

The Orkney Naturalist



**Bulletin of the
Orkney Field Club
2019**

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Front cover photo: *Primula scotica* (Anne Gascoigne). Back cover photos: Common Bird’s-foot-trefoil (Lee Johnson); An auk eggshell (David Bailey); Large Red Damselfly (Lee Johnson); *Polycera quadrilineata*, a nudibranch (Penny Martin); Gannet (Antonella Papa); Spring Squill (Lee Johnson); Small Tortoiseshell butterfly (Trish Avis).

Orkney Field Club

Founded in 1959

Aim: To encourage the study and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the County



Orkney Field Club is a registered Scottish charity, No. SC 012459

Orkney Field Club promotes the enjoyment, study and conservation of local wildlife. The Club manages land for wildlife, responds to conservation policy issues, promotes biological recording and runs training events. OFC was a founding partner of the Wildlife Information and Records Centre, located in the Orkney Library & Archive, which holds records of Orkney species, sites, habitats etc in a database. This valuable data is available to all interested parties. Records are submitted to OWIARC by a network of County Recorders who encourage everyone to participate in the collection of data.

Subscriptions (2019) are Adults £10, Family £15, Concessionary £6, Student £3.

Membership Secretary is Brian Ribbands, Queenamidda, Rendall, KW17 2PA, tel. 01856 751439 or email queenamidda@waitrose.com.

Walks and Talks. Club nights – normally illustrated talks – are usually held in Kirkwall on the third Friday of each month except in summer. Meetings are advertised on Radio Orkney, on the Club's website – www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/fieldclub and the Club's Facebook page - www.facebook.com/OrkneyFieldClub. Field meetings are held frequently, chiefly during the summer, at a wide range of locations, including the outer isles. Short notice meetings, taking advantage of natural events or favourable weather will be advertised via the Facebook page. Non-members are welcome to all events. For more information, please contact OFC Secretary, Jenny Taylor, email jenny@jtlarch.co.uk.

Newsletters are normally sent out to members three times per year and are also available on the Club's website. They give members news, information and a programme of events.

The Club's Bulletin – *The Orkney Naturalist* – is the main publication of the Orkney Field Club, and it is produced in spring each year. It is free to members. It contains a wide range of articles about Orkney's natural history and annual summaries of records from Orkney's County Recorders for various taxonomic groups of wildlife. For enquiries about the Bulletin, including guidelines for those wishing to submit articles, please contact the Editor, John Crossley by emailing flawsjohn@gmail.com.

Resources are made available to members, who have access to the Club's slide collection and a comprehensive range of reference books and other equipment, including microscopes. Contact OWIARC for details – www.orkneylibrary.org.uk/obrc

Club Office Holders 2018-19

President:	Peter Slater	Secretary:	Jenny Taylor
Vice-president:	Dick Matson	Treasurer:	Brian Ribbands
Chair:	Graeme Walker	Membership:	Brian Ribbands
Vice-chair:	Helen Aiton		Lindsey Taylor
Other committee	Penny Martin	Anne Gascoigne	
members:	Alastair Forsyth	Sydney Gauld	Megan Taylor
	John Crossley		

Orkney Field Club 1959-2019: Past, Present and Future

Graeme Walker

Anniversaries are not only a time for celebration, but can often also be a time for reflection and reappraisal. So, during the Field Club's 60th anniversary, it seems like a suitable moment to look back at the changes witnessed in those three score years, both in Orkney and further afield.

Some articles in this year's Orkney Naturalist will delve into the story of the Club's formation and also look at a few of the projects which were undertaken in those early years. For my own part, new in post, I readily acknowledge my woeful lack of knowledge about much of the Club's past, so I am eagerly anticipating an enlightening history lesson. But this exercise is not just about the past, we need to understand it in context, not only of the present but also the future.

After the Second World War, government policy was to create more cultivated land to increase food production and food security. Inevitably, in Orkney as elsewhere, this led to a loss of wild habitat as, for instance, moors were drained and ploughed, whilst pastures were improved with fertilisers. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, such that the world now knows how important it is that we re-wet moorland and bog habitat, to sequester carbon dioxide, and that ecosystems can be damaged by nutrient enrichment

Back in 1959, when the Club was formed, it was still three years before Rachel Carson would publish *Silent Spring*, and the highlighting of the threats to all life from uncontrolled use of pesticides and herbicides. By 1964, due to the effects of DDT, Peregrine falcon numbers in the UK had plummeted by 80%. The loss of wildflower meadows, weeds of cultivation and the innumerable invertebrates which co-existed amongst them, and supported the rest of the natural food web, was the beginning of a slippery slope for many species. Orkney, perhaps, suffered a little less in this regard, certainly in the smaller of the Northern Isles like Egilsay or North Ronaldsay. For the rest of Orkney, although development was the same as elsewhere, there has been a persistence of elements of more traditional farming, allowing many small pockets of habitat to survive in the farmed landscape. In part, this is why tourists still flock to Orkney, as our perceived relative abundance of wildlife seems to fly in the face of declines elsewhere. However, we must remember that declines happens here too, as in the decrease of our Corncrake population. In the 21st Century, concern has moved to the threats faced by bees, and other beneficial insect pollinators, from systemic pesticides like neonicotinoids.

Since 1967, the relatively new science of island biogeography had brought about a fresh understanding, which would become important not only for sea-bound islands, but also to any area of habitat which finds itself isolated by natural or man-made barriers, such as roads, railways and housing. Orkney is obviously a group of islands in the traditional sense, and so not immune from the effects of biogeography. In 2010, concerns were raised of the effects of a non-native invasive predator upon an isolated population of an endemic mammal and ground-nesting birds which are unaccustomed to such a threat. The dynamics of the Stoat incursion into Orkney are still playing out, but the threat to the Orkney Vole has knock-on effects for our nationally-important Short-eared Owl population, as well as the potential to drastically alter, and by that I mean 'diminish', the soundscape of Orkney's wild places. It is hard to imagine, let alone contemplate, the moorland, the shores and rough pastures of Orkney bereft of the calls of Curlew, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Snipe and Redshank.



The Rackwick valley, Hoy (Effy Everiss)

In the 1970s, the UK joined the European Economic Community, with the Common Agricultural Policy becoming another driver of large monoculture crops, further reducing the biodiversity of the land. The Common Fisheries Policy was more successful, but had its own problems brought about by lobbying and the actions of individual nation states. As different agri-environment schemes came and went through the years, the protection for farmland habitats increased and perceptions of the value of biodiversity began to change. However, often, these schemes were either too diluted to have much effect or were insufficiently audited. At present, with all the discussion about the UK's relationship with Europe, there is perhaps an opportunity to change the way farming subsidies are paid, with more emphasis on channelling public money into well-defined ecological good.

By the 80s, there was already plenty of evidence of global warming, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was established to assess the relevant science. Now, for some of Orkney's iconic seabird species, this means that their food sources are moving out of reach, either offshore or to deeper waters. Long term studies of Arctic Tern populations show that global effects can be witnessed on our own doorstep. Furthermore, as the terns suffer, so too do their klepto-parasites, the Arctic Skuas. Whilst it is likely that new species will be able to naturally colonise the islands, as they seek cooler climes, this will only be a temporary 'win', before continuing temperature rises force them yet further northwards.

By the 1990s, a new threat in the form of plastic pollution was becoming more of a problem. In Orkney, the first Bag the Bruck was held in 1992, and continues annually, as the problem shows no signs of going away. Indeed, further initiatives continued to be introduced on a regular basis, with Pick Up 3 Pieces commencing in 2012 and the Ghost Fishing initiative in 2015. Following the broadcast of the BBC's Blue Planet II in 2017, increased awareness of

the extent of the effects of global pollution led to a public outcry. Local cameraman and film maker Raymond Besant has helped highlight the plight of seabirds, particularly Fulmars, who ingest plastic whilst feeding and so fail to thrive or raise young. Also in Orkney, grassroots activism continues with the formation of a further environmental Facebook group, Orcadians Going Green, in 2017, whose members engage in impromptu beach cleans and the sharing of information of sustainable products to reduce waste.

But, lest I am sounding too pessimistic, remember that we do have the ability to make the necessary changes to solve these environmental and ecological problems. On a global scale, governments have put in place legislation to remove Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) from the atmosphere and so help repair the hole in the ozone layer. Harmful lead has been removed from water pipes, paint and petrol. The move away from our reliance upon fossil fuels has begun, but the momentum needs to be maintained.

At the same time, on an individual and at a community level, like-minded volunteers who realise the importance of the natural world in maintaining the healthy ecosystem we all live in, are promoting the message of sustainability. They are engaging with the wider public to demonstrate how Nature, in all its myriad forms, is critical to our well-being as a species. In a similar vein, the Orkney Field Club will continue to record the wildlife of the archipelago, from slime moulds to mammals, to help provide a continuous set of data which can be used to analyse population trends and inform the decisions of the future. On club walks and at talks, we will help the county's wildlife to enthuse, educate, encourage and entertain its human neighbours, to show how the complex web of Life is more than the sum of its parts, and to inspire a love for the natural world that is an essential component of protecting it for future generations.

'60 years'

Marking the 60 year anniversary of the Orkney Field Club, throughout this Bulletin are some excerpts from Club documentation, which have been painstakingly researched and collated by Anne Gascoigne. The Club committee is very grateful to Anne for undertaking this task.

From the minutes of September 1959, the first year of the Club

Programme for Coming Year

1. A visit from a lecturer from the Extra Mural Study Department of Aberdeen University
2. A Hat Night and a short film show
3. A Talk by Mr. Robert Rendall on "My Lifelong Interest in Orkney Shore Life" and An Exhibition of Sea Shells by him. Members could bring along their shell specimens for identification.
4. Slides of various birds and recordings of their songs. Mr. E. Balfour to show his own collection of bird slides.
5. A meeting of the Club to discuss (1) "Club project to Study Intensively a Particular Orkney Area", eg the triangle of land at the Ness of Brodgar, (2) Study of Black Headed Gulls in Orkney.

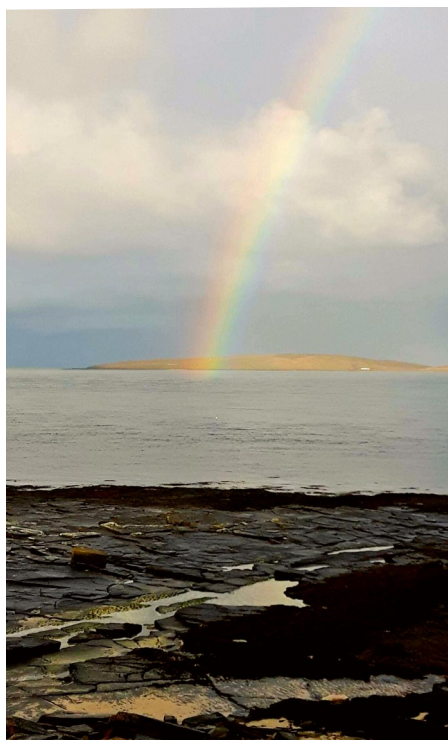
Orkney Field Club: a look back through 2018

Anne Gascoigne

I am writing this in early January 2019 and we have already experienced a kaleidoscope of Orkney weather. Today is grey and muted, yesterday saw 95mph gusts at Black Craig whilst the day before that was silent, sunlit and serene. ‘Indoor’ days are a good time for reflection; before things get busy in the garden and fields and Orkney is once again thronged with visitors. This look back over 2018 will as usual provide a chronological framework of events but leave individual recorders to go in to detail about particular finds.

Finding a suitable “weather window” for the New Year Ramble was problematic, but we plumped for January 1st. Heading to Aikerness (Evie) we arrived in a hailstorm but then a magnificent rainbow appeared over Eynhallow. We took a brisk walk along the road to Evie village then headed back down to the shore for a coffee stop and some bird-watching near the old stone pier. A retreating tide meant several wader species were spotted and it enabled us to collect some Flapper Skate cases to add to Penny Martin’s records. We just about made it back to the cars before another fierce rain shower and a gloomy, early dusk descended.

Our first Club Night of the year fell victim to wintry weather, as sheet ice on road and pavement made it perilous to travel. However, conditions had improved by the end of the month, enabling us to enjoy a sociable Non-Christmas dinner at the Albert Hotel. With over 20 members in attendance it proves this is a popular time for a mid-winter feast, rather than during the more traditional run-up to Christmas when folk have many other social engagements.



After a re-shuffle, we managed to fit January’s talk into the February slot and thus had an informative and optimistic presentation from Orkney Native Wildlife Project about their plans for Stoat eradication, *if* grant funding could be achieved. Orkney Field Club has fully supported development of this project, and we were delighted when in late October that “if” became a “yes”. We wish the project team well over the next five years!

By March we were raring to get outside and we headed to Orphir Earl’s Bu for the first of our “Through the Seasons” walks. The idea was to follow the same route (from Bu to Breck, Gyre and back) and take note of key seasonal changes. At this visit the bridge across Bu burn was still awaiting repair but low tide enabled us to cross by the beach. Along the way we were rewarded with Lesser Celandines in flower, singing Skylarks and an absolute frenzy of Frog activity at the Gyre ponds. All good indicators of Spring.

March Club Night consisted of another “Nature Showcase” with short talks on Bumblebee identification, more about Flapper Skate and an update from the Stromness ‘Limpet Lasses’ who had recorded a whole tide cycle on film. Footage showed individual limpets scuttling off, grazing, then each returning to its unique niche until next high water. Fantastic!

The newly-formed Bryophyte sub-group visited Russadale to take a closer look at moorland mosses. Complete beginners were made welcome and the group found so much of interest in the first 150 metres that time (but not distance!) simply flew by. Another fine day encouraged a further tree maintenance session amongst the Peedie Sea plantings. However, towards the end of the month we were reminded that winter was not quite past as the whole of Orkney huddled indoors whilst the ‘Beast from the East’ roared outside.

Surprisingly, wind-blackened and frost-scorched foliage soon recovered as April brought sunshine and settled days. We Bagged Bruck at Marwick - including along the approach road



verges - and were surrounded by golden Marsh Marigolds and Lesser Celandines. At the beach a decomposing cetacean carcass had been attracting Glaucous Gulls throughout winter, and when we stopped for lunch we were treated to close-up views of these Arctic birds.

Our final indoor talk of the season offered an insight into rural Japan with images of autumn foliage, birds, huge spiders and rugged volcanic landscapes.

Early May means Orkney Nature Festival; not perhaps the prime time for seeing ‘nature’ but the best available slot in a congested Orkney festival calendar. Once again Orkney Field Club hosted an afternoon, and once again we were rewarded with favourable weather and a good turnout. “TREEmendous” saw us exploring the woodland environment of Muddisdale (Kirkwall) and it was a joy to see trees clad in their fresh new leaves, a few still budding and to listen to plentiful birdsong. Several insect species were active in the sunshine too.

Muddisdale trees are now in their late teens, but we spent a morning with some young ‘uns at the HMS Hampshire Centenary Wood in Papdale. Basic maintenance like adjusting ties and guards, removing overpowering weeds and (grrrr!) litter is a very important part of establish-

ing new woodland and it gave us a chance to see how the 746 saplings were coming along two years after they were planted.

At the end of May a plea came from Papay Ranger Jonathan for information regarding the Great Auk statue on North Hill. Originally installed in 1988 by Junior Field Club this small memorial cairn had been damaged by storms. Twenty years on and the bird was repaired, given a lick of paint and so once again stands as poignant tribute to this now-extinct species.

A somewhat misty day saw five bryologists head into Russadale again, this time to look at *Sphagnum* mosses. The highlight of the day however had to be a bright red clump of a *Bryum* sp. located on the walk back. Barely a couple of evenings later and the Flora sub-group were seeking out woodland plants at Gyre. Frog activity had long since ceased at the ponds but was replaced by a stunning vista of Water Horsetail. Group study focussed on varieties of ferns, Willow and Rowan trees.

In June our “Summer” seasonal walk returned to the same area; and put the repaired Bu bridge to test. It was quite a contrast to “Spring”, with lush green vegetation even along the exposed Scapa shore and plenty insect activity including Common Blue butterflies. Seabirds were few (as expected mid-breeding time) but a lone Sand Martin was spotted, a first for this location.

So far, so good and with each outdoor event we congratulated ourselves on finding a sunny day. Surely this could not continue? Field trips followed in quick succession with the Flora sub-group visiting Waulkmill to look at the vegetated cliffs, native Aspen and more ferns. On a very hot day we sailed to North Ronaldsay, with Orkney Ferries *Sunday Excursion* timetable allowing time for a leisurely walk to the Old Beacon and back. We didn’t see anything particularly “rare” or “remarkable” but all felt as if we had visited a world apart, enjoying the island scenery, sheep-watching and flower-filled roadsides.

The enthusiastic team from St. Andrews University Sea Mammal Research Unit were back in the County, continuing their project about Common (Harbour) seal decline. Dr Monica Arso Civil offered us another update talk which was very well received and attended, given that it was arranged at short notice. *Odonata* fans headed to Wee Fea (Hoy) to explore the pools there, some folk attended OWIARC’s Leaf Miner identification workshop and a bumper-sized *Orkney Naturalist* was delivered to all members.

The Flora group chose a particularly warm July day to explore the vicinity of Moaness (Hoy). Continuing dry weather meant many usually wet, boggy patches were bone dry and accessible; but this also meant several plants had already flowered and were past their best. We found some “mystery orchid” stalks which would warrant a closer look during their flowering period, spent time in comparing different Wild Roses - then got totally distracted observing damselflies at the Whaness pools.

Also visiting the County was Professor David Horne, perhaps the leading expert on Ostracods in the UK and he was keen to share his knowledge with us. We were equally keen to find out more about these obscure, teeny-tiny crustaceans and after Dave’s slide presentation many folk remarked this was one of the most interesting talks they had *ever* attended. There are many species of Ostracod here and these seed-sized creatures with an external shell can be found in a range of habitats; anywhere from saline lochs to livestock water troughs!



August began with a sun-baked day trip to Flotta. Ostensibly in search of Emerald Damselflies (which we found) we also enjoyed late summer flowers and a surprise find of a rare-for-Orkney Peacock butterfly. Even more surprising was Graeme Walker's capture of a huge inflatable beach ball which had become stranded in a geo. We didn't believe this to be malicious "littering" (in fact some child on a beach Goodness knows where was probably distraught at their toy blowing away out to sea) but it provided another example of how far marine plastics can travel, posing a potential risk to wildlife and ending up as an eyesore.

The Flora group went to Toab in search of "weeds of cultivation" on arable fields where we made a comparative study of Fumitories. This

was the last of the group's meetings and all agreed it had again been a most interesting and diverse programme. Continuing fine weather encouraged us to take a mid-week dander around Hoxa head, where watching Great Yellow bumblebees and Cormorants worked up such an appetite that we headed to a certain café in St Margaret's Hope to refuel afterwards.

Our third "Through the Seasons" walk went looking for signs of Autumn; but we found many wildflowers still blooming - some for a second time. We saw active bees and flies and a Red Admiral butterfly. There were some (delicious!) ripe Bramble fruits and a few fungi, but again we enjoyed unbroken sunshine and the morning was far from "autumnal". That afternoon some of us headed straight to Marwick to meet with the RSPB for a joint event as part of the *Great British Beach Clean* weekend. A massive turn out of more than 50 people (including a contingent of Heriot-Watt ICIT students) made quick work of removing another pile of marine litter. As we shaded our eyes from the sun and our hands sweated in gloves, Orkney Field Club participants remarked it was a contrast to memorably cold, icy, windy, hail-y, wet sessions we have spent there for Bag the Bruck in years past.

Despite the benign weather, shortening hours of daylight indicated it was time for Club Nights to recommence and first up was a talk about wildflowers around the White Sea. This little-known part of European Russia is home to a variety of tundra, dune, wetland and woodland flowers, many of which are closely related to Orkney species. Much of the habitat resembled upland Hoy or South Parish beaches, with some magnificent examples of Bearberry, Louseworts and Oysterplant being displayed.

Some of us took an opportunity to meet Macca, a specially trained terrier from New Zealand who was visiting Orkney (with his handler) to assist Orkney Native Wildlife Project in sniff-

ing out any stoat activity on the Outer Isles. On another mid-week afternoon we explored Newark Bay in Deerness to look for wading birds along the tideline. We spotted Turnstone, Ringed Plover and a canny Grey Plover hiding in a flock of Golden ones. The walk was also notable for finding Sea-rocket in full bloom and low sunlight making for a particularly beautiful jade-coloured sea.

For our annual Fungi Foray we headed to a rather unusual location. Coastal grassland fungi are sorely under-recorded so Mull Head was suggested and provided the perfect opportunity for Julian Branscombe to introduce us to some different species. We found plenty of colourful Waxcaps, False Chanterelle and some Coral fungus (*Clavulina*), making it a real change from our habitual woodland forays.



Coral fungus (Brian Ribbands)

At the AGM we kept business to a minimum in order to allow time for Penny Martin to update us on her year of diving around the Orkney coast. Her slides of underwater life never fail to astound and give landlubbers and insight into just what a colourful and rich marine habitat we have around these islands. On the following morning the Bryophyte group creaked into action again and returned to Russadale to seek out mosses and liverworts in base-rich springs and flushes. From our vantage point up near the quarry it seemed that the rest of Stenness (and Harray and Sandwick) were under rain, but we remained dry for the duration of our trip.

The end of October marks the start of Grey seal pupping season so we headed to Burwick for our annual walk to observe the nursery beaches. Numbers were comparable with other years (65+ pups), but it was noted that slightly different beaches and geos were in use – and that all the shoreline was cluttered with amounts of marine plastic trash.

For our next Club Night UHI doctoral researcher Jasmijn Sybenga came to talk to us about tree pollen and the archaeological record. Her work helps build a profile of historic vegetation and landscape and may offer guidance as to what species would do best under similar conditions today, should rehabilitation and “re-wilding” of Highland habitat be attempted. As is traditional, we rounded off the year indoors by participating in the annual quiz night for local environmental organisations. Haha! - we won and recaptured Hamish, the much sought-after trophy. But it may prove a Pyrrhic victory, for our name was drawn out of the hat and Orkney Field Club is now obliged to organise the 2019 event.

And so December already. With days growing ever-shorter we set out on an afternoon stroll

around Brodgar, looking for wintering wildfowl. Megan Taylor helped identify several duck species and we were chuffed to spot a Goosander on Harray Loch. Megan has been like some kind of fair-weather fairy for the whole year and her magic did not fail when, after 3 days of horrendous stormy weather, the clouds lifted and wind dropped for our last of our “Through the Seasons” walks. We located several Long-tailed ducks on Scapa Flow and some lovely *Cladonia* lichen plus a significant amount of Willow Scale insect (*Chionopsis salicis*) on plants along the cliffs. There were still several wildflowers to be found and some trees were hanging on to quite robust leaves.

Walking the same route throughout the year has provided us with many surprises and shown that “seasons” don’t always deliver what one might expect. Whether that dry, sunny, warm summer was exceptional or whether it proves to be the new ‘normal’ remains to be seen. It will also be interesting to see what effect it might have on our perennial plants, insects and breeding bird species in this, the following year. We will just have to get out there and explore and record and enjoy Orkney’s nature!

Putting together an attractive programme of events throughout a year is no mean feat; especially when it is organised by a group of volunteers (most with regular employment commitments), having a minimal budget and needing to contend with the vagaries of Orkney’s weather. I feel we should applaud the “Walks & Talks” team for delivering such a successful 2018 and offer our thanks to all field trip leaders.

Of course, sometimes we do have to make changes to events; storms and closed Churchill Barriers can mean cancellation or moving to an alternative venue/time. Often there is the chance to meet with visiting researchers and experts or unexpected nature sightings occur, so we need to ‘seize the moment’. We now find digital media is the most effective way of communicating short-notice happenings and news to our membership. Therefore, if you haven’t already done so, please forward your e-mail address to Club Secretary and check out our Facebook page (you don’t have to be signed-in to view it).

Of course, it’s not just down to Committee members to devise things: there is a wealth of interests and knowledge amongst our membership and Orkney Field Club offers a supportive environment for anyone willing to lead a walk, present some slides or to share ongoing research. I look forward to reviewing everyone’s activity next year.

Prof. R. J. (Sam) Berry (26th October 1934 – 29th March 2018)



He was christened Robert James, but everyone called him Sam. He'd grown up in Preston, and arrived at Shrewsbury School – founded in 1522 – with a Lancashire accent. And “Sam, Sam, pick oop tha' musket,” was the officer's order in the popular Stanley Holloway monologue about the independently-minded soldier Sam Small.

He turned out to be well able to make his own mind up about whom to listen to. As one of the most eminent biologists of his generation, in a field where religion could come under fire, he held firm to his own beliefs and in several books argued the case for the compatibility of science and religion. His many awards included the 1996 Templeton UK Award for his “sustained advocacy of the Christian faith in the world of science”.

His achievements in biology were immense. University College London, where he had been professor of genetics until retirement in 2000, described him as “a massive figure in evolutionary and ecological genetics, biodiversity and conservation biology”.

It was at UCL that he spent most of his career, from his PhD onwards. But first, he had at Shrewsbury an example to follow in its former pupil Charles Darwin. At

Cambridge he was taught by another famous name in biology, the geneticist and statistician R. A. Fisher.

His lifelong interest in field biology developed to the full at UCL, where his PhD supervisor was Hans Grüneberg, often called “the father of mouse genetics”. Grüneberg realised that mice were the ideal model for studying the inheritance of human genetic disorders. The importance of studying them in the wild became clear to Sam as a result of Bernard Kettlewell’s work at Oxford on peppered moths. This was the now well-known study showing how darker-coloured moths predominated on trees darkened by industrial pollution; the better concealment from predators showed natural selection in practice.

It was Kettlewell, Sam later wrote, “who first taught me to understand and investigate genetical problems in natural populations, and to whom I shall always remain grateful for demonstrating so clearly that true science is vastly greater than the absurd reductionism that too often goes on in laboratories.”

And for fieldwork, he turned to islands in particular. Here he could study variation within populations. He visited many islands, from the northern isles to the South Shetlands, and gathered a massive amount of genetic data. Ecological genetics had long been shaped around snails and insects, but Sam focused mainly on mammals – voles, field mice, and especially house mice. He studied subtle differences, such as the presence or absence of a very small bone in the ear.

Some fascinating insights emerged. The Scottish island field mice had been thought to be relicts from ancient times, but Sam showed that various islands had a genetic similarity with field mice in Norway – the result, he suggested, of them travelling on Norse ships in the Viking Age. Later studies of house mice showed the same pattern. Elsewhere in the British Isles, he found, the pattern was different, but there were some similarities with mice in Germany, a possible marker of Iron Age trade links.

What took him first to Orkney, however, was not mice but bones. In 1958 he had married Caroline Elliott, whose career was in clinical genetics. In the late 1960s she became involved with work on human bones for Don Brothwell’s group from York who were excavating the Norse period chapel and cemetery at Newark Bay, Deerness. So the whole family went and that was the start of a lifelong Orkney connection. A later collaboration with Don Brothwell and other archaeologists, anthropologists, geneticists and local historians resulted in the book *The People of Orkney*.

He used to go to Fara in particular for mice, and sometimes he would take their son Andrew with him, along with one of his research students. Transport to and from the island was organised by Marcus Hewison from Westray, who had sheep on Fara. Those were the days before mobile phones, and so when they ready to come off, they had to signal with a bonfire.

Sam developed a deep love of everything about Orkney – the sight of diving gannets, the cliffs of Yesnaby (of which he had a painting), and Rackwick Bay where the family went on their first visit. They never forgot the experience: a day of mist, with the sandy beach and the towering cliffs – “Really magical,” Caroline recalls, “and when later on our grandchildren came there, they felt the same.”

Sam found his feelings for Orkney’s land and sea to be so well expressed by its writers, particularly in Robert Rendall’s poems and his book *Orkney Shore*. “Light and colour spill from its pages,” he wrote, “and in its own way it is a simple testament to the beauty of the Orkney landscape and the people who inhabit it.”

And he got to know many people in Orkney and form lifelong friendships. Some of his earliest contacts were with leading members of Orkney Field Club, among them Elaine Bullard. He formed a deep admiration for the quality of the work carried out by the Club and the county recorders, and for Orkney’s long line of outstanding naturalists.

The book *The Natural History of Orkney* in the Collins New Naturalist series was produced in collaboration with the Club, with members contributing key chapters and Sam synthesising the material into an overall format. Later he reworked it into *Orkney Nature*, in which he brought out further his feelings for the island in a book “for those who love sky and sea, nature in its fullness, solitude and plenitude”.

Out of many discussions with Elaine Bullard about the work of local biological recording came a short paper in the 1999 Field Club Bulletin, in the Club’s 40th anniversary year, that was nothing short of a clarion call for recognition of the role of local naturalists in the development of science. Sam, who himself had recognised the importance of fieldwork for researchers, made it clear that biology develops through a partnership of professionals and local specialists who know their own terrain. “Professionals are trained to fit details into general patterns, to mould understanding in the light of new knowledge. They may collect information for themselves, but for much of the time they depend on the data provided by others. And that is where the amateur comes in: he or she will almost certainly know the local area better than an outsider, however learned or eminent the outsider may be; it is the person on the spot who may sense change, record new species, document the loss of or decline of long-established forms.”

He gave strong support to the work to establish an Orkney Biodiversity Records Centre. He had long been concerned about the situation nationally, and in 1985, in his final year as president of the Linnean Society, he brought biologists together to draw up a new national blueprint for coordinating biological recording, which led to the establishment of the National Biodiversity Network of today. “Without Sam’s commitment to the cause,” says one of those most involved, “the NBN would never have been conceived.”

The list of his achievements, his books, his papers, and his awards is immense, and even those who worked with him often knew only a fraction as he never used up time to speak about himself when there was always a new challenge to be met. In the last Christmas card he was able to write, with his health failing, he urged Orkney friends to support action on stoats. The *Church Times* obituary summed up his warmth and humanity: “Sam wore his achievements lightly, and will be remembered for his smile and genuine interest in people.”

“My love of natural history has been steady and ardent,” wrote Charles Darwin in his autobiography, and indeed the same could be said of Sam, who brought to his work a joy in the natural world and its study and a great commitment to helping others share it.

HNF

‘60 years’

From ‘Doubtful Breeding Birds’ by Eddy Balfour Bulletin 2/1965

Doubtful Breeding Birds appear on most lists of Orkney Birds. It is one of the most tantalising problems the compiler has to cope with. When the evidence appears to be insufficient the species is listed as ‘doubtful’, but some writers are over cautious whilst others include a species on very slim evidence. Mistakes can be repeated in succeeding works. No doubt most mistakes occur through mis-identification, but some also, through wrongly applying an English or vernacular name to that species. A complication of this sort arose, leading to the assertion that the Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* nested in Orkney during and since Low’s time. It appears that the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, was sometimes called Goshawk or Goose-hawk in Orkney, and to further complicate matters, the Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, sometimes did duty for the Goshawk as well. Hence the quite erroneous claims. Generally the very old claims are most suspect; for instance no one now puts much faith in the story of the King Eider nesting in Papa Westray in 1812, or that the Eagle Owl nested in Birsay in Low’s time.

Claims of nesting for species whose breeding range is far outside our county, or whose normal nesting habitat is absent, should be very carefully investigated. However, three species considered as doubtful by Buckley and Harvie-Brown (1891), Omond (1925) and Lack (1943) have since been confirmed. They are, Ring Ouzel (Hoy 1963), Blackcap (Shapinsay 1949), and Goldcrest (Binscarth 1945). Two additional species from Lack’s list have also been substantiated, viz Scaup Duck a few times since 1950, and Black-tailed Godwit in 1956. Seven of the remaining doubtfuls would appear to be deserving of rejection altogether. They are, Black-throated Diver, Grey-lag Goose, Little Tern, Redwing, Pied Flycatcher, Yellow Wagtail, and Lesser Redpoll.

The one Grey-lag Goose *Anser anser* record has been admitted to be a tame bird.

New Orkney species recorded at Westshore, Burray in 2018

Barrie Hamill

In an article in the 2018 Orkney Naturalist (Hamill 2018), I wrote about my interest in recording all the wildlife that I manage to find or observe in my garden at Westshore, Burray. I mentioned that I felt that I had only just started to scratch the surface with regard to discovering and recording potential species that might be seen, and this was confirmed by events during 2018.

At the end of 2017 I had recorded 446 species at Westshore; a list of these by species group can be found in last year's article. During 2018 a further 134 additional species were recorded, so that by the end of 2018 the list had increased to 580. It was a particularly successful year for moths which made up roughly 1/3 of the new species. The moth trap was also responsible for a handful of new Craneflies and my first recorded Caddis Flies.

Incredibly, of the 134 new species mentioned above, five turned out to be new for Orkney! These are noted below, with some details of the circumstances of discovery, confirmation and wider distribution. They are covered in chronological order.

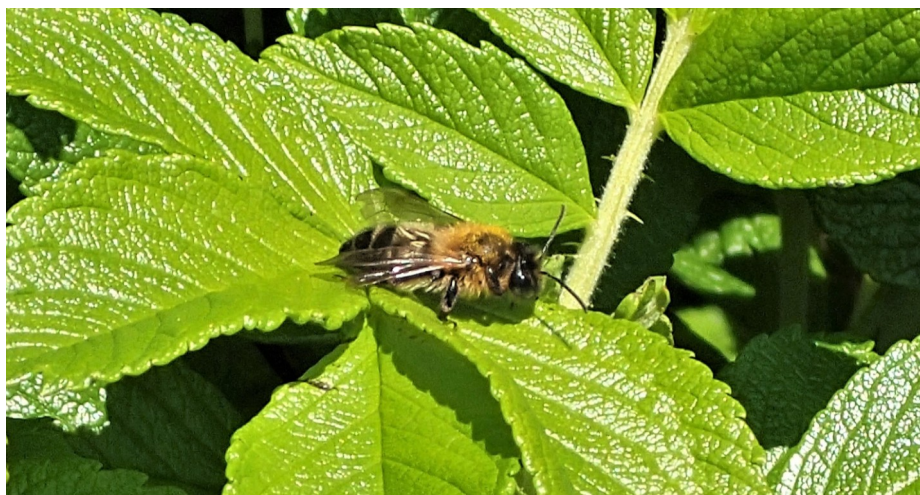
a Brown Lacewing

Wesmaelius (sub-genus
Kimminsia) *subnebulosus*



On 11th April 2018 my wife Linda handed me a pot containing an insect she had just found on the inside window of our porch. It was something I was unfamiliar with but after a small amount of research identified it as a brown lacewing. I knew that the Field Studies Council (FSC) had produced a key for these so immediately sent for it. The keys took me to two options, either female *Wesmaelius nervosus* or *W. subnebulosus*. Lee Johnson was kind enough to look at the specimen and agreed that it was one of these two species but thought that it looked more like *W. subnebulosus*, a species that had not yet been recorded in Orkney.

Unfortunately the keys state that these two species can only be separated by genital examination and being a female made it even harder to identify as the specimen needed to be 'cleared' before examination. As this involves boiling up the abdomen, Lee suggested I send the specimen to Colin Plant, the author of the FSC key. Colin was kind enough to examine the specimen and confirmed it as female *Wesmaelius* (sub-genus *Kimminsia*) *subnebulosus* (Stephens, 1836) and a new species for Orkney. It has been recorded from Shetland, and in mainland Britain it is a widespread and common species associated with trees.



Chocolate Mining Bee *Andrena scotica*

On 23rd May, I had been photographing insects in the garden. By far the most common species that day had been the **Tapered Drone Fly** *Eristalis pertinax*, and when I noticed an insect of a roughly similar size on some **Japanese Rose** *Rosa rugosa* I expected it to be this species. When viewed with the naked eye from around six feet I could see there was something different about it, so I took a photo. The photograph indicated that it was some sort of bee. It had moved very slightly but was still out of potting distance, so I took another picture. I made the mistake of checking that one on the back of the camera and looking back at the spot was distraught to see it had disappeared! I never saw it again.

My bee knowledge is pretty useless and I've absolutely no experience of bees that aren't of the bumble variety, so I sent the pictures to John Crossley for his views. John replied very quickly, identifying it as a **Mining Bee** *Andrena* species, thinking it was a species that had not been recorded in Orkney before. He sought the opinions of two experts who identified it as *Andrena scotica*. Common and widespread in England and Wales, distribution in Scotland is much more scattered with most records from lowland and coastal locations. This is the first sighting north of Dornoch. Gardens are a frequent habitat for this species which visits a wide variety of shrubs and flowers.

Light Brown Apple Moth *Epiphyas postvittana*

On 27th June I spotted beside our greenhouse an unfamiliar moth on a flower head of a plant that unfortunately I didn't identify. Straight away (I wasn't going to allow this one to fly off) it was captured and photographed. Comparing the photos to pictures in my reference books and on the internet, I was fairly certain that it was a **Light Brown Apple Moth** *Epiphyas postvittana*, a species which I could not find any Orkney records for. I sent the pictures to Sydney Gauld, the Orkney Moth recorder, who agreed with the identification, and sent the photos south for confirmation. This was soon received and Orkney had a new moth.

This is an Australian species that was introduced, probably accidentally, to Cornwall in the 1930's. Since then, it has spread northwards and by the beginning of 2018 had reached Sutherland, so its eventual appearance in Orkney is not unexpected.

Sphenella marginata - a fruit fly (Tephritidae)

When Linda and I wander round the garden we are constantly looking closely at plants for any signs of wildlife. On 12th August during one such stroll, Linda noticed something at the foot of a Ragwort plant. It appeared to be an insect and from a distance it looked like some sort of bug, but on closer views we could see it was actually a fly and certainly one I hadn't seen before. Apart from Hoverflies and Craneflies I hadn't been intending to look closely at flies this year, so rather than doing the sensible thing and potting it up, I took a couple of pictures instead. When I downloaded the pictures I was disappointed to see they were a bit blurred, and although after some research I was able to identify it as being most likely a member of the Tephritidae, I wasn't able to immediately arrive at a potential specific identification.

On 23rd August I was casually looking at some pictures of insects on the internet when I was fairly certain that I saw a picture of a fly that looked like my fruit fly. This enabled me to make a tentative identification. I e-mailed Lee Johnson, the Orkney fly recorder with the pictures and my suggested identification of *Sphenella marginata*. Lee was sure that my identification was correct, but as this was a potential first for Orkney it required confirmation. The photos were sent to dipterist David Clements who confirmed the identification and a new fly was added to the Orkney list.

It was fortunate that this is a fairly distinctive fly and that my photos, even blurred ones were sufficient for identification.

The species is associated with Ragwort and is also known as the Ragwort Fly. It is a fly that is likely to be very under-recorded which is reflected in its distribution on the NBN database which shows only one previous Scottish record, from the Dornoch Firth in 2015. The larvae form mines in the flowers of Ragwort and Groundsels.

Dicyphus pallicornis - a Mirid Bug

It's always exciting when Linda brings me a pot containing something she has found; often it is something common or that she has shown me before, but sometimes it can be new for the garden or even better.

When, on 18th October Linda handed me a pot, I initially struggled to see anything. Eventually I could see a tiny insect, so small that I had no idea of what type of insect it was. I had little confidence in being able to identify it, so, and I can't believe I said this, told her put it back where she found it. Thankfully she persuaded me not to do this, pointing out that she had noticed an interesting pinkish blush on the insect which is what had made her pick it up.

Once photographed, I could see that it was a Mirid bug, so my first port of call was the excellent British Bugs website www.britishbugs.org.uk. It didn't take long to narrow it down to *Dicyphus*, with two similar looking species standing out as potential candidates, *D. pallicornis* and *D. stachydis*. Luckily both species are associated with a host food plant, *D. pallicornis* with **Foxglove** *Digitalis purpurea* and *D. stachydis* with **Hedge Woundwort** *Stachys sylvatica*. We only have the former in our garden and Linda confirmed that she had found it whilst weeding at the base of a foxglove. This information, combined with the size – 3mm! – the markings on the head and the length of the hind tibia made me fairly confident that this was *D. pallicornis*, a species that did not appear on any maps for Orkney. I was able to get confirmation from the Orkney True Bug recorder Pete Kirby that indeed it was *D. pallicornis* and that it was a new species for Orkney.



Dicyphus pallicornis a Myrid Bug

A few days later, Linda found another individual of this species in another part of the garden, again through weeding at the base of Foxgloves.

My garden wildlife recording in 2018 has shown that Orkney gardens are home to, and a haven for, a large number of species, many of which are under-recorded and even unrecorded. Much remains to be discovered both at Westshore and gardens throughout Orkney.

I would like to thank all the individuals mentioned in the article who have been unfailingly helpful and, of course my wife Linda for her assistance and inquisitiveness.

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All photographs by the author

Flapper Skate update

Penny Martin

Flapper Skate *Dipturus intermedia* cases continue to wash up on Orkney shores. This is the fourth year that we have been collecting and recording them systematically.

In 2018 skate cases were reported from more than 20 beaches including Shapinsay, Westray, Sanday, South Ronaldsay, Auskerry, Hoy and various places on mainland Orkney. 29 people submitted records and cases were also collected during Bag the Bruck. Most records were in single figures but larger numbers were consistently washed up at Birsay, Skaill, Aikerness and Skipi Geo.

The table below shows how many were found in each month. It is probable that these numbers represent only a fraction of the hatched skate cases in Orkney waters as many will not make landfall, many beaches are inaccessible and some will not be found or reported.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Jan	2070	368	3263	1034
Feb	1194	398	2586	1182
March	1369	433	1761	640
April	1090	168	943	547
May	249	43	431	219
June	695	63	324	121
July	806	28	69	131
August	347	37	144	17
September	391	19	213	27
October	137	53	264	93
November	161	74	297	124
December	279	73	545	217
Total	8788	1757	10,840	4,352

A detailed database of records is maintained. Please continue to look out for skate cases and report them to me at Physiopenny@hotmail.co.uk. Please take them off the beach so they are not double-counted. A continuous run of data over years will help us to try to understand more about the skate population around Orkney.



Chrysolina l latecincta

– a very special Orkney
animal

Chrysolina latecincta is a leaf beetle in the family *Chrysomelinae*. This is a small but distinctive animal, just 7 to 11mm long, but striking in its red and black livery.

In Scotland it is found only in Orkney, at Loch Etive in Argyll and Bute and from Unst, Shetland. It is found nowhere else in the UK.

Sometimes referred to as *Chrysolina intermedia* the world distribution of this tiny beetle is unclear but it is certainly found at a few sites in Norway and may have small populations in Denmark, France, Germany and Spain.

In Orkney *Chrysolina latecincta* is found in grassy, salty, cliff-top vegetation amongst bare earth and rocks, and in an old cliff-edge sandstone quarry. At Loch Etive the species is found in a saltmarsh, a quite different habitat. So, when you are walking the Orkney cliff-tops between Stromness in the south and Skaill Bay to the north between March and August, keep your eyes peeled. In amongst the stones and sparse plant life you may find something very rare indeed.

Information sources

Hubble, Dave. 2017. *Leaf Beetles (Naturalists' Handbooks 34)*, Pelagic Publishing

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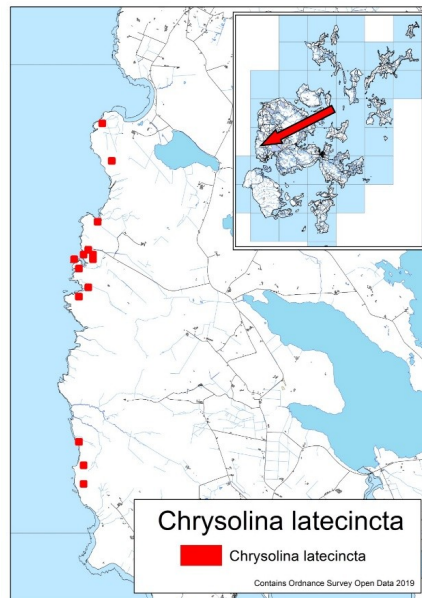
Fauna Europaeae <https://fauna-eu.org/>

Brian Ribbands (pers. comm.)

Map – Sydney Gauld

Photo – Alastair Forsyth.

Poster for Orkney Nature Festival event by Alastair Forsyth (with thanks to Brian Ribbands for advice and comments on earlier drafts).





'60 years'

***Primula scotica* research 1965-1967**



The Scottish Primrose *Primula scotica* is a plant endemic to Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland. It is probably Orkney's most well-known and loved wildflower and many people, local and visitor alike, go to see its beautiful, diminutive flowers, especially in the large colony at Yesnaby, during its two flowering periods in May and July. In Orkney, its habitat is mainly maritime heath, where the short, windswept sward allows it to thrive without competition from larger plants.

Knowledge of *Primula scotica*, its life cycle and locations, was greatly enhanced by a long-term study in Orkney between 1965 and 1981 carried out by our late botanical recorder for Orkney, Elaine Bullard, together with Hugo Shearer. Looking back through old bulletins, in this year of Orkney Field Club's 60th anniversary, it was interesting to see some early reports from this study.

From Bulletin 1/1967

'*Primula scotica*: The study on this species, initiated by the late Rev.N.Dennis and commenced in 1965, has continued, with more than 20 visits, mainly by Mr H.Shearer, throughout the year. Five one-metre quadrats have now been set out and various difficulties, mainly in the accurate plotting of plants onto graph paper, have been overcome. It seems certain that the study will have to continue for at least five years. As in 1965, the density of plants appears to be higher than that given in published information and it will be interesting to see if this fluctuates over the years. There was remarkably little change in the two quadrats under observation for two years: plants can persist for this period without flowering at all. Potential seed production appears to be lower than that published for Caithness; not only do a small proportion of the plants flower at all, but very few of these flower more than once during the season and in 1966 the majority only had two flowers per scape. Various mishaps (grazing, slug and rabbit damage and gales) prevented some of these from setting seed. However, this may be characteristic of the two colonies under observation; a Field Club member counted an estimated one-metre quadrat in Shapinsay and found most of the plants flowering, with four flowers per scape on many of them.

There seems no indication that *P.scotica* is extending its range in Orkney; it may be declining. It has not been re-found in its old sites at Brodgar, Toab, Houton or North Ronaldsay. It persisted in South Ronaldsay, where it had been deliberately introduced some time before 1919, until 1965, but no plants could be seen in 1966.'

From Bulletin 4/1967

***Primula scotica*:** The investigation, initiated by the late Rev.N.Dennis, S.J, and subsequently carried out by E.R.Bullard and H.Shearer, has now completed its third season. Eventually it is intended to publish a paper on this work.

Five one-metre squares have been permanently marked out, three at Yesnaby and two at Orphir. In these the following observations have been made:

Plants flowering each year:

at Orphir, 1965, 0%; 1966, 3.5%; 1967, 5%.
at Yesnaby : 1965, 20%; 1966, 49.2%; 1967, 3%

Plants dying over winter:

at Orphir, 1965, 6.0%; 1966/67, 13.0%.
at Yesnaby, 1965/66, 0%, 1966/67, 24.2%

New plants appearing in spring:

at Orphir, 1966, 16.6%; 1967, 30.2%.
at Yesnaby, 1966, 4.0%; 1967, 1.6%

Plants surviving three years without flowering at all:

at Orphir 66.7%.
at Yesnaby, 50%.

One plant under observation flowered in 1965 and has not done so since although it was alive at the end of 1967. A number which flowered in 1966 did not do so in 1967 although they too were alive at the end of the season. (previously published information suggests that *P. scotica* flowers in its second and third years and then dies).

The density varies from 11 to 74 per square metre in the quadrats under observation. 79 plants were counted in a randomly selected square metre in the colony at Balnakeil, Sutherland, on the 16th July 1967. Published records indicate a density of 12 per square metre.

(*Primula scotica* has not been recorded from the Orphir site on Hill of Midland since this study, though it is not known when it became extinct there – Ed. 2018.)

A paper describing this research in the 1960s was published in the Journal of Ecology in 1987 and focused on sites at Yesnaby, Orkney, together with one at each of Dunnet links and Sandside Head in Caithness.

Some of the main findings were as follows -

1. *Primula scotica* can be at risk due to its success only in a small range of habitats and the conservation of these is essential for its survival.
2. There were found to be two distinct populations within the study quadrats a) long-lived plants with higher flowering frequencies and b) plants that can survive for many years but with very low flowering frequency with many remaining non-flowering. (It was suggested that these plants may be a genetically inferior subset and that 57% of these may never flower, compared to only 4.8% of the longer-lived plants). Some of the 'superior' plants survived for more than 14 years during the survey.

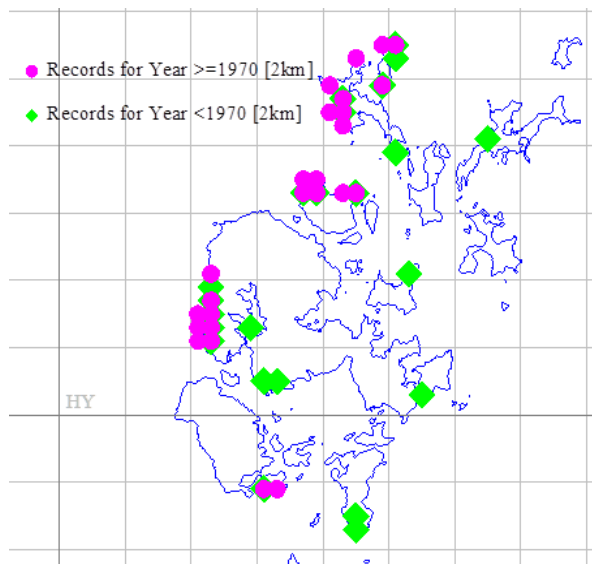


3. The number of flowering plants, population size and seedling establishment were higher following mild winters and lower following snow and severe gales. During the years of the survey, it was noted that the density only increased in the quadrats between the mild winters of 1970 and 1973 and that there was low mortality between 1972-77.

4. When plants were part of groups, fewer flowered compared to more isolated plants and at Yesnaby in 1972-3, only approximately 20% of the plants present flowered. (Any brief look at a flowering colony today will reveal the large number of non-flowering plants, so this figure may be the norm?)

It is perhaps the case, therefore, that our apparently flourishing existing colonies owe that health to the relatively mild years of recent years. Reports from the colder years of the 60s of plants with only two flowers per scape would seem to contrast with today's regularly seen plants bearing four to six flowers. However, it will also be interesting to see whether the unusual 'drought' during the summer of 2018 will adversely affect the health of this season's plants. Perhaps more at risk will be some of Caithness and Sutherland's sandy, links sites, some of which were severely burnt by the sun and the severe lack of water for many weeks.

Today, most of the known colonies in Orkney are healthy, but a number of sites, inland and in the east and south of the county were without doubt lost between the 19th Century and about 1970. The reason for this was mainly agricultural changes, either directly through land reclamation or more indirectly through populations becoming small, isolated and ultimately not self-sustaining. However, occasionally sites that had been considered extinct are re-discovered, e.g. one at The Axe, South Walls, seen in 2015 for the first time since 1926. There have even been new finds of small populations in Rousay and Westray, so it is always worth keeping a good lookout when walking in the right sort of habitat.



The Orkney Wildlife Information and Records Centre has archived and catalogued the huge amount of material on *Primula scotica* from the late Elaine Bullard's work, including surveys, maps and information from Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland. The catalogue can be found online at <http://www.orkneylibrary.org.uk/OBRC/html/contents.htm>

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Plant Report 2018

John Crossley

Another floral and fruitful recording year started with a visit by the Orkney Field Club Flora Group to Gyre woodland in Orphir on a fine evening in late May. This 19th Century plantation, actually two woodlands separated by a road and a grass field, is typical of its kind – overwhelmingly comprising Sycamores *Acer pseudoplatanus* but also with a few fine Wych Elms *Ulmus glabra*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and an occasional Laburnum *L. anagyroides*. The lower, southern, plantation was added to in about 1990 and has a greater variety of species including Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Downy Birch *Betula pubescens*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and various Willows *Salix* spp. It also has a patch of Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*; this bush does not in general do well in Orkney, so it was a treat to see it in full flower in this exceptionally sheltered place.

The ground flora includes abundant ferns in places, especially in the upper woodland, mainly common species, with the exception of Hard Shield-fern *Polystichum aculeatum* (rare, in the lower woodland only). This fern, presumably introduced here, is rare in Orkney but may be native at a single site in Hoy. The Bluebells at Gyre are, as elsewhere in Orkney, the hybrid *Hyacinthoides* x *massartiana* between the native species *H. non-scripta* and the Spanish *H. hispanica*, except that many of them seem very close to the Spanish parent, with broad, short ‘bells’ not recurved at the apex. I have not seen this elsewhere in Orkney. The Celandines *Ficaria verna* are not the common native subspecies *fertilis* but the probably introduced ssp. *verna*, earlier flowering and with tubers in the leaf axils. Another Orkney rarity, known only from Gyre but again an introduction, is Dog’s Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, but we failed to spot it.



Spanish Bluebells *Hyacinthoides hispanica* and the hybrid x *massartiana* at Gyre

Waulkmill Bay was the next venue, on a fine evening in July. We first followed the southern path down to the shore, where Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and low bushes dominate. A thicket of Bramble *Rubus* here has been identified in the past by a national expert (the genus is a very hard one to sort out) as *R. septentrionalis*; likely it was bird sown and therefore counts as a native. Some vestiges of native woodland cling to the rocks above the shore – Aspen *Populus tremula*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and Eared Willow *Salix aurita* – with Wood Sage *Teucrium scorodonia*. The northern path took us down to a small burn, dried up this year, between steep heathery banks. The wetland vegetation in the gully is quite rich, with Northern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* and several sedges including Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca* and Long-stalked Yellow-sedge *C. lepidocarpa*. But it was the ferns that took our attention. Among the frequent Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata* and Lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina* were a few that completely foxed us; they might have been the hybrid between Narrow Buckler-fern *Dryopteris carthusiana* and *D. dilatata* or possibly a

hybrid involving Northern Buckler-fern *D. expansa*. However, they had abundant glands (tiny, circular, secreting structures) on the underside of stems and leaves; only Hay-scented fern *D. aemula* is supposed to have these in any quantity and they certainly were not that species. Specimens were subsequently sent to the national referee at the Natural History Museum, London, who has so far not been able to identify them. They appear to be something new.

Two weeks later we spent a day in Hoy, in the Moaness-Orgil-Quoys area, easy walking, pottering almost, in an area which botanists and others usually pass through rather quickly en route to the hills. Roadside verges in the area are very rich, with abundant Common Tway-blade *Neottia ovata* on the upper road past Hoy Community Centre. It is good area for wild roses, including Glaucous Dog-rose *Rosa caesia* ssp. *vosagiaca*, Soft Downy-rose *R. mollis*, Sherard's Downy-rose *R. sherardii* and their hybrids. A rich wetland area near Hoy Lodge had plenty of Grass-of-Parnassus *Parnassia palustris* and in what would have been standing water in any other year, Floating Club-rush *Eleogiton fluitans*, a distinctly local plant in Orkney and not previously known from this area. Some fruiting stems of an orchid in flushes near the Whaness Burn were puzzling and there was a thought that they could be Small White Orchid *Pseudorchis albida*; they will be looked at again another time. In terms of new and updated (i.e. post 1999) records for the 10 km square, weeds of cultivation led the field, with 10 species including only the fifth county record for White Mustard *Sinapis alba*.



Glaucous Dog-rose *Rosa caesia* ssp. *vosagiaca*

A final outing of the group in early August was in pursuit of weeds of cultivation at Biggings, Toab, courtesy of the Baillie family. Heavily fertilised fields used for growing cabbages here had a plenty of weeds (selective herbicides among brassica crops are not and do not need to be 100% effective). We managed 20 species, the more interesting ones being Purple Ramping-fumitory *Fumaria purpurea*, Common Orache *Atriplex patula*, Fat-hen *Chenopodium album*, Small Nettle *Urtica urens*, Field Penny-Cress *Thlaspi arvense*, Bugloss *Anchusa arvensis*, Sun Spurge *Euphorbia helioscopia* and best of all, Treacle-mustard *Ersysimum cheiranthoides*, only the second Orkney record for this species.

Selected records of note

Entries in this section of the report are restricted to new finds and re-finds of relative rarities, and a few other records of special interest.

The definitions of terms for status – ‘Nationally Rare’ etc. – of species in the following list correspond with those given in the Orkney ‘Rare Plant Register’ (2015). For the most part, hybrids have not been assigned any status, nationally or locally.

‘Update’ in the context of this list means not recorded since 1999.

Species are listed in taxonomic order (Stace, 2010).

Records were made by the author unless initialled.

Natives and archaeophytes

(An archaeophyte is a plant species which is not native to a geographical region, but which was an introduced species in ‘ancient’ times [in practice, before 1500], rather than being a modern introduction.)

Small Adder’s-tongue *Ophioglossum azoricum* (Nationally Scarce, Locally Scarce/Data Deficient), Watery Geo, near Melsetter, North Walls, Hoy, ND2431289980, 10 Aug 2018, in short, sheep-grazed acid grassland, (JEC, JBR, JT and AU), confirmed by DNA analysis at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh: new site within existing 10 km sq.

Hart’s-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium* (Locally Scarce), Broch of Gurness, Evie, HY381268, 19 June 2018, on the broch itself (TD): new site in existing 10 km sq.

Wall-rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria* (Locally Scarce), also on the Broch of Gurness, same date (TD): update for site in existing 10 km sq.

Golden-scaled Male-fern *Dryopteris affinis sens. strict.* (not often recorded, locally data deficient), between Sunnybrae and Muddisdale, St Ola, on ditch bank by path, HY43051089, 12 May 2018 (JEC & JBR): new for 10 km sq.

Juniper *Juniperus communis* ssp. *nana* (UKBAP Priority, Scottish Biodiversity List), Wastlee Moor to Watery Geo 10 km sq, North Walls, Hoy, ND28P, where locally frequent, 20 Aug 2018 (JEC, JBR, JT & AU): update for 10 km sq. (since 1975).

Dense-flowered Fumitory *Fumaria densiflora* (Locally Scarce), 4th Barrier, Burray, ND479955, 6 June 2018 (LJ). The third record for Burray and the first anywhere from a beach. A species known only from Burray, Sanday and Stronsay, and always on light, sandy soils.

Cuspidate-leaved Bramble *Rubus mucronulatus* (national and local status undefined), Binscarth, Firth, HY34811408, 27 Aug 2018, determined from specimen by G. Ballantyne: 3rd county record and first for Firth and Mainland Orkney (two previous records are from Rousay). Bramble species are not often recorded because of the difficulty of identification. *R. mucronulatus* is one that has been recorded quite frequently in Scotland; in Orkney it may have been introduced with planted trees and bushes or be bird-sown.

Sun Spurge *Euphorbia helioscopia*, (Scottish Biodiversity List), near Woodwick, Evie, HY3923, 17 Jul 2018: new for 10 km sq.



Dense-flowered Fumitory
Fumaria purpurea

Tea-leaved Willow x Creeping Willow *Salix phylicifolia x repens* (national and local status undefined), near Quoys, Hoy, HY24190292, 24/07/2018, a low bush in heathland with scattered willow scrub, (JEC and OFG): 2nd Orkney record and 3rd British Isles, therefore a very rare hybrid. Identification almost certain but yet to be confirmed by national referee.

Wild Pansy *Viola tricolor* subsp. *tricolor* (IUCN Near Threatened, SBL), Orgil 1 km square, Hoy, HY2303, 24/07/2018 (JEC and OFG): update for 10 km sq.

Allseed *Radiola linoides* (IUCN Near Threatened), Rose Ness, Holm, ND51869878, 06/07/2018 and Sae Geo, Rose Ness, Holm, ND52639924, 06/07/2018: new for 10 km sq; also Grim Ness, South Ronaldsay, ND49209303, 17/07/2018 (TD): new site and update for 10 km sq.

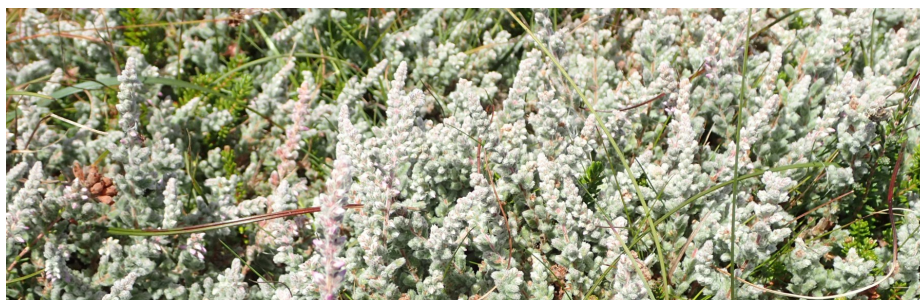
Northern Yellow-cress *Rorippa islandica* (Nationally Scarce), The Shunan, Harray, HY30721929, 04/08/2018; Helliar Holm, Shapinsay, HY48221578 and HY48511587, 11/06/2018, JEC and PH; and near Brough, South Ronaldsay, ND448831, 13/09/2018: all new for 10 km sqs.

Horse-radish *Armoracia rusticana* (Locally Rare), Pier Road, St Margarets Hope, South Ronaldsay, ND445938, 04/06/2018 (LJ) and Mill of Woo, Burness, Sanday, HY66814529, 18/08/2018: both new for 10 km sq.

Scottish Scurvygrass *Cochlearia officinalis* subsp. *scotica* (Nationally Scarce), Eastalet, Stromness, HY219122, 24/05/2018: update for 10 km sq; also Alisters Geo, Start Point, Sanday, HY78724378 and Bay of Wheevi, Sanday, HY76854373, 27/05/2018: both new for 10 km sq and first records since 1933. This very small Scurvygrass in short maritime turf has no doubt been overlooked and is almost certainly locally frequent in Orkney in this habitat. All identifications confirmed by Tim Rich.

Obovate Sundew *Drosera x obovata* (*D. rotundifolia x anglica*) (national and local status undefined), Loomi Shuns, Melsetter, North Walls, Hoy, ND25778990, 10/08/2018 (JEC, JBR, JT & AU): 3rd Orkney record and new for 10 km sq.

Common Glasswort *Salicornia europaea* (Locally Scarce), behind old St Andrews school, Toab, St Andrews, HY524041, 20/08/2018. *S. europaea* has in the past, but for one exception on 1962, been recorded as an aggregate comprising *S. europaea* and *S. ramosissima*; it is very likely however that most, if not all, plants in Orkney are referable to *S. europaea sens. strict.*



Hairy-leaved form of **Heather** *Calluna vulgaris* var. *hirsuta* (pictured), frequent around Loch of Torness, Ha Wick and Wastlee Moor, ND2489-ND2588. 10/08/2018 (JEC, JBR, JT & AU). This variety of Heather has apparently been known from the area for a long time, though there are no previous record details from anywhere in Orkney. Sell & Murrell (2014) state that it may be abundant in coastal areas, but there are no records at all on the BSBI British Isles database.

Bog Bilberry *Vaccinium uliginosum* (not quite Locally Scarce, but uncommon except in Hoy), Grim Ness, South Ronaldsay, ND49189303, 17/07/2018 (TD): new for island (but not for 10 km sq: it occurs at one site in Burray).

Arctic x Foula Eyebright *Euphrasia arctica x foulaensis* (no defined national or local status), Marwick Head, Birsay, HY22572450, 09/07/2018 (det. Chris Metherell): 2nd county record, and there are only 8 other records on the British Isles database.

Ostenfeld's Eyebright *Euphrasia ostenfeldii* (IUCN Data Deficient, UKBAP Priority, Scottish Biodiversity List, Nationally Scarce, Locally Rare/Data Deficient), Lounders Fea, Cui-lags, Hoy, HY20870421, 19/07/2018 (JEC, BJ & JT, det. Chris Metherell), on base-rich scree, where frequent with abundant arctic-alpines: 4th county record and new site within existing 10 km sq. Also Tur Geo, Rose Ness, Holm, ND52869973, 06/07/2018 (det. Chris Metherell), in cliff-top grassland: 5th county record and new for 10 km sq.

Ostenfeld's x Slender Eyebright *Euphrasia ostenfeldii x micrantha* (no defined national or local status), Rose Ness, Holm, ND51899876, 06/07/2018 (det. Chris Metherell), in wet heath with coastal influence: new county record, 3rd British Isles record.

Upland Eyebright *Euphrasia frigida* (Nationally Scarce, IUCN Data Deficient, Locally Rare), Blotchnie Fiold, Rousay, HY41842903, 05/08/2016, (JEC & JBR, det. Chris Metherell), on north-facing slope near summit, a two-year-old record lately confirmed by referee: 2nd Orkney record and new for 10 km square (but not new for Rousay). Also Lounders Fea, Cui-lags, Hoy, HY20880428, 19/07/2018 (JEC, BJ, & JT, det. Chris Metherell), where occasional among base-rich rocks and debris, with abundant arctic-alpines: 3rd Orkney record and new for 10 km sq.

Upland Eyebright x Ostenfeld's Eyebright *Euphrasia x eurycarpa (E. frigida x ostenfeldii)* (no defined national or local status), Lounders Fea, Cui-lags, Hoy, HY20880428, 19/07/2018 (JEC, BJ, & JT, det. Chris Metherell), among base-rich rocks and debris, with abundant arctic-alpines: new county record.

Bladderwort *Utricularia australis*, near Manse Loch, Egilsay, HY47613011, 30/07/2018. Until now this species has not been positively identified in Orkney, having been recorded only as part of the aggregate *U. vulgaris sens. lat.* (Locally Scarce), because it can only be determined from the distribution of glands inside the flower spur, and flowers are rare in the north of Scotland, and may not have been seen before in Orkney. In the warm summer of 2018, plants in pools near Manse Loch flowered!

Alpine Saw-wort *Saussurea alpina* (Locally Rare), Lounders Fea, Hoy, HY208042, 19/07/2018 (JEC, BJ, & JT): not new or update for 10 km sq., but first record here since 1933.

Nodding Bur-marigold *Bidens cernua* (Locally Rare), Mull Head, Deerness, HY58940880, 24/08/2018 (SG and ES): 2nd county record. Very probably from seed carried by birds onto pool margins muddied and nutrient-enriched by Greylag Geese.

Eel Grass *Zostera marina* (IUCN Near Threatened), Scapa Bay, St Ola, HY44090780, 05/11/2015 (JK): new for 10 km sq. Also Longhope Bay, North Walls, ND27558952, 25/04/2017 (JK): update for 10 km sq.

Marsh Fragrant-orchid *Gymnadenia densiflora* (no national or local status, but uncommon and localised to base-rich flushes and dune slack), Hill of White Hamars, South Walls, Hoy, ND31878877, 21/07/2018 (TD): new for 10 km sq.

Common Club-rush *Schoenoplectus lacustris* (Locally Rare), The Shunan, Harray, HY30741926, 04/08/2018, just a few stems, apparently declined since previous records: update for 10 km sq.

Grey Club-rush *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* (Locally Scarce), northwest end of Loch of Sabiston, Birsay, HY28952248, 04/08/2018, good-sized patch, apparently thriving: update for 10 km sq.

Floating Club-rush *Eleogiton fluitans* (Locally Scarce), Burnmouth, Rackwick, Hoy, ND207984, 11/08/2018 (JEC, BJ, JBR & JT), in dune slack pool, dry this exceptional summer: update for 10 km sq. Also near Hoy Lodge, Hoy, HY22850372, 24/07/2018 (JEC and OFG), in another dried up-pool: new site within existing 10 km sq.



Saltmarsh Flat-sedge *Blysmus rufus* (Locally Scarce) (pictured), Little Ayre, North Walls, Hoy, ND30469189 and ND30539201, 10/08/2018 (JEC, JBR, JT & AU): update for 10 km sq. (which includes a site on Cava), and new for Hoy and Walls.

Whorl-grass *Catabrosa aquatica* (Locally Scarce), Sea View, Bay of Skail, Sandwick, HY23731948, 09/06/2018. In small burn, 200 m from sea: update for 10 km sq.

Small Sweet-grass *Glyceria declinata* (Locally Scarce), Orth of Hawick, North Walls, Hoy, ND25158906, 10/08/2018 (JEC, JBR, JT & AU); and Wilderness track, Birsay, HY33282131, 04/09/2018: both new for 10 km sq.

Non-natives – neophytes and casuals

(A neophyte is a plant species which is not native to a geographical region and was introduced in ‘modern’ times [in practice, after 1500] and has become established. A casual is a non-native that has not become established. The terms are used in an Orkney context.)

Sainfoin *Onobrychis viciifolia* (Casual), north end of 4th Barrier, Burray, ND48159540, 14/08/2018 (MR): new county record. Other non-natives are frequent around here and it appears that someone has been indulging in some ‘enhancement’ of the area. Europe, possibly native in south England.

Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* (Neophyte), Gyre, Orphir, HY3404, 30/05/2018 (JEC and OFG): new county record, though probably is growing elsewhere. British Isles native.

Scarlet Avens *Geum quellyon* (Neophyte), near Lynegar, Hoxa, South Ronaldsay, ND409933, 07/07/2018, planted and surviving in tree plantation: new county record. South America.

Musk-mallow *Malva moschata* (Neophyte), Dounby, Harray, HY2920, 21/07/2018, in waste ground: 4th county record and first since 1932. British Isles native.

Treacle-mustard *Erysimum cheiranthoides* (Casual), Biggings, Toab, St Andrews, HY543030, 31/07/2018 (JEC and OFG), in cabbage field: 2nd county record. Europe.

White Mustard *Sinapis alba* subsp. *alba* (Casual), Midland, Evie, HY39512358, 17/07/2018; and Quoys, Hoy, HY240031, 24/07/2018 (JEC and OFG), in grass re-seed: 5th and 6th county records. South Europe.

Creeping Comfrey *Symphytum grandiflorum* (Neophyte), Newark Bay, Deerness, HY57290438, 08/06/2018, on track verge: new county record. Caucasus.

Italian Toadflax *Cymbalaria pallida* (Casual or surviving?), Franklin Road, Stromness, HY252089, 09/06/2018 (JG), on wall: new county record. Italy.

Yellow Bartsia *Parentucellia viscosa* (Neophyte – probably not native in Orkney), Newbigging, Eday, HY543313, 14/08/2018 (KT), in old grassland: 2nd county record (the other being also in Eday). British Isles native.

Garden Yellow-archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* subsp. *argentatum*, Franklin Road, Stromness, HY25260894, 30/05/2018 (JG), at base of wall: new county record. Probably a cultivar of British Isles native.

Lords-and-Ladies *Arum maculatum* (Neophyte), by The Cannon, Ness Road, Stromness, HY25270842, 01/04/2018 (JT): 3rd county record. British Isles native.

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All photos by the author

Mosses and Liverworts (Bryophytes) Report 2018

John Crossley

In February the eminent bryologist Chris Preston visited the county, to survey the bryophytes of arable fields. Many of these are short-lived, opportunistic species that complete their life cycles in winter, in cereal stubbles between autumn harvest and spring ploughing. Such habitat has become much reduced in the British Isles in the last few decades, as autumn sowing of cereals has largely replaced traditional spring sowing. With this in mind the British Bryological Society (BBS) organised a national survey in 2001-2005. However, Orkney was not covered in this survey. Chris was here to rectify that (though too late for results to be included in the survey report) (Preston *et al*, 2010).

Chris visited fields in several parts of Orkney mainland and linked south isles. His richest fields, with up to 16 species, were in the St Ola area and the poorest on the west coast. In general he appeared to be slightly disappointed by a lack of diversity of species, at least in view of the unusual abundance of potential habitat. We speculated that the harsh winters of Orkney may be a limiting factor. Nevertheless, he recorded a new species for Orkney, the liverwort *Fossombronina pusilla*, in several places, and also found the hornwort *Anthoceros punctatus*, only recorded once previously, several times. Species lists comprised a mixture of some of the characteristic annuals of arable fields and very common generalist species to be found in a variety of disturbed habitats. The most consistently occurring of the annuals were *Trichodon cylindricus*, *Dicanella staphylina*, *Bryum rubens* and *Tortula truncata*, components of an assemblage that the BBS survey found to be typical of northern and western Britain and Ireland.

The mosses group of the Field Club had three outings to Russadale in Stenness, in March, May and October. The first two were mainly revision sessions, to revisit and remember names, though several species new to the group were seen, including the attractive, shining *Hookeria lucens*. In October our destination was some base-rich flushes and springs slightly higher up the hill, a habitat we had not visited previously. A distinctive assemblage of species is more or less confined to this habitat and can be the dominant plant cover.



Hookeria lucens

The most notable record of the year from the rarity point of view was the tiny moss *Pohlia annotina* found at Westshore, Burray by Barrie Hamill (determined by S.D.S. Bosanquet). This was only the second Orkney record. Another good find was the liverwort *Frullania teneriffae*, by Julian Branscombe in Papay; this is an oceanic species and a new record for the island.

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Myxomycetes (Slime Moulds) Report 2018

Lee Johnson

17 records of 6 species were noted in Orkney in 2018, none were new for the county. As usual the most frequently seen species was *Mucilago crustacea* (commonly known as **Dog's Vomit** or sometimes **Scrambled Egg Slime**) which was reported from South Ronaldsay (LJ.), Papa Westray (JB), Rendall (MB), Stromness (BS, AG), Voy (AB), Toab (PF), Swannay (LT), Orphir (SW), Kirkwall (KC) and Newark Geo (AG) on grass from September onwards.

Egg Shell Slime Mould *Leocarpus fragilis* was recorded during October from Taftshurie, South Ronaldsay on moss in grass (PO). This distinctive bright yellow slime mould turns brown with maturity and has a brittle outer surface.

Physarum cinereum (sometimes known as **Ashen Slime Mould**) was recorded at Berstane in December on fallen leaves (NC). This tiny, sessile, grey slime mould is quite hard to see but often turns up in leaf litter.

Craterium minutum (pictured) was recorded on dead plant stalks at Berstane in March (LJ). This cosmopolitan species can grow up to 1.5mm tall and fruiting bodies are yellow-brown and goblet shaped. It can be found on living and dead vegetation.

A pretty pinkish-red *Arcyria* sp. most likely *Arcyria denudata* was recorded on the underside of a fallen fence post on Egilsay in July (AG). This species is very similar to *Arcyria incarnata* in the field however if gently blown upon, the capillitium* of *A. denudata* tends to remain in place whereas with *A. incarnata* it will blow away.



And finally, *Reticularia lycoperdon* (also known as **False Puffball**) was recorded on a fallen log at Gyre Woods, Orphir in May (LJ) and at Burray Cemetery in July (BH). This species resembles a blob of shaving foam when young but as it matures it turns brown and is filled with chocolate coloured spores.

Thank you to recorders M. Bell, Julian Branscombe, Nancy Charlton, Katharyn Coghill, Laura Cromarty, Premysl Fojtu, Anne Gascoigne, Barrie Hamill, Peter Oswald, Tina Ruiz, Bob Simpson, Linda Trickett and Sarah Welburn.

* The capillitium is a mass of fibres mixed in with the spores contained within the fruiting body of some myxomycetes.

Photo by Lee Johnson



Pseudoscorpions are tiny arachnids which superficially resemble scorpions. There are 28 species in the UK many of which have venomous claws which they use to overpower prey such as springtails and other soil dwelling invertebrates. They can also hitchhike on birds by hanging on with their claws. They are often found in leaf litter, grass tussocks, in bird nests and under bark but due to their size they are very hard to spot.

Two species of pseudoscorpion were recorded in 2018 one new for the county. The first specimen was spotted by Yvonne Simpson in February in a pile of rope collected from Windwick, South Ronaldsay. I identified it as **Common Neobiscid** *Neobisium carciniodes* (pictured, measuring less than 3mm). The specimen was verified by Liam Andrews. I managed to find this

species at two different locations in Burray in March and April along with another almost identical species **Shore Neobiscid** *Neobisium maritimum* on the Fourth Barrier. This species is new for the county (also verified by Liam Andrews).

This rather handsome spider is *Tibellus oblongatus* recorded in April 2018 at Hestily, South Ronaldsay in grass. It is a member of the *Philodromidae* otherwise known as the **Running Crab Spiders** but also sometimes referred to as **Grass Spiders**. The total length is around 10mm. They are often found with their legs stretched out forward on blades of grass which offers very good camouflage especially if the grass is dry. They make their egg sacs, which the female guards, high in long grass and other vegetation. *T. oblongatus* has been recorded previously from Hoy in 2011.



A very similar species *T. maritimus* has been recorded in Burray in 1976 but this species generally has more spots along the abdomen, however certain identification can only be achieved by examining the adult genitalia.



One of the **Jumping Spiders** *Salticus scenicus* otherwise known as the **Zebra Spider** was spotted in Stromness by Miranda McLellan on a garden wall in June. It is the most common of all the jumping spiders in the UK. They are often found around human habitation. They are quite small (around 5-9mm) but the black and white stripes make them easy to spot and they have quite a distinctive way of moving rather like a cat hunting. Jumping spiders do not build a web, instead they use their large eyes to hunt for, stalk and pounce on their prey. This species has not been previously recorded in Orkney although it has been

found in Inverness, Fair Isle and Shetland.

Spiders are often parasitized by wasps and flies and I often come across specimens, particularly **money spiders** *Linyphiidae* which are carrying larvae. Some spider parasites lay eggs in a spider egg sac but others (the *Polysphinctini* wasps) lay directly onto the spider often on the abdomen. The egg then grows into a larva which lives off the 'blood' of the spider until it is ready to pupate. Up until this point the spider is able to carry on with life without any hindrance. When the wasp is ready to pupate, it consumes the spider and spins a cocoon. Many of the *Polysphinctini* are host specific. In April I found an unlucky Linyphid carrying two larvae. The species usually associated with Linyphids where the egg is laid in this position is *Acrodactyla degener*. I collected the spider in order to rear the wasps and was curious to see if both larvae survived. Usually the period between the egg being laid and the death of the spider is around 20 days with the wasp remaining in pupation for 32 days. 14 days after I collected the specimen one of the larvae died presumably because there was not enough spider 'juice' to feed two. Five days after that the spider was consumed by the surviving larva and it pupated. The pupa was sent to Gavin Broad at the NHM. He identified it as *Acrodactyla similis* (pictured inset). This poorly understood parasitic wasp is thought to be fairly widespread but was only recognised as a species in 2011 and is new for Orkney. The specimen was donated to the NHM.



Giant house spiders of the *Tegenaria* genus (now split into *Tegenaria* and the *Eratigena atrica* group) have only really been found north of Yorkshire since the 1960s probably spread by human transportation (Oxford 2011). Three species are so far recorded in Orkney, *Tegenaria domestica*, *Eratigena saeva* and *E. duellica*. The latter two readily hybridise in other parts of the UK where their distributions overlap. As these species are fairly recent introductions to Orkney I was interested to see if these spiders are hybridising here. Both species are identified only by examination of the adult genitalia. I collected 30 dead specimens found during autumn 2018 from Orkney College and sent them for confirmation to Dr Geoff Oxford who specialises in these spiders. Some of them were too desiccated for accurate identification but of the identifiable specimens, one *Tegenaria domestica* male, two *Eratigena saeva* females and 15 *E. duellica* males were noted showing all three were present in the college. Several specimens appeared to be hybrids of *E. saeva* and *E. duellica*, demonstrating that they are very likely hybridising here which is a consequence of recent colonisation where populations of each species are sparse thereby necessitating pairings with whoever is available rather than members of their own species. These hybrids are able to cross back to their parent species with



increasing ease as initial mechanical difficulties with their genitalia is overcome (Croucher et al 2007) so it will be interesting to see if, in the future, all of the spiders become intermediate and 'pure' *E saeva* and *E. duellica* disappear.

Alastair Forsyth photographed and identified **Hansen's Harvestman** *Oligolophus hansenii* at night in Harray and a few days later at Binscarth. This short-legged species is arboreal and has probably been overlooked but it is a new record for Orkney.



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Photos by Lee Johnson unless otherwise stated.

Dragonfly and Damselfly (Odonata) Report 2018 *Graeme Walker*

In 2018, the flight season for dragonflies and damselflies was four months long, almost to the day, from mid-May to mid-September. It consisted of a welcome, if uncharacteristic, period of warm, dry weather, when seven of the eight resident Orkney species were seen, with a total of 191 records being submitted by 32 keen-eyed folk. Table 1 shows the distribution of species throughout Orkney.

However, before the season began, Orkney's dragonflies had been showcased on a slightly wider stage, when I gave a talk as part of the British Dragonfly Society's 3rd Scottish Dragonfly Conference in Perth on 14th April. The work of the Orkney Field Club was highlighted, as well as all the wonderful things to see in Orkney, some not even dragonflies!

In May, there was keen anticipation for the beginning of the flight season, which usually commences with a Large Red Damselfly sighting around the third week of the month. For 2018, the honour of first record went to Lee Shields in Hoy, who found a **Large Red Damselfly** *Pyrrhosoma nymphula* in the Red Glen on the 14th. Over the next few weeks, more Large Reds were seen in Hoy, East and West Mainland. On the 30th, Lee Johnson found the first **Blue-tailed Damselflies** *Ischnura elegans* of the year, a mating pair alongside the Wideford Burn as it flows towards Inganess Bay. The only other sighting of note was a chance meeting with a holidaying member of the BDS's Dragonfly Conservation Group, Ian Smith, whom I met at Langskaill Burn in the sheltered glade by St Andrew's Community Centre.

At the beginning of June, the first **Common Blue Damselfly** *Enallagma cyathigerum* record was received from Alan Leitch, who saw 10 damselflies at the Loch of Scockness in Rousay on the 5th. On the same day, in Sanday, Blue-tailed Damselflies were seen by Russ Neave at the Loch of the Riv. South Ronaldsay's Blue-tails opened their account for the year with a dozen at the Hoxa pools on the 16th, when I recorded three females egg-laying. Later in the season, these pools were to suffer from the prolonged dry spell. On the 26th, Alan Nelson, a knowledgeable visitor, spotted a **Common Hawker** *Aeshna juncea* at the Sands o' Wright in South Ronaldsay.

In early July, Alan Nelson also recorded the first **Emerald Damselfly** *Lestes sponsa* of 2018, with a dozen individuals seen at Whaness pool in Hoy on the 2nd. Also, on this day, I gave a talk about Orkney's dragons and damsels to the ladies of the St Andrews SWI. Mid-month saw the flight season in full swing, with a **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** *Cordulegaster boltonii* being seen by Lee Shields on the 17th at the Dwarfie Stane car park in Hoy. Unfortunately, this was to be the only local sighting of this strikingly-marked dragonfly for 2018. On the same day, but further south in Hoy, I found the first **Black Darters** *Sympetrum danae* making an appearance on Wee Fea, whilst conducting a recce for the OFC walk for National Dragonfly Week. With seven of our eight resident species now on the wing, it was hoped that someone might spot a **Four-spotted Chaser** *Libellula quadrimaculata* somewhere in the Rackwick valley but, sadly, no records were forthcoming.

National Dragonfly Week commenced on the 21st July and, as mentioned above, the Club put on a short walk from Lyness up to the southern flanks of Wee Fea. Eight folk turned out on a grey morning with hopes of seeing better weather and plenty of Odonata. Thankfully, the sun did put in an appearance, along with Common Hawkers and Black Darters, as

well as Large Red, Blue-tailed, Common Blue and Emerald Damselflies. Pleasingly, the Wee Fea pools also produced six exuviae, the shed larval skins, of Common Hawker, positive proof of breeding on site. Less happily, the pools here, like many that Summer, were almost dried up. There will surely be some knock-on effects from this, with larvae which were not yet full grown likely to have been particularly affected. Before July was over, there was one more pleasant surprise to come. At a quarry pool in Hoxa, South Ronaldsay, a male Emerald Damselfly was discovered by Megan Taylor. Whilst the island already has a small colony of Emerald Damselflies at Gairy Lochs, this new sighting was at the diametrically opposite end of South Ronaldsay. Orkney's other Emeralds were all in Hoy, with none having been found in South Walls or Flotta, so the question was where had the new sighting come from?

In order to try and answer this conundrum, the Field Club went to Flotta at the beginning of August. The pools at Stanger Head were the target water bodies and, happily, the first damselfly seen was an Emerald, again courtesy of Megan Taylor. Ten individuals were found altogether, with several pairs mating, so not only is this a new species for the island, hopefully this is a new breeding site for Emerald Damselflies. It is probably impossible to gauge whether the Hoxa individual and the Flotta and Gairy Loch colonies are part of the species' expansion from Hoy, rather than a new influx from mainland Scotland, but I think it is more likely to be the former.

Also in August, the last Common Blue Damselfly of the season was seen by Brian Ribbands at Loomi Shuns, near Melsetter in Hoy on the 10th. Brian also recorded the last Large Red Damselfly of 2018, on the 23rd, at Queenamidda in Rendall.

By the beginning of September, all too soon, the remaining four species on the wing were all reaching their final flings. On the 2nd, the final Emerald Damselflies were seen by Mary Harris, near the Rackwick Road bridge in Hoy. One of these was an egg-laying female, hopefully ensuring that the species will continue at the site into 2019. Also on the 2nd, I saw the last Blue-tailed Damselfly at Stromness reservoir. Back at Queenamidda, Brian Ribbands had the final Common Hawker of the year on the 5th, whilst the last Black Darter was seen by Nancy Charlton at Berstane in Kirkwall on the 15th.

So, as mentioned earlier, 2018 left us with an odonatological mystery, not just in Orkney but throughout the United Kingdom. Would the hot weather which brought very little rain and dried up so many breeding pools effect the future generations of dragonflies and damselflies? Whilst some species have quite short life cycles of just a year (all our damselflies and the Black Darter), the other dragonflies can take several years before they emerge from their aquatic stage as a flying insect. It remains to be seen if our dragons can bounce back from these weather-related problems.

Many thanks to all contributors who submitted records for 2018:

David Aiton, Helen Aiton, Trish Avis, Nancy Charlton, John Crossley, Simon Davies, Alastair Forsyth, Robert Foubister, Anne Gascoigne, Christine Hall, Mary Harris, Chris Jex, Keith Johnson, Lee Johnson, Alan Leitch, Dick Matson, Kim McEwen, Russell Neave, Alan Nelson, Brian Ribbands, Lee Shields, Ian Smith, Dawn Stanger, Jenny Taylor, Lindsey Taylor, Megan Taylor, Sian Thomas, Ally Thomson, Rachel Thomson, Barbara Todd, Graeme Walker and Alison Woodbridge.



Common Hawker exuviae found in pools on Wee Fea, Hoy (Graeme Walker)



A male Common Hawker (Robert Foubister)



A male Emerald Damselfly (Robert Foubister)



Figure 1: A map of Orkney records for 2018. Source iRecord

Island	Species									
	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	<i>Pyrrosoma nymphula</i>	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	<i>Aeshna juncea</i>	<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	<i>Sympetrum danae</i>		
	Emerald Damselfly	Large Red Damselfly	Common Blue Damselfly	Blue-tailed Damselfly	Common Hawker	Golden-ringed Dragonfly	Four-spotted Chaser	Black Darter		
Hoy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
East Mainland		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Flotta	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
South Ronaldsay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
West Mainland		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Rousay		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Sanday			✓	✓	✓					
Shapinsay		✓		✓	✓					
Burray		✓		✓						
Eday				✓						
Egilsay			✓	✓						
Graemsay			✓	✓						
Westray			✓	✓						
North Ronaldsay				✓						
Papa Stronsay				✓						
Papa Westray			✓							
South Walls				✓						
Stronsay										
Wyre										

Table 1: Cumulative island/species table up to 2018

Beetle Report 2018

Brian Ribbands

84 records of 31 species were reported in 2018. This is fewer records and fewer species than in 2017, and more specimens than usual are still awaiting identification.

One new species has been added to the Orkney list in 2018. Another new species was found among a large quantity of pitfall trap samples from 2016. Many of these have still to be identified. One species recorded in 2017 is now considered doubtful.

Hydroporus planus was found in a blue water tray in Harray. This small water beetle is likely to have been overlooked in the past. Two previous records, both in 2011.

Elaphrus riparius was found again in Rendall, where it was first found in 2009. It was also found in Egilsay, which becomes its third Orkney site. It may be a recent arrival in Orkney.

Bembidion bruxellense. First Orkney record. Found in a garden in Harray. It may have been overlooked or it could be a recent arrival here.

Black snail beetle *Silpha atrata*. All previous Orkney records seem to be the red form of this but 2 of the black form were found in 2018.

Dor beetle *Geotrupes stercorarius*. Two records in Sanday, one at a site where it was found in 2015 so most likely breeding there. Also remains of one were found in an owl pellet in Rousay.

Cantharis nigricans was new for Orkney in Tankerness and South Ronaldsay in 2015. It was recorded again in the same garden in Burray as in 2017, where it seems to be resident.

Harlequin ladybird *Harmonia axyridis*. One photographed near Kirkwall was the first Orkney record since 2015. All records of this and the next species are likely to be accidental importations.

Seven-spot ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata*. One photographed in a house in Finstown was the first Orkney record since 2009.

Salpingus(Rhinosimus) ruficollis. One at Binscarth, Firth in November was the third Orkney record, the others being at Happy Valley, Stenness in 2011 and Melsetter, Hoy in 1983.

Chrysolina latecincta (*C. intermedia*) was recorded in February, April and August in the usual area near Yesnaby; this nationally rare species still seems to be thriving there.

Hydrothassa marginella. One was found among pitfall trap samples from Egilsay collected in 2016, many of which are still to be identified. This is the first Orkney record but it has been recorded in Shetland so is not unexpected. It feeds on buttercups.

Hydrothassa hannoveriana. Found in early June 2018 at the same place in Hoy where one was photographed in 2017 so it seems to be resident there. A few days later another was found at the Ring of Brodgar. One was sent to the leading British authority on leaf beetles

who confirmed the identification. It feeds on marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* and causes distinctive feeding damage to the flowers. There are no other British records north of the Solway and it is very localised in England so its presence in Orkney is remarkable. First recorded near Stromness in the 1950s, so now known from 3 Orkney sites.

Prasocuris phellandrii. The record of this in 2017 is now considered doubtful. The finder first identified it as *Hydrothassa hannoveriana* and now that species has been found at Brodgar which suggests this was correct. There is very little of the food plant there, so it seems unlikely there is enough to support both species. Details of a post-1980 record in the Evie area cannot be traced.

Heather beetle *Lochmaea suturalis*. Recorded in Rendall and Rousay in April and May, then in Hoy in September. There was only one record in 2017 so it may have increased in 2018.

Many thanks to all contributors:

C J & J Booth, L Campbell, N Charlton, A Forsyth, B Hamill, M Russell, L Shields, A Weston. Apologies to anyone missed out.

Species list for 2018	Records		Records
<i>Hydroporus planus</i>	1	<i>Staphylinus erythropterus</i>	6
<i>Agabus bipustulatus</i>	1	<i>Ocypus olens</i>	2
<i>Carabus arvensis</i>	1	<i>Geotrupes stercorarius</i>	3
<i>Carabus problematicus</i>	3	<i>Hypnoidus riparius</i>	1
<i>Cychrus caraboides</i>	4	<i>Cantharis nigricans</i>	1
<i>Cicindela campestris</i>	2	<i>Harmonia axyridis</i>	1
<i>Loricera pilicornis</i>	1	<i>Coccinella septempunctata</i>	1
<i>Elaphrus riparius</i>	4	<i>Salpingus ruficollis</i>	1
<i>Bembidion bruxellense</i>	1	<i>Chrysolina latecincta</i>	4
<i>Pterostichus niger</i>	7	<i>Chrysolina staphylaea</i>	1
<i>Pterostichus rhaeticus</i>	1	<i>Gastrophysa viridula</i>	9
<i>Helophorus flavipes</i>	1	<i>Hydrothassa hannoveriana</i>	2
<i>Silpha atrata</i>	3	<i>Lochmaea suturalis</i>	6
<i>Nicrophorus humator</i>	1	<i>Galeruca tanaceti</i>	2
<i>Nicrophorus investigator</i>	11	<i>Otiiorhynchus sulcatus</i>	1



Hydrothassa hanoveriana (Brian Ribbands)

Bembidion bruxellense (Alastair Forsyth)



Bees, Wasps and Ants Report 2018

John Crossley

The splendid summer produced a wealth of records, including of some rarer species, and, to crown it all, a species of solitary bee new to Orkney found in Burray. This was the Chocolate or Hawthorn Mining Bee *Andrena scotica*. This is described in another article in this journal by the finder, Barrie Hamill. There were 248 records of all species, altogether, most of these being from Mainland and inner isles. The outer North Isles escaped much attention.

Bumblebees

Great Yellow Bumblebee *Bombus distinguendus* (Widespread but generally uncommon. Nationally Notable, UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species, Scottish Biodiversity List)

There were 64 records comprising at least 530 individuals. There were some unusually high counts, including 46 at the Brodgar RSPB Reserve HY2913, on 23 July and 32 there on 10 Aug; 80 at Marwick Head, Birsay HY227252 on 10 Aug; 68 at Onziebust RSPB Reserve, Egilsay HY42 on 13-15 Aug; and 199 on Copinsay RSPB Reserve on 19 Aug. Except for Marwick Head these are summaries of RSPB surveyors' records that exist in greater detail with regard to queens, workers and males found in a number of separate recording compartments. As well as these there were records from Evie, Harray, Holm, Hoy, Kirkwall, Orphir, Papa Westray, Rendall, Sanday, Sandwick, Shapinsay, South Ronaldsay, South Walls and St Andrews. The first queens of the year were recorded at Cuppar, Evie HY346265 on 8 and 17 May. Small numbers were seen there and elsewhere until late July, after which numbers greatly increased before falling away in late August. This is the normal pattern of seasonal occurrence. The last was seen, again at Cuppar, on 15 Sept.

Moss Carder Bee *B. muscorum* (Widespread but generally uncommon, except very locally common in North Isles. UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species, Scottish Biodiversity List)

There were 19 records of one to four individuals from Birsay, Evie, Deerness, Holm, Hoy, Kirkwall, Rousay, Sanday, Shapinsay, South Ronaldsay, St Andrews and St Ola. The first was at Saviskaill, Rousay HY400344 on 14 May (during a Nature Festival bicycle tour of the island); the last was at Clu Ber, Deerness HY59420812 on 6 Oct (during an OFC fungus-spotting outing). It is time that this increasingly scarce species becomes the subject of more recording effort – but it is not as easy to identify as the Great Yellow!

Common Carder Bee *B. pascuorum* (Widespread and common)

There were 20 records of one to 10 individuals between 18 April and 10 Oct.

Unidentified **Carder Bee** *B. muscorum/pascuorum*

There were some very high counts during RSPB reserve surveys, notably of 2240 on Copinsay on 19 Aug and 1383 at Onziebust Reserve from 7 to 15 Aug.

Buff-tailed Bumblebee *B. terrestris* (Widespread and locally common)

There were 23 records of one to three individuals between 18 April and 17 Sept. There were several new for 10 km square, reflecting the species' rapid spread in the last few years; these were at Bay of Skail, Sandwick HY21, Saviskaill, Rousay HY43 and Deerness HY50.

White-tailed Bumblebee *B. lucorum* agg. (Widespread and common)

There were 23 records of one to three individuals between 18 April and 17 Sept.

Cryptic Bumblebee *B. cryptarum* (almost certainly widespread and common, as part of the *B. lucorum* aggregate)

As usual, there were few records of this hard-to-identify species. These were from Sandwick, South Ronaldsay and Stenness.

Garden Bumblebee *B. hortorum* (Widespread and common)

There were 27 records of between one and 600 individuals between 21 April and 15 Oct. The 600 were at North Flaws, South Ronaldsay on 2 Aug; there were also high counts from RSPB Reserves in Copinsay, Egilsay and Mill Dam, Shapinsay in July and August.

Heath Bumblebee *B. jonellus* (Widespread and locally common)

Recorded between 24 April (an unusually early date for this species) and 21 August, the highest count being 25 on Mel Fea, Hoy on 11 Aug.

Gypsy Cuckoo Bee *B. bohemicus* (Widespread but generally uncommon)

Just two reports of single individuals this year, at Queenamidda, Rendall on 15 June and Kirk Burn, Hoy on 23 Aug.

Barbut's Cuckoo Bee *B. barbutellus* (Rare, also rare in Scotland)

One at Kirk Burn, Hoy, HY23420455 on 23 Aug, new for 10 km sq.

Social wasps

Common Wasp *Vespula vulgaris* (Local, can be common)

There were five reports of one to four individuals, from Kirkwall, Stromness and Rendall, between 10 March and 30 Oct.

Norwegian Wasp *Dolichovespula norvegica* (Local)

Just two were recorded, on 3 and 8 Aug, at Queenamidda, Rendall.

Tree Wasp *D. sylvestris* (Widespread, locally common)

There were seven records, all of singles, between 8 May and 30 Aug, from Kirkwall, Rendall, Rousay and South Ronaldsay.

Hornet *Vespa crabro* (New county record)

A Hornet was found and photographed by Roderick Thorne, on the inside of a window pane in his house in Lady, Sanday, on 29 April. There is circumstantial evidence that it hitched a lift in a car from south shortly before.

Solitary bees and wasps

Clarke's Mining Bee *Andrena clarkella* (Very rare)

A nesting aggregation was found by Alex Cropper near Glen, Rackwick, Hoy, ND20189995, on 20 March. This is the second Orkney record.

Chocolate or Hawthorn Mining Bee Mining Bee *Andrena scotica* (Very rare, new county record)

West Shore, Burray, ND468955, 23 May 2018.

Mason Wasp *Ancistrocerus oviventris* (Widespread but uncommon)

There were seven records between 19 June and 19 Aug, including a count of at least 10 at Frotoft, Rousay and singles at Queenamidda, Rendall.

Mason Wasp *Ancistrocerus scoticus* (Widespread but uncommon)

There were just three records of this species, between 27 May and 27 June, in Burray, Hoy and Rousay. Four recorded at Frotoft, Rousay, HY410280, were the first for the 10 km sq.

Ruby-tailed Wasp *Chrysis ignita* agg. (Widespread but uncommon)

A single wasp was seen in Burray on 27 May.

A Spider-hunting Wasp *Priocnemis parvula* (Local and uncommon)

At least two were present at a known site at Rackwick, Hoy, ND20189995, on 3 June

Ants

A red **Ant** *Myrmica ruginodis* (Widespread and common)

Ants of this species were reported on five occasions between 18 July and 10 Oct, from Firth, Harray, Hoy and Stenness. An unusual sight was a swarm of winged ants (males and queens) at Rosebank, Harray, HY332159, on 2 Aug. There seems to be only one previous report of what must be a frequent event; that was in Birsay in 2008.

Many thanks to all contributors:

Helen Aiton, Trish Avis, Chris Booth, Julian Branscombe, Nancy Charlton, Alex Cropper, Effy Everiss, Alastair Forsyth, Anne Gascoigne, Martin Gray, Barrie Hamill, Kerry Harris, Mary Harris, Barbara Johnson, Lee Johnson, Liz Lea, Alan Leitch, Annie Manson, Andy Mitchell, Brian Ribbands, RSPB, Lee Shields, Bob Simpson, Roderick Thorne and Graeme & Gudula Walker.

Sawfly Report 2018

Jenni Stockan

Eleven species of sawfly were recorded in Orkney during 2018. Notable finds were *Tenthredo balteata* and *T. colon* at Waulkmill Bay, Orphir, in July. The only prior records for both species are from Hoy in the 1980s. *Tenthredo colon* feeds mainly on **Willowherb** *Epilobium spp.* and is predominately a southern species, becoming scarce in northern Britain. *Tenthredo balteata* is widely distributed but poorly recorded and feeds on a wide range of hostplants. *Tenthredo mesomela* is a fairly common species throughout Britain but the last record of it in Orkney was in Hoy in 1986. This year it was found in Burray.

The **Wild Berry Sawfly** *Pontania collactanea* was once again spotted in Papa Westray, close to the previous record on the north side of the island. The spherical galls can be found hanging from the underside of **Creeping Willow** *Salix repens* leaves. This is an easy species to look for and it would be interesting to see whether it occurs at any other sites in Orkney. A new species record for Papa Westray was *Tenthredo arcuata*, which feeds as a larva on **White Clover** *Trifolium repens*. This species was also seen this year in Burray and appears to be common and widespread across, at least, the mainland of Orkney. It has also previously been found in Hoy.



The **Striped Alder Sawfly** *Hemichroa crocea* has been present in Sandwick every year since 2011 and this year was no exception. Deerness was a new location for this species this year, where it was seen in huge numbers. *Nematus ferrugineus* was spotted in Sandwick and Deerness, the latter being a new location for this species. The **Birch** *Betula spp.* feeding *Craesus latipes* was found for only the second time in Orkney, this time in Sandwick.

Other sawflies seen in 2018 were *Dolerus aeneus*, a common and widespread species, which was spotted in Harray and Burray. *Tenthredo atra* was found in Burray and the characteristic larvae of the **Peculiar Alder Sawfly** *Platycampus luridiventris* were found on **Alder** *Alnus glutinosa* at Berstane, Kirkwall.

Thanks to Barrie Hamill, Lee Johnston and Alistair Forsythe for additional records.

Photo: **Wild Berry Sawfly** *Pontania collactanea* gall on Papa Westray (Barrie Hamill)

Butterfly and Moth (Lepidoptera) Report 2018

Sydney Gauld

Seven new species were added to the Orkney list in 2018. Five were recorded in 2018 – *Lyonetia clerkella*, *Prays fraxinella*, **Drinker** *Euthrix potatoria*, **Bordered Beauty** *Epione repandaria* and **Mottled Beauty** *Alcis repandata repandata*; two were added after two specimens were identified from previous years - **Wax Moth** *Galleria mellonella* and **Flounced Chestnut** *Agrochola helvola*.

With the good weather in 2018 the number of records received was up on 2017, with 7674 received in 2018 compared with 4713 in 2017. The number of species was 288.

The following abbreviations are used:

AI - Accidental import; I - Immigrant; R - Resident; R? - Probably a Resident but not proven; RI Resident + Immigrant; U - Status Uncertain; V - Vagrant; V? - Vagrant/Possible Resident.

New to Orkney in 2018

Apple Leaf Miner *Lyonetia clerkella* (R). Recorded from mines found in Rowan leaves 17 September, Hestily, South Ronaldsay (LJ). Apple Leaf Miner is found across the British Isles up to Caithness. The larvae feed in leaf mines of species such as Hawthorn, Birch, Apple, Blackthorn, Whitebeam and Rowan. There can be up to three generations a year mainly between May and October, with the last generation hibernating over the winter.

Ash Bud Moth *Prays fraxinella* (V). One taken by trap 20 July Berstane House, St Ola (NC). Ash Bud Moth is found across the British Isles up to southern Sutherland. The larvae feed on Ash, mining the leaf before moving on to the bark of the twigs. The adult is on the wing from May to October, possibly being double brooded.

Drinker *Euthrix potatoria* (V). One taken by trap 27 June, Sea Cottage, Longhope, Hoy (MH). Drinker is found across the British Isles up to Caithness, where it was first recorded in 2010. The larvae feed on Common Reed, Cock's-foot and other wide-bladed species of grass, with the adult on the wing from late May to July.



Drinker (Mary Harris)



Bordered Beauty

Epione repandaria (V). Two taken by trap, 10 and 12 August, Sea Cottage, Longhope, Hoy (MH). Bordered Beauty is found across southern Britain and more sparsely across Scotland up to Caithness. The larvae feed on Sallow, with the adult on the wing from July to September.

Bordered Beauty (Mary Harris)

Mottled Beauty *Alcis repandata repandata* (V). One taken by trap 13 July, Berstane House, St Ola (NC). Mottled Beauty larvae feed on a wide variety of food plants such as Heather, Birch, Blackthorn, Honeysuckle and many others. The adult is on the wing from June to August.



Mottled Beauty (Nancy Charlton)

Other Species added to the Orkney List

Wax Moth *Galleria mellonella* (AI). One adult found 7 October 2011, Pet Shop, Stromness. The larvae feed on old honeycombs. This moth probably came in with supplies for the pet shop. Wax Moths are found across England with a few records in Scotland.

Flounced Chestnut *Agrochola helvola* (V). One taken by trap 5 July 2014, Cairston Road, Stromness (BS). The larvae feed on Birch, Hawthorn, Sallow, Willow and other deciduous trees. In the north they also feed on Heather. The adult are normally on the wing during September and October.

Other sightings of interest 2018

Cork Moth *Nemapogon cloacella* (V). Two singles taken by trap 25 June and 3 July, Old Nisthouse, Harray (AF). These are the second and third records for Cork Moth. The first was 28 July 2014, Queenamidda, Rendall (BR).

Bird-cherry Ermine *Nemapogon cloacella* (I). Two singles taken by trap 30 July, Berstane House, St Ola, (NC) and 1 August, High Street, Kirkwall (CJB & JB).

Honeysuckle Moth *Ypsolopha dentella* (R). Nine taken by trap: eight between 8 August and 8 September, High Street, Kirkwall (CJB & JB) and one 10 August, Quoyberstane, St Ola (SVG).

Coleophora alticolella (R). One recorded in the field 18 October, Westshore, Burray (BH).

Elachista atricomella (U). One taken by trap 1 September, Old Nisthouse, Harray (AF).

Mompha locupletella (R). One taken by trap 7 July, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Aethes smeathmanniana (U). One taken by trap 13 July, Sea Cottage, Longhope, Hoy (MH). This is the second record for *A. smeathmanniana*; the first was also taken at Sea Cottage, on 28 July 2016.

Epinotia nisella (U). One taken by trap 31 July, Viewforth, Birsay (KF). This is the second record for *E. nisella*, the first record was 1 August 1980, Scorradaie, Orphir R.I.Lorimer.

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* (I). Red Admiral was seen across Orkney between 15 May and 17 October.

Painted Lady *Cynthia cardui* (I). Painted Lady was seen across Orkney between 2 June and 5 September.

The Peacock *Inachis io* (V). 11 records between 27 July and 11 September.

Bee Moth *Aphomia sociella* (R). Four taken by trap: one 4 July, High Street, Kirkwall (CJB & JB), one 6 July, Old Nisthouse, Harray (AF) and two singles 13 and 28 July, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Rusty-dot Pearl *Udea ferrugalis* (I). One seen in the field 25 October, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Udea uliginosalis (R?). Three taken by trap between 3 and 21 August, Iphs, Westray (DB).

Mother of Pearl *Pleuroptya ruralis* (V). One taken by trap 24 August, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Rush Veneer *Nomophila noctuella* (I). Six taken by trap between 28 July and 20 October, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Brown China-mark *Elophila nymphaeata* (V?). Two singles taken by trap on 17 July, High Street, Kirkwall (CJB & JB) and 24 July, Gillbreck, Widewall, South Ronaldsay (LC & NF). One adult was also seen on 18 July, Lyness Museum Pond, Lyness Hoy (MH).

Humming-bird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum* (I). Eight records were received from across Orkney between 2 June and 11 August.

Blood-vein *Timandra comae* (V). One taken by trap 4 August, Gerraquoy Farm, South Ronaldsay (SS & SS).

Oblique Carpet *Orthonama vittata* (U). One taken by trap 10 July, East Thrave, Sanday (RN).

Pine Carpet *Thera fermata* (R). One taken by trap 10 August, Queenamidda, Rendall (BR).

Barred Straw *Eulithis pyraliata* (R?). Five taken by trap: one 11 July, Sea Cottage, Longhope, Hoy (MH), one 16 July, Westshore, Burray (BH), and three between 24 July and 21 August, Gillbreck, Widewall, South Ronaldsay (LC & NF).

White-spotted Pug *Eupithecia tripunctaria* (V). One taken by trap 15 June, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

The Streak *Chesias legatella* (V). One taken by trap 16 October, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Brown Silver-line *Petrophora chlorosata* (V). One taken by trap 21 May, Sea Cottage, Longhope, Hoy, (MH).

Feathered Thorn *Colotois pennaria* (V). Two singles taken by trap 20 and 21 September, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Pale Brindled Beauty *Phigalia pilosaria* (U). 63 seen in the field and taken by trap between 10 January and 18 February, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Peppered Moth *Biston betularia* (V). Five taken by trap: three 2 June, Old Nisthouse, Harray (AF), one 5 July, The Mill, Finstown, Firth (NC), and one 7 July, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Bordered White *Bupalus piniaria* (R). One taken by trap 15 July, Cairston Road, Stromness (BS).

Staw Dot *Rivula sericealis* (V). 15 seen across Orkney, all but one taken by trap. Recorded between 10 June and 10 August.

Dark Spectacle *Abrostola triplasia* (U). Larvae found in garden 4 September, Orphir (SW).

Lempke's Gold Spot *Plusia putnami putnami* (U). Five taken by trap: one 11 July, Sea Cottage, Longhope, Hoy (MH), three between 13 and 21 July, Gerraquoy Farm, South Ronaldsay (SS & SS) and one 23 July, Queenamidda, Rendall (BR).

Knot Grass *Acrionicta rumicis* (R). Two records: one taken by trap 7 June, Sea Cottage, Longhope, Hoy (MH) and a larva seen 5 August, Longhope, South Walls, Hoy (TA).

Mouse Moth *Amphipyra tragopoginis* (U). One taken by trap 3 August, Westshore, Burray (BH).

The Crescent *Celaena leucostigma scotica* (U). One taken by trap 12 August, Sea Cottage, Longhope, Hoy (MH).

Frosted Orange *Gortyna flavago* (V). One taken by trap 9 September, Cairston Road, Stromness (BS).

Bulrush Wainscot *Nonagria typhae* (V). Three taken by trap: one 2 September and two 3 September, Cairston Road, Stromness (BS).

Red-line Quaker *Agrochola lota* (V). One taken by trap 24 September, Cairston Road, Stromness (BS).

Yellow-line Quaker *Agrochola macilenta* (V). One taken by trap 3 October, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Red Sword-grass *Xylena vetusta* (R?). Two records: one seen in the field 22 September, Binscarth, Finstown, Firth (CB) and one taken by trap 15 October, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

The Satellite *Eupsilia transversa* (RI). Two singles taken by trap 19 April and 20 October, Berstane House, St Ola (NC).

Pearly Underwing *Peridroma saucia* (I). One taken by trap 14 July, Sule Skerry (MC, IB).

Heart and Dart *Agrotis exclamatoris* (U). One taken by trap 18 July, Sea Cottage, Longhope, Hoy (MH).

The Gothic *Naenia typical* (R). One taken by trap 2 July, Netherbrough, Harray (NiC).

My thanks to all who sent in records: Mick A'Court, Iain Barr (MC, IB), Trish Avis (TA), C.J. Booth & J. Booth (CJB&JB), Catherine Browne, Debbie Brunton (DB), Jeff Butcher, Lindsay Campbell & Norman Fairbairn (LC & NF), Nancy Charlton (NC), Dr J.H. Clarke, Nick Cooke (NiC), John Crossley, Shirley Ellis, Keith Fairclough (KF), Alastair Forsyth (AF), Anne Gauld, Barrie Hamill (BH), Eilidh Harcus, Kerry Harris, Mary Harris (MH), J.H. Johnson, Lee Johnston (LJ), T. Kennedy, Fiona Morton, Scott Napier, Russell Neave (RN), Brian Ribbands (BR), Sarah Sankey & Sami Sankey (SS&SS), Lee Shields, Bob Simpson (BS), Yvonne Simpson, Peter Slater, David Summers, Eileen Summers, Malcolm Sutherland, Sarah Welburn (SW), Jamie Wild.

'60 years'

Bulletin 4/1967

Seals:

Orkney Field Club has always stressed the difficulty of controlling seal poaching in Orkney as long as a free market for skins operates. Eventually the Club recommended that some sort of control should be placed on the actual sale of skins and by December 1964 had started to make formal and public statements to that effect. No other organisation appears to have made the same suggestion before that date.

In 'Habitat' for August 1967, the Council for Nature outline proposals for a Parliamentary Bill which would include the following clause : "No sealskin shall be sold or exported except by licensed dealers and on production of a licence authorising the killing of the seal".

Although no acknowledgement has been made to Orkney Field Club, members will be gratified to know that at last their proposals have been heeded.

The August copy of 'Habitat' was passed on to the local paper soon after it was issued with a note drawing attention to the proposed clause, but the information was not used, hence this note.

Members were able to co-operate with the staff of N.E.R.C. by carrying out "counts" on the South Ronaldsay colony this autumn.

True Flies Report (not including hoverflies) 2018

Lee Johnson

We were lucky enough to have Ian Andrews, an expert dipterist, visit Orkney in July 2018. He found seven previously unrecorded species whilst here, details of which follow. This demonstrates how under-recorded flies are and that if one takes the time to look, new species can be added to the list.

The **Dance Fly** *Tachydromia arrogans* (*Hybotidae*) is a tiny, slender, black fly with two dark stripes on its wings which can usually be found running around on vegetation rather than flying. A total of 20 were found at The Gloup, Deerness. Also recorded at The Gloup was a female *Loewia phaeoptera* (*Tachinidae*), these flies are thought to be parasitic on centipedes although not much is known about their ecology.

At RSPB Brodgar Ian found 2 male *Spaziphora hydromyzina* (*Scathophagidae*). This is a medium sized, dark grey predatory fly with a yellowish-red face. Also recorded at RSPB Brodgar were females of the **Shore Fly** *Scatella paludum* (*Ephydriidae*) and **Rust Fly** *Loxocera aristata* (*Psilidae*).

At Orphir Ian recorded a male *Helina quadrum* (*Muscidae*), a medium sized greyish fly similar to a house fly, and also a female *Actia crassicornis* (*Tachinidae*) the larvae of which are parasitic on micromoth larvae.



A leaf-mining fly new to Orkney was the **Iris Leaf-miner** *Cerodontha iraeos* (*Agromyzidae*) which was present in August and September at Olav's Wood, Sands of Wright Loch and Grimness, South Ronaldsay and at Wideford Burn (LJ, KB). It was also spotted by Mary Harris on Hoy. The larvae of this fly make linear mines (pictured) in **Yellow Flag Iris** *Iris pseudacorus*. Sometimes several mines can be seen in one leaf and

these can coalesce into one big blotch. This species is widespread and common all over the UK and Europe and is almost certainly under-recorded here in Orkney.

Barrie Hamill turned up an attractive fly new to Orkney at Westshore, Burray in August. *Sphenella marginata* (*Tephritidae*) is a predominately southern species which mines the flowerheads of ragwort and groundsel.

OWIARC ran a leaf mines course in September 2018 with expert Keith Bland. Many leaf mines are caused by fly larvae and Keith managed to find several new Agromyzid species for Orkney during the course (Berstane and Inganess Bay) and in various locations throughout Orkney including the RSPB reserve on Egilsay, Stromness, South Ronaldsay, Kirkwall and Binscarth. *Napomyza lateralis* puparia were recorded in the seed heads of **Sea Mayweed** *Tripleurospermum maritimum*. *Phytomyza evanescens* puparia were noted in the stems of **Meadow Buttercup** *Ranunculus acris* with *Phytomyza ranunculivora* mines in the leaves.

Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris* contained mines of *Phytomyza calthophila*. *Phytomyza diversicornis* puparia were recorded in stems of **Marsh Lousewort** *Pedicularis palustris*. *Phytomyza spinaciae* leaf mines were seen in **Creeping Thistle** *Cirsium arvense*. *Phytomyza obscurella* were recorded in leaves of **Ground Elder** *Aegopodium podagraria*. *Chromatomyia primulae* in leaves of **Primrose** *Primula vulgaris* and finally *Phytomyza varipes* in the seed heads of **Yellow rattle** *Rhinanthus minor*.

Following on from Derek Mayes' find of the non-native **Mediterranean Fruit Fly** *Ceratitis capitata* (Tephritidae) in 2017, further specimens were found by Charlie Taylforth in her house in St Mary's, Holm during November 2018 probably originating in imported goods from the supermarket.

Until this year I had yet to see a specimen of the **Bee Louse** (actually a wingless fly) *Braula coeca* (Braulidae) despite hearing from local beekeepers that it was present in their colonies in Orkney. I requested samples of the scrapings from hive floors to examine for dead specimens and one beekeeper, Helen Aiton (who has two hives on a hillside in Evie) obliged by providing me with a sample. Viewed under the microscope, I noted the presence of a few dead specimens. As there is more than one possible species of *Braula* in the UK, the identification needed to be confirmed by Erica McAlister at the Natural History Museum. They retained the specimen for their collection. The **Bee Louse** has all but been wiped out from the rest of the UK by treatments for the varroa mite in hives but it would appear that as long as Orkney (and possibly other isolated communities such as Colonsay) remain varroa free, treating hives with chemicals will be unnecessary and the bee louse will have a foothold here in Orkney. Photo by Erica McAlister.



The common **Red-Legged Heather Fly** *Bibio pomonae* (Bibionidae) was present again in good numbers this year in various locations (IA, AF, BH, LJ) as was another *Bibionid* the **Fever Fly** *Dilophus febrilis* which was recorded in huge numbers in a mating swarm at Tankerness House Gardens on 23rd May (LJ, BS), also at Burray (BH) and Harray (AF). Females of this species are easily distinguished by their dark wings with pale tips.

Molophilus ater (Limoniidae) was found in a new location in an old hawthorn hedge in Harray during May (AF) after first being recorded in Orkney in 2016 at Hestily. This tiny black fly has reduced but hairy wings with pale halteres. It is common in the north of Scotland and is thought to play an important role in moorland ecosystems.

Six soldierfly species were recorded in 2018. A **Broad Centurian** *Chloromyia formosa* (pictured) was recorded in July at St Margaret's Hope Community Garden (LJ). This is an attractive soldierfly measuring around 9 mm with hairy eyes and a metallic green thorax. The sexes have different-coloured abdomens; the female is blue-green whilst the male is bronze. Adults are often seen feeding on nectar from hogweed flowers. Another soldierfly, the **Long-horned Black Legionnaire** *Beris geniculata* was also recorded at the same location (LJ). This common species has six spines on the scutellum, a dark green metallic thorax and a black abdomen. The **Murky-legged Black Legionnaire** *Beris chalybata* was also recorded in Burray (BH) and South Ronaldsay (LJ) during June.



The **Black-horned Gem** soldierfly, *Microchrysa polita* was recorded at Burray (BH) and in Stromness (BS) in June, and in Kirkwall (LJ) in July. It is a small, green soldierfly lacking spines on the scutellum. As the common name suggests, it has all-black antennae. The very similar **Black Gem** *Microchrysa cyaneiventris* was seen in Harray (AF) and at Berstane (LJ) in June. This species is distinguished from *M. polita* by its mostly orange antennae, black abdomen and shiny, black frons on the female.

The final soldierfly recorded in 2018 was the **Yellow-legged Centurion** *Sargus flavipes* which was seen in July at Burray (BH). Males are green but females are black often with bluish-purple tones and as the common name implies, they usually have yellow legs.

The final soldierfly recorded in 2018 was the **Yellow-legged Centurion** *Sargus flavipes* which was seen in July at Burray (BH). Males are green but females are black often with bluish-purple tones and as the common name implies, they usually have yellow legs.

Thank you to Helen Aiton, Ian Andrews, Keith Bland, Nancy Charlton, Alastair Forsyth, Barrie and Linda Hamill, Mary Harris, Bob Simpson, Charlie Taylforth,

'60 years'

Bulletin 2/1961

Transport

The Orkney Steam Navigation Company makes various sailings which allow more time in the North Isles (up to 48 hrs. in some cases), than the Kirkwall holiday excursions. As a special concession to Orkney Field Club, members may be carried on these trips at the "Round Trip" fare and allowed to sleep on board if necessary. enquiries should be made to the Company's Office 3-4 weeks beforehand as dates and times of sailings are uncertain at present.

Orkney Hoverfly Report 2018

Alastair Forsyth

The county list of hoverflies now stands at 68 species, this includes two species aggregates (where several species are very similar and determination to species is difficult or uncertain) and one species pair (where there is taxonomic uncertainty whether one or two species are involved). Two new species were added to the county list this year, *Dasysyrphus tricinctus* found in a moth trap at Berstane Woods on 29th May by Nancy Charlton was the first. This species is a not unexpected addition to our hoverfly fauna and further sightings are likely in future years. The next day Lee Johnson found *Eupeodes latifasciatus* at Wideford Burn, another expected species but this one is awkward to separate from its much more common relative *Eupeodes corollae*.



Eupeodes latifasciatus (Lee Johnson)

There was a valiant attempt to add yet another species to the list with a very observant recorder finding an egg on dock (*Rumex sp*) at Olav's Wood, South Ronaldsay, and suggesting an identification of *Parasyrphus nigratarsis*. Unfortunately, the identification could not be proven but this nationally scarce species has a northern and western distribution in the UK and is a possible resident here, identification of adults, let alone eggs, is tricky though.

Other notable species recorded during the year included two more records of *Chrysotoxum arcuatum*, first recorded in the county in 2013, again being found at its Rendall stronghold. A series of records of *Sericomyia lappona* from Rousay confirmed this island as its county stronghold, Peerie Water and Trumland in June being the places and time to search. From Burray came a selection of interesting species, including *Dasysyrphus albostrigatus*, first found in the county in 2017 and *Helophilus trivittatus*, first found in the county in 2016. *Epistrophe glossulariae* was again found in Kirkwall, on the same bush where it was first found in 2015. Larvae found in a moth trap in Harray in June were raised and identified as *Syrphus torvus* when they emerged, a species not often recorded due to the difficulty in identifying the species but clearly established in the county.

The other significant feature of the year were the huge numbers of common species found particularly at coastal sites during the summer. The species mix seemed to vary from day to day and site to site but *Episyrphus balteatus*, *Eupeodes corollae* and *Syrphus vitripennis* (confirmed by specimens) were the three main species recorded. On occasion thousands of animals were involved, although actual counts were limited to up to 100+. This phenomenon was observed elsewhere in Scotland, particularly on the east coast.



Episyrphus balteatus (Alastair Forsyth)

If readers are interested in beginning to identify hoverflies there are some very good resources available these days. The field guide, "Britain's Hoverflies" by Stuart Ball and Roger Morris is a very helpful beginners' guide. Signing up to the UK Hoverflies Facebook group will give you an idea of what species are being seen across the UK at any particular time of year and there is help available there to aid identification (but please read the pinned post before you begin to contribute). Our own Orkney Insects Open Forum Facebook group is another site where identification help is available. Almost any digital camera, or even your phone, can be used to take photographs of hoverflies many of which may be identifiable from your photographs.

Fish Report 2018

Chris Booth

Details of some of the more interesting fish reported in 2018 are given below.

Basking Shark *Cetorhinus maximus*

The only reported sighting was that of one off the Old Man of Hoy on 27th May.

Flapper Skate *Dipturus intermedia*

A dead skate was washed ashore at Newark on 23rd March.

Rat fish *Chimaera monstrosa*

One found Papa Westray on 5th March.

Snake Pipefish *Entelurus aequorius*

One found at Dingieshowe, Deerness on 28th March.



Snake Pipefish skeleton (John Crossley)

Greater Pipefish *Syngnathus acus*

One dead at Stywick, Sanday on 17th August.

Blue-fin tuna *Thunnus thynnus*

A freshly dead Tuna was found by Malcolm Sinclair at Backaskaill Bay, Sanday on 16th December.

It was thought that it might have live stranded. There are two 19th century records of this species and more recently one was washed ashore on Papa Westray in January 1955 and the remains of one was found on Papa Stronsay in March 1964.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the following for information:

S Dodman; T Dodman J Crossley; R Neave; E Neave-Webb; D Sinclair; The Orcadian

Amphibia Report 2018

Chris Booth

Common Toad *Bufo bufo* Rare

Very little information. Two adult toads were seen on the road in Rackwick Hoy on 6th May (CD). There were at least 50 tadpoles in the pond near the bridge Rackwick Hoy on 24th May. Between 3rd July and 17th September.

Five toads were found at Hundasaeter, Birsay ranging in weight from 19gms to 41 gms (AK&JHJ)

Common Frog *Rana temporaria* Fairly common

The first reports for the year were of two adult frogs on the road near Hundasaeter, Birsay on 19th February and of several present in a garden pond at Sunnybank, Deerness on 20th February (PW) while there were two in a pond in Berstane Woods on 11th March (NC). Spawn was noted at Hundasaeter, Birsay on 11th March (AK&JHJ), then the duck pond at Berstane Woods (NC) and Sunnybank, Deerness on 13th March. At Dale, Costa the first spawn was found on 16th March, with spawning then continuing for three days with a total of 105 batches (REM), while on Eday spawn was first seen at Skaill and the school pond on 20th March (MC). Elsewhere spawn was reported from Gyre farm pond, Orphir, the Crafty Kirkwall (ER) on 25th March and the Pickaquoy centre on 4th April (PW).

At Hundasaeter small tadpoles were seen on 8th April and froglets 29th May.

An increase in breeding frogs was noted by Brian Ribbands at Queenamidda, Rendall. Twelve adult frogs were present in the breeding ponds on 25th March and there were 43 batches of spawn in three ponds on 27th March. Two batches of spawn were in the pond near the bridge at the Burn of Blubbersdale on 1st April. On 16th June many froglets were seen close to the main breeding pond at Queenamidda.

Lister Hogarth reported a poor year in South Ronaldsay with the number of frogs spawning being well down. A Heron *Ardea cinerea* took up residence at the Rinibar pond, eating both frogs and spawn while disturbance from work being carried out at McIver's quarry resulted in reduced spawning. The lower ponds at Linnegar did well but a number of pools dried out during the summer. First spawn was found at Quindry on 20th February and recorded at other sites from 14th to 23rd March with a total of 52 batches at Rinibar quarry on 23rd March.

Otter *Lutra lutra* predation was reported at several locations including the Burn of Blubbersdale, Rendall, the Crafty, Kirkwall, Hundasaeter, Birsay, and Skaill, Eday.

In May three frogs were spotted on a wet road at Burness, Sanday and a single frog was in a partly filled bucket of water at Whitemill, Sanday on 11th October (RN).

Acknowledgements

My grateful thanks to the following for their records and help:

N Charlton (NC); M Cockram (MC); E J Crew; C Dowell (CD); J R L Hogarth; AK & JH Johnson (AK&JHJ); R E Matson (REM); R Neave (RN); JB Ribbands; E Ross (ER); and P Wilson (PW).

Mammal Report 2018

Brian Ribbands

The RSPB, SNH and OIC were successful in getting funding from the National Lottery and EU LIFE for the main phase of a stoat eradication project. Trial trapping has been taking place but stoats continue to increase and spread. As part of the public engagement side of the project it is hoped that Orkney voles will be monitored more systematically. So far Orkney voles remain widespread but at low density and rabbits seem to be little affected.

Orkney Vole *Microtus arvalis orcadensis*

A very welcome increase in records this year. Reported from the Mainland parishes of Deerness, Evie, Firth, Harray, Rendall, St Ola, and Tankerness, also in Burray, Sanday and South Ronaldsay. Voles are still widespread and runs were conspicuous in some places after the snow in March. However vole density is now much lower in most of Mainland; this is reflected in a marked reduction in sightings of their most specialised predator, Short-eared Owl. There were a few live vole sightings but as usual most records were of animals found dead or killed by cats.

Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*

A slight increase in records this year. Recorded in Mainland (Evie, Harray and Rendall), Burray, Papa Westray, Sanday, and South Ronaldsay. Most were cat kills or mice trapped in houses, but there were a few live sightings, including 2 under a bird feeder in February.

House Mouse *Mus domesticus*

12 reports, a small increase. Reported in the Mainland parishes of Harray and Holm, also in Burray, Papa Westray, Sanday and South Ronaldsay. Mostly records of trapped mice.

Common Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

Reported from Mainland (Holm, Orphir, Rendall and St Ola), also Burray, Sanday and South Ronaldsay. Very under-recorded. Again no conclusive evidence of rats was found on Swona.

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Reported from most Mainland parishes, also in Flotta, Gairsay, Hoy, Papa Westray, Rousay, Sanday, South Ronaldsay and Swona. Myxomatosis was only noted in one rabbit in Sandwick in March. Rabbits were noted as much reduced in Birsay and Harray early in the year but seem to have increased later, recovering from myxomatosis the previous year. Black rabbits were reported from Birsay, Deerness, Flotta (particularly around the plantation) and Sanday. Stoats seem to have made very little if any difference to rabbit numbers so far.

Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*

Recorded in almost all Mainland parishes and a big increase in records. Largest group was eight in Harray in March, chasing and boxing. Recorded in every month but as usual most in the first half of the year. Mating was seen in July so later breeding may have occurred.

Mountain Hare *Lepus timidus*

Confined to Hoy. Largest counts were 32 on Ward Hill in June and 10 on Mel Fea in August. Seven road casualties were counted between Moaness and Rackwick in March after the cold spell. One at Loomishun near Melsetter in August was near the southern limit of their range, where they are rarely recorded.

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

75 records is an increase and coverage was much better, with records from most Mainland parishes, also from Burray, Eday, Egilsay, Hoy and Sanday. Recorded in every month except January, though few before May. Two were reported attracted to cat food, one frequently from October to the year end and into 2019. 47 records were of dead animals, one on the shore, the others all on roads.

Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus*

16 records, well up on last year. Widespread in Mainland from Birsay to Deerness, also recorded in Burray, Hoy and South Ronaldsay. As usual most were found dead but there were at least four live sightings. One was seen eating the corpse of a dead shrew.

Otter *Lutra lutra*

42 records is slightly up on last year. Reported from most mainland parishes and from Burray, Egilsay, Hoy, Papa Westray, Rousay, Sanday and South Ronaldsay. Recorded in every month except September, most in winter. Eight were found dead, six of these on roads (five road casualties in each of two previous years and nine in 2015). 12 records were of spraints or tracks. Most sightings were of one or two, but there was a record of five in Rousay and as in previous years, three at Brig o' Waithe in December. The 2017 report from Swona now seems doubtful.

Stoat *Mustela erminea*

The number of reports has increased to 1,486 in 2018, the rate of increase seems to have slowed. The latest distribution map shows further infilling in the north of West Mainland, also in South Ronaldsay, but there seem to be gaps appearing in Orphir and around Wideford Hill. This was the area where stoats first appeared, possibly they have run short of food there and moved out or it may be due to trial trapping in this area, or most likely a combination of both. There were no further Hoy records. At the time of writing the number trapped is not available.

Common/Harbour Seal *Phoca vitulina*

Largest haul-outs recorded were 47 at Birsay (in April), 21 Stromness inner holm, 20 Gairsay and 17 at a site in Sanday. Smaller haulouts were recorded at other Sanday sites and in the Loch of Stenness.

Three were reported dead, two pups in July and one of unknown age in February. Some of 18 unidentified dead seals may also have been this species but only one was outwith the usual months for finding grey seals dead. That one was in Orphir in May.

Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*

Pup counts from Burwick to Green Head on the west side of South Ronaldsay, were 60 on 27 October and 74 there on 12th November. The same day there were 270 further north, from Barth Head to Hoston Head. On the east side there were 114 from Windwick south to Lay Taing on 11 November. On 8 November there were 257 pups counted on Gairsay and 277 on Sweyn Holm. 46 were counted on Holms of Spurness, Sanday, on 27 October and 68 there on 31st with another 11 on Spurness. At least 300 were still on Swona on 5 December, though by that date many are likely to have left. Elsewhere the largest haul-outs reported were 70 Vasa Skerry, Shapinsay and 50+ Start Point, Sanday, both on 23 September.

116 were reported dead, many more than in the previous year, 14 in January and February,

one in April, then four in August, one in September, three in October and 93 in November and December. 30 were pups, 39 juveniles, 17 adults, the other 30 of unknown age. 18 (none definitely adult) were recorded as possible grey seal predation ('corkscrew' injury). Most of the 18 unidentified dead seals are also likely to have been this species.

Walrus *Odobenus rosmarus*

A male was on North Ronaldsay briefly on 8 March and Sunday the next day, staying overnight and leaving early on 10 March. The last previous Orkney record was North Ronaldsay on 3 March 2013 and before that Eynhallow in 1986.



Cattle *Bos taurus*

On Swona 16 were counted in April and 18 in December, including 2 bulls and 4 calves. This is down from 26 in 2017; the others died during the previous very wet and cold winter.

Many thanks to the following contributors of records:

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'60 years'

Bulletin 3/1961

As agreed, the Eynhallow Fulmar Research Group supplied rings and the Club's ringing party carried out a more ambitious programme than they did last year, ringing 251 young Fulmars and 105 young Cormorants, and trying out new climbing and catching techniques with success. Dr. George Dunnet is pleased with this work which he hopes will be continued.

Bat Report 2018

Tim Dean

The Bat Group undertook 31 watches during the period from 7th March to 16th October; we drew 'blanks' i.e. no bats on at least eight occasions which included both the first and last dates mentioned above.

Drawing blanks is down to a variety of reasons. It's fairly obvious that we were obviously 'too keen' on those first and last dates but our other six blanks relate to three visits to an old stamping ground (Stromness) and three visits to a new venue in Kirkwall. In fact, Stromness was largely disappointing; it has been a regular site for many years, albeit small numbers of Common Pipistrelles. However, in 2018, despite visiting on four occasions, we had just a single sighting in August. Visits to the new site in Kirkwall came about following the observation of up to five 'bats' on 3rd July. The bat group followed this up with a further three visits in July, August and September but again drew a big fat zero - the enigma that is Kirkwall continues.

Bat records were received from 9th January through to 2nd December 2018 involving a minimum of 104 bat 'sightings' – 100 of which were considered to be Common Pipistrelles; the remaining four sightings were of an unspecified individual and three Nathusius' Pipistrelles – more of this to follow. For comparison's sake, the figures for 2017 in which the bat group undertook 41 watches between 30th March and 9th October, also realised a minimum of 104 bat 'sightings'. The year started off in early January with an unspecified bat flying around Blanster House in South Ronaldsay and ended with the detection of a Nathusius' Pipistrelle at Braefoot in Shapinsay in early December.

Bats by month

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
records	1	0	1	5	4	4	5	4	2	6	2	1	35
bat 'sightings'	1	0	1	12	12	17	26	16	3	13	2	1	104

Records were received from the following parishes and islands: Evie, Firth, Holm, Hoy, St Ola, Shapinsay, South Ronaldsay and Stromness. As to be expected and as in previous years, the parish of Firth and the island of Hoy were the county's Common Pipistrelle hotspots. The largest count on Hoy occurred on 15th July when 14 were recorded. Firth's highest total was of six on 12th and 31st August.

Bats by parish and island

	Evie	Firth	Holm	Hoy	St Ola	Shapinsay	South Ronaldsay	Stromness	Total
records	1	12	1	13	2	4	1	1	35
bat 'sightings'	1	34	1	58	6	1	1	2	104

Shapinsay, in particular its built heritage and woodlands at Balfour, has long been thought of as deserving of more attention for bat survey work. The island's potential was highlighted in 2018 by the presence of either one or two Nathusius' Pipistrelles in the autumn. The first was found on the ground at Breckmyres in the late afternoon of 28th October; it was retrieved and placed in the roof of an outhouse and not seen the following day – hopefully it had flown. The second sighting was at Braefoot on 3rd November and most likely it was this individual that was seen again on 15th November and 2nd December. The use of a bat detector on that December date determined its veracity as a Nathusius' Pipistrelle calling at 39 kHz. The identification of the Breckmyres' bat as a Nathusius' Pipistrelle was judged by a single image which highlighted the bat's grey shaggy coat, a strong indication of its identity.



And this, or these, was/were not the only Nathusius' Pipistrelle/s seen in the county. On 20th October, at Ocklester in Holm, a small bat was found roosting behind a door in a shed. Photographs were taken on the day but it was not seen subsequently. I suppose that in theory, these three records could all relate to just the one bat; but then again, the records could relate to three bats. Facebook does have many uses, not least of which is seeking opinion and expertise from those at the coal face. The image of the Ocklester bat was presented to the Facebook group 'UK Bat workers' and its identification was confirmed by a number of experienced bat-workers by virtue of its striking light belly fur and longer grey hair on its back.

Nathusius' Pipistrelle, 28th October 2018 – Breckmyres, Shapinsay



Nathusius' Pipistrelle, 20th October 2018 – Ocklester, Holm

The status of Nathusius' Pipistrelle in the UK has changed considerably over the last twenty years. Being so similar to the other pipistrelles, it's spent much of its life being overlooked. To quote the Bat Conservation Trust, '*Nathusius Pipistrelle was first recorded in Shetland in 1940. It was initially regarded as a vagrant, but its status was upgraded to winter visiting migrant as records accumulated, and since the 1990s it has been known to breed in the UK. A small number of maternity colonies are known both in England and Northern Ireland*'.....'*In continental Europe, Nathusius' Pipistrelles migrate southwest across Europe in late autumn and winter before returning to eastern Europe the following spring. In the UK it appears that a small summer breeding population is supplemented by migratory individuals during the winter*'.

This changed status has brought with it increased familiarity. Twenty years ago, the identification of Nathusius' Pipistrelle was considered almost impossible unless you were able to look at its dentition which in itself is almost impossible, unless it is moribund or worse. Failing that you could resort to the tried and tested theorem of measuring the length of the fifth digit from wrist to tip and divide by the forearm length. Of course, with the use of bat detectors they can be identified in the field (calling at between 36 and 40 kHz) but nowadays, with this accumulated familiarity and experience, it is possible for Nathusius' Pipistrelles to be identified at rest.

Orkney's first record was of a live individual (which died a couple of days later) found on South Ronaldsay on 12th June 1995. The second record, this one from North Ronaldsay, was of a dead animal in June 2002 and was followed by a further two dead animals found in Burray and Sanday in the Septembers of 2006 and 2010. Intriguingly, a recording of a Nathusius' Pipistrelle was made in Evie five days after the Sanday specimen was discovered. Orkney's sixth record refers to a moribund individual that was found on Eday in late March 2014. Since then, there have been the seventh and eighth Orkney records - a live individual on Auskerry in August 2015 and a dead specimen from Copinsay in December 2015. And now we have a further three to add to this ever-enlarging list. Be prepared for more; though inconclusive, two members of the bat group had a strong inkling that their bat detectors picked up the call of a Nathusius' Pipistrelle in Finstown in May 2018.

The RSPB organised a bat watch in Finstown for 28th September – nine children and eight adults were treated to a performance from the village's resident bats. Such was the interest for this event that it was followed up on two later dates; on 5th October, seven each of children and adults and on 6th October by 12 children and eight adults. On both nights the bats put on a fine display feeding and flitting over the heads of the youngsters and slightly oldsters alike.

There is always room for more observers and insomniacs are welcome to join the bat group on its watches; please contact Tim Dean timdean4@hotmail.com

My grateful thanks to everyone who has contributed records and advice including Bea Ayling, Pauline Barber, Chris Booth, Lindsay Campbell, Nancy Charlton, Rebecca Drever, Effy Everiss, Fiona Gray, Mike Gray, Elspeth Groat, Jerry Herman, Eilidh Marcus, Paul Hollinrake, Malcolm Macrae, Susan Kenyon, Andy Mitchell, Mervyn Rendall, Brian Ribbands, Malcolm Russell, Shona Strange, Lindsay Taylor, Roger Whitworth, Sue Whitworth. Apologies to anyone I may have missed.

Effy Everiss

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Effy Everiss who died on the 13th of February 2019. Effy was one of life's true characters whose passion and commitment to studying the flora and fauna of Orkney shone through in conversation.

She was an active member of the Field Club, and a committee member for a time. In recent years she was a great advocate for the bats we have in Orkney and formed a group to study them. Effy was knowledgeable in other fields too, notably botany, and was a leader of the U3A botany group. She contributed several thousand plant records to the Orkney database and became the go-to person for identifying aquatic plants, a notoriously difficult group. Before she took up bats she was never happier than when pottering along a loch shore, recording pondweeds, water starworts and stone-worts. The Hoy hills were another love of hers.



Effy came to live in Orkney in 1979, first staying at Garson Farm near Stromness, then moving to Graemsay during the 1980s before settling at Rosebank in Harray.

The work she did on bats was ground-breaking: little was known about them before she took up their study. Without fail she would be out every Friday evening searching for bat roosts with volunteers, working out where populations were feeding and recording their movements between different sites. Her enthusiasm and diligence has greatly increased awareness of bats in Orkney. Effy was always keen to pass on her wealth of knowledge - at public events she inspired adults and children alike with a glimpse into the nocturnal world and Orkney's bats.

LT & JC

Photo thanks to Bob Tateson

Whale, Dolphin and Porpoise Report 2018

Chris Booth

During 2018 thirteen species of cetaceans were reported, either alive or dead. The more unusual species included two Northern Bottlenose whales, a Cuvier's whale and a Striped Dolphin, while Killer whales and Risso's dolphins were present in good numbers.

Humpback whale *Megaptera novaeangliae* Rare

Three were seen in Scapa Flow on 3rd January, moving west between the Barrel of Butter and Flotta.

Minke whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* Common

Fewer reports than usual. One was seen off Cava on 19th April. Then in July there were singles off Westray on 14th and the Gloop, Deerness on 15th. The only August report was of one seen from the Pentland Venture close to Burwick, South Ronaldsay on 30th. Singles were seen from North Ronaldsay on 3rd and 21st September while one was near No.4 Barrier on 4th October.

Stranding: one stranded on Graemsay between the Old Kirk and Gorn on 7th October; it was about five metres in length.

Northern Bottlenose whale *Hyperoodon ampullatus* Very rare

There were two strandings of single whales: Costa, Evie on 9th October and Bay of Tafts, Westray on 18th October. The only other strandings of this species in recent years are of one in 1995 and two in 2001.

Cuvier's beaked whale *Ziphius cavirostris* Very rare

Stranding: a rather decomposed whale stranded at the Choin, Marwick on 16th February; it was about six metres in length. This is the eighth recorded stranding of this species in Orkney.

Harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* Common

Well distributed around the islands. The majority of reports were of 1 to 5 animals but ten were seen off the Brough of Deerness on 20th July and a large gathering was noted in Longhope Bay on 28th October.

Strandings: singles at Mill Bay, Stronsay 3rd January; Cantick Head 3rd April; West side, Birsay 27th July; Bay of Sandoyne, Holm 29th August.

Short-beaked Common dolphin *Delphinus delphis* Uncommon

A pod of four was present in the Bay of Firth for several days from 22nd December.

Striped dolphin *Stenella coeruleoalba* Rare

One stranded alive on Sanday on 30th December and was re-floated. Length 1.8 metres.

Bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* Rare

There was a sighting of three off the Brough of Birsay on 27th May.

Atlantic White-sided dolphin *Lagenorhynchus acutus* Uncommon

Between 10 and 15 were reported 1.5 miles east of Lambness, Stronsay on 27th August.

Stranding: one Bay of Creekland, Hoy on 25th February.

White-beaked dolphin *Lagenorhynchus albirostris* Formerly common, now uncommon
Five were seen in the Stromness Harbour area on 25th and 26th July.

Stranding: a freshly dead dolphin stranded on Evie beach on 25th August.

Killer whale *Orcinus orca* Common April to July, uncommon at other times

In January five to six were seen in Kirkwall Bay on 23rd. Then no more reports until April when four were seen from Yesnaby on 11th, a pod was close to Auskerry on 27th and three males were in Scapa Bay area on 29th and remained there until at least the 9th May. One was seen eating a seal in Echnaloch Bay on 6th May.

A pod of five, including three juveniles were in Skaill Bay, Sandwick on 7th May and probably the same group were off Marwick head on 8th May. Other May reports were two west side of Papa Westray on 15th, eight North Ronaldsay on 18th, two in the Pentland Firth on 21st, two between Swona and South Ronaldsay on 23rd, five (1 juvenile) were in Scapa Flow on 24th and a similar group in Hoy Sound on 27th.

June records were three off Mull Head, Papa Westray on 6th, one was seen from Marwick Head then the west side of Mainland on 9th and two were in Scapa Flow on 11th. July sightings were two off Eday on 2nd, four off the Whalebone, Birsay on 4th, two off Burwick, South Ronaldsay on 8th and one there on 9th and 11th. At least five were off Stromness on 12th, when one was seen eating Eider ducklings, also present on 13th. During the second week of July up to seven were seen between Skaill and Marwick Head. On 25th there were six off Fowl Craig Papa Westray and a similar number off Westray on 26th. The only August report was of a pod between Swona and Switha on 4th. There was a sighting of five from North Ronaldsay on 2nd December and the last report for the year was of four (1 male, 1 female, a calf and 1 other), off the east side of South Ronaldsay on 29th and 30th December.



Killer Whale (Robbie Stanger)

Long-finned Pilot whale *Globicephala melas* Formerly common, now uncommon

The only report was of a pod seen northeast of Cava heading towards Stromness on 22nd March.

Risso's dolphin *Grampus griseus* Common

The first report was of seven off Yesnaby on 31st March and on about the same date there were 20 off Noup Head, Westray. In April four were off Marwick Head on 21st and in May a pod was seen off Yesnaby on 3rd, two were on the west side of No.2 Barrier on 24th and a pod off Evie on 28th. The only June sightings were on 10th with eight off Noup Head and 15 off North Ronaldsay. In July four were seen off North Ronaldsay on 8th and on 17th 10 to 20 were seen regularly, with sometimes as many as 50, about 30 miles west of Westray while between 15th and 25th there were several sightings from Noup Head with a maximum count of at least ten on 25th. Up to 30 were sighted North east of Papa Westray on 3rd August, while two were seen off Marwick and four off North Ronaldsay on 4th August and two off Cantick Head on 15th August. On 26th August there were five off North Ronaldsay and 20 were watched from the West Mainland heading north while five were seen from the Brough of Birsay on 27th August and a pod was reported off Swona on 30th August. September sightings included five off North Ronaldsay on 2nd, eight in Windwick Bay, South Ronaldsay and six North Ronaldsay on 3rd. There were five off North Ronaldsay on 9th and at least six in Weyland Bay on 13th. Further reports in the month were from North Ronaldsay with four on 17th and ten on 23rd. In October there was a pod off Yesnaby on 9th, two Braeswick, Sanday on 16th. The only November sighting was of seven Bay of Holland, Stronsay on 27th. Then in December three were in the Bay of Holland, Stronsay on 10th and eight off Mull Head, Papa Westray on 22nd. Stranding: one Neil's Helly, Papa Westray on 7th June, length three metres.

Unidentified cetaceans

The following sighting was reported where identification could not be made with absolute certainty: one large dolphin/Minke whale off Calf of Eday on 17th July.

Acknowledgements

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S. Dodman; T. Dodman; H. Hadley; J. Hinchliffe; S. Lawrence; E. Neave-Webb; R. Neave; North Ronaldsay Bird Observatory; D Roche; Steve, Sarah and Sami Sankey; A Upton; H. Weaver; F.van Wijk; A Woodbridge.

Records were also obtained from Facebook and The Orcadian.

Orkney Recorders 2019

(Please see second half of table for contact information)

County Recorders can arrange species identification, either through their own knowledge or by access to the expertise of others; they feed information into local and national recording schemes; and they maintain Definitive Lists. A number of the latter are now available on the Field Club website, <http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/FIELDCLUB/index.asp>. As the Reports in the Bulletin demonstrate, appropriate records of sightings are always welcome.

Algae – marine (seaweeds)	Prof. Martin Wilkinson
Algae – freshwater	VACANT
Amphibians & reptiles	Chris Booth
Bats	Tim Dean
Beetles	Brian Ribbands
Birds	Russell Neave
Bumblebees, solitary bees, wasps & ants	John Crossley
Butterflies & moths	Sydney Gauld
Caddis flies, mayflies & stoneflies	Ross Andrew*
Centipedes & millipedes	VACANT
Cetaceans (whales, porpoise & dolphins)	Chris Booth
Cnidaria	Penny Martin
Crustacea (marine)	VACANT
Dragonflies & damselflies	Graeme Walker
Earthworms, leeches etc	VACANT
Echinodermata (sea urchins, starfish, etc)	VACANT
Fish	Chris Booth
Fungi	Julian Branscombe
Grasshoppers	Dick Matson
Hoverflies	Alastair Forsyth
Isopods (Woodlice & relatives)	VACANT
Lichens	Roger Davies
Mammals (excepting bats & cetaceans)	Brian Ribbands
Molluscs (marine – sea slugs and cephalopods)	Anne Bignall
Mollusca (marine – shells)	Dr Yvonne Simpson
Molluscs (terrestrial and freshwater – slugs and snails)	VACANT
Mosses, liverworts & hornworts	John Crossley
Sawflies	Jenni Stockan
Slime moulds	Lee Johnson
Spiders, pseudoscorpions & harvestmen	Edward Milner
Stoneworts	VACANT
True bugs (Hemiptera)	Peter Kirby
True flies (Diptera) except hoverflies	Lee Johnson
Vascular plants	John Crossley

* Ross Andrew has moved away but will continue temporarily. A replacement is sought.

Recorder	Address	Phone	E-mail
Ross Andrew	6 Riverbank, Gatehouse of Fleet, Kirkcubrightshire, DG7 2JZ		rosshandrew1@gmail.com
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Martin Wilkinson	19-21 Reid Street, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 7EE	07720 192729	M.Wilkinson@hw.ac.uk

General advice on recording

All records are worthwhile. The essential four pieces of information that must accompany **all** records are:

What	Where	When	Who by
SPECIES NAME (& HOW MANY)	PLACE NAME (GRID REF IF POSSIBLE)	DATE	YOUR NAME

If no County Recorder is listed, please send your records to the OWIARC:

**Orkney Wildlife Information and Records Centre, Orkney Library and Archive,
44 Junction Road, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1AG**

Email: biodiversity@orknevlbrary.org.uk

If you want a reply it would be appreciated if you include a stamped addressed envelope. This is essential when specimens have to be sent away for identification. When collecting specimens please collect only the minimum number needed for purposes of identification. If you need help with identification or if you would like more information about records of a particular species of plants, birds, mammals, invertebrates, etc, please ask the appropriate County Recorder. To assist with species identification the OWIARC holds a library of reference books and equipment including microscopes.

Guidelines for Contributors

Contributors to the Bulletin are warmly welcomed. If you are interested in contributing, please contact John Crossley at North Flaws, South Ronaldsay, Orkney KW17 2RW or by emailing flawsjohn@gmail.com. Articles for the Bulletin follow certain conventions, such as the use of capitals for the English names of species, with this name being emboldened at first use, and the Scientific name being provided with it at that point. More detailed guidelines for contributors are available from John, and it will be a great help to John and his editorial sub-group of the Orkney Field Club if they are followed.

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