
GUERNSEY

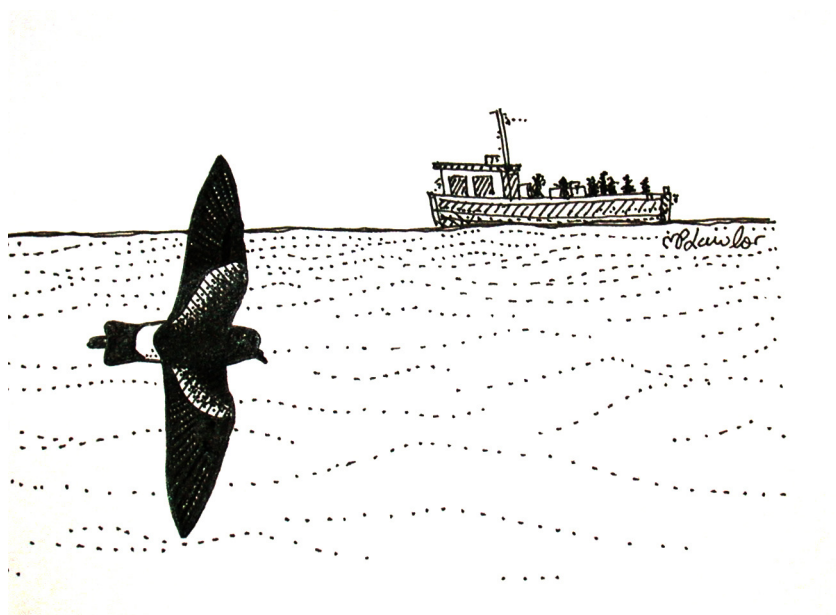


Bird Report 2003

LA SOCIETE GUERNESIAISE - ORNITHOLOGICAL SECTION

GUERNSEY BIRD REPORT

2003



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EDITOR - MARK LAWLOR

Based upon information supplied by the members of the Ornithological Section of La Societe Guernesiaise.

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front cover – Eastern Black Redstart – Mark Lawlor

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Editorial

This is the fourth consecutive year that a full systematic bird report for Guernsey has been compiled. There has always been a summary of the ornithological year published in the annual 'Transactions' of La Societe Guernesiaise, including an official report of the accepted rarities and a detailed ringing report. This continues to be the case, and this bird report is intended to complement the Transactions, and make it easier for birders throughout the world to find the information they require. This year the bird report will be available on CD (for a minimal charge) and so will include lots of photos, drawings and graphs. Also a text-only version will be available on-line at the Guernsey Bird News website [www.geocities.com/mplawlorque/Guernseybirdnews], and a few paper copies will also be kept.

Many thanks go to the birders who have taken the time to send in their records. Having a detailed database, as well as a monthly 'Bird News' newsletter, from which to glean the information, made the task of compiling this report much easier, so many thanks to Mike Bairds. Also thanks to Wayne Turner for supplying wader count data and Margaret Austin for providing ringing data.

The structure of the report tries to follow the general accepted format. However, the order of the systematic list has changed recently taking into account recommendations of the BOU, and we are following the list that they publish (although Yellow-legged Gull is treated separately here). The English names used for species are the commonly used names on the island. The scientific names are also given to avoid confusion.

I have made every effort to acknowledge the finders of the birds listed but there will be no doubt some errors which I apologise for. I have been unable to acknowledge some of the records as they are listed in the bird news and database as "SEV" indicating they have been reported by several observers

Please contact me if you want to offer suggestions for improvements to the report.

Records for 2004 and beyond should be submitted to myself, the recorder, at the address below.

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To make the report more accurate and detailed, more records are required of the commoner species. Information such as large flock sizes, visible migration, unusual places, plumage or behaviour would be very welcomed. Also, more records of escaped birds would be welcomed. At the end of the report, there is a list of rare species requiring a full description for acceptance, and forms are available online at the above website or from myself through the post.

Mark Lawlor

Summary of the year

2003 was Vic Froome's final year as Section Secretary and all members applaud his efforts during his time in the post. Vic has been a very active secretary, the driving force behind numerous initiatives and successes. Everyone in the Section will be sorry to see him step down as he cares so passionately about Guernsey wildlife and conservation. Many thanks to Nancy Ogier who has stepped into the vacancy for 2004.

There were two notable improvements for birdwatchers in Guernsey during the year, with regards to the dissemination of up-to-date information. Firstly the monthly 'Bird News' has had an excellent facelift – with photos and other snippets of interest, along with the usual list of sightings – and thanks must go to Mike Bairds for his efforts every month. Also, a new website has been set up which collects and displays sightings and photos of local birds, and is updated on a daily basis. This means that birdwatchers will know what is around and what to look out for, before they even leave home.

With the large number of bird sightings submitted monthly, including masses of data from the wader counts, ringing schemes, breeding bird surveys and seawatching statistics, it is pleasing to see that the Records Centre has opened to store it all. The Section has started the process of transferring this data to the centre this year, although it will be quite a long process.

The bird hides around the island have benefited from new interpretation boards and posters which have been installed during the year. The boardwalk at the Claire Mare NR has been replaced by a more permanent pathway and so the second hide should be more easily accessible. A small but important success was, thanks to Chris Maurant's speedy intervention, the postponement of digging work at Port Soif to save one of the few remaining Skylark nests on the island. Other topics discussed at the Section meetings included the possible extension of the slow speed limit area around Herm, the new Animal Welfare legislation and its relevance to wildlife, habitat creation and management at L'Eree, and the planting of crops specifically for feeding the birds.

With Wilson's Petrel, the Guernsey bird list increased to 307 species, although the sighting sparked a debate about how far out to sea we could look for additions to the Guernsey List. Initial calculations seem to show that the bird was closer to Guernsey than Alderney however, but it is something pelagic birders will have to take into account on future trips. There was another new bird for the island – an Eastern Black Redstart – but despite being very exciting, this is not a full species and so does not increase the total.

Other exciting sightings were the island's second Fan-tailed Warbler, fourth Bean Goose and first Pectoral Sandpiper for over ten years. Luckily for most birdwatchers, nearly all the rare birds stayed around long enough to be seen by others. The Spring was very disappointing for rarities but the Autumn made up for it. Many breeding species seem to be increasing with nesting Shelduck, Tufted Duck, Little Grebe, Cormorant and Long-eared Owl extending their range, but species such as Skylark show no signs of recovery.

January

Rarer birds from 2002 which stayed on into the new year included the flock of 4 **Whooper Swans** at Rue des Bergers and the **Glaucous Gull** at the harbour. The main feature of the month however, was the influx of seabirds into Belle Greve Bay between 10th and 13th January, following freezing temperatures and light snow. These included at least 2 **Goosander**, 4 **Eider**, 2 **Black-throated Diver**, 1 **Great Northern Diver** and 2 **Red-necked Grebes**. With smaller numbers of such species also seen elsewhere around the island, this is a good return to form, as wintering seabird numbers have fallen in recent years. There was also good numbers of other duck around, with plenty of **Wigeon** and **Tufted Duck** seen and a single **Pochard** at the Reservoir. A **Bittern** was found at the Grand Pre on 22nd and then was noted at Rue des Bergers and finally Claire Mare until the end of the month.

However, the rarest birds of the month were recorded on the final day when 2 **Waxwings** visited a garden on La Mare Road, Castel. This was only the 6th record on the island since 1970 and coincided with an influx of the species into the UK.

February

The **Waxwings** stayed until 7th February but were extremely elusive, clearly spending most of their time in a secret location. Afterwards, the temperatures warmed up somewhat and the **Bittern** moved to the Reservoir briefly before disappearing. Up to 3 **Short-eared Owls** showed very well around Mont Herault, but there was little else different to report apart a **Buzzard** on Herm on 15th and a **Little Gull** in the Little Russell on 21st. There continued to be good numbers of seabirds and diving duck, including at least 5 **Pochards** present on the island.

March

Apart from the odd front passing through, March consisted of dry weather and a south-easterly wind. These conditions did bring in some very early migrants although many nights were so clear everything passed straight through. The first flurry of sightings started with a **Wheatear** at Rousse on 4th, followed by a **Sand Martin**, a **Ruff** and a further two **Wheatears** during the next two days. Also, on 5th and 6th an elusive **Water Pipit** fed in the vrac on Vazon beach.

The days between 11th and 13th brought a few more early migrants to the island, and then the first **Swallow** was sighted on 17th. However, things moved on quickly in the last week of the month with a surge of early migrants. A **Redstart** at Saumarez Park on 23rd, a **Ring Ouzel** on Lihou on 24th and the first **Willow Warbler** on 25th. Finally the first **House Martin** and a male **Pied Flycatcher** were recorded at Fort Saumarez on 30th. All these 'first' sightings are very early in the year, and the Pied Flycatcher was exceptional, the first ever March record for the island.

Rarer species seen during this movement included one, possibly two **Hoopoes** and an **Osprey** flying north-east up the coast over Grandes Rocques on 25th. At least 3 of the **Whooper Swans** stayed until the end of the month and singing **Cetti's Warblers** were heard at Rue des Bergers, Grand Pre and Vale Pond. The **Raven** pair on Herm had hatched 5 chicks by the end of the month.



male Wheatear, Pleinmont – Barry Wells

April

The first two weeks of April saw very few migrant birds passing through, mainly due to unhelpful weather conditions, although 2 **Little Ringed Plovers** were at Claire Mare on 10th. The **Whooper Swans** were last seen on 5th, and **Short-eared Owls** were still regularly observed at Mont Herault.

From about 12th the winds moved round to warm south-easterlies, bringing in at least 3 **Marsh Harriers**, a very showy **Avocet** on 15th at Claire Mare, plus many commoner migrant species. The 20th was an excellent day for migration with hundreds of **Wheatear** scattered around, about 15 **Ring Ouzels** and a **Hoopoe** briefly at Pleinmont. Migration continued in pleasing numbers through the rest of the month, with a male **Garganey** at Claire Mare on 27th being a highlight for many. It was a touch disappointing that there were no sightings of any very rare species during this seemingly good month for migration. However, sightings included a summer-plumaged **Black-necked Grebe** in Rocquaine Bay on 4th, a female **Pintail** arriving at Vale Pond on 25th, a fine **Black-tailed Godwit** in front of Claire Mare hide on 27th, as well as a **Hobby**, a **Merlin** and 2 singing **Grasshopper Warblers**.

The breeding birds' nesting season was well under way by the end of the month. The **Peregrine** pair had laid eggs and there were as many as 4 or 5 sets of **Shelduck** paired up. A **Cormorant** colony on Lihoumel increased to 3 or 4 nests and **Skylarks** were singing at L'Ancrese (3 or 4), Port Soif (1) and Herm Common (1).

May

May started relatively quiet and the bird race did not coincide with a heavy migration day – although there were single **Lapwing**, **Golden Plover**, **Purple Sandpiper** and **Little Ringed Plover** recorded. The next week was very blustery and wet but this weather did bring down a few interesting waders, including a **Curlew Sandpiper**, a **Black-tailed Godwit**, a **Wood Sandpiper** at Claire Mare on 10th and a fine male **Kentish Plover** on Vazon beach on 11th.

The rest of May was disappointingly quiet, with both **Hen** and **Marsh Harrier** at Pleinmont on 16th being the highlight. A spring without any major rarities at all was unusual.

A very pleasing sight was 2 **Little Grebe** chicks at the Reservoir, probably only the fifth breeding record for the island. The actual number of pairs of **Shelduck** was difficult to ascertain as many ducklings suddenly appeared between L'Eree and Fort le Crocq during the month. It was at least 2 pairs, possibly 4.

June

The breeding season continued, with the pair of **Little Grebes** at the Reservoir having a second brood - or perhaps there was a second pair hidden away - as 4 chicks were seen there mid-month. Even more surprising was the discovery of another pair breeding at Gallotin Quarry, where a pair of **Tufted Ducks** again bred. Auks were regularly seen around Herm and Jethou but no counts of breeding pairs were made. At least 40 **Puffins** were recorded from the Puffin Patrols. **Long-eared Owls** seem to be much more elusive at their traditional sites in the South of the island. Although there was no evidence of breeding at these locations it is still likely. The Reservoir pair seemingly bred again however, and there was definite proof at a site in Vale where, unfortunately, a dead chick was found. So up to 5 pairs are now breeding around the island, along with probably 40 pairs of **Barn Owls**.

The last few days of June produced a couple of good sightings – a **Little Ringed Plover** at Pulias on 27th and 29th, and 2 **Little Terns** in Grandes Havres on 29th. Other uncommon birds in June were a **Hobby** in St. Martins on 1st and a **Buzzard** in Fauxquets on 28th.

July

Waders started to return to the island on their autumn migration from about 11th, and **Green Sandpiper**, **Greenshank**, **Whimbrel** and **Lapwing** were noted in the next few days. A sudden post-breeding arrival brought 4 **Mediterranean Gulls** to their favoured location of Belle Greve Bay on 23rd. Seawatching began on 27th, when 3 **Balearic Shearwaters** were seen passing off the northern rocks.

Spotted Flycatchers were proved breeding at the Foulon and in the Fauxquets Valley, and another pair of **Shelduck** appeared with 2 chicks in the Pulias area

August

Passerine migration seemed to start very early with a selection of drift migrants, including **Pied Flycatchers**, noted on 8th and 9th. **Little Ringed Plovers** continued their good run with a bird appearing at Claire Mare on 9th, where an adult **Aquatic Warbler** was caught on 13th. Waders passed through in pleasing numbers, with Vale Pond attracting a **Wood Sandpiper** on 12th and 13th, and a **Black-tailed Godwit** on 30th.

A major rarity appeared in the reedbed at Claire Mare from 16th – Guernsey's second **Fan-tailed Warbler**. This was a male bird which delighted in buzzing round the whole reserve, dancing in the air above the reeds whilst singing its unusual "zitting" song. It too was trapped and could be watched daily until 20th.

A further 3 **Aquatic Warblers** were trapped during this third week of August, and migration carried on steadily. There then was a sudden surge on 24th, when migrants, especially **Pied Flycatchers**, were numerous in the Pleinmont area. This continued during the final week with up to 3 **Wrynecks** present in the Lihou/Lihou Headland area. Raptors also were very visible with a **Hen Harrier** on 27th, an **Osprey** over Jerbourg on 28th and a **Honey Buzzard** on 30th.

The most frustrating bird of August was a small eagle that was seen coming in low at Pleinmont, and then watched briefly by 3 other birders at two different sites across the island. It was almost a perfect match for a Booted Eagle – potentially a first record for Guernsey - but it never showed well enough to be absolutely certain.



Little Ringed Plover, Claire Mare – David Trestain

September

The good migrant conditions continued into September with **Hobby, Honey** and **Common Buzzard** passing through on 1st, then two more **Wrynecks** appeared, followed by a **Hoopoe** staying around Fort le Crocq headland for a week from 7th.

The 7th was also the day chosen for the pelagic boat trip which went to the Hurd Deep, a deeper water area NW of the island. As well as the 200 **Storm Petrels** which were recorded, the 'chum' attracted a superb **Wilson's Petrel**. These birds usually spend their time way out over the ocean, and have never been recorded in this part of the Channel before. Perhaps in further years we may find that it is a regular visitor to the Hurd Deep.

There followed a period of wet weather, but as soon as it cleared, light easterly winds from the continent brought in a flurry of exciting sightings. The first of these was a juvenile **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Rue des Bergers reserve on 12th. This was part of a large influx of the species into NW Europe and was the first here in Guernsey since 1992. Then straight away, in the field opposite, a juvenile **Red-backed Shrike** was discovered but it did not stay very long.

Also that day, a few **Honey Buzzards** drifted across to the island. There were 3 at the Fauxquets Valley, 2 over Barras Lane fields, then 3 over Fort George. These last birds found the woods between Havelet and Fermain to their liking and could be seen soaring daily until at least 20th. During the next few days, at least 4 **Ortolans** arrived, as well as more **Common Buzzards**, and an impressive 5 **Wrynecks** on 14th, including 3 together at Fort Richmond. The good birds kept coming, with a juvenile **Rose-coloured Starling** briefly on Lihou on 17th.

and a juvenile **Kentish Plover** at Vazon on 18th. Of course, during this time species such as **Redstart**, **Whinchat** and **Pied Flycatcher** were easy to find.

The second half of September was much quieter, with more average numbers of birds passing through, the highlight being a **Richard's Pipit** at Pleinmont on 27th.

October

A wet start to the month brought the first strong seabird passage of the autumn on 5th, which included 40 **Sooty Shearwaters** and an **Arctic Tern**. Also on this day, a juvenile **Dotterel** rested for a while at Pleinmont. On 8th, **Mediterranean Gull** numbers increased to 5 in Belle Greve Bay and seawatching on 11th produced a **Pomarine Skua**.

From the start of the third week, the winds swung easterly bringing in the first wave of winter migrants. Species such as **Black Redstart**, **Fieldfare** and **Redwing** appeared in numbers, plus a **Coal Tit** was at Pleinmont on 18th. The next day, the adult **Glaucous Gull** reappeared in the Town Harbour – it is 8 years since it first arrived here. The second **Bittern** of the year was seen just for the day at Rue des Bergers on 27th.

The clear highlight of the month was an unusual redstart which was found along the seawall at the Richmond side of Vazon Bay on 28th. Although resembling a Black Redstart, it had red plumage right up to the breast. Further investigation led to the conclusion that it was an **Eastern Black Redstart** (race *phoenicuroides*) from the central Asian mountains, one of the very few to have been seen in Europe, and so an extremely rare bird. It stayed until the clear night of the 31st.

November

An interesting start to the month was a simultaneous count of the two known roosts of **Little Egret** on the island. The western roost had at least 53 birds, and the north-eastern roost also had a minimum of 53. This proves what was always suspected - that there are over 100 Little Egrets present on the island at certain times of the year.

Most of the rest of the sightings during the month were of winter migrants arriving into the island. The best of these was no doubt the **Shorelark** which appeared at Pleinmont on 6th and stayed for about a week. **Common Buzzard**, **Coal Tit** and **Reed Bunting** sightings were all up from previous years. Leftovers from summer were a **Swift** over Saumarez Park on 14th, and a lingering **Wheatear** on Vazon beach until 21st.

December

Very few new birds seemed to appear during the majority of the month – 2 **Swallows** on 3rd and 3 **Gadwall** at Claire Mare from 8th being the most unusual. A couple of unusual gulls were noted – a **Yellow-legged Gull** on 24th and a **Little Gull** on 27th - followed by **Great Skuas** off Chouet on 22nd and 28th. Divers and grebes were few, although a **Red-necked Grebe** was seen on 7th and a **Black-necked Grebe** on 26th. A second-winter **Mediterranean Gull** with a green colour ring, was found to have originated from Belgium.

The final week of the year did have some excitement with a **Bean Goose** appearing with 4 **White-fronted Geese** at L'Eree Aerodrome from 22nd. These White-fronts appeared different from the feral flock in the north of the island and were quite timid and presumed wild. The Bean Goose that accompanied them is probably only the third record for the island. The geese stayed into 2004, unlike the very large falcon which was seen hunting menacingly around the L'Eree area during these final few days.



White-fronted Geese, L'Eree – Mark Lawlor

SYSTEMATIC LIST

A total of **186** species were recorded during the year, which is a very low total. The island bird list grew to **307** species with the addition of **Wilson's Petrel**. Species which are usually recorded but were not in 2003 included Spotted Redshank, Black Tern, Melodious & Yellow-browed Warblers, Golden Oriole, Serin, Crossbill and Lapland Bunting.

The abundance categories for each species in the systematic list give some indication of how likely you are to see each species if you visit the correct habitat at the correct time of year.

Apart from the first category, they give no indication of the number of individuals to be seen, as some species never occur in large flocks even though they might be 'common'.

Very common	many should be seen each visit
Common	should be seen each visit
Quite common	should be seen most visits
Uncommon	will sometimes be seen, often depending on weather conditions
Scarce	maximum of a handful of records per year on the island
Rare	not usually seen every year on the island
Very rare	usually only seen once every few years
Vagrant	very few records for the island

Species accounts in **bold type** indicate those records which have been accepted by the island's Rarities Committee, and which (in most cases) required a full written report to be submitted.

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

Vagrant – 6 previous records

The 4 wintering birds which first arrived with 4 others in late October 2002 were still present feeding in fields along Rue des Bergers at the start of the year. Sometime during March one of the birds disappeared, and the final 3 were last seen in the same area on 5th April (AJB,LT).

Taiga Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis fabalis*) 1 record

Vagrant – 3 previous records

A bird arrived at L'Eree Aerodrome with the four White-fronted Geese (below) on 22nd December and stayed there until early January 2004. There was no indication of a captive origin as the 5 birds appeared wary and easily spooked at first. They did eventually settle down with the local feral geese and became more easily approached, but never worryingly so. *Probably* only the fourth record for the island, as there are a couple of records where captive origin cannot be ruled out.

(J. Hooper et al)



Taiga Bean Goose, L'Eree Aerodrome – Mark Lawlor

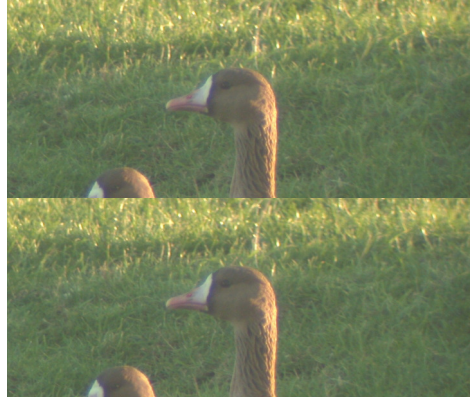
White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*)

1 record (of 4 birds)

Very rare winter visitor, but also a feral breeding resident

Four birds appeared on L'Eree Aerodrome on 22nd December, staying there until the New Year. It is difficult to differentiate wild birds from the local feral population, but these birds appeared timid and easily-spooked when they arrived, and also had a Bean Goose in tow (see above).

(J. Hooper et al)



White-fronted Geese, L'Eree Aerodrome – Mark Lawlor

Dark-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla bernicla*)

Quite common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The three wintering flocks totalled about 80 birds early in the year: up to 36 in Herm, up to 31 ranging along the east coast between Miellette and Salerie, and 17 along the west coast in Perelle and Vazon Bays. This is a maximum count as birds definitely do travel between Guernsey and Herm. There does appear to be a slight drop in numbers. Normally, decent-sized flocks persist into May, but this year only a single straggler was seen that month, in Herm until 14th May (GDA).

The first returning birds were 2 which flew past Jaonneuse on 4th Oct (WRT). Numbers were slightly up in the second winter period, with 44 present at Bordeaux on 15th Nov (LT, RJM). The west coast party increased to 22 birds, but the only flock noted in Herm was 11 (although there were probably more).

As last year, a leucistic bird was seen – in Belle Greve Bay on 25th Feb (WRT) and at Bordeaux on 13th Apr (MAG).

Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

4+ pairs

Uncommon year-round visitor and rare breeder.

The wintering pair were again in the L'Eree/Claire Mare area at the start of the year, staying into the breeding season. They were joined in the area by a second pair on 25th Feb (AJB) and then a third pair on 9th Mar (GDA). What was presumed to be a fourth pair appeared at Vale Pond on 2nd Apr (MPL) and were then seen at various sites in the north of the island, including Herm on 24th Apr. In the Claire Mare area numbers built up to 9 birds and the first brood was seen there on 25th May, consisting of 10 ducklings (RJM,LT). There were certainly 2 other successful broods in the area between Lihou and Fort le Crocq but there may have been others. Another brood appeared at Pulias on 13th Jul (GDA) but only a maximum of 2 chicks were seen there. As usual, numbers dwindled during the summer and early autumn as birds left the island for their moulting sites. The last was seen on 13th Sep (GDA). A returning single bird was noted in the Claire Mare area from 19th Dec (RJM,LT).



juvenile Shelduck, Claire Mare – Mark Lawlor

Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)
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Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

The wintering population in January was up to 23 birds in the Claire Mare area and c.20 at Marais Nord. There were still 11 at the former site on 23rd Feb, but the last winterer departed on 9th Mar (GDA). A single male passage migrant visited Grande Mare on 4th May (AJB). The first birds seen returning for the winter were 1 at Fort le Crocq on 29th Sep (DT) and a flock of 9 past Pulas Headland on 16th Oct (MPL), with a single at Claire Mare the same day (GDA). During mid-October up to 14 birds could be seen feeding at Rue des Bergers but not thereafter. The numbers at the Claire Mare built up to a maximum of 26 in December and up to 22 were at Marais Nord.

Gadwall (<i>Anas strepera</i>)

1 record (of 3 birds)

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Only a single record of a species which used to occur in double-figure flocks during the mid-nineties. After last year's blank though, it is an improvement.

2 males + 1 female, Claire Mare, 8th to 14th Dec (DT, GDA)

Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)

Quite common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Flocks of wintering Teal numbered 30 at both Track Marais and Rue des Bergers early in the year, with at least that amount in the Claire Mare area. Numbers dropped considerably during March and the final birds lingered until mid-April.

Very few arrived back until September was under way, but numbers soon built up, with maxims of 25+ at Rue des Bergers, 20+ at Track Marais and 46 in the Claire Mare area.

Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)
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Common resident breeding species, winter visitor and passage migrant.

As usual the species was encountered practically everywhere on the island, but pure pairs are becoming less common, as many birds show signs of hybridisation with domestic ducks.

Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)	1 record
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Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

This bird is presumed to be the same returning bird as last spring, which also spent just over a month on the island. The three further sightings in the year may indicate that the origins of this bird may be dubious.

1 female, Vale Pond, 25th Apr to 31st May (MPL), then presumed the same on 19th Jul, 22nd Aug (RJM,LT) and 2nd Nov (MPL).

Garganey (<i>Anas querquedula</i>)	1 record
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Scarce passage migrant

This male bird proved exceptionally popular during its brief stay.

1 male, Claire Mare, 27th Apr (NW)



drake Garganey, Claire Mare – (above) Mark Lawlor, (below) Barry Wells



Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>)
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Quite common winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers.

In the north of the island, at least 9 birds were wintering at Marais Nord (PKV), and a male bird spent the whole of March at Vale Pond (MPL). Only 3 birds wintered in the Claire Mare area, disappearing on 4th Apr (WS,GDA). Only 10 wintering birds is a poor showing. Two autumn passage birds were seen – a female briefly at Claire Mare on 22nd Aug and a male bird there on 12th and 13th Sep (RJM,LT). From late October wintering birds started to appear at Claire Mare, peaking at 6 birds during November. The only other sighting was of 6 at Marais Nord on 19th Dec.

Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)**3+ records (of 6+ birds)*****Uncommon to scarce winter visitor and passage migrant***

The best showing for five years after a blank last year.

1 female, Reservoir, 17th Jan (RJM,LT)

Up to 2 males + 2 females, Reservoir, 4th Feb to 23rd Feb (JMA) – with a female visiting Saumarez Park on 17th Feb (AJB).

1 male, Claire Mare, 5th to 7th Dec (RJM,LT) – presumed same, Saumarez Park, 17th Dec (GDA) – presumed same, Marais Nord, 19th Dec (RJM,LT)

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)***Uncommon year-round visitor. One breeding pair.***

Small numbers of Tufted Ducks were present on the island throughout the year in 2003, being recorded from most freshwater sites. The peak counts of the year were 13 at Grande Mare on 1st Jan (AJB,RAF) and 11 at Marais Nord on 28th Nov (LT).

Following on from the first ever breeding of the species on the island in 2000, what was presumably the same pair bred again this year at Gallotin Quarry, producing 7 young (IH). They may have also bred in the intervening 2 years without our knowledge.



drake Tufted Duck, Reservoir – Mark Lawlor

Eider (*Somateria mollissima*)**2 records (of 4 birds)*****Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.***

This species is becoming increasingly difficult to see, so this small influx was welcome.

1 female, Bordeaux, 3rd to 6th Jan (MCS) – probably moving into Belle Greve Bay later in the month to join the other Eiders.

2 males + 1 female, Belle Greve Bay, 10th Jan to 9th Feb (RJM,LT), with 1 female lingering until 21st Feb

Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*)**8 records (of 21 birds)*****Uncommon year-round visitor and passage migrant.***

Not a very good year for the species, with virtually all reports being from autumn/winter seawatches. A total of only 20 went past Jaonneuse, Chouet or Fort le Crocq between 5th May and 15th Dec, with a maximum of 6 on 5th Oct (WRT,PKV,MV).

The only other sighting was of an oiled male bird resting on the beach at Belle Greve Bay on 24th Dec which had to be taken to the Animal Shelter (GDA,PWA).



drake Common Scoter, Belle Greve Bay – Phil Atkinson

Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>)	5 records (of 8 birds)
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Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

It is surprising we get so few Mergansers since large feeding flocks occur just a few miles away in Jersey.

- 1 male + 1 fem, L'Eree to Vazon, on and off from 1st Jan to 25th Mar (PKV,RJM,LT)
- 1 pair, Belle Greve Bay, 1st Jan (AG)
- 1 female, Herm, 21st Feb (RJM,LT)
- 2 females, Fort le Crocq, 9th Nov (AJB,RJM,LT)
- 1, Perelle, 28th Nov (LT)

Goosander (<i>Mergus merganser</i>)	1 record (of 2 birds)
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Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

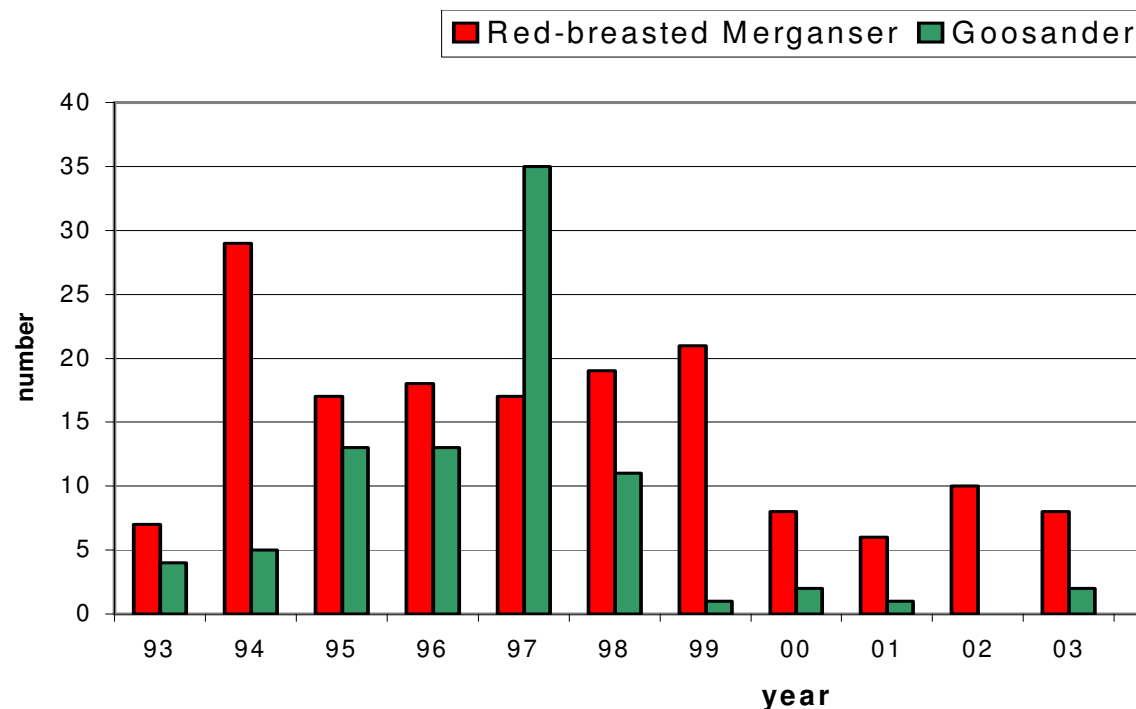
One record after none were seen at all last year. There has been only 6 birds in the last 5 years, whereas there were at least 70 in the previous 5-year period.

- 2 males, Belle Greve Bay, 13th to 17th Jan (MPL)



drake Goosanders, Belle Greve Bay – Mark Lawlor

The chart below shows this decline in Goosander numbers, and also the reduction in the numbers of Red-breasted Mergansers.



Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)

Uncommon introduced species to Herm – not thought to be self-supporting.

Seen on Herm and Jethou in small numbers – 18+ on 11th Oct was the most reported (MPL). Also, a single bird was at Pleinmont on 1st Apr (AJB) – probably left over from last years 'put down' birds in Guernsey.

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Quite common introduced resident species.

This introduced species was regularly seen in good numbers on Herm and in small numbers along the south coast of Guernsey. The birds make use of feed put down for them.

Black-throated Diver (*Gavia arctica*)

6 records (of 8 birds)

Uncommon to scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Another increase in sightings due to the small influx of seabirds early in the year.

- 1, Grandes Havres/Rousse, from 2002 to 17th Jan.
- 1, L'Eree, 5th to 12th Jan (MPL).
- 2, Belle Greve Bay, 11th and 12th Jan (PKV)
- 1, Belle Greve Bay, 2nd Feb (JMA)
- 1, Vazon, 9th Feb (MAG)
- 2, Grandes Rocques/Cobo, 10th to 22nd Feb (MPL)
- 1, Grandes Rocques, 10th Mar (MPL)

Great Northern Diver (<i>Gavia immer</i>)	9 records
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Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

Despite other seabirds having a good year, this is rather a low total for this species.

- 1, Grandes Havres/Rousse, from 2002 to 1st Jan
- 1, Pezeries/L'Eree, 5th to 12th Jan (RJM)
- 1, Belle Greve Bay, 12th Jan (DJRA,PKV)
- 1, Belle Greve Bay, 2nd Feb (MCS,JMA,GDA)
- 1, Vazon, 5th Feb (MAG)
- 1, Jerbourg, 8th Feb (MCS)
- 1, Chouet, 20th Apr (MAG)
- 1, Pleinmont (flying over headland), 25th Oct (WRT)
- 1, Rousse, 16th Nov (PKV,MV)
- 1, Bordeaux, 15th Dec (GDA)

Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>)	12+ birds (and 2/3 pairs)
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Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant. Has bred.

At the start of the year, up to 7 birds were wintering on the island, with 1 at Paradis Quarry, 2 at Gallotin Quarry and up to 4 at the Reservoir. These latter birds stayed on into the spring and at the start of May, a surprising sight was two small chicks accompanying an adult bird. Little Grebe has only ever bred on the island on a few previous occasions. In mid-June a bird was seen with 3 small chicks on its back which probably meant that another pair bred at the site – although a second brood by the first pair cannot be ruled out. Even more surprising was that the pair which wintered at Gallotin Quarry also stayed and also produced some young. So three broods were on the island this year. In the early autumn the breeding birds dispersed, and most left the island. During November there were birds recorded at Claire Mare and Vale Pond as well as the usual sites, but only 6 stayed to winter.

Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>)
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Quite common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Wintering groups were recorded in most of the island's bays peaking at 7 in Grandes Havres on 6th Jan (MPL). Most birds had departed by the end of February and the last was seen from Rousse on 10th Mar (GDA).

The first bird back after the summer was off L'Eree Shingle Bank on 14th Nov (LT) but strangely, no others were reported before the end of the year.

Red-necked Grebe (<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>)	5 records (of 6 birds)
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Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Six birds is the best since seven in 1997. Another seabird which increased its records in 2003. The Belle Greve Bay birds were the longest-staying for quite a few years.

- 2, Belle Greve Bay, 12th Jan to 14th Feb (PKV,DJRA,MPL,BGW)
- 1, Vazon, 7th Feb (AJB)
- 1, off Lihou Headland, 9th Feb (GDA)
- 1, Portelet, 23rd Mar (MAG)
- 1, Pulias, 7th Dec (PKV,MV)

Slavonian Grebe (<i>Podiceps auritus</i>)	19+ birds
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Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

There was approximately 14 birds wintering during the first part of the year with a peak count of 6 in Rocquaine/L'Eree Bay on 12th Jan (PKV), plus up to 3 in Belle Greve Bay, and 1 or 2 in Grandes Rocques, Vazon and Perelle. The last wintering bird was on 2nd Mar but a migrant breeding-plumaged individual was at Perelle on 28th Mar (MAG). On 28th Nov the first was back at Rocquaine (RJM,LT), then all other sightings were of up to 3 birds in Perelle during December.

Black-necked Grebe (<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>)	2 records
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Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Black-necked Grebe is very irregular in its occurrences and 2 birds is about average, although breeding-plumaged birds are very uncommon.

- 1 in breeding-plumage, Rocquaine, 4th Apr (RJM,LT)
- 1, St. Sampsons Harbour, 26th Dec (GDA)

Fulmar (<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>)

Quite common passage migrant and summer visitor. Breeds in small numbers.

Most records were from the south cliffs or from Herm/Jethou, where about 15 nest sites were found in the Spring (GDA). No counts of breeding pairs were made from Guernsey, although 13 birds were resting together in the breeding area at Petit Bot early in the year. From August, occasional birds were observed passing the northern headlands, but no proper passage was observed.

Sooty Shearwater (<i>Puffinus griseus</i>)	63 birds
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Quite common to uncommon autumn passage migrant.

The first of the year was seen on the pelagic trip on 7th Sep feeding alongside the boat. Other than that, passage was observed from Chouet or Jaonneuse on 9 dates between 9th Sep and 11th Oct, with a peak of 40 birds on 5th Oct (WRT,PKV,MV). The total of 63 birds is an improvement on last year but still a low total.

Manx Shearwater (<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>)

Quite common to uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor.

Noted regularly passing the northern headlands between 25th Apr (VEF) and 5th Oct (PKV,MV). There were no really large passages – nearly all sightings were single-figure – the peak being 30 on 24th Sep (DL).

Balearic Shearwater (<i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>)	12 birds
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Uncommon autumn passage migrant.

All birds were seen passing Jaonneuse Point during seawatches. Twelve in a year is higher than a typical year, but with the amount of regular seawatches nowadays, is not unexpected.

- 3 on 27th Jul (CJM,WRT)
- 1 on 2nd Aug (WRT)
- 2 on 16th Aug (MAG)
- 2 on 30th Aug (sev)

1 on 31st Aug (sev)
1 on 22nd Sep (RJM)
2 on 5th Oct (sev)

Wilson's Petrel (<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>)

1 record

Vagrant – no previous records

During an organised pelagic boat trip to look for seabirds, a Wilson's Petrel was found amongst a flock of Storm Petrels, attracted to the boat-side by the 'chum'. This was in an area of sea North-west of Guernsey known as the Hurd Deep. This species is one of the main targets to aim for on a pelagic trip as they are rarely seen from shore, as they usually live way out into the Atlantic. This is the first record for Channel Island waters and a full write up is given later in the report.

(C. J. Mourant, J. M. Medland, P. K. Veron, W. R. Turner et al)

Storm Petrel (<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>)

7 birds (+ up to 230 at sea)

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant.

Most were recorded from the pelagic trip on 7th Sep when between 200 and 230 were seen (sev). Weather conditions were not ideal in the early summer so the only land-based sighting was 3 off Fort le Crocq on 1st Jun, and 4 off there on 6th Jun.

Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>)

Common passage migrant and summer visitor, less common in winter.

The species was commonly seen off all coasts throughout the year, but greater numbers were noted during the autumn and early winter, with up to 100 birds per hour noted from Jaonneuse Point on a few days. Spectacular high-diving flocks can sometimes be watched out to sea when a productive feeding area is found.

Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)

Common year-round visitor. Breeds in small numbers.

The species was seen in small numbers all around the coast but, unlike the next species, was noted widely on inland lakes and ponds, and also flying overland to and from these areas. No large concentrations were reported. A few birds showing the white-headed characteristics of the continental race 'sinensis' were noted early in the year, but to be certain, one must study the facial skin pattern carefully.



'sinensis-type' Cormorant, Reservoir – Mark Lawlor

Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>)
--

Common breeding resident.

The species was seen more regularly than the last and often in large flocks of over 100, especially around the northern limits of the islands. As usual, there were no inland records.

Bittern (<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>)
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2 records

Rare to very rare winter visitor or passage migrant.

A bird was found feeding around the pond at Grand Pre Nature Reserve on 22nd January. It then wandered widely, being seen at Rue des Bergers NR the next day, and then at Claire Mare during the last few days of the month. It was then seen at the Reservoir on 8th and 9th February, there again on 17th February, before making its final appearance at Rue des Bergers on 18th.

(G. D. Atkinson et al)

A single bird dropped into the reeds at Rue des Bergers NR on 27th October and spent the rest of the day in the area.

(L. A. Terry et al)

Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)

Quite common year-round visitor, less common in spring/early summer.

Commonly seen all round the coast, less so inland. A good number are regularly observed feeding in fields with gulls, crows etc. As usual, only a handful remained on the island during May and June. Numbers built up during the summer and autumn and 25 at Claire Mare on 14th Dec (PKV,MV) was the largest day-time flock recorded.

There was a simultaneous count of the two known roost sites on 1st Nov. The western roost held 53 birds and the north-eastern roost also held 53 birds. So 106 birds were counted altogether (RAF,JH).

Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>)
--

Quite common year-round visitor, less common in spring and summer.

The species was seen mainly as single birds feeding in rockpools and ponds. Groups of resting birds did flock together, especially at high tide on offshore rocks and behind the Claire Mare reedbed – where the largest group of the year was recorded, 16 on 28th Dec (JTA).



Grey Heron, Claire Mare – Mark Lawlor

Honey Buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*)

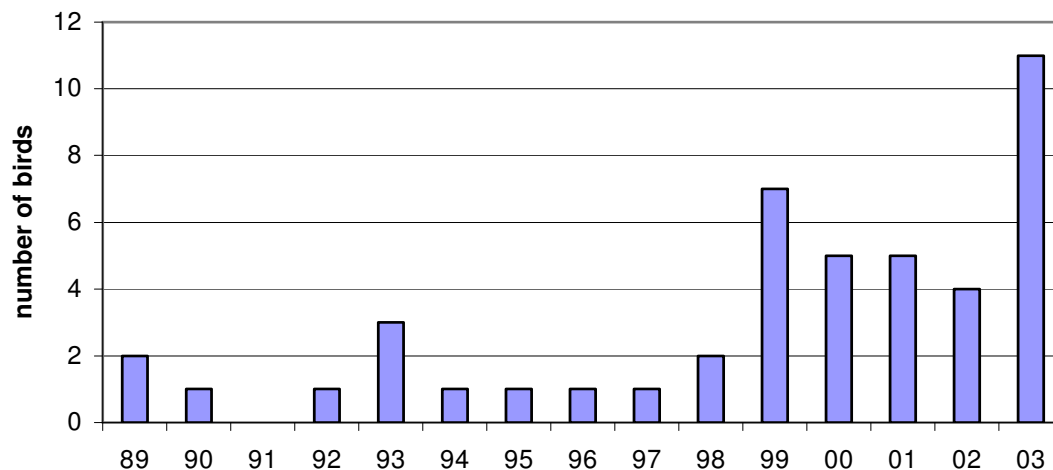
approx. 11 birds

Scarce passage migrant.

In mid-September there was a definite influx of the species into the island. However the total number of birds involved would be impossible to work out. For example on 12th Sep there were 9 sightings but this was likely to just involve 5 birds. The estimated minimum is 8 and the maximum 15. Below is a summary of the sightings reported. Eleven birds was chosen as a total by assuming that the birds which arrived on the island ended up gathering/roosting in the Fort George area.

- 1, Pleinmont, 30th Aug (RAF)
- 1, over Mont Saint, 1st Sep (AJB)
- 1, Damouettes Lane, 7th to 21st Sep – joined by a second bird at one point.
- 2, over Barras Lane Fields, 12th Sep (MPL)
- 1, over Rue des Bergers, 12th Sep (PKV)
- 3, Fauxquets Valley, 12th to 13th Sep (LT)
- up to 4, over Fort George, Fermain or Havelet, 12th Sep to 27th Sep (MAG,RAF)
- 1, Pleinmont, 13th Sep (MAG)
- 2, Reservoir, 14th Sep (RAF)

11 birds is the best ever for the species, eclipsing the 7 in 1999. The graph below shows all the Guernsey records of Honey Buzzard since the first in 1989 and illustrates the increase in sightings recently.

**Marsh Harrier** (*Circus aeruginosus*)

9 records

Scarce passage migrant.

Another good year for this increasing species. Now that they are breeding in Jersey and doing well in the UK, the numbers should continue to rise.

- 1, Pleinmont, 13th Apr (MAG)
- 1, Vale Pond, 15th Apr (DJRA)
- 1, Claire Mare, 15th Apr (DJRA)
- 1, Mont Herault, 11th May (RJM)
- 1, Airport, 15th to 17th May (BGW)
- 1, Pleinmont, 16th May (JH,RJM,LT)
- 1, Pleinmont, 20th Aug (AJB)
- 1, L'Eree, 19th Oct (MAG)
- 1, Vale Pond, 28th Nov (AJB)

Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)**3 records****Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.**

The third year running that 3 birds have been seen, but no wintering birds were found, just migrant birds at Pleinmont.

- 1, Pleinmont, 16th May (JH,RJM,LT)
- 1 fem/imm, Pleinmont, 27th Aug (WS)
- 1 male, Pleinmont, 25th Oct (WRT,DT)

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)**Uncommon to quite common resident breeding species.**

Regularly seen in all areas of the island, with pairs displaying at a number of woodland sites, indicating breeding.

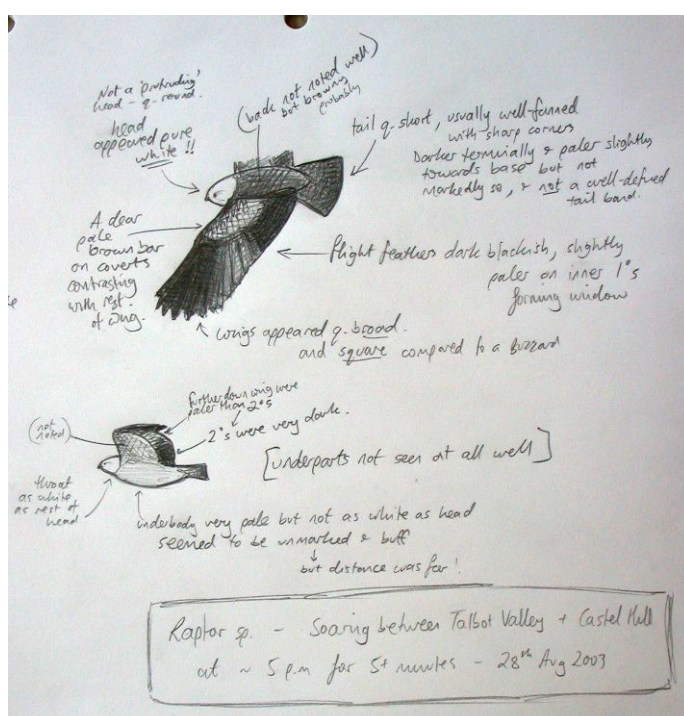
Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)**11+ birds****Scarce passage migrant.**

For a species that seemed to be visiting Guernsey less and less, 2003 was the best total for 6 years. 11 birds should be thought of as a minimum since, like Honey Buzzard, it was difficult to tell exactly how many were on the island in mid-September

- 1, Herm, 15th Feb (LT)
- 1, Fauxquets Valley, 14th Jun to 27th Jul
- at least 3, Fauxquets Valley/Reservoir/Fermain, 31st Aug to 19th Sep (sev)
- 1, Pleinmont, 30th Sep (AJB) – probably same, Reservoir 2nd Oct & Petit Bot, 4th Oct
- 1, Petit Bot, 21st Oct (LT)
- 1, Track Marais, 16th Nov until 2004 (AJB)
- 1, Bon Port, 28th Nov (LT)
- up to 2, Fauxquets Valley, 29th Nov until 2004 (RRC)

Eagle sp.

A bird, which was probably a pale-phase Booted Eagle was seen coming in low at Pleinmont on 28th August before resting briefly in a field (DB). It then was seen soaring over Fort Grey and up Le Coudre (JH), and then later on, over the Talbot Valley (MPL,WRT). It was clearly no other species of wild bird of prey, but the chance that it could have been an escaped species could not be ruled out. Some field notes and sketches are shown below.



Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)**2 records*****Scarce passage migrant.***

Since 1998, two birds per year is the average despite the species being a big rarity on the island previously.

- 1, north-east over Grandes Rocques, 25th Mar (JH)
- 1, Jerbourg, 28th Aug (RAF,RJM,LT)

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)***Common resident breeding species.***

Breeding was proved at a number of sites and the species continues to make use of the nestboxes provided.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)**14 records*****Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.***

Fourteen birds is one of the best ever years for Merlin, which seems to be increasing year on year at the moment.

- 1, over Pont Vaillant, 6th Jan (WRT)
- 1 fem/imm, Richmond, 9th Feb (RJM)
- 1 male, Cobo, 10th Feb (JH)
- 1, Airport, 19th Feb (DJRA)
- 1 fem/imm, Lihou, 16th Mar (AJB)
- 1 male, Rousse, 16th Apr (VEF)
- 1 fem/imm, Reservoir, 27th Jul (RJM)
- 1, Herm, 24th Sep (LJC)
- 1 juv, Herm Common, 11th Oct (MPL)
- 1, Fort le Crocq, 1st Nov (WRT)
- 1 male, Miellette, 15th Nov (AG)
- 1 fem/imm, Portinfer, 20th Nov (JH)
- 1, Claire Mare, 21st Nov (LT)
- 1 fem/imm, Mont Herault, 23rd Nov until 2004 (MAG)



juvenile Merlin, Herm Common – Mark Lawlor

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

8 records

Uncommon to scarce passage migrant.

An average number and spread of records.

- 1, Fort le Crocq, 23rd Apr (JH)
- 1, Gypsy Lane, St Martins, 1st Jun (LT)
- 1, King's Mills, 27th Jul (RJM)
- 1, Mount Row, 17th Aug (MAG)
- 1, Fauxquets Valley, 1st Sep (MAG)
- 1, Silbe NR, 9th Sep (GDA)
- 1, Pleinmont, 28th Sep (MPL)
- 1, Pleinmont, 12th Oct (MPL,PKV,MV)

Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)***Uncommon year-round visitor. Rare breeding species.***

Peregrines were noted in all parts of the island throughout the year, but nearly all sightings were of single birds. The breeding pair on the island were present again but had moved location slightly. The success of this pair is unknown but they definitely produced eggs. Most sightings were probably of these birds although other migrants must have been seen.

Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*)***Quite common passage migrant and winter visitor. Has bred.***

Up to 4 Water Rails were present at all suitable sites in both winter periods. The last of the spring was seen on 29th Apr at Claire Mare (AJB) and the first of the autumn were 2 birds seen at the same site on 13th Aug (PKV). However, there were 2 reports from mid-summer – Marais Nord on 8th Jun (RJM) and Dell Nursery on 6th Jul (GDA) – so breeding may have occurred.



Water Rail, Claire Mare – Bob Murphy

Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)***Very common resident breeding species and winter visitor.***

Commonly seen around all lakes, ditches and marshy areas

Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>)

Uncommon resident breeding species, common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Seen in small numbers around freshwater ponds and lakes.

Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)

Quite common resident breeding species. Common passage migrant and winter visitor.

The wader count produced a peak count of 729 island-wide on 14th Dec which is quite low. Otherwise seen very commonly on all coasts at all times of the year.

Avocet (<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>)

1 record

Very rare visitor – 16 previous records

One was found in front of the hide at Claire Mare on 15th April and showed well for the rest of the day. Quite surprisingly, this is the first record of an Avocet at Claire Mare, nearly all sightings coming from Vale Pond.

(R. A. Ferbrache et al)



Avocet, Claire Mare – Mark Lawlor

Little Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius dubius</i>)
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6 records (of 8 birds)

Scarce passage migrant, mostly in Spring

The best ever year for this species, beating the 7 birds recorded in 1994.

- 2, Claire Mare, 10th Apr (DT)
- 2, L'Eree Aerodrome, 29th Apr (AJB)
- 1, Pulias Pond, 4th May (JH,RJM,LT,RAF)
- 1 juv, Pulias Pond, 27th to 29th Jun (AJB)
- 1, Claire Mare, 9th & 10th Aug (DT)
- 1, Claire Mare, 29th Aug (RJM,LT)

Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>)
--

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Breeds in small numbers.

A commonly seen bird of the shoreline. Wader counts of this species were well-down on last year – peaks of 98 in January and 97 in November – but this may be due to disturbance at count time rather than a drop in numbers. A few pairs bred on the shingle beaches at, for example, Lihou and near Fort Doyle.

Kentish Plover (<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>)
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2 records

Very rare passage migrant

A breeding-plumaged male bird was discovered on Vazon beach on 11th May during a good period of wader migration.

(M. A. Guppy et al)



male Kentish Plover, Vazon – Barry Wells

A juvenile bird was discovered at Vazon in almost exactly the same spot on 18th and 19th September.

(M. A. Guppy et al)

These are only the 4th and 5th records since 1986.

Dotterel (<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>)
--

1 record

Scarce passage migrant

This is a very late record for the island – only one or two others have been in October.

1 juv, Pleinmont, 5th Oct (RJM,LT)



juvenile Dotterel, Pleinmont – Bob Murphy

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Uncommon to quite common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Early on in the year, the Portinfer roost held only up to 36 birds – on 17th Feb (AJB) – well down on last winter. These birds are assumed to disperse to feed inland but are actually rarely seen away from the roost site. During March and April, odd migrant birds were recorded passing through the island, with a late bird lingering on L'Eree Aerodrome from 29th Apr to 4th May. An additional bird was seen on Herm on 30th May (LT). An early migrant bird was seen at Fort le Crocq on 17th Jul (AJB), then single-figure migrant flocks were regularly seen – mostly at Pleinmont, Herm or L'Eree Aerodrome – during August and September. During the last three months, the Portinfer flock appeared again, the highest number counted being 45+ on 28th Oct (PKV,MV).



Golden Plover, Claire Mare – Carole Kinnersly

Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

Common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The maximum count from the wader-count data was 164 on 19th Jan. Regularly noted during all the winter months with between 100 and 200 birds probably present and numbers increasing slightly during migration. Disappears during the summer months, the final spring migrant was recorded on 11th May (LT) and the first returning bird was on 30th Jul (GDA). However, there was an unusual mid-summer record on 29th Jun at Pulias (PKV).

Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)

Quite common winter visitor and passage migrant.

The pattern of Lapwing sightings was quite typical this year with the sizeable wintering flocks, the small number of spring and autumn migrants and the handful of summer wanderers. The winter flocks were, as usual, hard to pin down and mostly seen as flyovers. The peak count was 65 birds East of the Airport on 12th Jan (MPL). After 27th Feb none were seen until a migrant bird appeared in the Claire Mare/L'Eree area staying from 18th Apr until 10th May (RJM). On 11th Jul, two birds were seen at Vale Pond (RJM,LT) and stayed on the island for a few days. The next bird was not seen until 20th Sep when one went over the Fauxquets Valley (PKV), and a few migrant, single-figure flocks were seen during October. The wintering birds at the end of the year were even more elusive, with 28 over Grandes Havres on 5th Dec being the peak (PKV,MV).

Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)

3 records (of 6 birds)

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

A below average showing for this species, with an especially poor Autumn.

1, Vazon, from 2002 until 19th Jan.

4, Vazon/Fort le Crocq, 11th to 18th May (RJM,LT)

1, Herm, 30th May (RJM,LT)

1, Fort le Crocq, 24th Sep (AJB)

Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>)
--

Quite common winter visitor and passage migrant.

52 birds on the wader count on 19th January was about half the amount noted two months previous, but was the peak for the first part of the year. No very large flocks were noted on spring passage but 31 birds were on Herm on 30th May (RJM,LT), and the last was at Port Soif on 7th Jun (GDA).

The first two birds back after the breeding season were on 17th Jul on Lihou (GDA) and birds were common on the beaches thereafter. The largest flock built up in Grandes Havres during the end of the year peaking at 65 on 27th Dec (AG).



Sanderling, Vazon – Barry Wells

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)**2 records**

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in autumn.

The second poor year in a row for this species, both records away from the shoreline.

1, Claire Mare, 1st Sep (GDA)

1, Rue des Bergers, 25th Sep (LAT)

Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*)**1 record**

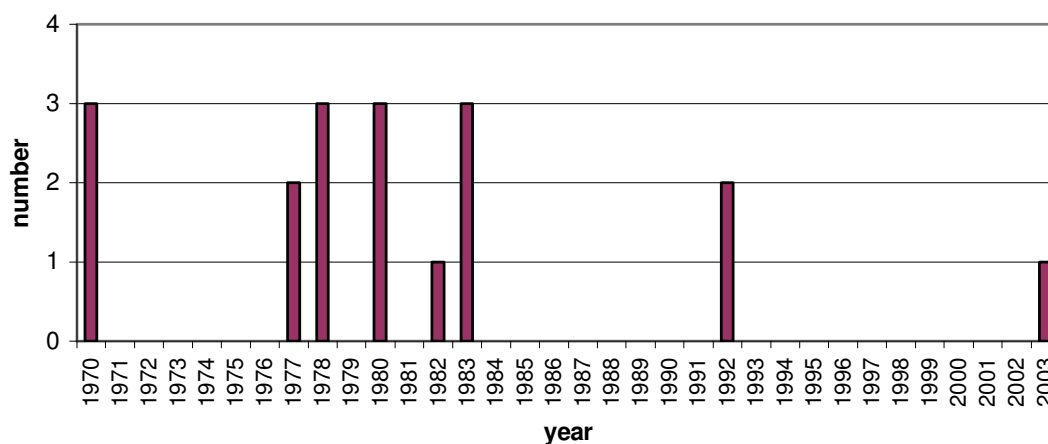
Vagrant – less than 20 previous records

A juvenile bird was discovered on 12th September feeding in the marshy areas in front of Rue des Bergers NR hide. There was a notable influx of the species into the UK at the time. This bird showed well until 16th September. The first on the island since 1992, this species was more regular in the late 70's and early 80's, as can be seen from the graph below.

(E. A. Thomson, R. J. Murphy et al)



Pectoral Sandpiper, Rue des Bergers – (above) Mark Lawlor, (below) Bob Murphy



Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)**4 records (of 9+ birds)*****Scarce passage migrant, mainly in autumn.***

Nine birds was the minimum since during late September there was probably some changeover of individuals at Vazon.

1, Vazon, 11th May (MAG)

1, Vazon, 8th to 28th Sep (PKV)

up to 6 additional birds, Vazon, 20th to 26th Sep (MAG)

1, Fort le Crocq, 24th Oct (LT)

Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*)**21+ birds*****Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.***

Only 4 birds appeared to be wintering in the island at the start of the year – 2 in the Fort le Crocq/Vazon area, and 2 at Les Ammareurs – but these were not seen after 10th Feb. Spring passage saw 4 birds at Jaonneuse on 4th Apr, 7 on the wader-count of 6th Apr, 3 on 2nd May (LT), a single at Fort le Crocq between 2nd and 5th May (AJB) and 2 at Vazon on 17th May (MAG).

A bird was seen on Herm on 3rd Sep (GDA), one was seen on 14th Sep and another was in the Fort le Crocq area from 24th to 31st Oct (LT). The only record from the rest of the Winter was on the wader count on 14th Dec.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)***Common winter visitor and passage migrant.***

225 birds recorded on the 19th Jan wader-count was the peak month of the year. The cold weather in January however brought flocks of up to 300 birds at Vazon. Single-figures could be seen during the summer.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)**2 records*****Scarce passage migrant, rare in winter.***

The overall trend for this species continues to be down.

1, Herm, 4th Jun (GDA)

1, Vale Pond & Grandes Havres, 10th to 20th Sep (MPL)

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)**4+ birds*****Uncommon to scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.***

Most records were from the Rue des Bergers this year, the species seemingly liking the boggy areas in front of the hide. The first individual was observed on 25th Oct (AG), and peaking at 3 birds on 7th Dec (PKV,MV). Also one was at Vale Pond on 26th Oct (DJRA).

Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)***Common winter visitor and passage migrant.***

The largest count of wintering birds reported to the Societe at the start of the year was 38 at Vale Pond on 7th Feb (RJM). The odd bird lingered into late April, with the final one seen at Rue des Bergers on 23rd Apr (MCS).

On 28th Aug the first returning bird was sighted at Claire Mare (GDA) and there were 50 birds there by the end of October (LT). The species suffers from lack of reporting and many more birds than this winter on the island in suitable habitat.

Woodcock (<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>)

Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant.

Woodcocks are under-recorded due to their secretive nature – mostly seen when flushed by shooters. The species was seen at 8 sites by birders during the months of January to March, and October to December. The largest number seen was 7 at the Reservoir on 4th Jan (LT). A total of 57 Woodcock were ringed during the year, which shows how common they actually are.

Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)	4 records
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Scarce passage migrant, rare in winter.

A typical spread of records but with no large flocks to inflate the total.

- 1, Claire Mare, 27th Apr (WS,CJM)
- 1, Claire Mare, 10th May (RJM,LT,AJB)
- 1, Vazon, 25th & 26th Jul (LT)
- 1, Vale Pond, 30th Aug (MPL)



Black-tailed Godwit, Claire Mare – Barry Wells

Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>)
--

Quite common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Twenty to thirty birds seemed to be wintering at the start of the year – mainly in Belle Greve Bay, although a large flock of 40 birds was briefly there on 14th Jan (DJRA). Numbers of migrants in spring were insignificant, with a few single-figure flocks along the West coast. The last northward bound bird was seen on 4th Jun on Herm (GDA).

On 18th Jul they returned (LT) although again, migration did not involve many birds. The final winter period was very poor with just one or two birds staying on the island.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

Quite common passage migrant.

A single bird wintered on the rocks at Portelet/Pezeries on the North side of Pleinmont Headland, being seen on 11th Jan and 14th Feb (LT,RJM).

This was also the location of the first spring migrant on 28th Mar (LT). Flocks of up to 30 birds were then seen widely during migration until the last group on Herm on 4th Jun (GDA).

Birds soon arrived back on the island as a bird was at Fort le Crocq on 7th Jul (AJB) but as usual, smaller flocks of up to 4 birds were passing in autumn, until the last on 16th Oct (BK). Portelet and Pezeries Bays seem to be becoming a regular wintering site for this species as 2 birds were present there on 26th Dec (WS,LT). This is a new phenomenon, as Whimbrel is usually just a passage migrant through the island.

Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Smaller numbers in summer.

Wader-count data showed a peak of 138 in December, but the species is difficult to monitor as some feed inland. Very few spent the early summer period on the island.

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Smaller numbers in summer.

This species was very scarce in May and June but was much commoner at other times of the year. No especially large flocks were noted and 45 birds in January was the largest wader-count figure, although the wintering population will probably be slightly larger.

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

Uncommon passage migrant.

Only three birds were seen on spring migration this year – Claire Mare from 15th to 20th Apr, Vazon/Fort le Crocq from 28th Apr to 2nd May (AJB) and Fort le Crocq on 23rd May (AJB). The first returning individual was at Grandes Havres on 13th Jul (MAG), and there were lots of sightings until the last on 5th Oct at Rue des Bergers (AJB). The peak counts at each site were Rue des Bergers (2), Claire Mare (6), Vazon/Fort le Crocq (4), Pulias (1) and Vale Pond (6). The total number was impossible to ascertain but was probably about 40 - 50.



*Greenshank, Claire Mare
Barry Wells*

Green Sandpiper (<i>Tringa ochropus</i>)

13+ birds

Uncommon passage migrant. Rare in winter.

There were no Spring records this year so the first was at Claire Mare from 11th to 17th Jul (CK). Four birds were at Claire Mare from 7th Aug (MPL), gradually reducing in number until 15th Aug, with another final sighting there on 1st Sep. Vale Pond held birds on 26th Jul, 30th Aug and 7th Sep (3), Pulias Pond had one on 22nd Aug and Rue des Bergers had the final bird from 7th to 17th Sep (AJB).

Wood Sandpiper (<i>Tringa glareola</i>)
--

3 records (of 4 birds)

Scarce passage migrant.

The best year for Wood Sandpiper since six birds in 1995.

- 1, Claire Mare, 10th & 11th May
- 1, Vale Pond, 12th & 13th Aug (AJB)
- 2, Claire Mare, 7th Sep (LT)



Wood Sandpiper, Claire Mare – Barry Wells

Common Sandpiper (<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>)

Quite common passage migrant, scarce in winter.

The first sighting of the year was at the Reservoir on 28th Mar (AJB) – which may have been a bird which had been wintering nearby. The first of the migrants was seen on 18th Apr (LT,RJM), with small numbers – c.20 birds altogether – recorded until 14th May.

As usual, Common Sandpipers arrived back very early on Autumn migration, with the first at Pulias on 27th Jun (RJM,LT), and were much commoner than in Spring, with the biggest flock

of 5 on 7th Sep. The last of the regular migrants was at the Reservoir on 3rd Oct (EDB). Again a Winter bird was sighted – at Pulias on 5th Dec (LT).

Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>)
--

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Small numbers in summer.

Wader-count data shows that 319 birds on the island on 26th Oct was the largest island-wide count – almost exactly the same as last year's. Small numbers also spent the summer season here. Even taking into account the difficulties of counting this rocky-shore species, the number of wintering birds visiting the island has dropped considerably in recent years.

Pomarine Skua (<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>)
--

1 record

Scarce Autumn passage migrant. Very rare in Winter.

This species had started to become very regular with 33 sightings in 3 years, but with only one this year and none in 2002, it again appears quite rare.

1, past Jaonneuse Point, 11th Oct (WRT)

Arctic Skua (<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>)
--

42 birds

Uncommon autumn passage migrant.

Two birds passing Jaonneuse Point on 2nd Aug (WRT) were the first observed of the year, and a total of 39 birds on 9 dates were counted from the northern headlands as they migrated south. The peak day was 14 on 30th Aug (WRT,PKV), and the last sighting was a bird on 6th Oct (AJB). Also 3 birds were seen from the pelagic trip on 7th Sep.

Great Skua (<i>Stercorarius skua</i>)
--

97 birds

Uncommon autumn passage migrant. Very rare in winter.

The first migrant seen was one past Chouet on 18th Aug (PKV), with 74 birds being recorded on only 9 dates after that, until the last was noted on 7th Oct (MPL). The peak day was 5th Oct when 28 birds were counted (WRT,PKV,MV). In addition to the usual migration, up to 20 birds were seen on the pelagic trip of 7th Sep, and there were Winter sightings of 2 on 22nd and 1 on 28th Dec (WRT,AJB).

Mediterranean Gull (<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>)

7 records (of 14+ birds)

Scarce visitor, mainly from summer through to winter.

Fourteen birds is a minimum total since a bird may disappear and be replaced by another without anyone really noticing, especially in Belle Greve Bay. Any double-figure total is a very good year for the species however, which is still slowly increasing in numbers.

1 adult, Belle Greve Bay, from 2002 until 23rd Feb.

1 1st-winter, L'Eree Shingle Bank area, from 2002 until 1st Jan only.

1 1st-winter, Grandes Rocques, 21st Jan (MPL),

possibly same at Belle Greve Bay on 22nd Jan (MCS).

1 adult, Cobo, 23rd Mar (MAG)

4 birds (1 adult, 1 2nd-summer, 2 1st-summers), Belle Greve Bay, 23rd Jul (BGW)

1 juv, Fort le Crocq, 15th Aug (RJM), possibly same, Grandes Havres, 16th Aug (MAG), and same again, Belle Greve Bay, 17th Aug (PKV)

up to 5 birds (1 first-winter, 2 second-winter, 2 adults), Belle Greve Bay, 7th Oct until year-end (BGW)

1 2nd-winter, La Mare de Carteret, 19th Oct (MPL)

1 1st-winter, Fort le Crocq, 24th Oct (RJM,LT)



adult Mediterranean Gull, Belle Greve Bay, February – Barry Wells



colour-ringed 2nd-winter (left) and adult (right) Mediterranean Gulls, Belle Greve Bay, December – Phil Atkinson

Little Gull (<i>Larus minutus</i>)	2 records
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Scarce autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.

Mid-winter appears to be the most likely time to see this species at the moment.

1 1st-winter, Little Russell, 21st Feb (RJM,LT)

1 adult, Chouet, 27th Dec (PKV,MV)

Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)
--

Very common year-round visitor, but uncommon in late spring and early summer.

The species was commonly noted in large flocks in the winter and migration seasons, but as usual, it was very difficult to find any during the breeding season in May and June. They clearly breed quite close by, as very young juvenile birds start appearing in mid-summer.

Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>)	3 records
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Uncommon to scarce visitor, mainly in winter.

Three birds is a very low total indeed, with no sightings at all after late January.

1 1st-winter, L'Eree, 5th Jan (RJM)

1 1st-winter, Belle Greve Bay, 9th to 20th Jan (BGW)

1 adult, L'Ancrese, 24th Jan (RJM,LT)



first-winter Common Gull, Belle Greve Bay – Barry Wells

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant. Uncommon in mid-winter.

The species was observed in the largest numbers in poor weather during passage periods, mainly on beaches. During mid-winter single-figure counts were most common.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

Very common resident breeding species, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The commonest gull on the island and abundant throughout the year. Flocks of 1000+ were often noted at Chouet Rubbish Tip and stormy weather out to sea brought many birds to shelter on the West coast. Breeding birds were mainly nesting on the South cliffs, Lihou and off Herm.

Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*)

2 records

Scarce visitor, mainly summer and autumn.

The impression is that observers are not spending as much time searching for Yellow-legged Gulls as previously.

1, Vazon, 25th Jan (MAG)

1 ad, Chouet/Ladies Bay, 24th Dec (WRT)

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)

1 returning individual

Vagrant – 9 previous records, including one regular wintering individual.

The regular wintering adult bird was seen around the Town Harbour and Belle Greve Bay until 2nd February. It was located again on 19th October and could be found regularly until the end of the year. This bird is 8 years old and has only missed one winter since it was first seen in 1997.

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

Common resident breeding species, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The species does not flock in as large a numbers as other large gulls but is still common throughout the year, with groups of a hundred together not uncommon.

Kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>)
--

Quite common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Small numbers were seen off the headlands in the first month of the year and in late Spring. Birds started moving offshore from September and this continued irregularly throughout the second half of the year. There was heavier passage on 27th and 28th Dec when a few hundred birds were seen passing Chouet.

Sandwich Tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>)

Quite common passage migrant and summer visitor. Uncommon winter visitor. Former breeder.

In January, there was up to 12 birds wintering, with maxima of 6 in Belle Greve Bay, 3 in the northern bays and 3 in the West – but of course there may have been movement between these areas. The wintering birds had more or less disappeared at the start of March before the migrants started passing through on about 23rd Mar. As usual, small flocks could be encountered during the spring and summer periods, with slightly larger numbers in Autumn. Birds could be seen trickling past the northern headlands most Autumn days. The second Winter period saw c.10 birds fishing the island's bays.



winter Sandwich Tern, Belle Greve Bay, December – Phil Atkinson

Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)
--

Quite common passage migrant and summer visitor. Small numbers breed.

An early bird was seen in Cobo Bay on 7th Apr (LT), but proper passage started from about 29th Apr, when small flocks could be encountered passing through for about a month. Birds were regularly seen during the Summer months and, although no specific news was received, a few pairs probably bred in the Herm area. Autumn migration was strongest in August with 51 birds past Jaonneuse on 2nd being the largest count (WRT). Numbers were much reduced in September and there was a final flourish on 5th Oct when 19 birds were seen (WRT,PKV,MV).

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)**2 records*****Scarce passage migrant.***

With increased observer familiarity with the species under seawatching conditions, Arctic Terns are now being seen on a regular basis as they pass the island.

1, west past Jaonneuse, 5th Oct (WRT,PKV,MV)

1, west past Jaonneuse, 11th Oct (WRT).

Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)**1 record of 2 birds*****Scarce passage migrant.***

An unusual – but not unprecedented - time of year. Most Little Terns are seen in Spring or Autumn.

2, Les Ammarreurs, 29th Jun (RJM,LT)

Guillemot (*Uria aalge*)***Quite common winter visitor and passage migrant. Uncommon summer visitor, a few breed.***

The odd tired or sheltering bird could be seen around the coast during the Winter periods, with the occasional wrecked, dead bird found on the beaches. In the Spring and Summer, sightings were more or less restricted to the Jethou and Herm areas where there was probably a handful of breeding pairs. Some passage was visible whilst Autumn seawatching but this was never more than single-figures this year.

Razorbill (*Alca torda*)***Quite common winter visitor and passage migrant. Uncommon summer visitor, a few breed.***

The general comments for the previous species are also applicable to Razorbill, except that this species was much easier to find than Guillemot. For example 7 were in Belle Greve Bay on 16th Jan and 7 were also off Fort le Marchant on 24th Jan (RJM). A few pairs probably bred in the Herm and Jethou areas as they could be seen there through the Summer. Seawatching in December was productive with 12 on 24th being the maximum (WRT).

Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*)***Uncommon summer visitor and breeder. Rare on passage and in winter.***

All records received were from the breeding areas around Jethou and Herm, where the first returning birds were seen on 12th Mar (GDA). Approximately 40 birds seen from the "Puffin Patrol" boat trip on 26th Jun was the peak count, similar numbers as seen in recent years. As usual birds disappeared again during July, with the last seen on 19th.

Feral Pigeon (*Columba livia*)***Common resident breeding species.***

Large flocks were noted at a few sites, especially around the harbour and town, or in certain favoured fields. Tired racing pigeons were often seen exhausted and resting on the island's headlands.

Stock Dove (<i>Columba oenas</i>)
--

Uncommon resident breeding species and passage migrant.

The species was generally not recorded in any numbers, with groups of up to 8 noted at a variety of sites. The largest flock reported was 30+ at Fauxquets Valley on 6th Sep (LT). No clear evidence of migration was reported.

Woodpigeon (<i>Columba palumbus</i>)

Very common resident breeding species and passage migrant.

Widely recorded from all parts of the island, with some visible migration noted especially during the autumn.

Collared Dove (<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>)

Common resident breeding species.

Present in all areas of the island, flocking in numbers at a few sites. A leucistic bird was present at Les Effards, St. Sampsons on 30th Dec (MPL).

Turtle Dove (<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>)

Quite common passage migrant and summer visitor.

Single birds were recorded on the Bird Race on 4th May at Pleinmont and Jerbourg (SoS), with small numbers moving through during May. During the summer, a few were reported from the quieter areas of the island, with migrant birds returning from August. There were few September sightings, with the final bird in a stubble field at Camp du Roi on 22nd Sep (MPL).

Cuckoo (<i>Cuculus canorus</i>)
--

6 records (of 7 birds)

Uncommon passage migrant and rare breeding species.

The species has become so scarce in recent years that, for the first time, all records are listed.

- 1, Jerbourg, 16th Apr (CJM)
- 1, Catiaroc/Claire Mare, 17th Apr (LT,JH)
- 1, Grande Mare, 24th Apr (AJB)
- 1, Valniquet, Pleinmont, 18th May (LT)
- 2, Herm, 4th Jun (GDA)
- 1, Pleinmont, 10th Aug (AJB)

Barn Owl (<i>Tyto alba alba</i>)

Uncommon resident breeding species.

Many pairs of owls are using the nestboxes erected around the island, but they are still difficult to see. About 20 pairs were probably breeding around the island (VEF).

Long-eared Owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)
--

3+ pairs

Uncommon resident breeding species. Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

This species appears to be reported much less often, with birds at the traditional sites along the South coast becoming difficult to locate. The Reservoir birds were thought to have bred

however, and there was the discovery of a new site in the North of the island where, unfortunately, a fledged chick was found dead (PKV). There are between 3 and 5 pairs on the island at the moment.

Short-eared Owl (<i>Asio flammeus</i>)

9 records (of 11+ birds)

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

The birds which spent a long time in the fields at Mont Herault often gave an excellent performance as they hunted at dusk. It is quite likely that more than 3 birds were involved in this series of sightings. The number of records is increasing since the 2 or 3 per year in the late 90's.

- 1, Old Aerodrome, 5th Jan (MAG) – [probably same as one on Lihou at end of 2002]
- 1, over Le Friquet, 25th Jan (DJRA)
- Up to 3, Mont Herault/Pleinmont, 1st Feb to 6th Apr (WRT)
- 1, Claire Mare, 23rd Mar (MAG)
- 1, over Saumarez Park, 11th Apr (RJM,LT)
- 1, Pleinmont, 18th Apr (MAG)
- 1, Pleinmont, 30th Aug (RAF)
- 1, Lihou, 27th Oct (AJB)
- 1, Pleinmont, 7th Nov (RJM,LT)
- 1, Lihou, 21st to 24th Nov (AJB)

Swift (<i>Apus apus</i>)

Very common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

A bird appearing at Pleinmont on 14th Apr was the first reported sighting of the Summer (LT). Numbers built up slowly during the next few weeks with good numbers passing through on a few days in the Spring. Flocks were present during the Summer with birds breeding in many roof-spaces in the older buildings. Numbers dropped off in August and there were 4 birds seen during September, the last being on 14th. However this was not the end of it, with an exceptionally late bird recorded over Saumarez Park on 14th Nov (RJM,LT).

Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>)
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Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant. Has bred.

In Guernsey, the Kingfisher is present at unusual times of the year compared to other species. The first birds arrive on the island in the middle of the Summer (about early July) and continue to fish round the island until late Winter, most disappearing during February, with a few into March. This was similar in 2003 with the only March bird being on 6th at Vale Pond (WS), and the next sighting being on 24th Jun in Belle Greve Bay (RJM).

Hoopoe (<i>Upupa epops</i>)

3 records

The extended stay of the Autumn bird is notable, and the Spring birds were typically brief.

- 1, near St. Martins School, 24th Mar
- 1, Trinity Cottages, Pleinmont, 20th Apr (JH)
- 1, Fort le Crocq, 7th to 13th Sep (AJB)

Wryneck (<i>Jynx torquilla</i>)
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11 records (of 14 birds)

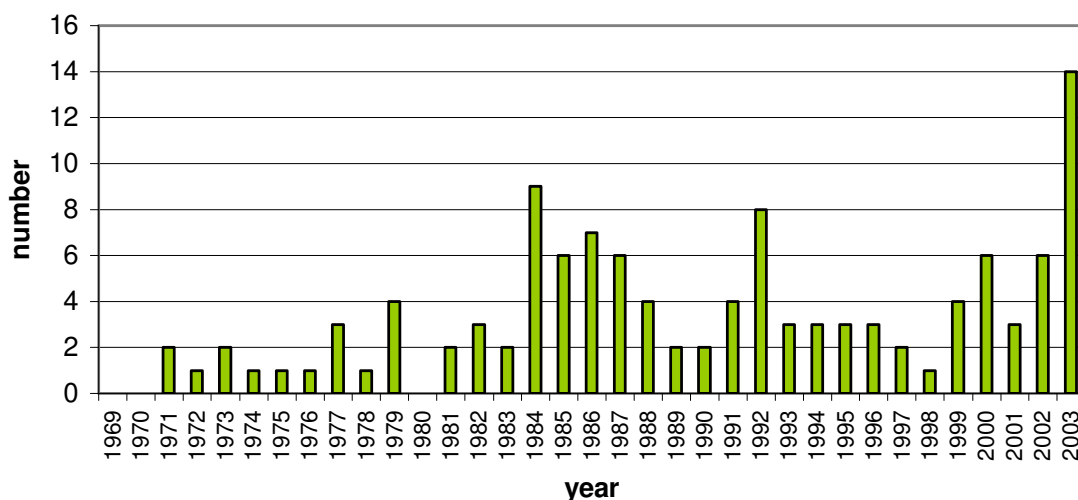
Scarce passage migrant. Formerly common breeder.

One of the highlights of the early Autumn was the large number of Wrynecks which appeared on the island. Fourteen birds is easily the best total since the species stopped breeding in

Guernsey early in the 20th Century. During the weekend of the 13th and 14th Sep, an amazing seven birds were present.

- 1, Landes du Marche, 25th Aug
- 1, Lihou, 26th to 30th Aug (AJB)
- 1, Trinity Cottages, Pleinmont, 27th Aug (RAF)
- 2, Lihou Headland, 30th Aug to 1st Sep (MAG) – 1 staying to 13th Sep
- 1, Watch house car park, Pleinmont, 2nd Sep (AJB)
- 1, top fields, Herm, 3rd Sep (AJB,JB)
- 1, Scramble Track, Pleinmont, 13th Sep (LT)
- 1, Chouet, 14th Sep (MAG)
- 3, Fort Richmond/Fort le Crocq, 14th Sep (DJRA) – 1 staying to 26th Sep
- 1, Pleinmont Road, 14th Sep (DT)
- 1, Petit Bot, 4th Oct (LT)

The chart below shows that 2003 was easily the best year for Wryneck in recent times.



Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) 1 record

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

A typically elusive and brief mid-winter record.

1 heard only, Saumarez Park, 19th Jan (RJM,LT)

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Quite common passage migrant and winter visitor. Uncommon breeding species now.

Small flocks of up to 30 were widespread during the winter periods, but larger numbers were seen in late autumn peaking at 50+ at Pleinmont on 24th Oct (RJM,LT). The breeding population continues to hang on with about 3 pairs at L'Ancrese, 1 pair at Port Soif and 1 pair on Herm Common.

Shorelark (*Eremophila alpestris*) 1 record

Vagrant - 8 previous records

One was found feeding in fields near the Scramble Track at Pleinmont on 6th November. It could be seen there regularly until 12th November but could be difficult to find sometimes. This is the first record since one nearby in 1998.

(D. Trestain et al)

Sand Martin (<i>Riparia riparia</i>)

Quite common passage migrant. Uncommon summer visitor.

The first Sand Martin of the year was reported on 6th Mar heading North over Belle Greve Bay (DJRA). This was followed by sightings on 11th and 13th and then commonly thereafter. During the next month or so, regular passage continued, then smaller numbers through in May. As usual, a handful of birds wandered around the island during the summer months but there was no sign of breeding. Autumn passage was typically light, with the final sighting at Mont Herault on 28th Sep (LT).

Swallow (<i>Hirundo rustica</i>)

Very common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first returning Swallow flew around Pleinmont on 25th Mar (AJB), with 2 others reported before the month's end. Strong passage continued for the next two months and birds were common all summer. Return passage was evident throughout the autumn, with the last of these passing through on 25th Oct. There was a late trickle however, with one seen on 8th and 2 on 9th Nov (RJM,LT). Two birds seen at Cobo on 3rd Dec were highly unusual (CJM). An interesting sighting was of a pure white albino bird with a small flock at Jerbourg on 15th Sep (RRC).

House Martin (<i>Delichon urbicum</i>)

Quite common breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.

A bird over Rue Sauvage on 27th Mar was the first record of the Spring (RJM). After a further 2 in March, House Martins could be seen passing through during April and May but not in huge numbers. Present and breeding during the Summer months, return passage peaked in September then slowed down in early October. The final sighting was one feeding over Grande Mare on 23rd Oct (MPL,AJB)

Richard's Pipit (<i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>)
--

1 record

Scarce autumn migrant, very rare in spring.

This record is almost identical to last year's just one day earlier.
1, Pleinmont, 27th and 28th Sep (MAG).

Tree Pipit (<i>Anthus trivialis</i>)

9 birds

Uncommon passage migrant.

Records of this species continue to fall with only 2 reported in the whole of the Spring – both on the Bird Race of 4th May at Pleinmont and Herm (SoS). Autumn was marginally better with 7 birds reported until the last over Fort Saumarez on 12th Oct (WRT). Perhaps not all observers are reporting this species to La Societe.

Meadow Pipit (<i>Anthus pratensis</i>)

Common resident species and passage migrant. Declining breeding bird.

No especially large groups or heavy passage was reported this year, but flocks did build up at various headlands and fields during the migration season. Nowadays only small numbers breed.

Rock Pipit (*Anthus petrosus*)

Common breeding species, with additional wintering birds.

Birds were seen in all coastal areas, often flocking into double-figures, feeding on vraic.

Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*)

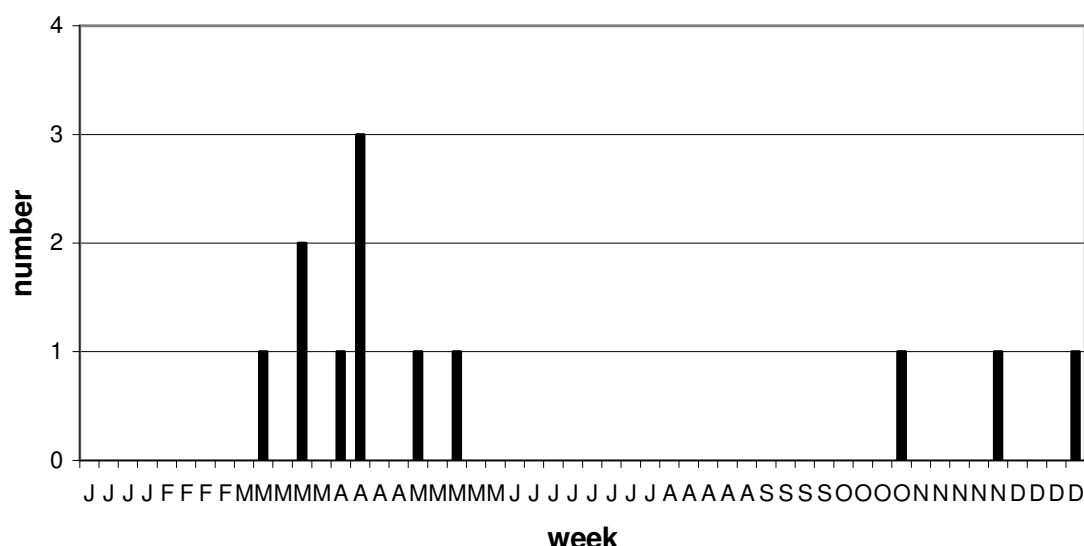
1 record

Rare passage migrant – 11 previous records

One was seen feeding with a flock of Rock Pipits on the vraic at Richmond, Vazon on 5th and 6th March. It was probably resting and refuelling on its journey from wintering in southern England to its breeding grounds in the Alps or Pyrenees. This is the 12th record for Guernsey.

(M. P. Lawlor et al)

The chart below shows all the Guernsey records of Water Pipit. Most of the records are from Spring migration – this year's being the earliest – with a couple in Winter/Autumn.



Grey Wagtail (<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>)
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Quite common winter visitor and migrant.

Single birds were seen wintering at various sites on the island, departing during March, when the last was seen at Pleinmont on 24th (LT). There was a couple of unusual mid-Summer sightings with birds at Petit Bot on 28th Jun (GDA) and the Reservoir on 4th Jul (AJB). Autumn migrants appeared from 14th Sep when one was at Petit Bot (GDA). There were no reports of more than 2 together, but the species was widespread thereafter.



Grey Wagtail, Reservoir – Mark Lawlor

Pied Wagtail (<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>)

Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Sometimes breeds.

Common in the Winter with birds flocking at various sites to roost. Numbers of migrants built up during March with 40+ on the Old Aerodrome on 13th (MPL). Recorded during the next month or so as migrants. This race of Pied Wagtail generally disappears during April and returns to the island during October to winter in large numbers.

White Wagtail (<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>)

Quite common passage migrant. Sometimes breeds.

The first Spring White Wagtails were two with the Pied Wagtails on the Old Aerodrome on 14th Mar (MPL). Passage peaked during May then dropped off quickly. Also common on Autumn migration passing through in August and September before vacating the island for their winter quarters

NB.

[***'alba' wagtail*** – As has been typical in recent years, there was the odd sighting of mainly juvenile birds in the summer which were variously reported as Pied or White Wagtails. These birds were no doubt locally bred but no nest site was located.]

Waxwing (<i>Bombycilla garrulus</i>)

1 record (of 2 birds)

Vagrant – about a dozen previous records.

Two birds were seen briefly in a garden along La Mare Road, Castel on 31st January. They were very elusive, being seen again two days later and then again on 6th February, clearly preferring to feed in an unknown area nearby. The final sighting was on 7th February when a few local birders managed to see them. This is only the third sighting since 1990.

(C. & E. Mould et al)



Waxwings, La Mare Road, Castel – Mark Lawlor

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

Very common resident species.

Commonly noted at all sites.

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)

Very common resident species.

Commonly noted at all sites.

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)

Very common resident species, also passage migrant and winter visitor.

Commonly noted at all sites, numbers augmented by continental birds arriving from the last week of September to winter in the island.

Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochrurus*)

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor, rare in summer. Bred once.

Singles were wintering at a variety of sites until 9th Mar, with 2 birds noted on Lihou. Very little Spring passage was observed this year but 3 were seen on Herm on Mar 21st (RJM,LT). With no Summer sightings this year, the next birds were 4 appearing at Clos des Pecqueries on 16th Oct (MPL). This was the highest count of the Autumn, with ones and two staying to winter on the island.



Black Redstart, L'Eree Shingle Bank – Barry Wells

Eastern Black Redstart (<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus phoenicuroides</i>) 1 record
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Vagrant – no previous records

An unusual Black Redstart stood out from the typical birds as it fed on the seawall at the Richmond end of Vazon on 28th October. This bird was bright red from the breast right down to the vent, and was clearly of an unfamiliar subspecies. It showed very well in the same area until it departed on the night of 30th October, and was trapped during its stay. Investigations revealed that this bird belonged to the race 'phoenicuroides' from the mountains of Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia. As well as being a first for the Channel Islands, it is probably one of the first to be identified in the whole of Europe.

(G. D. Atkinson et al)



Eastern Black Redstart, Richmond, Vazon – Mark Lawlor

Common Redstart (<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>)

Uncommon passage migrant.

There were a few very early records of Redstart this year with birds in Saumarez Park on 23rd Mar (DM), at Le Friquet on 25th Mar (DJRA) and Petit Port on 30th Mar (MAG). After a short gap another 6 or so were reported between 15th and 24th Apr. A late migrant was seen at L'Eree on 26th May (JTA).

A single bird was at Pleinmont on 8th Aug (RJM,LT) but there was a good passage between 24th Aug and 26th Sep with small numbers regularly seen all around the island, totalling up to about 50 birds. There was a couple of late sightings with birds on Lihou on 7th to 12th Oct (AJB) and Herm on 11th Oct (MPL).

Whinchat (<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>)

Passage migrant – uncommon in spring, quite common in autumn.

Seven birds were recorded on Spring passage but all on just 3 dates – 1 on 20th Apr at Mont Herault (MAG), 4 on 24th Apr at Pleinmont and Herm (LT,MPL) and 2 on 4th May at Port Soif and Track Marais (AJB).

As usual, the species was much more common during Autumn migration but numbers were higher than normal. After 4 at Claire Mare on 8th Aug (LT), there were numerous sightings and double-figure counts until the last week of September. The passage peaked on 13th and 14th Sep when up to 25 were at Pleinmont. The final record was two birds at Pleinmont on 12th Oct (WRT).

Stonechat (<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>)
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Common breeding resident and passage migrant.

Many pairs bred in suitable habitat, mostly around coastline. During the non-breeding season birds were more dispersed in other habitats.

Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>)
--

Common passage migrant, irregular breeder.

The first sighting was a bird at Rousse on 4th Mar (CJM), then one on Vazon beach on 5th Mar, with one at Fort Doyle the day after that. Passage then picked up slowly until the first influx on 31st Mar. The first half of April was mainly poor for Wheatear passage until a sudden arrival of a few hundred birds occurred on 20th, with 100+ birds on L'Eree Aerodrome alone (CJM,SGB). Passage continued through May in smaller numbers (including 'Greenland' Wheatears) until the final bird was recorded at Pleinmont on 8th Jun (AJB).

The first date for the Autumn arrivals was 8th Aug with a few birds present at Pleinmont (RJM,LT). Despite good numbers of other migrant species this Autumn, there were no massive counts of Wheatear, with a count of 30 being the highest reported to La Societe. Passage had finished by 26th Oct apart from a late individual on Vazon beach from 17th to 21st Nov (AJB).

Ring Ouzel (<i>Turdus torquatus</i>)

20+ birds

Uncommon passage migrant.

The Spring was very good for seeing Ring Ouzels. The first was on Lihou on 24th Mar (AJB) and during the next couple of weeks, 6 or 7 singletons were found. Then on 18th Apr, 5 individuals appeared at Pleinmont (MPL), rising to at least 9 by 20th (CJM). These birds disappeared by 24th, when the final male was on Herm (MPL).

There were 2 birds seen in Autumn – at Pleinmont on 18th and 19th Oct (WRT) and Icart on 20th Oct (AJB).



Ring Ouzels – (left) male, Herm – (right) female, Pleinmont – Mark Lawlor



male Ring Ouzel, Pleinmont – Barry Wells

Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)

Very common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Commonly noted at all sites, with additional influxes recorded during the autumn and winter months.

Fieldfare (<i>Turdus pilaris</i>)
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Quite common passage migrant and winter visitor – numbers vary.

Early in the year small groups of up to 20 birds were widely reported, until the final sighting on 20th Mar at Pleinmont (AJB).

Two very early birds were reported over St. Peter Port on 20th Sep (LT), but most birds arrived after the 16th Oct. Peak passage days were 20th, 25th and 31st Oct, and 16th Nov, with over 100 on the former day being the maximum. After the migration season, very few were seen in December.

Song Thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>)

Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Commonly noted at all sites, with additional influxes recorded during the autumn and winter months.

Redwing (<i>Turdus iliacus</i>)
--

Common passage migrant and winter visitor – numbers vary.

100+ birds at Track Marais on 14th Feb was the largest flock reported (LT), but there were probably lots of a similar size around the island at the time. Birds started passing through north during March and the last lingering bird was observed at L'Eree on 8th Apr (AJB). Three birds migrating overhead on 29th Sep were the forerunners of the Autumn migration (LT), but the first heavy passage occurred during the night of 14th Oct. Birds were commonly reported during this migration with 300 at Petit Bot the highest count (LT). Plenty of birds wintered in small flocks around the island.

Mistle Thrush (<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>)

Uncommon breeding resident and passage migrant.

Observed infrequently, mainly in parkland and gardens, with groups of up to 3 birds recorded. 5 birds on 28th Oct in Candie Gardens may have been migrants (LT).

Cetti's Warbler (<i>Cettia cettia</i>)

5+ singing males

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. Has probably bred.

In the last couple of years there have only been 2 singing birds per year, so this is a welcome increase to the levels of the late 90's. It is almost certain that Cetti's Warbler bred at a couple of these sites but due to their secretive nature it is impossible to be definite.

1, Claire Mare, 8th Feb (GDA), presumed same (a female) trapped on 1st Aug (JH) and seen 12th Sep (LT)

1 singing male, Grand Pre, from 12th Feb (GDA) until 5th May, with a later sighting of probably on 21st Nov. Also, a few birds were recorded singing here on 5th May.

1 singing male, Rue des Bergers/Grande Mare, from 27th Mar (RJM,LT,AJB) until 3rd Jul, with a later sighting of probably the same bird on 7th Nov.

1 singing male, Vale Pond, from 28th Mar (RJM,LT,MPL) until 29th Jun.

1 singing male, Marais Nord, from 4th May (JMA) until 7th Jun.

Fan-tailed Warbler (<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>)

1 record

Vagrant – 1 previous record

A male bird was found singing in the reedbed at Claire Mare NR between 11th and 20th August. It could be watched, mainly early in the morning, buzzing around the tops of the reeds 'zitting' out its distinctive song. It was trapped and ringed during its stay. This is the second record for Guernsey but not unexpected since it is expanding its range northwards, and it is a species which could soon colonise the island if the warm winters continue.

(J. Hooper et al)



Fan-tailed Warbler, Claire Mare – Jamie Hooper

Grasshopper Warbler (<i>Locustella naevia</i>)

4 records

Uncommon passage migrant.

Quite a low total, but year to year, this species is very variable in numbers.

- 1 singing, La Mare Road, Castel, 15th Apr (RRC)
- 1, Pleinmont, 18th Apr (MAG)
- 1 singing, Herm Common, 24th Apr (MPL)
- 1 ringed, Trinity Cottages, Pleinmont, 27th Sep (JH)



Grasshopper Warbler, Herm Common – Mark Lawlor

Aquatic Warbler (<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>)

4 records

Scarce autumn passage migrant.

Four trapped birds is excellent, but not surprising with the good weather conditions for migrants during the second half of August.

- 1 trapped, Claire Mare, 11th Aug (JH)
- 1 trapped, Claire Mare, 13th Aug (JH)
- 1 trapped, Claire Mare, 19th Aug (JH)
- 1 trapped, Claire Mare, 22nd Aug (JH)



Aquatic Warbler, Claire Mare – Jamie Hooper

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*)

Quite common passage migrant but not easily seen. Occasionally breeds.

First reported to La Societe on 17th Apr from Claire Mare (LT). The main passage of birds was recorded through the island's wetter areas in April and May. There were a few records in June and July, before birds started passing through again during autumn migration in small numbers. The last bird was not specifically noted – this species is quite under-recorded.



Sedge Warbler, Claire Mare – Mark Lawlor

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first bird was singing at the Rue des Bergers on 15th Apr (AJB). Good numbers passed through, with singing and breeding birds located at most reedbed sites, even quite small ones. Good migration was noted in August and early September, with the final sighting at Marais Nord on 11th Oct (PKV,MV).

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

Quite common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor

There were plenty of sightings of male and female birds wintering at the start of the year, but singing males were in more evidence during March. Spring passage peaked in late April and autumn migrants were commonest in mid to late October. Again small numbers stayed to winter around the island.

Garden Warbler (<i>Sylvia borin</i>)

Uncommon breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first Garden Warbler of the year was present at Fort Saumarez on 17th Apr (LT). The majority of the spring migrants were recorded in May and breeding certainly occurred at a few quiet sites. Autumn migration was poor and few birds were seen until the last on 24th Oct at Pleinmont (RJM,LT).

Lesser Whitethroat (<i>Sylvia curruca</i>)

2 records

Scarce passage migrant and rare breeding summer visitor.

The number of records of this species continues to decline.

1, Mont Herault, 24th Apr (LT)

1, Pleinmont, 17th Aug (LT)

Whitethroat (<i>Sylvia communis</i>)

Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first arrival was on 14th Apr on Lihou (AJB) with a sudden influx during the next few days. The species still seems to be very common around the island with lots of singing birds and breeding pairs. Autumn passage continued up until 24th Sep (PKV).

Dartford Warbler (<i>Sylvia undata</i>)
--

2 or 3 pairs

Uncommon breeding resident.

Dartford Warblers were not recorded in as high numbers as last year which may have been due to a cold snap in January with the first (light) snow for a number of years. The maximum count at Pleinmont was only 3 birds, so only one or two pairs were probably present. Also a pair was observed at Le Gouffre, and singles were seen at Fort le Marchant, Fort Doyle and Herm during the year but with no evidence of breeding.

Wood Warbler (<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>)
--

2 records

Scarce passage migrant, mostly in spring.

A poor year for Wood Warbler, especially after the 9 birds recorded last year.

1, Pleinmont, 18th Apr (MAG)

1, Saumarez Park, 2nd & 3rd May (RJM,LT)

Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)

Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, uncommon winter visitor.

1 or 2 birds were noted at many sites during January and February, with 5 at Rue des Bergers on 23rd Jan (WS). Spring migrants arrived from about 21st Mar and the species was very common thereafter throughout the Spring and Summer. Chiffchaffs were also very common during the autumn migration, which peaks in late October, early November. Groups of up to 5 could be seen in December, mainly in reedbed locations.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)

Common passage migrant, uncommon breeding summer visitor.

The first migrant Willow Warbler was present at Claire Mare on 25th Mar (JH). More birds moved through during April but no unusually large arrivals were noted. As usual, the species was not very common during the summer with only a handful of singing males reported. Larger numbers of migrants appeared during August, falling in number during September, with only a couple of October records, the last at Vaux de Monel on 24th Oct (LT).

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, uncommon breeding resident.

Commonly reported, especially during autumn migration in October and November. Only small numbers were seen during the summer in suitable habitat where there were no doubt a few breeding pairs.

Firecrest (*Regulus ignicapilla*)

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor. Has probably bred.

Only ones and twos were reported in the first 2 months but at a wide range of sites. There were a couple of March migrants, then a final two birds at Fort Saumarez on 21st Apr (RJM). Five at Pleinmont and one at the Reservoir on 20th Sep were the first reported back on the island (LT,MPL). Numbers built up, peaking in late October, early November, with a high count of 11 at Petit Bot on 21st Oct (LT). Only single birds were recorded during December. 38 birds were ringed this year in total.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)

Uncommon to quite common passage migrant, scarce breeding summer visitor.

The first Spotted Flycatchers arrived back on the island on 2nd May, with 4 birds at 3 locations (RJM,LT). There were only a few other sightings reported during the Spring. Breeding pairs were proved at 2 traditional sites – Fauxquets Valley and Foulon Cemetery – but there may have been others as there were a few other mid-summer sightings. Autumn migration peaked during late August and early September, with counts of up to 8 birds at some sites. After 5th Sep, there were barely any records, and the last bird was seen at Grande Mare on 2nd Oct (AJB).

Pied Flycatcher (*Ficedula hypoleuca*)

Uncommon to Quite common passage migrant.

There were only two birds reported to the section during the whole Spring but the first was an exceptionally early male at Fort Saumarez on 30th Mar (MAG). This was the earliest ever recorded in Guernsey - the first March Pied Flycatcher on record. The other was also at Fort Saumarez on 15th Apr (DJRA).

Three birds on Pleinmont on 8th Aug (RJM,LT) were the first of an exceptional Autumn passage of the species. Numbers built up, peaking on 24th Aug when suitable weather conditions resulted in probably between 50 and 100 birds being present around the island. The species could be found daily until late September, with the final sighting being on 4th Oct at Petit Bot (LT).

Bearded Tit (<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>)

2 birds

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

The 2 birds from 2002 were seen on and off at Claire Mare until 21st Feb.

Long-tailed Tit (<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>)

Uncommon to quite common resident breeding species.

Commonly recorded on the island, but no very large flocks were reported

Coal Tit (<i>Parus ater</i>)

3 records (of 5 birds)

Scarce, irregular winter visitor and passage migrant – has bred.

Five birds in a year is the best showing since 1997 when there were at least 13 birds seen

1, Trinity Cottages, Pleinmont, 18th Oct (JH)

2, Trinity Cottages, Pleinmont, 10th to 21st Nov (JH)

2, Saumarez Park, 19th Nov (JPD)



Coal Tit, Trinity Cottages, Pleinmont – Jamie Hooper

Blue Tit (<i>Parus caeruleus</i>)
--

Very common resident breeding species.

Very commonly seen throughout, but no large flocks were reported.

Great Tit (<i>Parus major</i>)

Very common resident breeding species.

Very commonly seen throughout, but no large flocks were reported

Short-toed Treecreeper (<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>)
--

Common resident breeding species.

Commonly seen in suitable habitat throughout the island, even in the town centre.

Red-backed Shrike (<i>Lanius collurio</i>)

1 record

Very rare passage migrant recently

Almost immediately after the Pectoral Sandpiper was discovered at Rue des Bergers, a juvenile Red-backed Shrike appeared in the field across the road from the hide. This was on 12th September but the bird did not stay for very long.

(E. A. Thomson et al)

Magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)

Very common resident breeding species.

Very commonly seen throughout, but no especially large flocks were reported.

Jackdaw (<i>Corvus monedula</i>)

9+ birds

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant. Recently rare breeder.

Most reports were either from the South cliffs between Pleinmont and Tielles, or flying to the corvid roost in the Fauxquets Valley. There was the odd sighting from further North but these were still probably the same birds. The largest count was 9 birds at Les Tielles on 10th Dec (GDA) which indicates probably two pairs are breeding. The most unusual sighting was a flock of 5 birds in off the sea at Chouet on 5th May (MAG). Perhaps these were local birds exploring further afield rather than new immigrants.

Carriion Crow (<i>Corvus corone</i>)

Very common resident breeding species.

Very commonly seen throughout. Often, large flocks of over 100 built up, especially in the central valleys.

Raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)

2 breeding pairs

Uncommon resident breeding species.

The Guernsey pair were successful this year as 7 birds were seen at Mont Herault in May, indicating at least 5 young fledged. The usual pair on Herm were also successful as 4 well-grown chicks were seen in April. After the breeding season, birds wandered widely all over the island, and flock sizes of up to 7 were noted, although the juvenile birds appeared to leave the island in the autumn as they always do, leaving just the 2 pairs by the end of the year.

Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)

Very common resident breeding species, passage migrant and winter visitor.

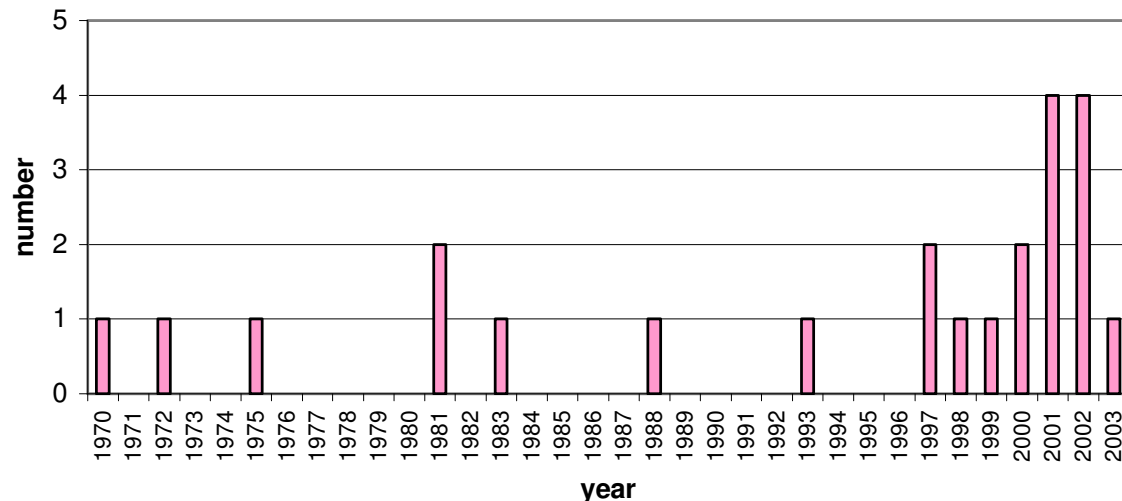
Flocks of up to 1000 were not uncommon in Autumn when huge numbers of Starlings pass through the island. Also large numbers spent the Winter here.

Rose-coloured Starling (*Sturnus roseus*)**1 record**

Rare autumn passage migrant – 22 previous records.

Guernsey continues its run of records of this Eastern European species with a juvenile seen briefly in a Starling flock on Lihou Island on 17th September. This is the seventh year running that this species has been recorded totalling 15 birds.

(A. J. Bisson)



(above) chart showing the increase in Rose-coloured Starling records in recent years.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Common resident breeding species.

Commonly seen throughout, but no unusually large flocks were reported.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Common resident breeding species, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Commonly recorded all year, with an increase in numbers during the migration and winter periods. No very large flocks were reported.

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)**62+ birds**

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

At the end of 2002 there were only a handful wintering on the island and these obviously disappeared as there were no sightings of Brambling until October. The first 2 or 3 were observed at Pleinmont on 12th Oct (sev), with small groups observed regularly until mid-November. Altogether, approximately 60 birds were seen during Autumn migration. There were a couple more wintering sightings but the species was really just a passage migrant this year.



Brambling, Trinity Cottages, Pleinmont – Jamie Hooper

Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*)

Common resident breeding species and passage migrant.

Commonly recorded, with many flocks of over a hundred present in the autumn and winter. The largest flock reported was at least 200 birds at Pleinmont on 23rd Aug (LT).

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Common resident breeding species and passage migrant. Less in winter.

Commonly recorded with flocks of up to 50 present throughout the year. Most common during autumn migration, and least common in mid-winter.

Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*)

Scarce to uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.

At the start of the year there was only a handful of birds wintering on the island at the traditional sites of Dell Nursery and Silbe, as well as in a few gardens. The last of these were seen at Grande Lande, SSv on 20th Feb (BK).

A very early flock of three birds was seen at Pleinmont on 19th Sep (LT), with the next birds at the same location on 12th Oct (WRT). Approximately 90 birds were seen during migration in October and November, with a flock of 20 lingering at Dell Nursery being the largest group encountered. There were no reports in December.



male Siskin, St. Saviours – Catherine Kinnersly

Linnet (<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>)
--

Common resident breeding species and passage migrant. Less in winter.

Commonly recorded, with flocks of up to 100 reported throughout the year but less common during mid-winter.

Bullfinch (<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>)

Uncommon resident breeding species.

Up to 6 reported at various sites throughout the island during the year.

Snow Bunting (<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>)
--

2 records (of 5 birds)

Scarce to uncommon autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.

Five birds is quite a low total, but the flock of 4 were very approachable as they fed around the cars in the beach-side car park.

1, Chouet, 5th Jan (DJRA)

4, Les Ammareurs & Rousse, 7th to 11th Nov (RJM,LT)



Snow Bunting, Les Ammareurs – Mark Lawlor

Ortolan Bunting (<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>)
--

2 records (of 4 birds)

Scarce autumn passage migrant.

This species is often found in small groups. A total of four birds is the same as last year.

3, Pleinmont, 13th to 17th Sep (MAG) – only 2 from 14th.

1, Chouet, 18th Sep (DJRA)

Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)**9 records (of 19 birds)**

Uncommon resident, passage migrant and winter visitor. Sometimes breeds.

Another welcome increase in sightings, but mainly late-autumn migrants. The Track Marais appears to be becoming a reliable wintering site for this species, which will hopefully stay and breed there soon.

- 1, Claire Mare, 19th to 28th Mar (MPL)
- 1, Pulias Headland, 14th Oct (MPL)
- 3, Pleinmont, 25th Oct
- up to 6, Track Marais, 28th Oct to 30th Nov, probably to year-end (AJB)
- 2, Rue des Bergers, 1st Nov (AJB)
- 2, Pleinmont, 7th to 10th Nov (AJB)
- 1, Fort le Crocq, 9th to 11th Nov (RJM,LT,AJB)
- 1, Rue des Bergers, 14th to 16th Nov (RJM)
- 2, Claire Mare, 21st Nov (RJM,LT)

ESCAPES AND EXOTICA**Black Swan** (*Cygnus atratus*)

At least one bird was at large during the year, sometimes seen in the Grande Mare area.

White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*)

20+ feral birds commuted between Marais Nord and Barras Lane fields during the year, with breeding noted at the former site. It is always difficult to pick out wild flocks due to local movements of these birds which can disperse more widely at times.

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

Lots of feral birds, including many farmyard and hybrids, spent most of their time at the Old Aerodrome. The numbers are set to increase quickly now that they have started to breed in the area.

Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)

Small flocks commuted between Marais Nord, Vale Pond and Barras Lane fields during the year. Also there are a few strange-looking birds which are probably hybrids between Barnacle and White-fronted Goose.

Canary (*Serinus canaria*)

One was seen on 7th May (JH)

List of Observers mentioned in the systematic list

DJRA	David Andrews
GDA	Geoff Atkinson
JMA	Joan Anderson
JTA	John Aslett
PWA	Phil Atkinson
AJB	Tony Bisson
DB	Danny Barnes
EDB	Ted Banks
SGB	Steve Brooks
LJC	Len Clark
RRC	Ralph Cave
JPD	Judy Down
RAF	Rod Ferbrache
VEF	Vic Froome
AG	Tony Grange
MAG	Mark Guppy
IH	Ian Hall
JH	Jamie Hooper
BK	Barbara Kendall
CK	Carol Kinnersly
DL	Dave Laurent
MPL	Mark Lawlor
CJM	Chris Maurant
DM	Denis Moore
RJM	Bob Murphy
MCS	Mary Simmons
SoS	Sultans of String bird race team
WS	Win Symons
DT	David Trestain
LAT	Laurie Terry
LT	Liz Thomson
WRT	Wayne Turner
MV	Merlin Veron
PKV	Paul Veron
BGW	Barry Wells
NW	Norman Wood

sev Several people were present at the time the bird appeared

Plus thanks to all other observers who contributed records used in this report.

WADER COUNT DATA

Table showing the total number of selected waders at Guernsey coastal sites during 2003

(taken from the monthly Wetland Bird Survey). This is a co-ordinated count of most of the coastal sites on the island which regularly hold waders.

Compiled by the wader count co-ordinator, Wayne Turner

Date of count	19 th Jan	16 th Feb	2 nd Mar	6 th Apr	18 th May	29 th Jun	13 th Jul	10 th Aug	14 th Sep	26 th Oct	9 th Nov	14 th Dec
Oystercatcher	662	478	652	246	299	259	238	412	679	528	658	729
Ringed Plover	98	89	94	31	36	2	2	45	73	41	97	62
Golden Plover	1	16	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Grey Plover	164	82	162	6	3	-	-	6	6	43	71	89
Sanderling	52	28	3	-	6	-	-	-	14	16	4	49
Purple Sandpiper	1	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Dunlin	225	181	205	-	9	-	1	11	22	82	56	94
Bar-tailed Godwit	18	16	24	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Whimbrel	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	3	-	-	-	-
Curlew	127	79	53	19	7	5	33	43	31	44	73	138
Redshank	45	23	26	4	-	6	5	11	24	28	26	28
Turnstone	291	114	230	159	77	2	1	71	105	319	259	208
Uncounted Sectors (out of 10)	1	1	0	1*	1	0	1	0	1*	1	1	1

* counts affected by high levels of disturbance

Contributors:- Wayne Turner (Local Organiser).
Chris Mourant, Steve Brooks, Bob Murphy, Mark Guppy, John Aslett, Julian Medland, Mary Simmons, Tony Bisson, Pete Vaudin, Wayne Turner (Sector Counters).
Catherine Kinnersly (Relief Counter).

SEAWATCHING DATA

The table below shows the ten best days for seawatching in Autumn 2003, and the full total for the whole of the Autumn season. All counts were made from the Northern headlands of Chouet and Jaonneuse.

Date of seawatch	27/07	02/08	30/08	31/08	23/09	28/09	04/10	05/10	06/10	11/10	season totals
Wind direction	WNW4	NE2	NNE3	NW2	NW5	NW3	NW4	NW5	NW5	W2	
No. of hours watched	2	2	3	3	3.5	1.5	5.5	5.5	0.75	2	(39.5 hours)
Sooty Shearwater					9	2		40	3	2	66
Manx Shearwater	1	1	1	2	32	1	1	24			93
Balearic Shearwater	3	1	2	1				2			11
Pomarine Skua										1	1
Arctic Skua		2	14	5	8	2	1	5	1		40
Great Skua			5		16	1	18	28	2		76
Unidentified skua sp.					2			4		1	8
Sandwich Tern	5	23	17	11		14	37	34	1	10	181
Common/Arctic Tern	17	51	42	17				19		2	148

REPORTS OF RARITIES

These reports are edited versions of the rarity report forms submitted to the Guernsey Rarities Committee by the finders of the birds involved and were all accepted.

Wilson's Petrel

At Sea – 7th September 2003 – 1st Guernsey record

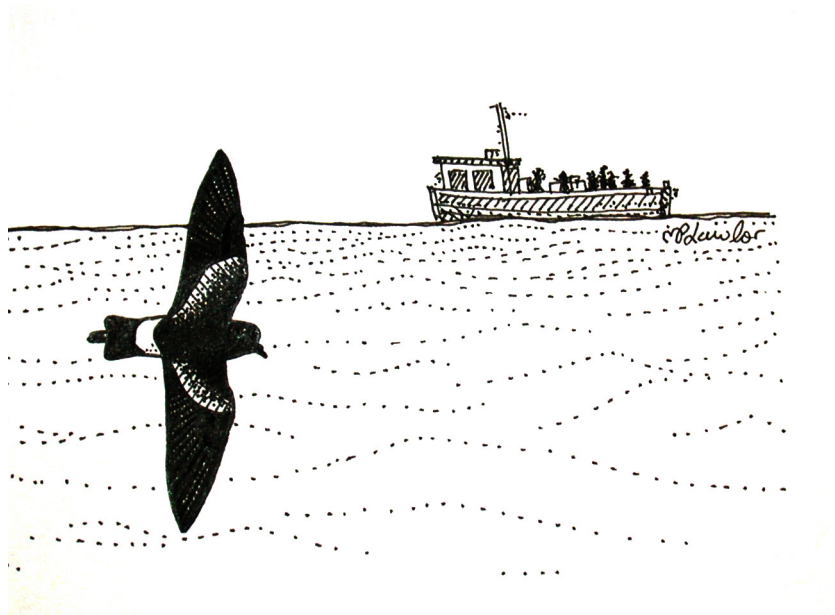
By Paul Veron

Dedicated pelagic trip. We had been seeing European Storm-Petrels at close range on slight seas throughout much of the day. This was the last stop on the return journey. We placed "chum" over the side and soon had a variety of gulls and attendant skuas near the boat. A single Sooty Shearwater flew in and dived beside the boat! The chum slick attracted European Storm-Petrels. While watching up to 30 of these birds flying past and over the slick, Chris Maurant said to me that he had a larger petrel. I got straight onto the bird, as it came in over the chum slick. I immediately knew the bird not to be a European Storm-Petrel and repeated Chris' call to the others to "get on the bird".

Seen alongside European Storm-Petrels the Wilson's was surprisingly obvious. Not only was it noticeably larger, but its flight action was different with broader wings, which were more rounded at the end. These features stood out.

The bird passed alongside the boat at a range of c 0-40 metres. It then turned again and flew back over the chum, in close proximity to several European Storm-Petrels. As it came back I secured very good views of the grey bands along the greater coverts and the dark underwings.

It was striking that all ten observers got onto the bird themselves. No-one needed any specific instructions to find the bird and to differentiate it from the more numerous European Storm-Petrels.



Description

Size and structure:

Typical storm-petrel, but significantly larger than European Storm-Petrels (also in attendance). Broader winged with more rounded ends than European. This together with different flight action produced a "paddling" effect

Plumage:

Head: Dark sooty colour
Underparts: Dark sooty
Upperparts: Dark sooty
Wings: Dark sooty, but with noticeable pale grey band along greater coverts. Underwings uniformly dark.
Tail: Dark tail contrasting with bright white rump. Squarish.
Bare parts: At one point when the bird turned I clearly saw the legs projecting a little beyond the tail.

Behaviour:

Flying past over chum slick alongside boat. Low over water

Elimination of similar species:

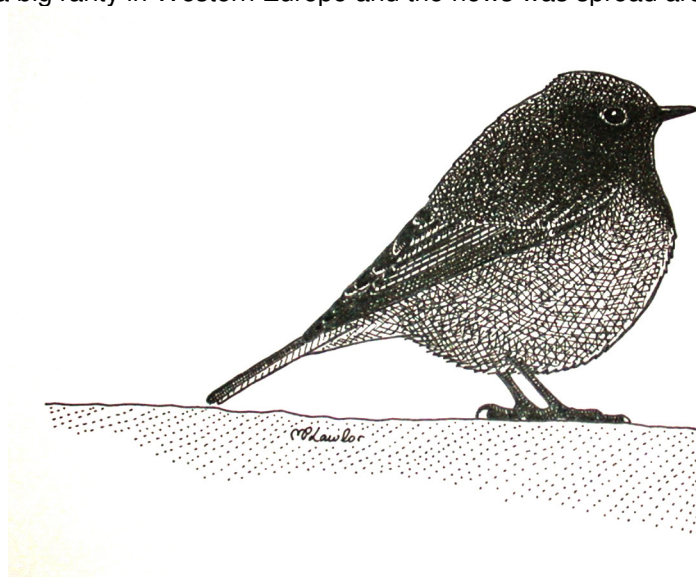
Size (noticeably larger than European) – wing structure (quite different to European), wing pattern (upper and lower), feet projecting beyond tail. Clear white rump.

Eastern Black Redstart

Richmond, Vazon – 28th to 31st October 2003 – 1st Guernsey record

By Mark Lawlor

On the morning of Tues 28th Oct, Geoff Atkinson located an unusual-looking Black Redstart at Vazon which was very red below. When he bumped into Tony Bisson, later in the day, he mentioned it to him, and Tony went down to see it and saw that it was a Black Redstart of an unfamiliar race. Later that evening, after some research, they learned that an 'Eastern' Black Redstart was a big rarity in Western Europe and the news was spread around the grapevine.



I arrived at the site at about 9 am on 29th and the bird was still present and showing well. I took a series of photos. The next day, Phil Atkinson phoned me to tell me he'd trapped the bird and I raced down to take a full in-hand description and more photos.

The bird stayed until 31st October, the night of which was the first clear weather since it arrived, and it departed.

Description

Structure

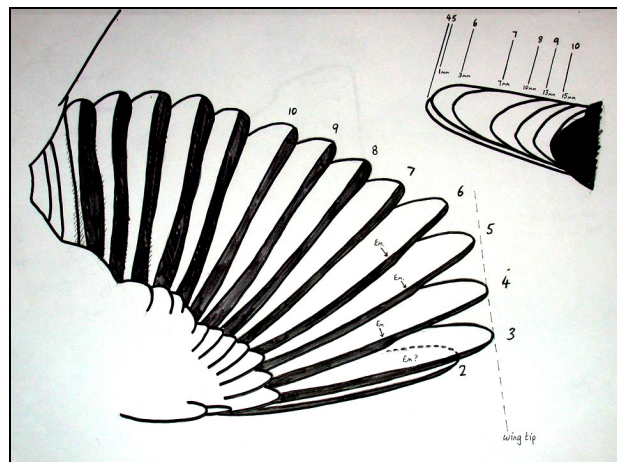
No obvious differences between this bird and other Black Redstarts.

Wing formula – [NB primaries numbered from outer to inner]

wing-tip made by primaries 3, 4 and 5 which were all within 1mm of each other in length. Longest were 3 and 4 equally. Other primaries were measured to be shorter by the following lengths in mm : 1=42, 2=8, 5=1, 6=3, 7=7, 8=10, 9=13, 10=15.

Therefore $5 - 6 = 2\text{mm}$ and $6 - 7 = 4\text{mm}$, giving this ratio to be 1 : 2.0.

Emarginated primaries [with narrow outer web at feather tip] were 3, 4, 5 and 6. On spread wing these were very obviously stepped on 4 and 5, less so on 3 and 6.



Plumage

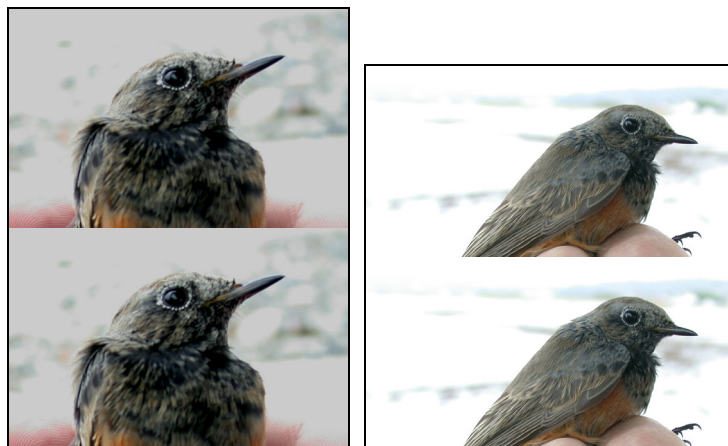
Head

crown, nape – grey with brownish tinge, especially on top of head – palest grey above eye
cheek, lores, chin, throat – blackish feathers with many grey, buff or brownish tips, giving a mottled appearance.

eye-ring – whitish, broken.

Underparts

upper breast – blackish feathers, broadly tipped buff – sharp lower border to this black colour, starting where wing meets body, curving round middle of breast (see photos for exact shape).



lower breast, belly, flanks – bright orange-red, some buff tips – quite uniform across these areas, apart from a paler orange colour on very rear of belly, behind legs.

vent, undertail coverts – pale orange

Upperparts

mantle – grey with brownish tinge, blackish bases of feathers hidden underneath.

Rump, uppertail coverts – bright orange-red.

Tail

central pair of feathers dark brown fringed orange – rest of tail feathers orange – outer tail feathers having a dark brown smudge extending for 12mm along shaft.



Wings

axillaries – bright orange-red, tinged fawn

lesser coverts – blackish, tipped grey.

median and greater coverts, tertials – dark brown, fringed fawn – GC appearing all same age.

secondaries and primaries – dark brown, fringed buff – secondaries not forming a clear whitish wing panel but some indication of a buff panel.

Bare parts

bill – black, very slightly paler yellowish-pink in gape area and nostril.

eye – very dark brown iris.

legs – black, soles paler

Behaviour

Chosen habitat very typical of Black Redstart on the island – on rocky and man-made concrete terrain just above beach

Generally fed on the tarmac of the road, chasing insects underneath cars, and was quite tame. It was in the company of c.10 Rock Pipits, a Stonechat and a female-type Black Redstart. It occasionally flew up onto walls and house roofs, only perching on vegetation once or twice when flushed by cats. Altogether, typical Black Redstart behaviour.

* * * * *

Further information

There is very little mentioned about the Eastern races of Black Redstarts in the standard bird guides and it would have been very difficult to confirm and research this record. However, we were lucky that there was a practically identical bird seen at Ijmuiden, Netherlands just before the Guernsey bird, from 21st to 23rd October. So a lot of the 'footwork' was done by Laurens Steijn in Holland, and I thank him for his efforts.

It seems that there are no accepted records from Western Europe of Eastern Black Redstart. There were some older records, including a few from Britain, but these were deleted because the possibility of a hybrid CommonXBlack Redstart could not be eliminated. The hybridisation of these birds in Europe has only quite recently been studied and, although very very rare, the offspring can appear to be similar to Eastern Black Redstart. So, the Vazon bird had to be studied carefully to see if there was any intermediate features which may indicate a hybrid.

The bird did not show any features suggesting Common Redstart so was presumed not to be a hybrid. The main feature was the wing-formula being just like a Black Redstart and unlike a

Common Redstart. Also the underparts were a deep red colour with no pale patch in middle of belly, and there was no whitish wing-patch,

It would seem surprising that there are not more records of the race 'phoenicuroides' of Eastern Black Redstart in Western Europe. It is a long distance migrant breeding in the mountains of central Asia and wintering in western India, through to Arabia and into Eastern Africa. Other species with a similar breeding range do occur (e.g. Isabelline Shrike, Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler) so this race should do also occasionally.

The main reason is probably that not all individuals are identifiable in the field. It is known that most Autumn vagrants of any species are first-winter birds and first-winter female Eastern Black Redstart is practically identical to our birds. First-winter males usually look like females (type 'cairei') but some can look more like males with a red belly (type 'paradoxus' about 12% of birds). This complex situation means that approximately only 1 in 20 vagrant Eastern Black Redstarts can be identified. If two did occur this year, then perhaps 30 or 40 more were missed.

In summary, the bird was accepted by the rarities committee as the first for the Channel Islands. However, this identification is on present knowledge and there may be more to say about this bird in the future.



LIST OF SPECIES REQUIRING A WRITTEN DESCRIPTION

If you see any of the following species, please fill in a rarity form, write a full description and send it to the recorder. If you need a form, contact the recorder.

Mute Swan	Bewick's Swan	Whooper Swan
Bean Goose	Pink-footed Goose	Canada Goose
American Wigeon	Green-winged Teal	Scaup
Long-tailed Duck	Velvet Scoter	Bufflehead
Smew	Quail	Cory's Shearwater
Great Shearwater	Wilson's Petrel	Leach's Petrel
Red-billed Tropicbird	American Bittern	Little Bittern
Night Heron	Green Heron	Squacco Heron
Cattle Egret	Great White Egret	Purple Heron
Black Stork	White Stork	Sacred Ibis
Black Kite	Red Kite	White-tailed Eagle
Griffon Vulture	Montagu's Harrier	Goshawk
Rough-legged Buzzard	Red-footed Falcon	Gyrfalcon
Spotted Crake	Corncrake	Crane
Little Bustard	Black-winged Stilt	Stone Curlew
Kentish Plover	Temminck's Stint	Pectoral Sandpiper
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Upland Sandpiper	Solitary Sandpiper
Spotted Sandpiper	Wilson's Phalarope	Red-necked Phalarope
Long-tailed Skua	Sabine's Gull	Ring-billed Gull
Iceland Gull	Glaucous Gull	Roseate Tern
White-winged Black Tern	Little Auk	Pallas's Sandgrouse
Great Spotted Cuckoo	Snowy Owl	Tawny Owl
Nightjar	Alpine Swift	Little Swift
Bee-eater	Roller	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Short-toed Lark	Woodlark	Shorelark
Red-rumped Swallow	Water Pipit	Citrine Wagtail
Waxwing	Dipper	Alpine Accentor
Nightingale	Bluethroat	Black-eared Wheatear
Desert Wheatear	Fan-tailed Warbler	Savi's Warbler
Paddyfield Warbler	Blyth's Reed Warbler	Marsh Warbler
Great Reed Warbler	Icterine Warbler	Barred Warbler
Subalpine Warbler	Sardinian Warbler	Greenish Warbler
Pallas's Warbler	Dusky Warbler	Western Bonelli's Warbler
Red-breasted Flycatcher	Treecreeper	Penduline Tit
Red-backed Shrike	Great Grey Shrike	Woodchat Shrike
Jay	Chough	Rook
Hooded Crow	Rose-coloured Starling	Tree Sparrow
Common Rosefinch	Hawfinch	Cirl Bunting
Little Bunting	Yellow-breasted Bunting	Black-headed Bunting
Corn Bunting	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	

plus

Aquatic Warbler – non-trapped individuals

White-fronted Goose and Greylag Goose – individuals thought to be wild

plus

any species that has not occurred in Guernsey before

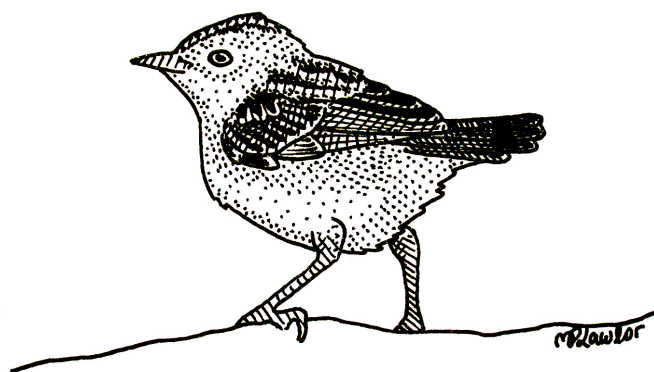
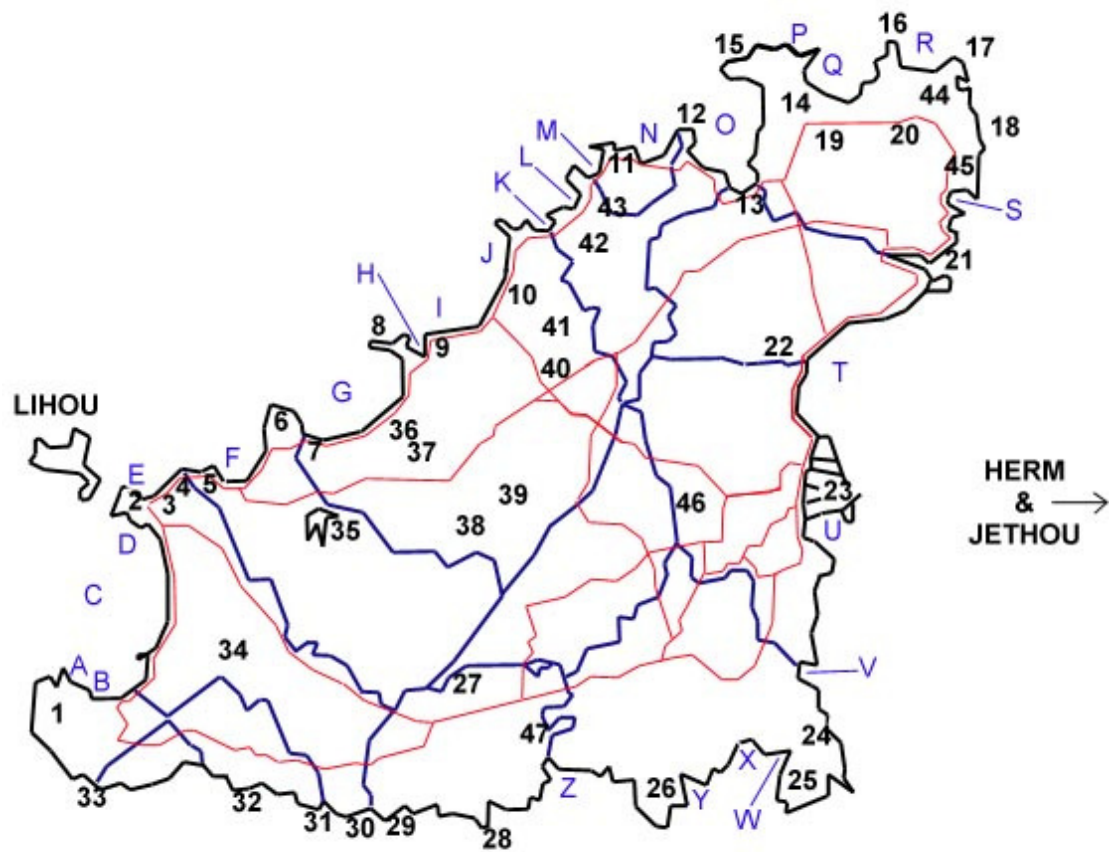
plus

any record that is well out of season (eg summer visitor sighted in mid-winter). Check with the Recorder if unsure.

GAZETTEER

All the main birdwatching sites on the island – see the map for approx. locations.

BAYS		Other sites	
A	Pezeries	1	Pleinmont
B	Portelet	2	Lihou Headland/Fort Saumarez
C	Rocquaine	3	L'Eree Aerodrome
D	L'Eree	4	Claire Mare NR
E	'Shingle Bank'	5	Le Catoroc
F	Perelle	6	Fort le Crocq
G	Vazon	7	Richmond
H	Albecq	8	Fort Hommet
I	Cobo	9	Le Guet
J	Grandes Rocques	10	Mare de Carteret
K	Port Soif	11	Pulias Pond
L	Portinfer	12	Rousse
M	Pecqueries	13	Vale Pond
N	Port Grat	14	L'Ancrese Common & Golf Course
O	Grandes Havres	15	Chouet
P	Jaonneuse	16	Fort le Marchant
Q	Pembroke/L'Ancrese	17	Fort Doyle
R	Fontenelle	18	Le Miellette
S	Bordeaux	19	Marais Nord
T	Belle Greve	20	Grand Pre
U	Havelet	21	St. Sampsons Harbour
V	Fermain	22	Track Marais
W	Petit Port	23	Town Harbour
X	Moulin Huet	24	Bouvee
Y	Saints	25	Jerbourg Pt.
Z	Petit Bot	26	Icart Point
		27	Airport
		28	Le Gouffre
		29	Le Bigard
		30	Corbiere
		31	Prevote
		32	Les Tielles
		33	Mont Herault
		34	Silbe NR
		35	The Reservoir (St. Saviours)
		36	Grande Mare (inc. Golf Course)
		37	Rue des Bergers NR
		38	Fauxquets Valley
		39	Talbot Valley
		40	Saumarez Park
		41	Heritage Walk
		42	Vingtaine de l'Epine
		43	Barras Lane Fields
		44	Paradis Quarry
		45	Gallotin Quarry
		46	Dell Nursery
		47	Petit Bot Valley



Fan-tailed Warbler – Mark Lawlor