

Stronsay Bird Report **(7 Sep 2007)**

A third brood of Sand Martins emerged from the small colony in Mill Bay during late July, generally the quietest month of the year regarding unusual species here on Stronsay. A few Swifts were seen and one or two Sedge Warblers, and as usual large numbers of waders, gulls and starlings were attracted to the newly cut silage fields in mid-summer. A few less common waders were seen, including a male Ruff (complete with a black “ruff”), two Greenshank, and both Green and Common Sandpipers – all at the Matpow Loch. Late July brought four Black-tailed Godwits to the Bu Loch and a Wood Sandpiper was seen at the Lea Shun.

At least five pairs of Sandwich Terns bred “inland” this year – a most unusual event for a species that nests almost exclusively among sand dunes along the shore. Just 2-3 clutches of young Pheasants have been reported this year – a big drop from last year – although high numbers of this introduced species are probably not sustainable here given the lack of suitable habitat.

A few migrant Wheatears are now arriving from further north – perhaps Greenland – and Herons are returning to the bigger lochs. Swallows have been rather less numerous this year but a flock of 30 was over Airy in early August. A few juvenile Common and Arctic Terns have been seen in Mill Bay.

“Bird of the summer” was without doubt the adult White-winged Black Tern seen flying past Gesty by Dave Miller on 7 August – the first known island record! The bird headed off in the direction of the Lea Shun Loch but was not seen again. It was quite possibly the same bird seen on Mainland Orkney around this time although at least two other individuals of this rarely seen species in the U.K. were recorded elsewhere in Britain around the same date as the Stronsay bird. Other sightings of interest have been a Garden Tiger moth at Rosebank on 19 July, and a Convolvulus Hawk moth has been seen on the honeysuckle at Dale on two occasions, including late evening on 11 August.

The first Hen Harrier of the autumn – a “ring-tail” (either juvenile or female) was seen over the unharvested crop at Dale on 12 August.

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