12 on 19th September. Small numbers were present through October, with a peak of 10 on 11th. Two on 2nd November were the last records of the year.

White Wagtail Motacilla a. alba
Uncommon migrant

Small numbers were noted throughout the spring and autumn, with the first noted on 11th April. This was followed by one on 18th, two on 22nd and a further two on 25th April, while May produced one on 4th, one on 17th, two on 19th and one on 20th, the latter being the last of the spring. Recorded on 11 dates in autumn from 2nd September to 4th October, with peak counts of seven on 13th and 10 on 22nd September.
Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*
*Uncommon migrant*

First recorded on 13th April, with sightings on a further seven dates in April all involving singles, except for two on 17th at High Cliff. One on 14th May was the only May record and the final record of the spring. All autumn sightings occurred in September, with the first record being of one on 3rd. Further sightings involved singles on 4th and 9th, four on 11th, two on 12th, four on 14th, three on 15th and two on 29th September at South Stream, the latter being the last record of the year.

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

Present throughout the year as a frequently encountered breeding bird, though with numbers bolstered in spring and autumn by migrants. Spring peak counts include 40 on 13th, 102 on 14th and 70 on 15th and 19th March. Ninety-seven territories were mapped in 2014, up from c80 in 2013. The first nest was discovered on 15th April while birds were first noted carrying food on 6th May and first fledglings were seen on 17th May. Autumn saw flocks beginning to form from late August with 40 noted on 28th followed by 70 on 30th. Numbers continued to build in September with counts frequently over 100 and large flocks particularly at Skomer Head and Captain Kites. High counts include 110 on 8th, 340+ on 17th, 135 on 18th, 450 on 19th, 70 (mostly counted during light overhead passage) on 22nd, 200 on 26th and 250 on 27th and 28th. A count of 110 on 1st October was the final large count of the season, with numbers dwindling through the month, though light passage was still noted in suitable conditions on 9th (90), 11th (80), 16th, 22nd and 29th. Birds present through to the end of November and small numbers are likely to winter on the island.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*
*Uncommon breeder, not censused every year due to inaccessibility of nest sites. Fairly common migrant*

Present all season. Twenty-four Rock Pipit territories were plotted this year, an increase of one from the previous year. This total is likely an underestimate and an accurate assessment of the Rock Pipit population on Skomer would require a dedicated coastal census. Birds were first noted displaying on 30th March, with 1st fledglings seen on 17th May and many pairs achieving at least two broods. Larger counts were made during the autumn, when the island population is supplemented by incoming migrants. High counts include 18 on 31st August, 40+ on 17th, 33 on 26th, a years high of 100 on 27th September and 40 on 22nd October. Present throughout November, with a peak count of 15 on the Isthmus on 15th.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*
*Common migrant*

Noted on arrival to the island, with up to two seen on six march dates. The only other spring sightings involved singles on 9th and 28th April, one on 20th and two on 25th May, one female on 3rd and two individuals on 5th June. None were noted in July or August. The first of the autumn was recorded on 4th September, with a singleton noted. Two on 15th were then followed by almost daily sightings of between one and four birds, with the exception of eight on 28th and 14 on 29th September. Passage peaked in October with almost daily sightings during the month of between one and 21, and peak counts of 57 on 11th, 30 on 12th, 26 on 22nd and 25th, 50 on 29th and 30 on 31st. Between one and 15 noted almost daily in November to the seasons end as overhead passage continued, with a peak count of 42 on 16th.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
*Uncommon migrant*

There were no spring records. The first of the autumn was a female in the North Valley Willows on 9th October, lingering to the 10th. Two were present on 11th. Five birds flew over the farm on 14th October. The last record of the year was of one bird on 9th November.
**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

*Rare migrant*

The sole record for the year was of a female on 18th November.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

*Abundant migrant*

Present on the wardens day of arrival, and seen on all bar one day in March, with maximum counts during the month of 15 on 26th and nine on 27th. Spring passage peaked during the 2nd week of April, with counts of 81 on the 9th and 143 on 10th (highest of the year). Counts of more than 10 were made on a further six days during the month. May saw sightings of between one and four on 17 dates. Birds were then logged on 12 dates in June, with a maximum of five logged on two dates. A small group of juvenile birds logged on 29th, these almost certainly having commuted from the mainland, as no breeding activity was noted on the island this year. Small groups, often comprising family parties continued to arrive from the mainland throughout July, with sightings on 23 dates and a peak of eight birds on 15th. Numbers dwindled in August, with a maximum of five seen on only six dates. Sightings of between one and seven were almost daily in September, with higher counts of 10 on 28th and 21 on 29th. Passage continued in October with sightings on 26 dates peaking with 19 on 1st, 48 on 11th, 45 on 22nd and 30 on 29th. There were frequent encounters in November through to the last day of the season, with a peak count of 22 on 9th.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*

*Previously bred in small numbers. Last bred 2009. Frequent migrant*

One on 14th March was the first of the season, followed by sightings on nine further dates during the month peaking with 14 on 30th. Sightings increased in April with light passage during the first half of the month peaking at 119 on 9th, 80 on 10th, 22 on 15th and 21 on 16th. A bird was noted singing on 14th. Between one and 12 birds noted on 26 days in May, with higher counts of 18 on 16th, 15 on 25th and 17 on 30th and 31st. Two recently fledged young were seen on 29th, suggesting possible breeding on the island, though this could not be proven. Unfortunately breeding has not been proven on the island since 2009. Sightings were almost daily in June as small parties arrived from the nearby mainland, with peak counts of 20 on 1st and 5th and 24 on 2nd. Small numbers were noted (no more than 15) throughout July and August. September saw autumn passage become more evident, with peak counts of 30 on 15th, 24 on 17th, 123 on 18th (highest count of the year) and 30 on 22nd. October produced sightings on 16 dates with peaks of 33 on 1st, 48 on 11th, 30 on 12th, 49 on 16th and 50 on 22nd. Only recorded once in November, with 27 on 15th, this being the last sighting of the season.

**Lesser Redpoll** *Carduelis cabaret*

*Uncommon migrant*

Small numbers during the spring included one on 17th and two on 18th April, followed by three on 3rd and one on 25th May. Surprisingly there were no autumn records.

Fly-over birds not assigned to species were noted as follows; one on 10th, 12th, 13th and 17th, four on 18th and two on 19th April and singletons on 2nd, 6th, 21st and 25th May.

**Siskin** *Spinus spinus*

*Uncommon migrant*

Noted on six autumn dates as follows; one on 12th, three on 14th, one on 23rd, 10 on 26th and three on 29th October and eight on 5th November.
**Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus*
*Uncommon migrant*

The first of the year was a stunning summer plumaged male found on the main track between North Haven and the Farm on 30th March, where it remained until 4th April. October then produced one record of a fly-over on 1st, while November saw two records, with singles on 14th and 16th.

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**Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana*
*Rare migrant*

Two of these smart drift migrants were found in 2014, both in the autumn and both only lingering for a short while on the morning of their discovery. The first was a vocal juvenile found at the Farm on the morning of 2nd September (JWM), where it remained and showed well for around 40 minutes before disappearing. The second, also a vocal juvenile, was found by the chicken sheds below the Farm early in the morning on 10th September (JWM). This bird was seen even more briefly, only being on show for about a minute before flying off strongly to the south. Pending acceptance by the WRP, these represent the 19th and 20th records for Skomer, and the first since 2002.
Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

*Scarce breeder. Uncommon migrant*

Up to five birds seen sporadically throughout the spring, with no passage noted. Three pairs nested on the island this year, with a pair at Moorey Mere and two at North Valley Crossing. Fledged young were seen at Moorey Mere but the North Valley Crossing pairs both failed, despite attempting multiple broods. Nest building first noted on 24th and chicks being fed in the nest from 30th June. September saw the frequency of sightings increase as migrant birds arrived, with a peak count during the month of eight on 18th. Numbers increased further in October with almost daily sightings and peaks of 11 on 1st, 10 on 11th and 13 on 14th. November saw sightings become more sporadic, with counts never exceeding four and the final record being of one on 23rd.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*

*Vagrant*

A female-type of this rare eastern bunting was discovered in the afternoon on 21st May (JWM) behind the Farm, where it remained within the vicinity until 24th. If accepted by the BBRC, this will become the 6th Skomer record, and the first since 2004.
Exotica

**Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus*

*Escape*

One of these gigantic falcons, bearing falconers jesses, arrived on the island on 17\textsuperscript{th} August, where it remained around the Farm area the following day. Unexpectedly the bird was again seen four days later on 22\textsuperscript{nd}, having spent the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} on Bardsey Island, 119km to the north. Despite the bird being an obvious escape, it was no doubt one of the seasons highlights for those who saw it!
References


Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all Skomer Island staff, short and long-term volunteers, researchers, crew of the Dale Princess and all overnight guests who contributed bird sighting to the nightly bird log. Also particular thanks to Eddie Stubbings and Bee Büche who gave helpful comments and amendments to the report, Liam Langley who provided the migration summary and Steve Sutcliffe who contributed useful comments to the first draft.