

The highlight of the autumn migration so far was the record number of Yellow-browed Warblers on the island in late September and early October. At least 21 were seen – almost exclusively in sycamore trees – with two together on three occasions. These tiny warblers – very close in size, shape and colour to the Goldcrest (but lacking the yellow crown-stripe) – breed no closer than western Russia and (typically) arrived on Stronsay during a spell of light SE winds. One was seen in the single large tree at Rosebank in what is a very isolated area of suitable habitat for this ‘woodland’ species.

Three Barred Warblers – another uncommon species of warbler, this species breeding no closer than eastern Europe – have also been seen on the island: the first one on The Reserve where it spent the best part of a week eating the apples on one of the trees in the Castle garden; the second at Sunnybank, where it shared a sycamore tree briefly with a Yellow-browed Warbler, a Lesser Whitethroat, and two Goldcrests on 28 September, and we were alerted to the third individual which was discovered resting in the fuchsia hedge in the Hotel garden by Carol Cooke on 18 October. This last bird was seen again on 21 October. A Turtle Dove was in the Southbank garden on 18 October when a Puffin was also seen – close inshore in Mill Bay.

A few Greenfinches and Reed Buntings have been seen recently – the latter feeding mainly in the oat patch on The Reserve – but there have been only small numbers of Redwings and Fieldfares so far this autumn. Jack Snipe have been seen on a few occasions and a Grey Wagtail was seen briefly by Ross Goodwin on 12 October.

The most amazing sighting of the autumn so far was a juvenile Sea Eagle seen soaring high over the Meikle Water by Sue Holloway on 25 September as it drifted slowly south. Given the date and direction of flight, this bird probably originated from Scandinavia rather than from the introduced stock in Western Scotland.

Thanks to all who have phoned in their sightings.