



Skomer Island



Bird Report 2018



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Front cover: Lesser Black-backed Gull (Photo by Mike Wallen) ©

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SKOMER ISLAND

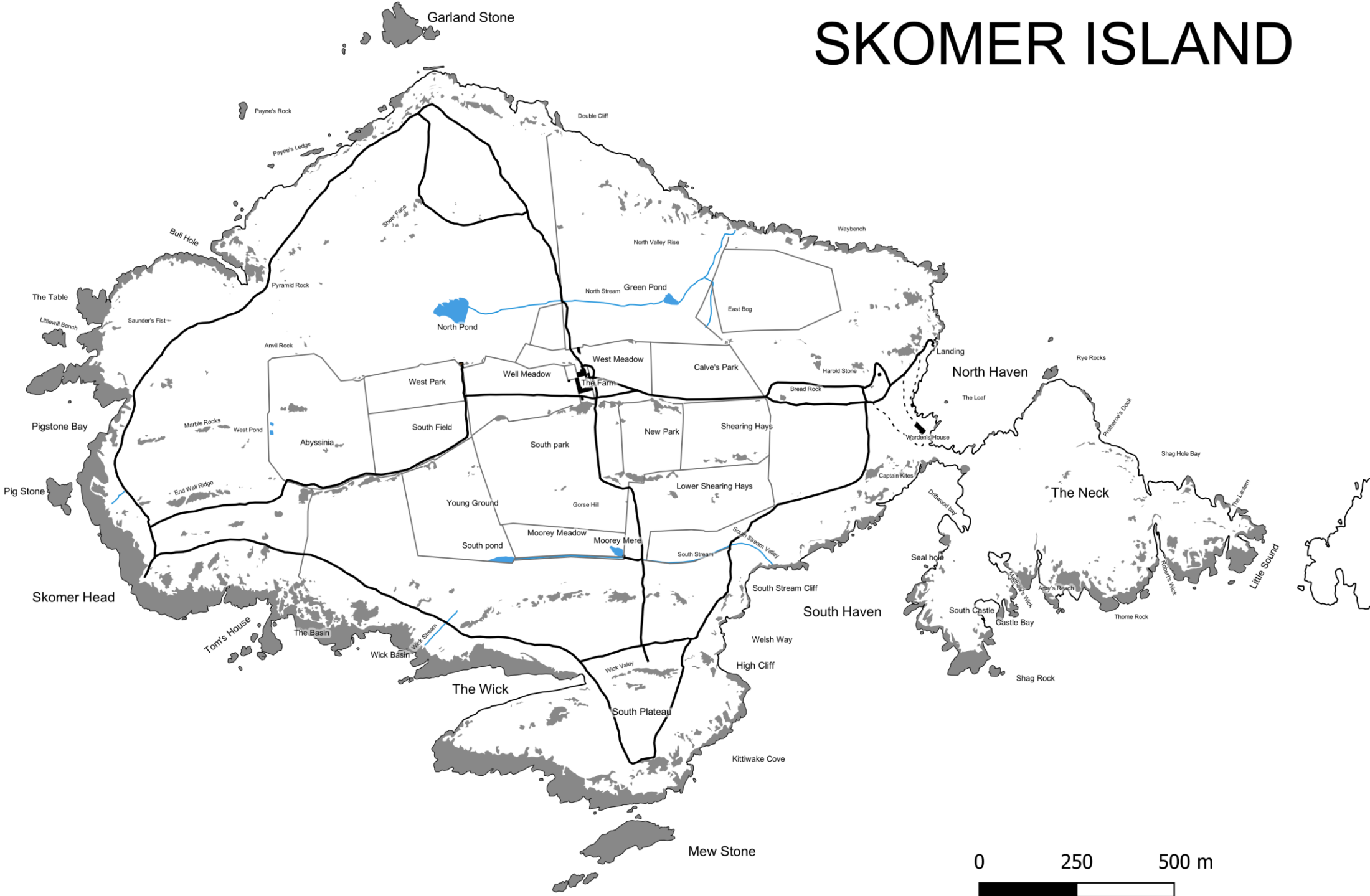


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The Wick, during the 'beast from the east', March 2018. (Photo by E. Stubbings)

Skomer Island Bird Report 2018

The island was manned between 27th February and 22th November. During this time, a total of 156 bird species were recorded. This is 16 less than the 172 seen in 2017, possibly due to the lack of rare seabirds seen in autumn.

Island rarities summary 2018

Species	Island status	Last recorded
Woodchat Shrike	15 th island record	2016
Black Kite	3 rd island record	2014
Snowy Owl	1 st island record	n/a
Alpine Swift	1 st island record	n/a
Subalpine Warbler	12 th island record	2013
Rose-coloured Starling	5 th island record	2011
Bonelli's Warbler sp.	2 nd island record	2017
Barred Warbler	12 th island record	2014
Red-breasted Flycatcher	21 st island record	2017
Iceland Gull	11 th island record	2015
Cetti's Warbler	9 th island record	2015
Grey Phalarope	9 th island record	2017
Rose-coloured Starling	4 th island record	2003

In addition to these island rarities, a host of scarce species were recorded, including Spoonbill (2), Pomarine Skua, Northern Goshawk, Yellow-browed Warbler, Common Crossbill (10), Common Eider (4), 'Siberian' Chiffchaff, Red-backed Shrike, Whooper Swan (4), Snow Bunting, Long-eared Owl (3) and Water Pipit.

Skomer Island seabird population summary 2018

Guillemots were not counted (whole island) in 2018. All other species were counted and the table below summarises the whole island population counts and makes comparison with the previous count as well as giving a five-year percentage change.

Species and count units	Totals for 2018	Totals for 2017	% change from previous count	Comparison with mean of previous 5 years
Fulmar (AOS)	578	n/a ²	-14.37 ³	
Cormorant (AON)	0	0	N/A	
Shag (AON)	6	5	+20 ⁴	+42.86
Lesser Black-backed Gull (AON)	5410	4935	+9.63 ⁴	-25.00
Herring Gull (AON)	365	297	+22.90 ⁴	
Great Black-backed Gull (AON)	120	120		+11.11
Black-legged Kittiwake (AON)	1236	1336	-7.49 ⁴	-10.30
Guillemot (IND)*	n/a ¹	24788		
Razorbill (IND)	7529	n/a ²	+3.85 ³	
Puffin (IND)	30895	25227	+22.47 ⁴	

Data on the seabirds breeding season has been compiled from the Skomer Seabird Report 2018.

Notes:

1. Not censused in 2018 (see 2.1 Whole island counts)
2. Not censused in 2017 (see 2.1 Whole island counts)
3. % change between 2018 and 2016
4. % change between 2018 and 2017

Count units used in this report:

AOS-Apparently Occupied Site
 AON-Apparently Occupied Nest
 AOT-Apparently Occupied Territory
 IND-Individual

Skomer Island breeding landbirds population summary 2018

The below data were collected by island staff during the breeding season, mostly through the annual Breeding Bird Survey, mapping territories along set transects across all parts of the island on at least three occasions between mid-April and mid-June. In addition, many breeding territories are noted during the daily patrol and wardening of the nature reserve.

A total of 32 species of 'landbird' bred on Skomer in 2018.

Species	Total for 2018	Total for 2017	5 year % change
Canada Goose (AON)	15	22	-38.0
Shelduck (AOT)	2	2	11.1
Mallard (AOT)	3	5	-16.7
Shoveler (AOT)	2	4	-16.7
Pheasant (AOT/IND)	5	6	-16.7
Common Buzzard (AON)	5	5	8.7
Peregrine (AOT)	1	3	-66.7
Common Moorhen (AOT)	6	4	36.4
Oystercatcher (AOT)	60	46	3.1
Eurasian Curlew (AOT)	3	3	0.0
Wood Pigeon (AON)	3	3	0.0
Short-eared Owl (AON)	6	4	100.0
Little Owl (AON)	0	0	-100.0
Skylark (AOT)	0	6	-100.0
Barn Swallow (AON)	6	8	-23.1
Meadow Pipit (AOT)	102	114	-0.6
Rock Pipit (AOT)	21	27	-3.7
Pied Wagtail (AON)	2	4	-37.5
Dunnock (AOT)	9	17	-39.2
European Stonechat (AOT)	2	4	-9.1
Northern Wheatear (AOT)	19	24	-10.4
Blackbird (AOT)	5	5	38.9
Song Thrush (AON)	1	1	n/a
Common Whitethroat (AOT)	14	14	-25.5
Sedge Warbler (AOT)	31	53	-25.8
Common Chiffchaff (AOT)	1	1	0.0
Wren (AOT)	68	71	6.3
Magpie (AOT)	4	6	-20.0
Red-billed Chough (AOT)	5	3	78.6

Western Jackdaw (AOT/IND)	21	26	-25.5
Carrion Crow (AON)	10	12	4.2
Common Raven (AON)	7-8	9	33.3
Common Linnet (AOT)	3	5	25.0
European Goldfinch (AOT)	0	2	-100.0
Reed Bunting (AOT)	3	3	-28.6



Some of the Skomer Island team in 2018.

Systematic list of birds

Sarah-Kay Purdon and Edward Stubbings

Status categories

Vagrant – one to 10 records

Rare – 11 to 40 records

Scarce – one to five records per year

Uncommon – six to 50 records per year

Fairly common – 51 to 250 records per year

Common – 251 to 1000 records per year

Abundant – 1001 to 2500 records per year

Very abundant – more than 2500 records per year

Note: Status' are given in an island context, not a national context.

Breeding categories

Very rare breeder – one to 10 breeding records

Rare breeder – 11 to 40 breeding records

Scarce breeder – one to five breeding records per year

Uncommon breeder – six to 50 breeding records per year

Fairly common breeder – 51 to 250 breeding records per year

Common breeder – 251 to 1000 breeding records per year

Abundant breeder – 1001 to 2500 breeding records per year

Very abundant breeder – more than 2500 breeding records per year

Count units and terminology used in this report

AOS – Apparently Occupied Site

AON – Apparently Occupied Nest

AOT – Apparently Occupied Territory

IND – Individual

BBRC – British Birds Rarities Committee

WRP – Welsh Records Panel

NRW – Natural Resources Wales

List of contributors mentioned within the report

Name	Initials	Name	Initials	Name	Initials
Eddie Stubbings	EMS	Birgitta Bueche	BB	David Astins	DA
Anna Sutcliffe	AS	Ted Wallen	TW	Nathan Wilkie	NW
Dulcie Fairweather	DF	Mike Wallen	MW	Sarah-Kay Purdon	SKP
Ollie Padget	OP	Sonia Gadd	SG		

Notes

The species order for this systematic list is taken from 'The British List' published by the BOU in Jan 2013.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Vagrant, seven previous records involving 37 birds. Last noted 2017.

Four were seen flying east over the island towards the mainland on the 30th of September. What was probably one of these four was then seen flying over the island again on the 22nd of October before flying back toward the mainland. These four birds spent several weeks in the vicinity of the Gann.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Vagrant. Eleven previous records, involving eleven birds. Last recorded 2017

A single bird was seen flying around over Shearing Hayes at 09:00 on the 4th of June. It was later seen on both Moorey Mere and North Pond and was seen again the next day on Moorey Mere.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

Vagrant.

Six, presumed escaped, Snow Geese turned up on North Pond on the 24th of June. The small flock consisted of five white morph birds and one blue morph. They remained on North Pond until the 26th of June.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Uncommon breeder. First bred 1993

Present almost throughout. A total of 15 pairs nested on the island in 2018, a decrease of 30% on the 22 pairs in 2017 as shown in Figure 1. The early part of the nesting season may have been hampered by the cold early spring and low vegetation height and pairs were slow to settle. Some birds that had spent the winter on the island but breed elsewhere were seen leaving the island on the 10th of April after which time birds were seen mostly on territory. Egg laying began at the end of March. The first goslings (five) were seen on the 26th of April. Despite the lower number of breeding pairs this year a few managed to fledge some chicks, notably at North Pond and Pigstone Bay. These surviving broods were led onto the sea by their parents in July and possibly taken over to the mainland.

Non breeding birds began to utilise the island again at some point during the first week of September. The highest count of the year was 130 on the 3rd and 7th of October. There were no records between the 21st of October and the 10th of November.

Table 1. Monthly maxima of Canada Goose 2018.

Month	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Max count	45	25	31	27	38	13	117	130	27

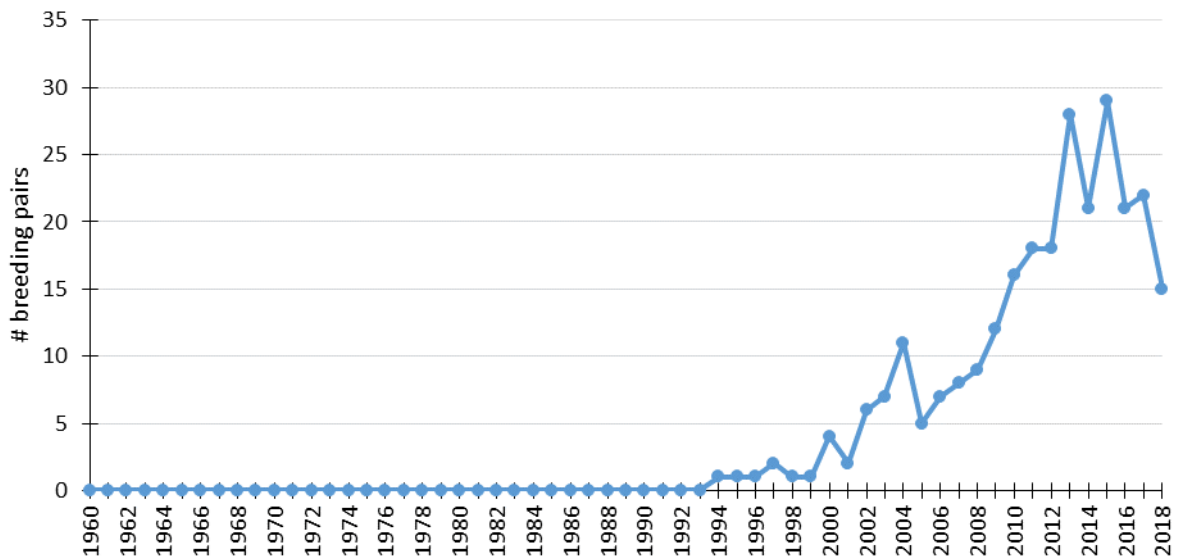


Figure 1. Population trend of Canada Goose on Skomer 1960-2018.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Scarce breeder (maximum three pairs). First bred 1969. Scarce migrant

At least two pairs bred in 2018. A pair was seen displaying on North Pond on the 21st of March. Most records during the rest of March and April were of two to four birds apart from a record of five seen flying through Jack Sound on the 19th of April. The first chicks were seen on North Pond on the 22nd of May. However, what started as a brood of six was quickly reduced to five by marauding gulls. Broods of five (the original family) and eight were seen on North Pond on the 29th of May. Possibly due to the difference in size of the chicks the two families stayed relatively separate. On the 7th of June one of the broods was led across the island to Moorey Mere. After this point it started to get quite hard to follow their progress. Three large chicks continued to be seen on North Pond until the middle of the month but this was reduced to two by the 20th and a juvenile was seen there on the 21st.

A female was seen on the 24th of June. This was the final record of the year and came exactly one day after the final record of 2017.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Uncommon migrant

Up to six were present during the 'beast from the east' and, unfortunately, one sustained an injury to a wing and remained on the island throughout the summer. 'Willy', a male bird, was last seen on the 3rd of August and his fate is unknown. He was seen to fly short distances on at least one occasion but it is unlikely that he was able to completely recover full powers of flight.

The first autumn bird was seen on North Pond on the 15th of October and remained there for at least a week. There were two on North Pond on the 21st of October. Twelve on the 7th of November was the highest count of the year and from then until the wardens left the island between two and nine were seen on an almost daily basis.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Rare and sporadic breeder (maximum two pairs). First bred 1968. Fairly common, sometimes common migrant

A flock of Teal were present on North Pond during the 'beast from the east' with peak counts of 42 on the 28th of February and 28 on the 1st of March, during the worst of the weather. Smaller numbers were present throughout March and into April. Eleven were seen on Moorey Mere on the 4th of April with the males displaying to the watching females. Numbers then dwindled further until only a potentially breeding pair remained. These eventually settled on North Pond but breeding was not proven. There were only five records in May, mostly involving a lone female, and no records in June and July.

Autumn records began again in August with between two and four from the 12th. September saw a slight increase in occurrence and a maximum of 21 on the 23rd. The number of ducks, on North Pond especially, was dictated by water levels and there were very few records in the first half of October, when it was still very dry, but many more in the second half of the month (first half: 33 individuals recorded; second half: 299 individuals recorded), after rain. The peak count in October was 29 on the 28th. By far the largest counts, however, came in November with counts of over 60 on eight dates and a year's peak of 70 on the 17th.



Teal sheltering from freezing conditions, North Pond, early March 2018. (Photo by E. Stubbings)

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Uncommon breeder (maximum 18 pairs 1978 and 2000). Fairly common migrant

Thirteen were seen on the 28th of February during the 'beast from the east' and there were 13 on the 1st of March, which were the highest counts of those months. April saw a peak of twelve on the 30th. The first brood of ducklings (seven) was seen on the 4th of May. Two broods (four and five) were seen on the 19th of May and three broods (six, five and five) were seen on the 28th of May. A family with six chicks was seen in North Haven on the 27th of May, which may indicate a parent attempting to lead chicks away from the island towards the mainland. Four fully fledged juveniles were then seen on North Pond between the 30th of June and the 1st of July. Judging by the size of the chicks and the dates and locations they were recorded in, an estimated three pairs bred in 2018. This is probably an underestimate but fairly reasonable based on previous years figures, as shown in Figure 2.

There were very few records in July, August and most of September, the peak count during the period being 16 on the 21st of September. Again, the number of Mallards on North Pond was dictated by water levels and arrivals of birds were obvious after heavy rainfall. Seventy five flew in on the 5th of October but no birds were seen between then and the 14th. Quite a few birds were then present between the 14th and 24th with high counts of 88 on the 16th and 104 on the 21st. Another count of 104 was made on the 7th of November, equalling the highest count of the year, and 79 were recorded on the 9th. The last record of the year was of 30 on the 22nd of November.

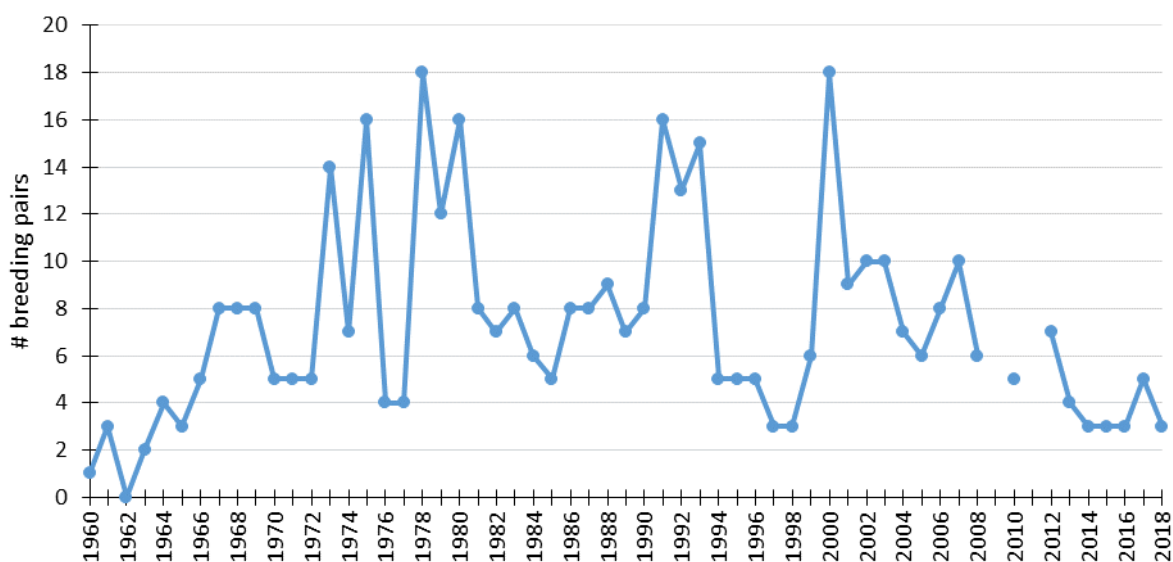


Figure 2. Population trend of Mallard on Skomer 1960-2018.

MallardXPintail

A presumed mallard pintail hybrid was present on North Pond on the 21st and 22nd of October.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Rare breeder (first bred 1988 – first Welsh record). Last bred 2002. Scarce to uncommon migrant. Less than annual in recent years

The first of the autumn was seen on North Pond on the 5th of October amongst an arrival of Mallard. The only other records of the year were one on the 22nd of October and two on the 7th of November.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Scarce breeder (maximum six pairs). Uncommon migrant

Two separate nesting attempts are thought to have been made in North Valley in 2018. Two birds were present on and off from the 1st of March and two pairs were present on the 31st of March. Between one and four birds were seen throughout April. During May up to five males and two females were active, mainly around the North Valley area. A possible brood of Shoveler ducklings was seen in North Valley Crossing on the 28th of May. It was not until the 5th of June, however, that a single chick was confirmed on North Pond. Four ducklings, probably from a second nest, appeared on North Pond on the 27th of June. They were seen again on North Pond the next day and on Green Pond on the 1st of July. It is possible that this attempt failed during the following few days as a lone female was seen flying around between Green Pond and Moorey Mere on the 4th and there was no further sign of chicks. Furthermore, there were no confirmed sightings until late August.

The first bird of the autumn was a female type on North pond on the 28th of August and there were four there on the 30th. There were very few records in September with two, including an eclipse male, on the 2nd, three on the 4th, 6th and 7th and singles on the 27th and 28th. In October, there were no records until the 21st when an incredible 22 arrived (highest count of the year). There were then five the next day, five on the 29th and four on the 30th. Males became fully distinguishable again in November and there were records of two males and a female on the 3rd, 19th and 20th. The final record of the year was of four on the 22nd of November.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Rare and sporadic breeder. Last proven breeding 2007. Scarce to uncommon migrant

The only records of the year were of one on the 17th of October and three on the 21st of October.

Eider *Somateria mollissima*

Rare. Last record was of three in April 2013

Four flew past North Haven on the 29th of October.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Common migrant

The first record was of six on the 31st of May. Summer records then involved 17 on the 16th of June, 28 on the 8th of July, 21 on the 17th, 14 on the 18th and 24 on the 24th. Records in August came on the 4th (20) and 29th (three). Significant counts in September include 18 on the 13th, 20 on the 17th and 25 on the 22nd. In October there were records of eleven on the 3rd, 20 on the 11th, eight on the 25th and 19 on the 29th. November saw records of nine on the 5th, 22 on the 16th and, finally, nine on the 18th.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Uncommon breeding resident. Released for shooting during 19th century with population surviving today

Five pairs were mapped on breeding bird surveys, although this may be an underestimate. Pheasants were present across the island throughout the year. Twenty were recorded on the 1st of March during the 'beast from the east' when birds were more obvious in the snowy conditions. The next sizeable count was of 15 on the 30th of April. The first chicks of the year were seen at North Valley Rise on the 21st of June and there was another brood of chicks between the Farm and Skomer Head on the 25th. During July chicks were seen in almost all areas of the island. Well grown chicks were then seen up until the beginning of August. Some higher autumn counts include 17 on the 11th of September, 16 on the 19th and 30th of October and 14 on the 17th of November.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

Scarce visitor, though uncommon in some years. Most sightings during early and late season

The first Great Northern Diver of the year was an adult on the 10th of October. There were further records of singles on the 22nd and 29th of October and the 1st, 16th and 18th of November.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Common breeder. First confirmed breeding 1960

Numbers have dropped to 578 AOS since the last whole island count in 2016 when there were 675 AOS as shown in Figure 3. Productivity was 0.30 which is a drop on the 2017 figure (0.41) and the lowest value since 2009. The first egg was recorded on the 27th of May and the first chick on the 15th of July.

Present on the island from the start of the recording year until late September. There were no records between the 22nd of September and the 4th of November. Small numbers of birds were then present until the wardens' departure from the island on the 22nd of November.

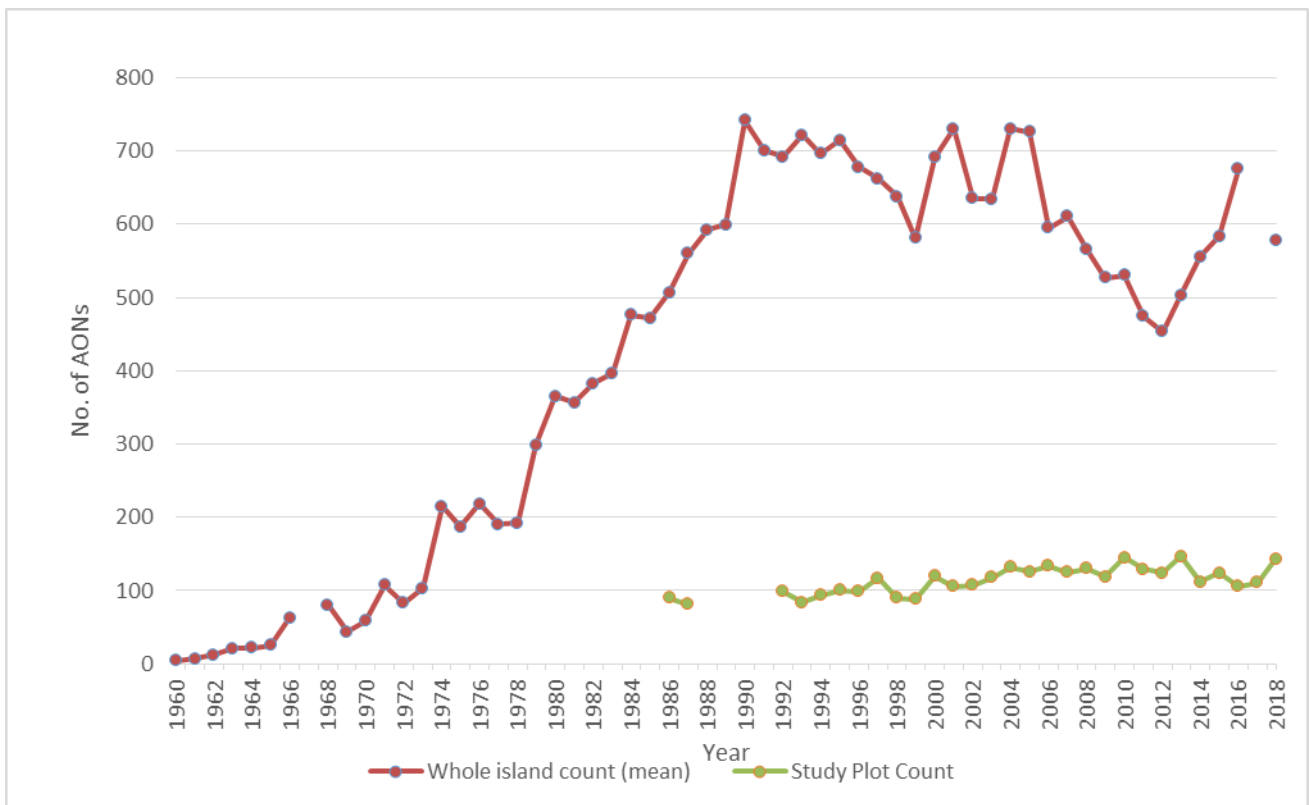


Figure 3. Population trend of Northern Fulmar on Skomer 1960-2018.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

Very abundant breeder, largest colony in the world

The first record of the year came on the 7th of March (one day earlier than 2017). Birds were then more or less present until the last record of the year on the 18th of November.

A whole-island census was conducted in June. The population was estimated at 350,000 pairs. The island was last censused in 2011 when an estimate of 316,000 pairs was made. Middleholm was included for the first time since 1998. This intense study of all three islands took an incredible amount of field work and was a collaboration between WTSWW, University of Gloucestershire, University of Oxford and the National Trust and was part funded by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), The Seabird Group and the National Trust. The census makes a critical contribution towards a repeat national seabird census that is being co-ordinated in Wales by NRW. The standard annual plots were censused as usual, with a slight increase on previous years shown in Figure 4.

Within the standard annual census plots, the number of responses (giving an indication of occupancy) was up on the previous year. The study plot on the isthmus showed poor hatching success and therefore a fairly low productivity of 0.46. The Oxford Navigation Group continued to study many burrows on the slopes in North Haven.

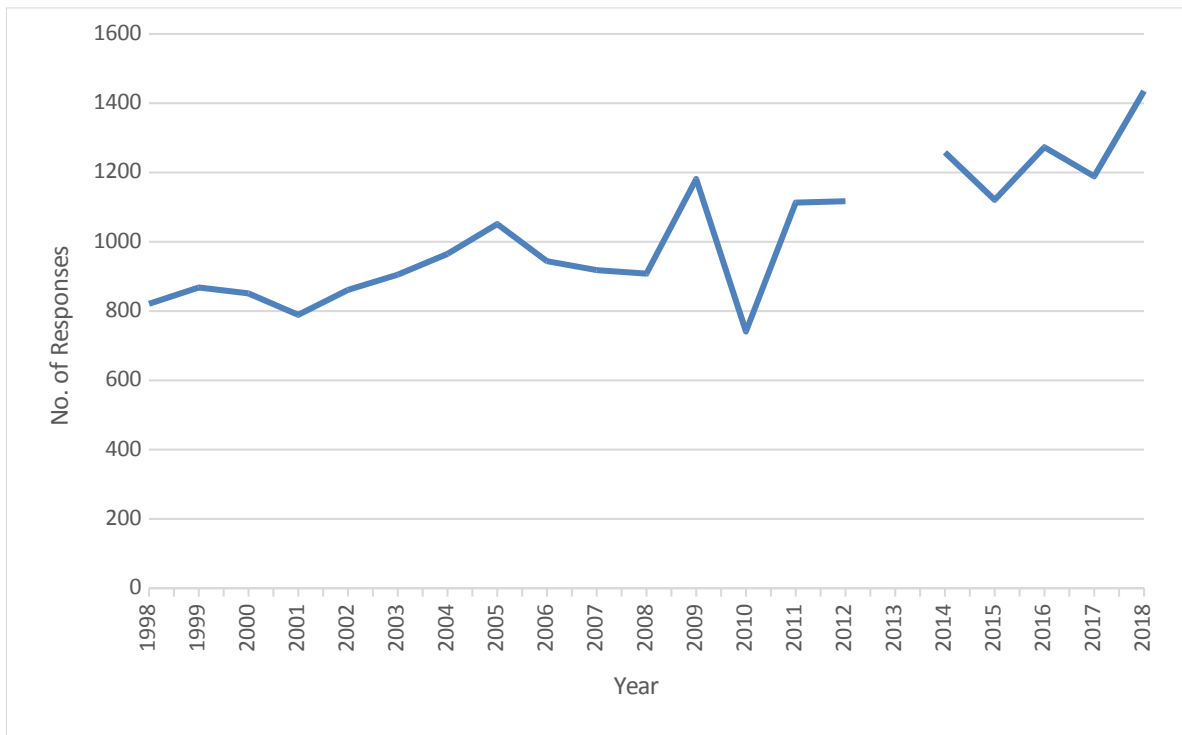


Figure 4. Population trend within Manx Shearwater plots on Skomer 1998-2018.

European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

Fairly common breeder. Full census conducted 2016

The estimated total number of breeding Storm Petrels on Skomer is 220 Apparently Occupied Sites. This figure is taken from the last whole island census conducted in 2016. The population is thought to have remained stable since the previous census 2003/4 (Brown 2006).

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Very abundant visitor. Abundant breeder on nearby Grassholm

With the large breeding colony on Grassholm only six miles to the north west small numbers of Gannets are recorded from Skomer on an almost daily basis. Birds seen from Skomer probably reflect the number of birds feeding around the island and large movements of birds are very rare. Monthly maxima are reported below in table 2. A clear reduction in sighting frequency was apparent through October and November, presumably reflecting the departure of the Grassholm population.

Table 2. Monthly maxima of Northern Gannet 2018.

Month	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Max count	40	72	220	20	100	150	100	40	7

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

In 2017, after a shift from the southern face of the Mew Stone to its western corner in 2016, the Great Cormorant (hereafter Cormorant) colony on Skomer moved completely, from the Mew Stone, to Middleholm (where there were eleven nests in 2018). Therefore, there were no breeding Cormorants on Skomer in 2018. Data on whole island counts on Skomer up to 2018, including two years with zero counts, are shown for completeness in Figure 5.

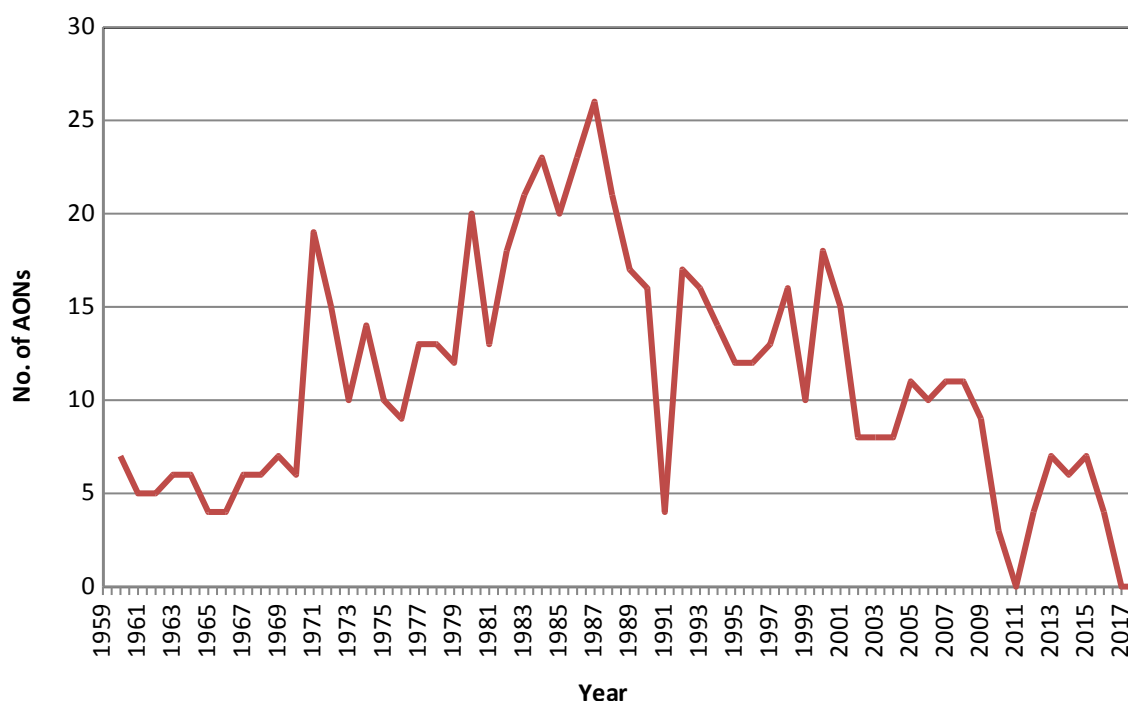


Figure 5. Population trend of Great Cormorant on Skomer 1960-2018.

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

In the 1960s/70s the Shag colony on Skomer was concentrated on Shag Hole Bay, on the north side of The Neck. Over a period of years these moved to Middleholm and by the early 1990s Shags had more or less ceased to breed on the main part of Skomer. A few pairs, however, have continued to breed on the north coast of Skomer, at the base of Double Cliff, and on the Garland Stone. This information is useful in explaining the trend in Figure 6. For the third year running there was also a nest on the Mew Stone.

Several visits were made by boat to the colony near Double Cliff in June and July and five AONs were identified. This may be an underestimate as nests are well hidden and difficult to observe. With the single nest on the Mew Stone this gives a total of six nests found in 2018, which is one less than last year and the same total as in 2016. No accurate data was collected on the breeding success of the Double Cliff colony.

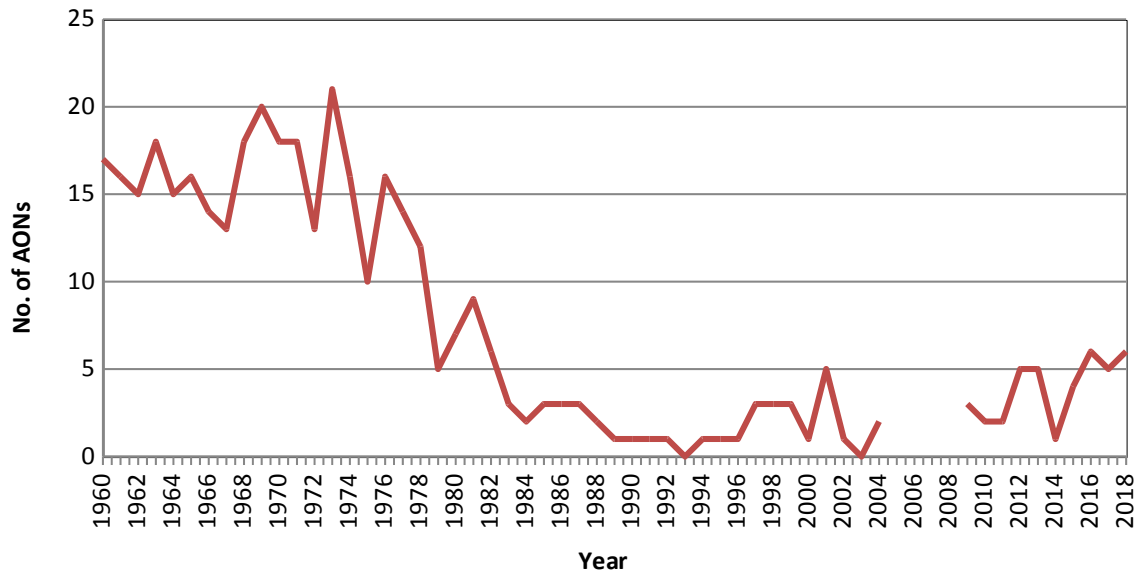


Figure 6. Population trend of European Shag on Skomer 1960-2018.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Rare visitor. First recorded 1996. Last recorded 2016

There was one in North Valley on the 27th of May and one was seen flying over the sea towards North Haven by AS on the 26th of September. These were the only records of the year.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Fairly common migrant

There were no spring records. In keeping with the previous year there was surge of records in late June with five on the 22nd, two on the 23rd and twelve on the 24th. The next records came in July with peak counts of six on the 10th and four on the 22nd. There were three, well spread, records of individuals in August including a juvenile on the 10th. There were also three records of singles in September including a juvenile on the 6th. Between one and three herons were then regularly seen on beaches in North Haven and South Haven between the 19th of October and 21st of November.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Vagrant. Ten previous records, involving 12 birds. Last recorded 2017

Two were seen flying north over the island at 08:00 on the 19th of May. A single bird was then seen flying south at 16:00 on the same day. It is assumed that the bird in the afternoon was just one of the two from the morning heading south again and the total in birdlog for that days remains at two.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
Scarce visitor

The sole record of the year concerns a single bird which was present on North Pond between the 26th and 28th of March.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Vagrant. Two previous records, May 1998 and May 2014. Also two unsubmitted records 1991 and 1996

With both previous records coming in May it was no surprise that the island's third confirmed sighting also came in that month. On the 14th of May DA was leading a birdwatching tour on the island and spotted a Black Kite flying over the middle of the island. The same bird was then photographed as it flew off to the east over North Haven. Interestingly, this record came during a movement of Red Kites (see below).

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Uncommon migrant. First record 1995, annual since 2010

Records of this species are now somewhat regular throughout the year, peaking in spring and autumn but sometimes in summer and late autumn. The first record was of one on the 24th of March and there were two the next day. Two birds were seen on the 21st of April. May saw the highest number of sightings with 20 individuals recorded in total and a maximum day count of ten on the 13th.

There were no further records until September the 24th when three were logged. There were then a spread of records until the last sighting of the year on the 30th of October, including five on the 27th of September.

Table 3. Number of records and individuals of Red Kite noted on Skomer since the first in 1995.

Year	1995	2004	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Records	1	1	3	2	5	6	8	2	16	10	10	17
Individuals	1	1	3	2	5	8	15	2	61	15	16	44

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce migrant

Another record year for the species and a great year for harriers in general on the island. The first record came on the 26th of July with a juvenile that roamed the island for most of the day. A juvenile was then seen on the 26th, 27th, 29th and 31st of August. These records preceded a larger influx of Marsh Harriers in September when up to three were seen on several dates. Three juveniles seen together on the 6th of September was the year's, and probably the island's, record count (three birds were suspected on a few other dates but not confirmed). There was a wide spread of sightings in October with one or two birds seen. It also became apparent in October that at least one bird was roosting on the island. A single bird remained into November and continued roosting on the island on at least some occasions. The final sighting of the year was of one on the 15th of November.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*
Uncommon migrant and winter visitor

The first sighting of the year came on the second day of occupation of the island on the 28th of February. Between one and two ringtails were then present up until the 15th of April. There were no further spring records.

The first bird of the autumn arrived on the 26th of September. Where ever possible careful attention was then paid to individual identification (juveniles, females and males) and roosting behaviour. Birds seen on the 16th and 17th were identified as juveniles. The first bird seen to roost in North Valley was a ringtail on the 3rd of October. A second ringtail turned up on the 22nd of October and these were seen roosting on the 23rd and 29th. A third ringtail turned up on the 31st of October. Three were watched into roost on the 11th of November. A stunning adult male joined the three ringtails on the 16th. Three ringtails roosted on the 17th. On the final evening of wardening presence on the 21st of November an incredible seven ringtails and an adult male went to roost in North Valley.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*
Vagrant. Three previous records, April 2010, August 2014 and September 2015

A juvenile male turned up in North Valley on the 15th of August. It was then seen on the 17th and between the 27th and 29th of that month. It was seen on ten dates in September and on four dates in October, last being seen on the 8th of October.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
Uncommon migrant, though can be fairly common in some years

The first records came in April with singles on three dates. There was also a sighting on the 14th of May during a good period for raptor migration. There were no further spring records.

The first autumn record came on the 12th of August with sightings on six other dates during that month, including a presumed juvenile female on the 13th and a juvenile (not sexed) on the 24th. Birds sexed as both females and males were seen in September with between one and two birds seen on most dates. It is possible that the spread of September sightings involved at least three birds as on one occasion two females were seen. October also saw a good spread of sightings involving at least two birds. What was presumably a female Sparrowhawk was seen killing and eating Magpies on the 15th and 20th of October at the Farm. There were just two sightings in November with the last record of the year coming on the 7th.



Sparrowhawk killing a Magpie, October 2018. (Photo by S.K. Purdon)

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Scarce breeder, though uncommon in some years (maximum eight pairs 1954). Fairly common migrant, particularly in the autumn

Five pairs nested again this year (Figure 7). Nest sites were located at Robert's Wick, South Plateau, The Table, Paynes Ledge and Waybench. Birds were seen displaying over territories from as early as late March and the first eggs were found in the Robert's Wick nest on the 29th of April. Eggs must have been laid before this date in other areas as two very close nests both contained small chicks on the 18th of May at The Table and Paynes Ledge. Two eggs and a chick were seen in the Roberts Wick nest on the 22nd of May. The Paynes Ledge nest contained three chicks on the 31st of May. Four chicks were present at the Roberts Wick nest on the 12th of June. Two large chicks were seen by the Paynes Ledge on the 17th of June and fledgable chicks were seen at the South Plateau nest on the 26th. Young had moved away from nest sites by the middle of July. If we assume that all chicks seen in June survived and exclude the Waybench nest which was not found (but presumed to be there), productivity was three chicks per AON, from the four visible nests.

Common Buzzard were present throughout the recording year. Movements of birds, or larger gatherings were noted from late August, beginning with 16 recorded on the 31st of that month. The largest count of the year was made on the 27th of September when 36 were recorded. Twenty were recorded on the 4th of October (including a flock of 14) and 25 were recorded on the 22nd. The peak count in November was 14 on the 21st.

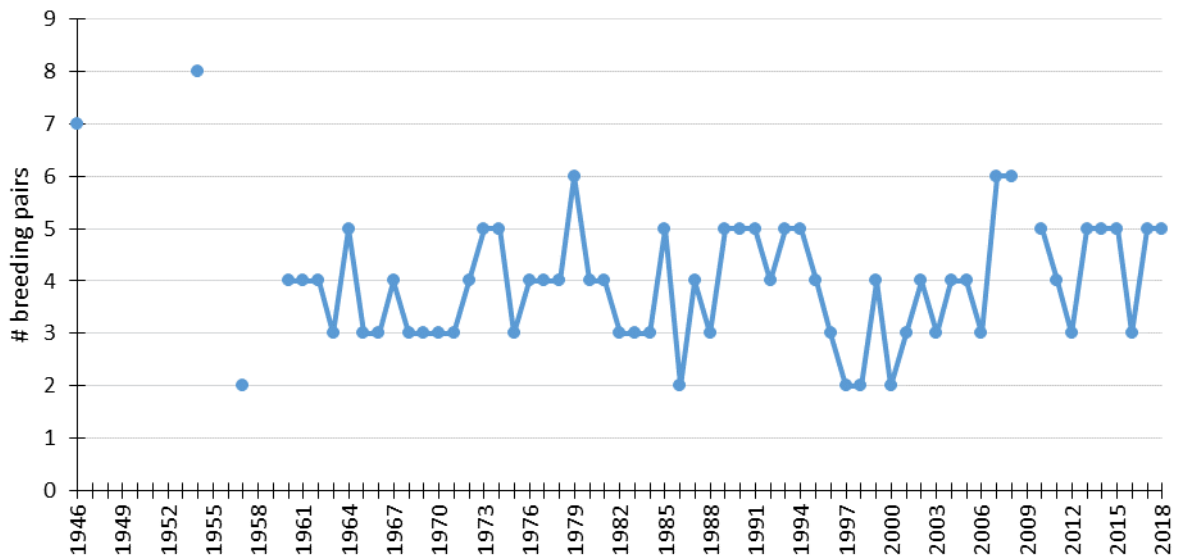


Figure 7. Population trend of Common Buzzard on Skomer 1946-2018.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Very rare breeding species, last record 2013. Fairly common migrant

Wintering birds were present on arrival to the island on the 27th of February. Up to four were seen throughout March. Up to three were present in April and singing was heard from both Moorey Mere and North Valley towards the end of the month. At least one bird was still being heard in North valley throughout May. There were no records of Water Rails in June.

The next record came in July with two heard in South Stream on the 22nd. There were two records in August with one on the 9th and one heard in South Stream on the 31st. Records increased sharply in September with records on most days and a maximum day count of seven on the 13th and 24th. In October, the maximum count, and the joint highest of the year, was ten on the 17th. There was also a count of ten on the 1st of November as well as a count of nine on the 7th and counts of eight on three dates. The last record was of seven on the 22nd of November.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Uncommon breeder, though scarce in some years

Present throughout the season, with six pairs nesting (Figure 8). A pair was seen nest building at Moorey Mere on the 1st of May. The first chicks were seen at North Pond on the 7th of May (two days later than 2017). Broods were then regularly seen at North Pond, Green Pond, Moorey Mere, West Pond and South Stream. There were at least two different broods at North Pond and the only good evidence of a second brood from one of these pairs came from that site in mid-June. Two dead chicks were found at West Pond on the 24th of May and a chick was seen being predated in Shearing Hayes on the 27th of June. A very dry summer may have effected juvenile survival and autumn counts were much lower than normal. The highest count of the year was 33 on the 20th of August and only five other counts that month reached over 20 individuals.

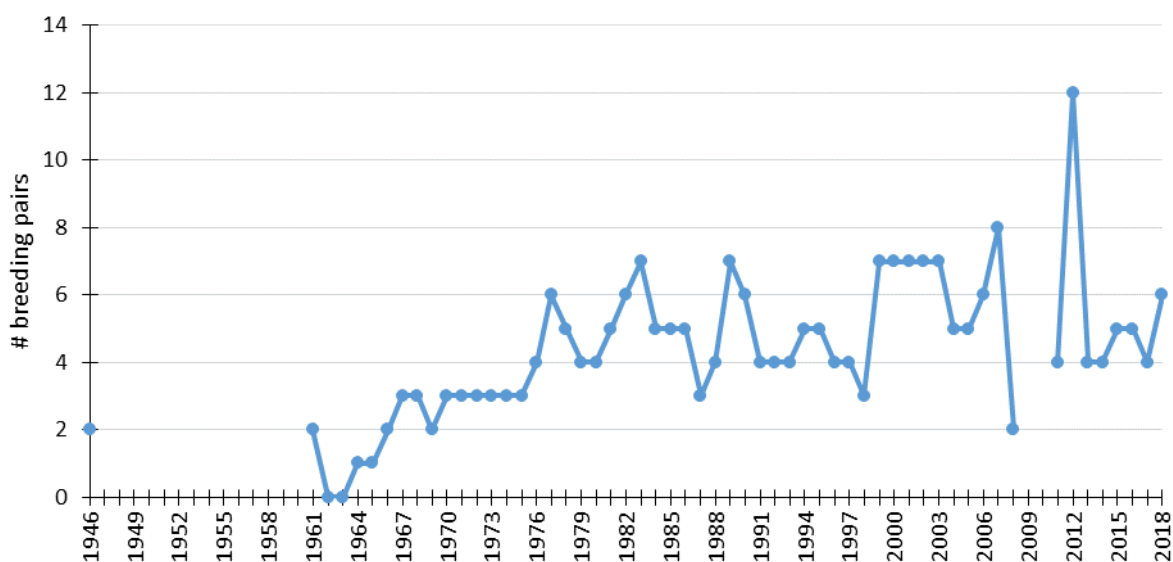


Figure 8. Population trend of Moorhen on Skomer 1946-2018.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostrrelagus*

Fairly common breeder

Present throughout the season, with 60 breeding pairs confirmed (Figure 9). A study conducted by DF involving 17 nests found the average productivity to be 0.71 fledged chicks per pair. This figure is higher than 2016 (0.67 (Taylor 2016)) but lower than 2006 (0.94).

The first egg was found at the Harold Stone on the 1st of May and the first chick was seen on the 15th of May between Moorey Mere and the Farm. Many eggs hatched around the 25th of May as could be seen from the behaviour of the adults.

Peak spring counts at the main roost sites include 154 (including 122 at South Stream) on the 28th of March and 141 on the 4th of April. In total there were ten counts in March of over 100, with the bulk coming from the South Stream roost.

Autumn roosts were, as usual, much smaller with peak counts of 32 on the 23rd of August, 34 on the 23rd and 24th of September, 53 on the 28th of October and 42 on the 7th of November.

Several birds ringed at The Gann and fitted with coded 'darvic' colour rings were present in the South Stream roost during the spring and autumn, including one caught and ringed at The Gann at 21:00 on the 7th of March and sighted in the South Stream roost, three or four miles away, at 08:00 the next day. Skomer joined the project in 2018 and fitted darvic rings to 17 Oystercatcher chicks during the summer.

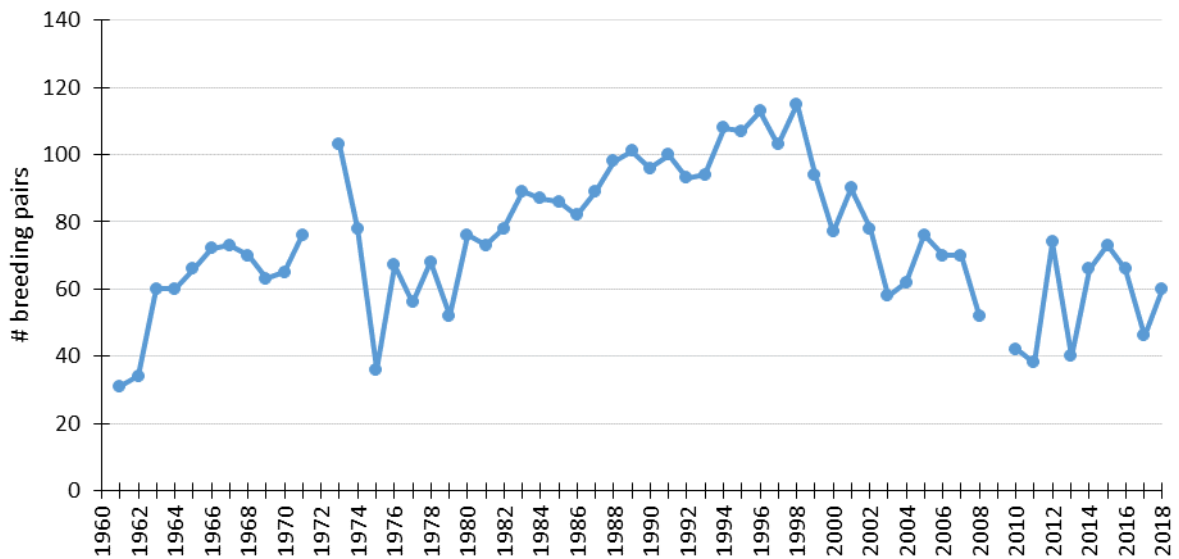


Figure 9. Population trend of Oystercatcher on Skomer 1960-2018.



Oystercatchers at the Harold Stone, May 2018. (Photo by E. Stubbings)

European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

Uncommon migrant

Unusually cold and snowy spells in February and March brought exceptional numbers of this species to the island. Most birds were flying over but many stopped to try and find food and some succumbed to the extreme conditions. The first cold snap, and the one that brought most Golden Plovers to the island, came at the end of February and carried on into March. Daily counts of Golden Plovers include 41 on the 28th of February, 239 on the 1st of March, at least 500 (highest count of year) on the 2nd, 150 on the 3rd, 200 on the 4th, 140 on the 5th, 70 on the 6th, 55 on the 7th, 86 on the 8th and 21 on the 10th. The only other significant record that month involved twelve on the 25th. Most were flying west over the island but many were seen on the ground, including around the buildings. One watched and photographed feeding in the courtyard at the Farm had been ringed in mid Wales in 2015. This was the first sighting of L36 since it was ringed in 2015. At least twelve were found dead at the start of March. The only record in April involved two on the 2nd. There were also three on the 5th of May.

In stark contrast to last year, when all records came during the autumn period, there were no autumn records in 2018.



A ringed Golden Plover in the courtyard during the 'beast from the east', March 2018. (Photo by S.K. Purdon)

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Uncommon migrant. Bred annually on the island until the late 20th century

Just as with the species above, cold snaps in March and April brought exceptional quantities of Lapwings to the island except in even greater numbers. At least 163 were seen flying west over the island on the 28th of February. Numbers passing over then increased markedly in the first week of March. Daily counts include 770 on the 1st, at least 1,000 (highest count of year) on the 2nd, 400 on the 3rd, 80 on the 4th, 78 on the 5th, 72 on the 6th, 39 on the 7th and 85 on the 8th. Small numbers (between one and eleven) were seen on eight further dates in March. As with Golden Plover, most were simply passing over but some sizeable flocks gathered around the island and once again many succumbed to the weather. At least 18 were found dead around the island in March.

The next record came in July when five landed on North Pond on the 1st. Two were recorded flying over on the 4th. August saw just a single record on the 5th when a bird was seen being repeatedly attacked by a Peregrine over North Haven. The Lapwing escaped by landing on the beach, where it rested for 15 minutes before flying off. There were no records in September. There was one on the 18th of October and a flock of eleven were seen in a large flock of Jackdaws on the 30th, this being the final record of the year.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Uncommon migrant, though scarce in some years

Five over Wick Stream on the 29th of April were the first of the year. One north over the centre of the island on the 19th of May was the only other spring record.

One heard on the 20th of August was the sole autumn record.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Common spring and autumn migrant. Rare in winter

There were seventy two individuals recorded in April. The first record (of three birds) came on the 13th and the maximum count concerned a flock of 35 flying west over North Haven on the 22nd. May produced 82 individuals recorded and a maximum count of 15 on the 18th.

The next records came in July with singles on the 29th and 30th. The maximum count in August was 23 on the 13th. One on the 19th of September was the last of the year.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Scarce breeder. Common migrant

Three pairs once again attempted to breed on the island. Displaying was first noted on the 4th of March and continued, on and off, throughout March, April and May. Display flights were centred around the usual inland breeding sites between the Wick and Bull Hole. Unfortunately, no aggressive behaviour towards other birds (indicating the laying of eggs), or alarming (indicating hatching), was noted at all in 2018.

The population decline of curlew is very concerning with Skomer holding the last breeding curlew in Pembrokeshire. The population for the last ten years has been lower than ever recorded before (Figure 10), and while we can hold some hope from the population not declining any further in the past five years, it is still low enough that it is very possible that Curlew may soon disappear from our list of breeding birds, just as Lapwing have. This decline has been hypothesised as possibly being related to the increase in Canada Geese' presence on the island, as shown in Figure 11. Canada Geese are highly defensive and dominant in wetland areas; however, correlation does not imply causation and this decline could also be related to the changing vegetation on the island as the island is now further along a post-agriculture road and there are less areas of bare ground. Either way, Curlew are declining throughout Wales and we can only hope our population falls no further.

Larger than usual numbers were seen during the 'beast from the east'. There were 34 on the 28th of February and 46 (highest count of year) on the 1st of March. Numbers remained relatively high throughout March with migrants supplementing the small breeding population. A flock of five were seen departing to the north at 17:20 on the 21st of March.

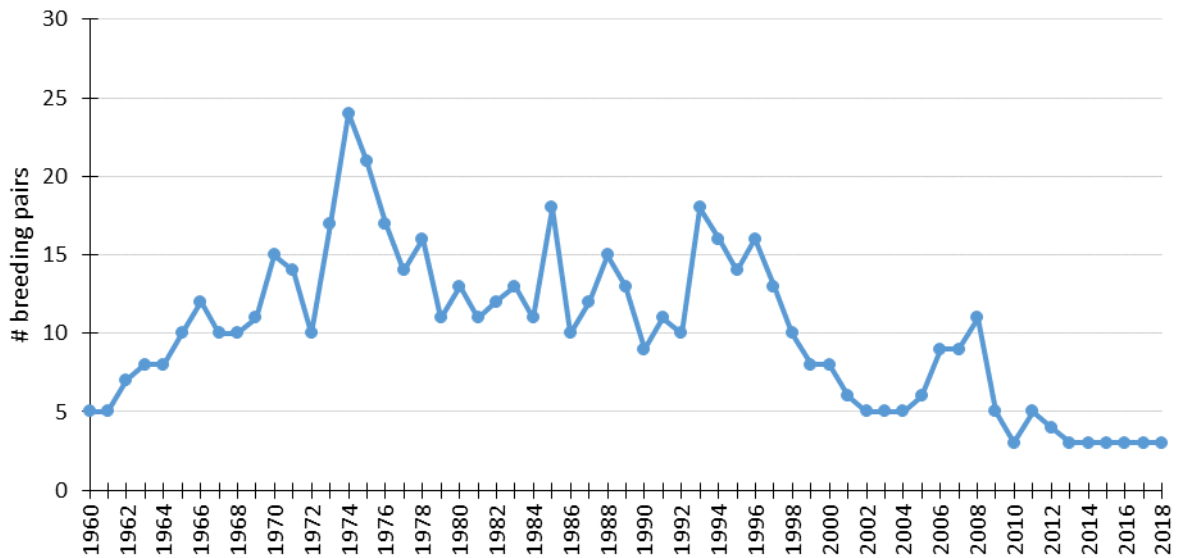


Figure 10. Population trend of Eurasian Curlew on Skomer 1960-2018.

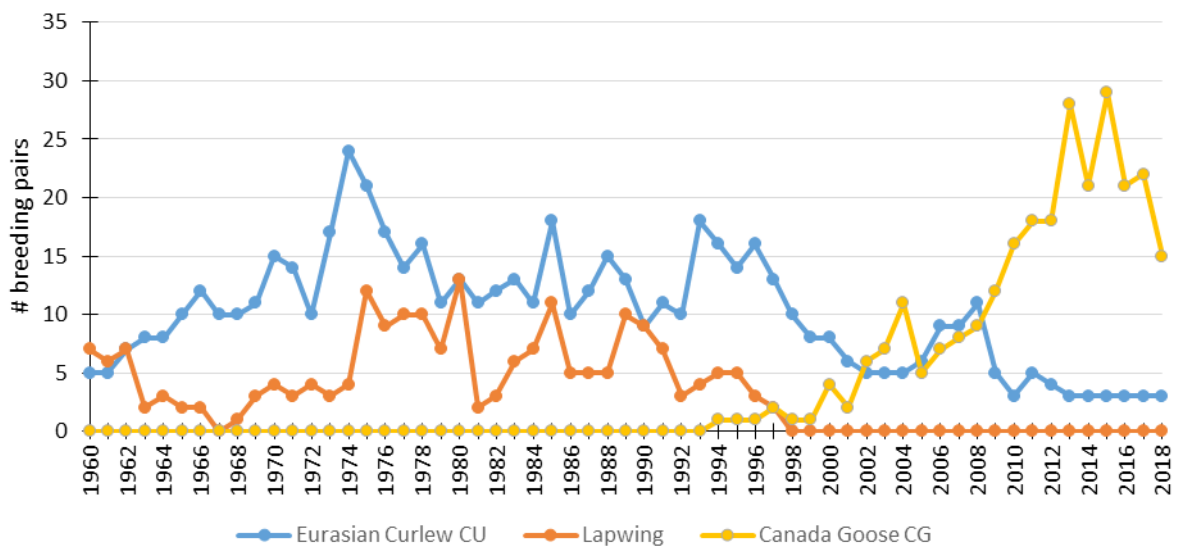


Figure 11. Population trend comparison between Canada Goose and Eurasian Curlew and Lapwing on Skomer 1960-2018.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*
Scarce migrant

The first record of the year concerned one on North Pond on the 18th of April. Another single bird arrived on North Pond on the 4th of May where it remained until the 15th when it flew over to Moorey Mere to feed on tadpoles. Two were seen on the 17th and 19th. A further bird arrived on North Pond on the 5th of June and remained until the 7th. Four summer plumaged birds were on North Pond on the 30th of June and 1st of July. Between one and two were then seen on and off on North pond until the 10th, one of which developed a limp on the 5th.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*
Scarce migrant

The only record involved a bird caught up in the cold weather movement of waders in early March. A bird was seen in three different locations on the 2nd of March, probably looking for somewhere to feed, before settling at South Stream where the flowing water was preventing it from freezing. There were also sightings on the 3rd and 10th, all thought to be of the bird which arrived on the 2nd.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*
Common migrant

A common bird on the beach at North Haven between September and May. During the recording year they are usually recorded between occupation of the island in spring (27th of February in this case) and some point at the end of April or beginning of May. The first returning birds are often seen in August with the bulk of records coming from September onwards.

Six were recorded on the 28th of February. During March and April they were recorded on an almost daily basis with peaks of 13 on the 11th of March and 13 on the 4th of April. Numbers started to drop, however, towards the end of April and the sole May records, both away from North Haven, were one near Skomer Head on the 18th and one at North Valley Outfall on the 20th.

The first returning bird was seen at South Castle on the 21st of August. There were five on North Haven main beach on the 28th of August. Up to ten were present in North Haven during September. Up to ten were also present for most of October but for a count of 14 on the 2nd. The year's peak count came in November with 16 on the 17th and the last record of the year was of three on the 22nd.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*
Vagrant. Seven previous records, most recently October 2012

One was seen and photographed on North Pond on the 19th and 21st of September.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
Uncommon migrant

A few Dunlin were present during the 'beast from the east'. There was one on the 1st of March and singles on three other dates. Two were recorded on the 3rd, 6th and 19th of March including one on the 3rd, walking on Green Pond! Nine went west over the Farm on the 16th of May and there were singles on four other May dates.

Three birds in breeding plumage turned up on North Pond on the 22nd of June and there was one on the 27th of that month. Four were on North Pond on the 3rd of July and three went over North Haven on the 29th of July. There were only two records in August with an adult at Green Pond on the 4th and one at North Pond on the 12th. The last records came in September with singles on four dates and the final record coming on the 14th.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Uncommon spring and autumn visitor. Scarce in some years

Six on the 10th of March were the first record of the year. Forty were seen by BB on South Castle on the 4th of April and 27 were counted two days later, which were the final records of the spring.

The first returning birds (four) were seen from the island boat on South Castle on the 21st of August. Surprisingly there were no records in September. There were then two records of singles in October. November brought two records with one on the 3rd and five on the 13th.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Vagrant. eight previous records, involving ten birds. Most recent record September 2017

One was seen just off North Haven at 09:00 on the 21st of September and one (possibly the same bird) was found on North Pond at 17:00. The bird found on North Pond during the afternoon was an adult bird. Two juveniles came into North Haven on the 15th of October and fed in the surf for most of the morning.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Uncommon migrant

The first record of the year was of one on the 11th of April. Further spring records came on the 23rd of April (one in North Haven) and the 2nd of May (one).

The first returning bird was seen in North Haven on the 11th of July and there was one at High Cliff on the 17th. Records of singles came on the 3rd, 8th, 12th and 13th of August, these being the final records of the year.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Scarce migrant

A Green Sandpiper was seen at Green Pond on the 28th of June, this being the only record of the year.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Scarce migrant

The only record of the year was of two on North Pond on the 13th of September.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Scarce migrant, though uncommon in some years

The first record was of three on the 3rd of July. There were four on North Pond on the 6th of July and the final record of the year was of one on the 21st of August.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*
Scarce migrant

One was seen at Moorey Mere on the 28th of February. There were two on the 1st of March and singles on the 2nd, 13th and 16th.

The first autumn record came on the 27th of October and there were two in North Valley on the 28th.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*
Uncommon spring and autumn migrant, scarce in some years

There were multiple records during the freeze in early March with singles on three dates, five on the 2nd and 3rd and two on the 6th.

The first bird of the autumn was seen being killed and eaten by a pair of Ravens in North Haven on the 27th of October. There were then two on the 29th and 31st of October. There was one on the 1st of November, two on the 5th, one on the 9th and three on the 18th which was the final record of the year.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*
Common migrant

The bulk of records came from the cold snap during late February and early March. The first record was of 23 on the 28th of February. In March there were 36 on the 1st, 80 (highest count of year) on the 2nd and 17 on the 3rd. The rest of the month saw between one and eleven recorded on most dates. Between one and four were recorded on 15 dates in April.

The first record of the autumn was of a flock of 16 flying over on the 5th of August and there was one on the 13th. September saw between one and three recorded on twelve dates. Small numbers (up to seven) were recorded on 18 dates in October apart from 23 on the 18th. Between one and eight were recorded on 17 dates in November.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*
Vagrant

A pale morph bird was seen flying south past Skomer Head, until lost behind Skokholm Island, on the 17th of May.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*
Scarce migrant

The only record, in a poor year for skuas, was of one that flew past the Garland Stone on the 2nd of September.

Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*
Very abundant breeder

The first Puffins of the year were seen on the 13th of March, four days later than in 2017, the same date as 2016. A total of 30,895 individual Puffins were counted in April. This represents another large annual increase (+22%) and is once again the highest total since modern records began in 1988. Whole island counts of Puffins were made on two dates in April (8th and 14th) with the maximum count of 30,895 coming on the 8th. Counts were also conducted in North Haven on eleven dates between the 27th of March and 18th of April to assess Puffin attendance (Table 4). Puffin productivity was 0.62 which is lower than in recent years. Survival of breeding adults (2016-17) was 0.91.

Table 4. Spring counts of individual Puffins in 2018: North Haven

Date	No. individual puffins in North Haven
30-Mar	5440
02-Apr	1384
03-Apr	5000
04-Apr	4997
05-Apr	2489
06-Apr	600
07-Apr	4121
10-Apr	290
12-Apr	375
13-Apr	4095
Max.	5440 (30 th Mar)

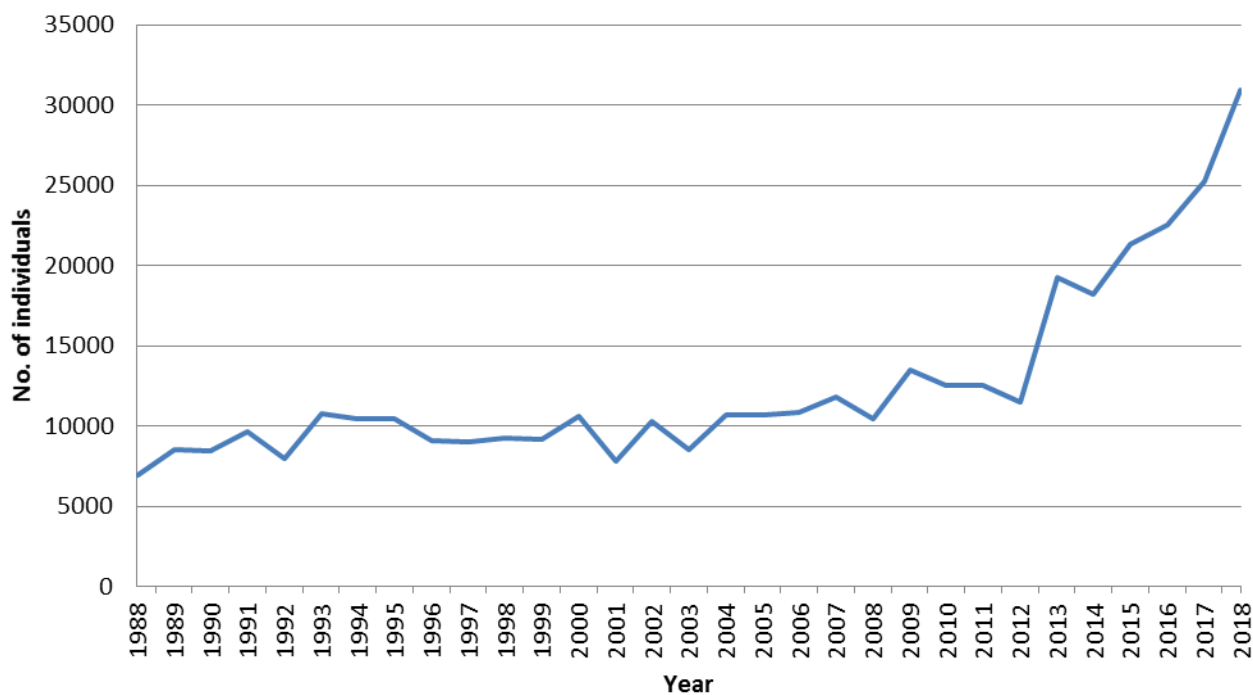


Figure 12. Population trend of Atlantic Puffin on Skomer 1988-2018.

Razorbill *Alca torda*
Very abundant breeder

7,529 individuals were counted in 2018. This represents an increase of 4% since the last whole island count in 2016. Productivity was 0.61 fledglings per active and regular nest site which is the highest value since at least 2001. Survival of breeding adults (2016-17) was 0.85.

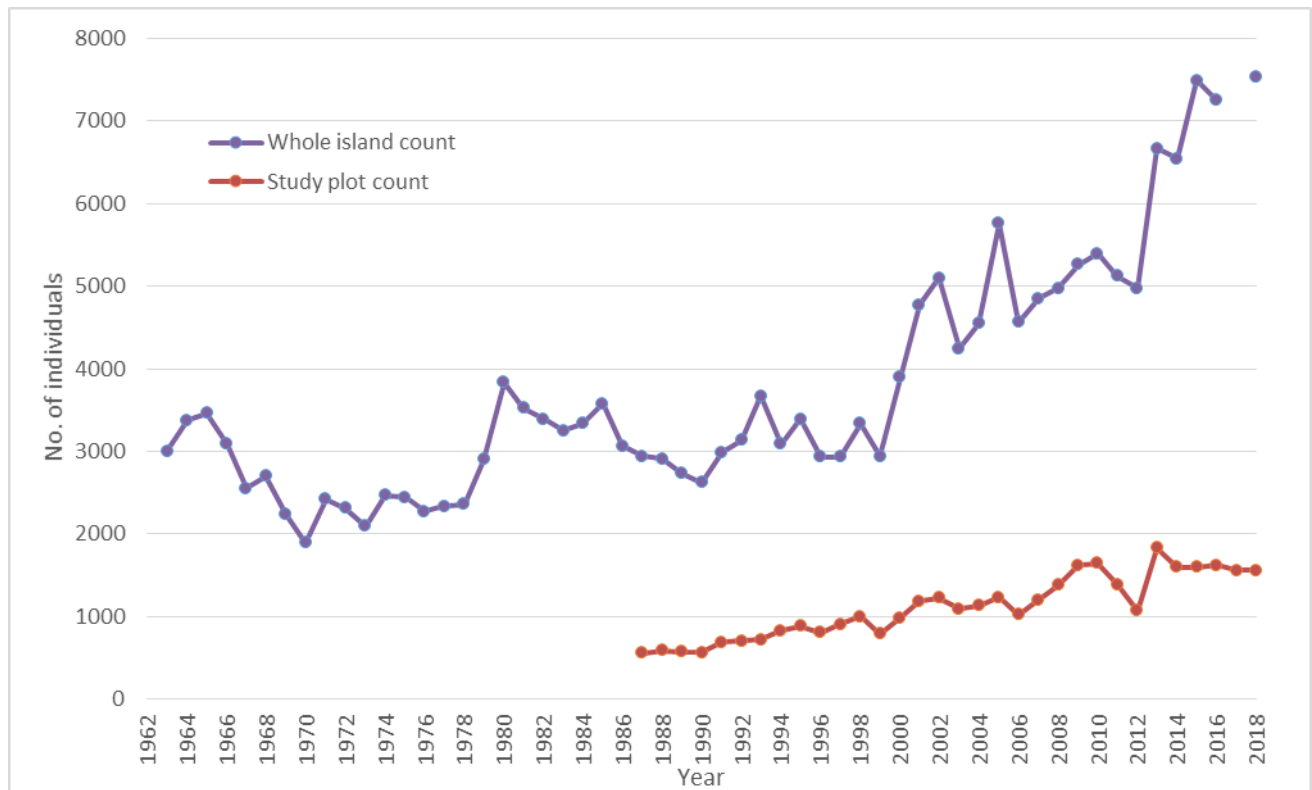


Figure 13. Population trend of Razorbill on Skomer 1962-2018.

Guillemot *Uria aalge*
Very abundant breeder

There was no whole island count in 2018. Productivity was 0.76 which is higher than last year's figure of 0.66. Adult survival at the Amos study colony was slightly down for the second year running.

New Guillemot population study plots were initiated in 2017 meaning that comparison before that date are difficult, However numbers across all study plots at the Wick were up slightly by 2.47% between 2017 and 2018.

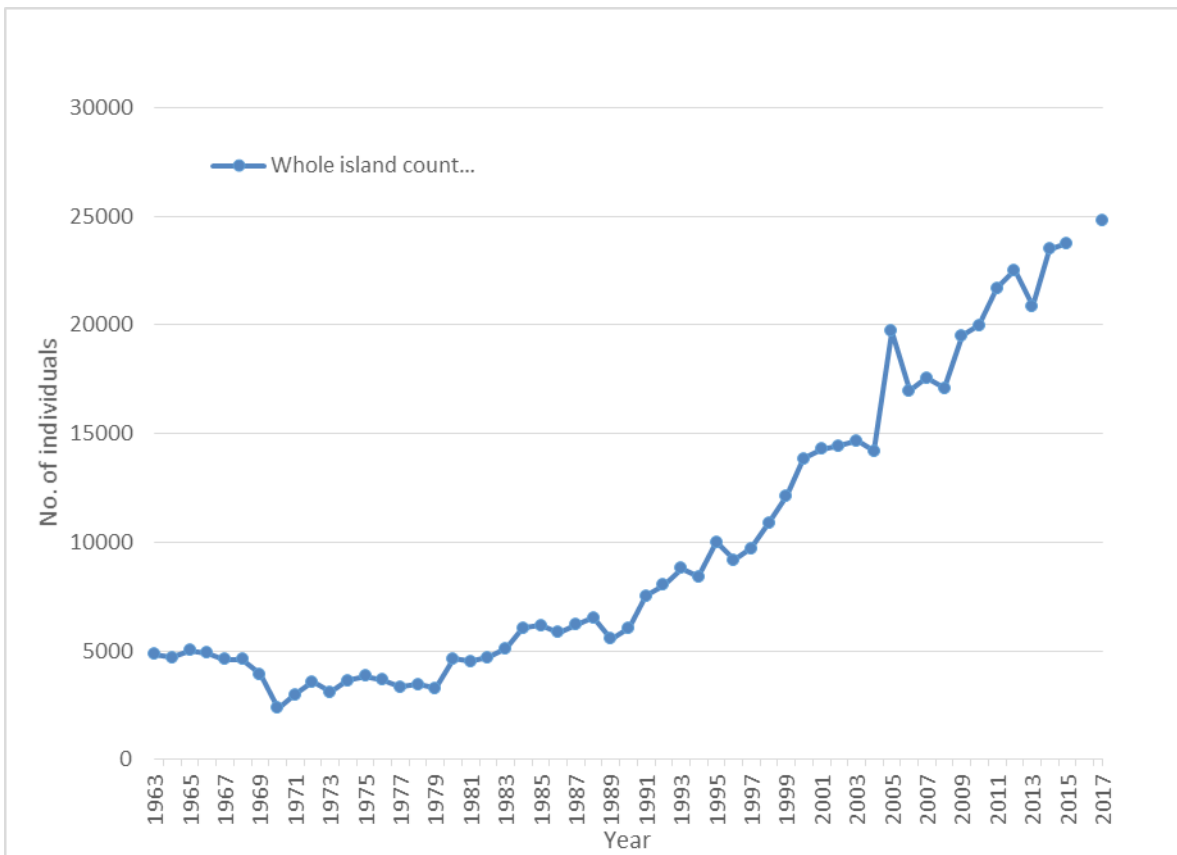


Figure 14. Population trend of Guillemot on Skomer 1963-2017.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Scarce migrant, though uncommon in some years

Five Sandwich Terns were seen in St Brides Bay on the 21st of August. Eight on the 2nd of August were the second and last record of the year.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Scarce migrant. Possibly under-recorded, with many records of 'commic' tern in the logs likely to have mostly involved this species

Four were seen in St Brides Bay on the 21st of August. This was the only confirmed record of this species in 2018.

'Commic' tern

Two were seen from a boat trip on the 6th of May. In September there were three on the 1st, 22 on the 2nd and eight on the 21st.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*
Abundant breeder

A continuing decline leaves the number of nests around the island at 1,236, the second lowest figure since records began in 1960. Productivity was 0.66. This result is higher than the productivity reported in 2017 (0.33) and the average productivity for the last five years (0.57), but lower than historical records (0.69). The survival rate of breeding adult Kittiwakes in 2015-16 was 0.96, a continued recovery in recent years that may be good news – an upturn that may indicate the continuation of the apparently decadal cycles of adult survival since 1978, rather than a consistent decline in adult survival. Given the difficulties faced by Kittiwake populations further north in the UK, we remain vigilant for the status of the Skomer population.

Once breeding birds had left the nesting areas, movements, or large gatherings, of birds out at sea include: 110 on the 29th of August, 500 on the 21st of September and 95 on the 21st of November.

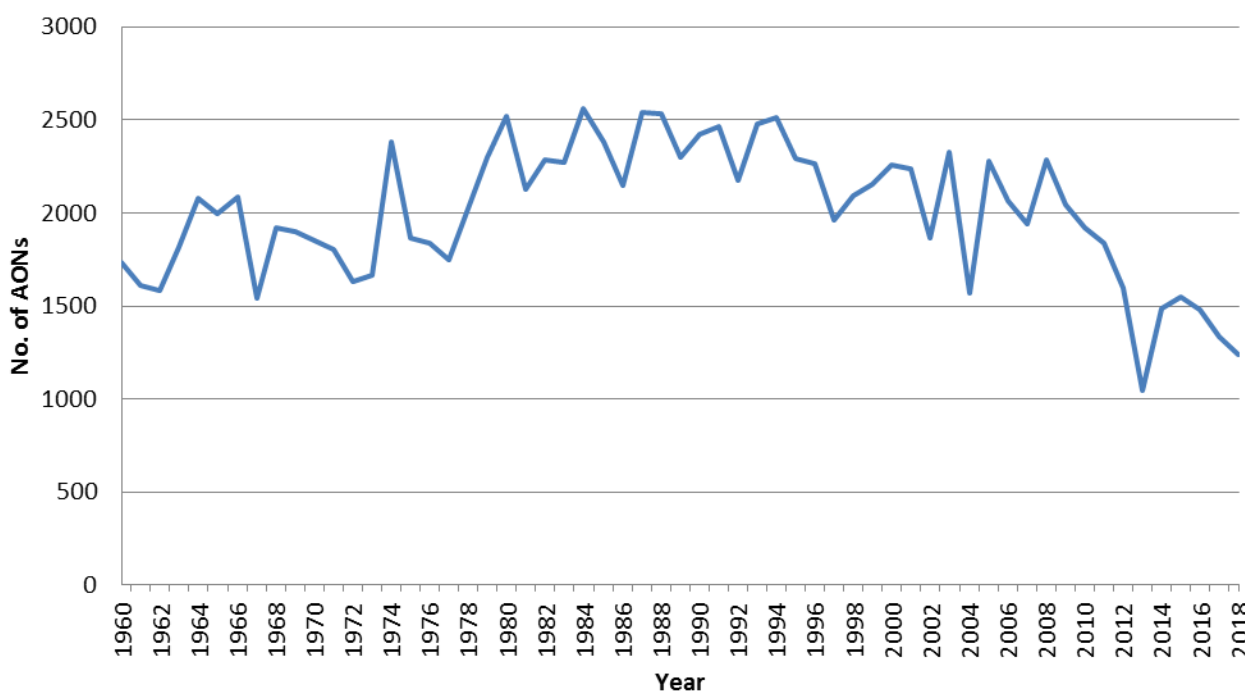


Figure 15. Population trend of Kittiwake on Skomer 1960-2018.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Bred at North Pond between 1965 and 1970, maximum 25 pairs. Abundant migrant, particularly in the autumn

There were records in every month during the recording period. The first came on occupation of the island on the 28th of February. March produced four on the 1st, 16 on the 2nd, five on the 3rd and an adult on the 31st. One was found dead on South Haven beach on the 5th of March. The only records in April and May were of three in Little Sound on the 19th of April and four on the 13th of May. June produced single birds on the 4th and 30th. Up to six were recorded in July. There were 22 on the 4th of August and up to ten during the rest of the month. There were also 22 in St Brides Bay on the 5th of September with smaller numbers through the rest of the month. Numbers increased slightly in October with 35 on the 28th and 47 on the 29th. The highest count of the year was 68 on the 11th of November and the final record of the year was of seven on the 22nd.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Uncommon visitor. This species has undergone a change in status, being considered a vagrant on the island (less than 10 records) until 2007

There were no spring records. The first records were two adults on the 17th and a juvenile on the 22nd of July. All records in August were of juveniles with two on the 7th and singles on the 12th and 14th. There were singles on the 10th of September and the 24th and 28th of October. The last record of the year was of two on the 16th of November.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Uncommon visitor

One was seen on the 28th of February. There were also single records on the 1st and 3rd of March.

The first of the autumn was seen in North Haven on the 24th of September. Singles also came on the 15th, 16th, 28th and 29th of October. The only record in November, and the final record, was of one on the 12th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Very abundant (but declining) breeder

The whole island population estimate was 5,410 AON which is 9.63% higher than 2017. Productivity was low at 0.58 chicks per AON and many chicks were found dead in or around nests. Survival of breeding adult birds 2016-17 dropped to 0.79, the lowest level since 2003.

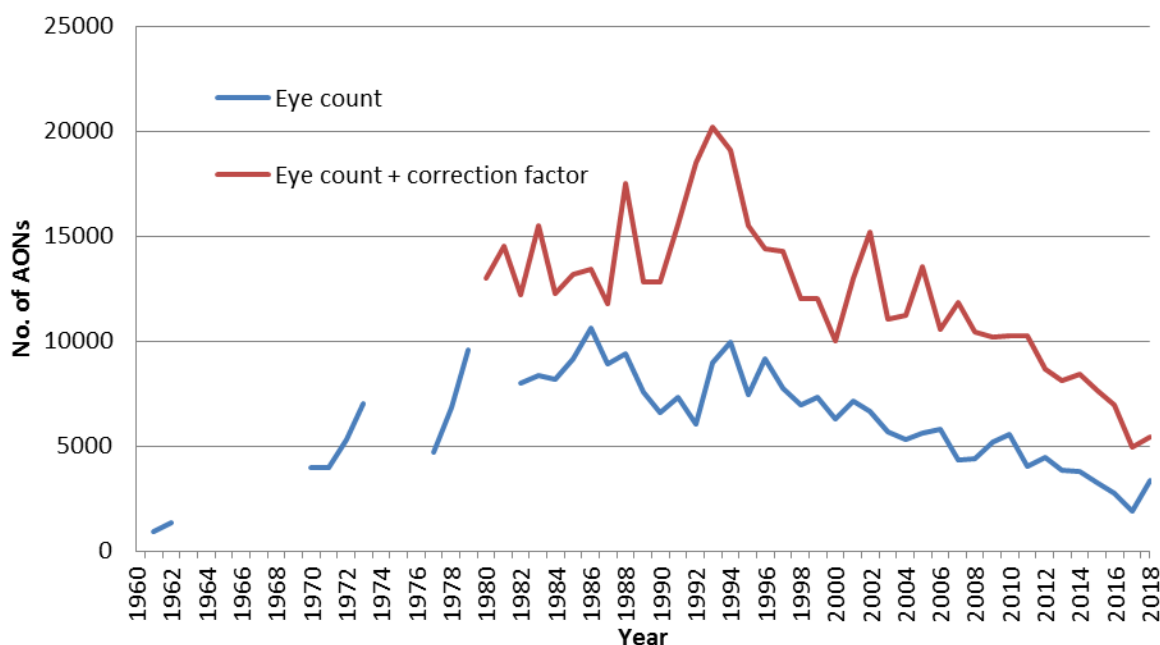


Figure 16. Population trend of Lesser Black-backed Gull on Skomer 1960-2018.

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*
Common (but declining) breeder

This year's whole island count was up by 23% on the previous year at 365 AON. As vegetation height was very low during the counting period more pairs may have been visible. Productivity was extremely low at 0.36. The most recent annual survival estimate (2016-17: 0.75) is returning to the average over the course of the study (1978-2016: 0.82), but this remains low. The continued decline in the Herring Gull population on Skomer suggests that 20% adult mortality may be contributing to this decline.

Counts of roosts (North Haven and South Haven) include 151 on the 17th of October, 170 on the 2nd of November and 217 on the 13th of November.

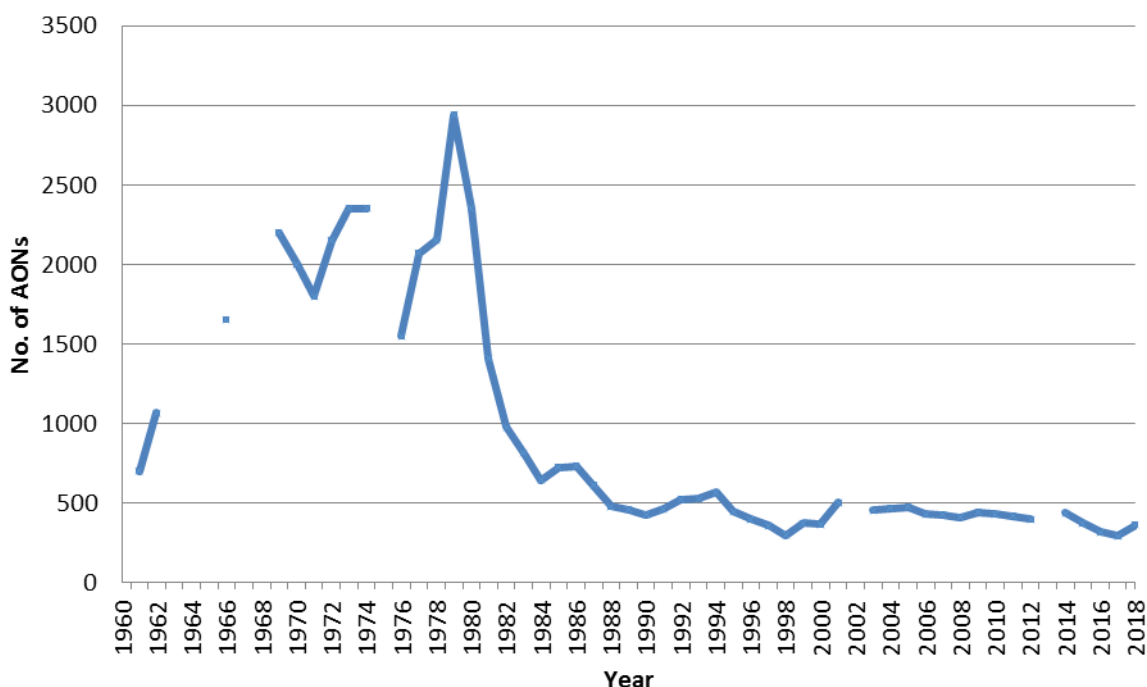


Figure 17. Population trend of European Herring Gull on Skomer 1960-2018.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*
Vagrant. Ten previous records, most recently 2015

An immature was seen flying over the Farm towards North Haven at 09:30 on the 27th of March. This is the first record of this species since 2015.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*
Fairly common breeder.

120 AON were counted in 2018 which is exactly the same number as the previous year. Productivity was 1.92, the highest figure since 1996.

Counts of roosts (mostly at Pigstone Bay and the Wick) in the autumn include 190 on the 22nd of September and 147 on the 1st of October.

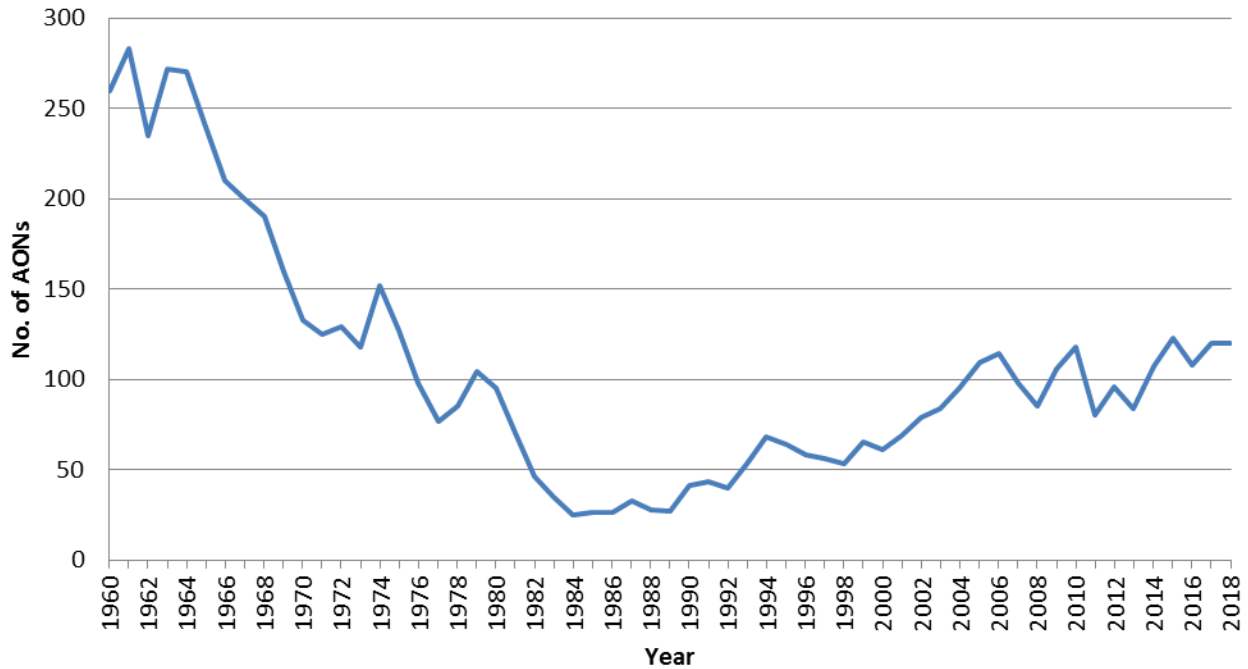


Figure 18. Population trend of great Black-backed Gull on Skomer 1960-2018.

Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*
Fairly common visitor

Birds will occasionally stop off for several days around buildings, presumably to rest and feed before moving on. The largest flock recorded contained around 500 birds and was seen flying over North Haven on the 26th of May. A bird was seen in suitable breeding habitat on the Neck on the 28th of May but breeding was not proven.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*
Previously an uncommon breeder (up to 50 territories in 1970s). Last breeding record 1988. Now a Scarce migrant

There were no records in spring. The only record of the year concerned a flock of eight on the 29th of October.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*
Scarce breeder, though uncommon in some years. Common migrant, particularly in late autumn

Present on the island throughout most of the season. At least three pairs are thought to have bred. A typically late nester, a bird was acting in an agitated manner around a patch of Rosebay Willowherb south of the Farm on the 22nd of June and a nest was found on the ground near Moorey Mere on the 16th July. The first juvenile was seen on the 5th of August.

Peak autumn counts of migrants came in October and November with 79 on the 20th and 370 on the 28th of October and 77 on the 2nd of November.

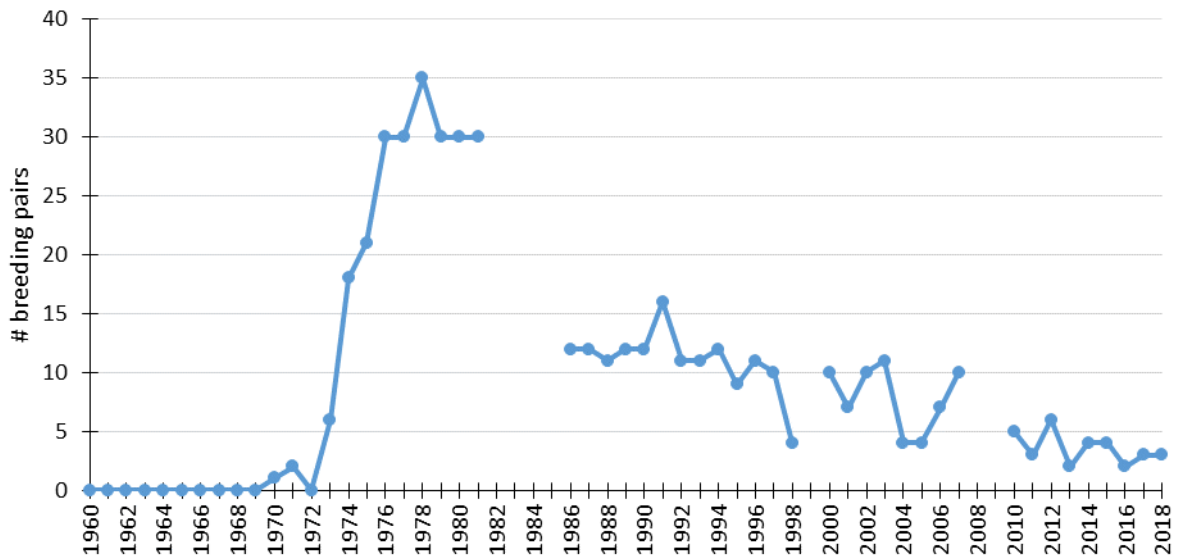


Figure 19. Population trend of Wood Pigeon on Skomer 1946-2018.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Uncommon migrant

Occurring with increasing regularity. The vast majority of records are from the Farm. The first record of the year was of one on the 6th of April. May saw a massive peak in records with some large flocks seen. On the 6th a flock of 19 were seen briefly on the old farm house before flying off together. There were also eight recorded on the 19th. There were further records of multiple birds in May (between two and three on five further dates). All other records concerned single birds including five in June, four in July, one in August and one on September.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Rare and sporadic breeder. Last confirmed breeding record 1991 (possibly 2002). Scarce migrant

The first Cuckoo of the year was heard at North Valley Crossing on the 26th of May. The next record was of one heard over the Neck on the 9th of June. Records increased in July (15 records). A male was present on the 4th and 5th. Singles were seen on several more dates including juveniles on the 29th and 30th (last record of year) and there were two (unaged birds) on the 18th.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Scarce and sporadic breeder. Last breeding record 2007

The only record in 2018 was of a bird that was seen in North Valley for three days running from the 28th to the 30th of September.

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus*
Vagrant. One on the 30th of May 2018

One of the highlights of 2018 was a Snowy Owl on the 30th of May. The bird was found by DA, who was leading a birdwatching tour on the island, near Pigstone Bay. The bird (probably an immature female) was visibly tired and was relentlessly mobbed by local crows and Great Black-backed Gulls so it was perhaps, not surprising that it moved on again as soon as it could and was not seen the next day. This represents the first record of this species for the island.



Snowy Owl being mobbed by Carrion Crow, Pigstone Bay, May 2018. (Photo by E. Stubbings)

Little Owl *Athene noctua*
Scarce breeder. Typically, between one and two pairs, maximum six pairs 1985

There was no evidence of breeding in 2018. Furthermore, there were only five observations all year. The first concerned one calling from near the Farm on the 6th and 8th of March. Singles on the 9th, 16th and 20th of March were the only other records in 2018.

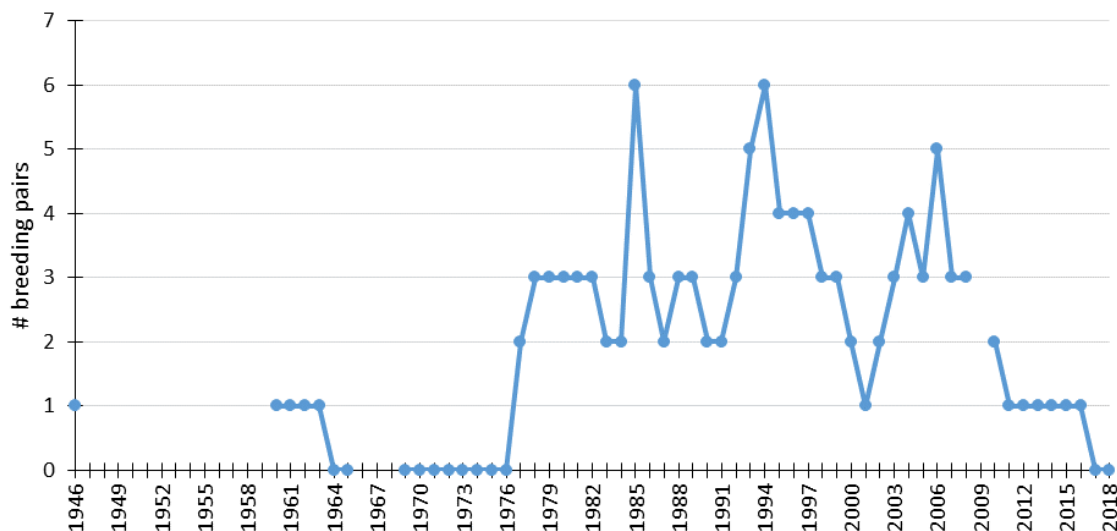


Figure 20. Population trend of Little Owl on Skomer 1946-2018.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Rare visitor. Fourteen previous records (four in the spring), most recently October 2010

Three were present in North Valley Crossing between the 4th and 7th of November, although they were not seen on the 6th due to bad weather. One observation involved one seen carrying a mouse towards Green Pond and another simultaneously heard calling repeatedly in the bushes at North Valley Crossing on the 7th (BB). This represents the first record since 2010 when one was seen in North Valley on the 1st of October.



Long-eared Owl (one of three), North Valley Crossing, November 2018. (Photo by E. Stubbings)

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Scarce breeder, though uncommon in some years. Maximum 14 territories 1993. Uncommon migrant

Up to six pairs bred, which is two more than 2017 and the highest total since 2009. Territories were located on North Castle (behind the Harold Stone), between the Farm and Green Pond, between the Farm and North Valley Crossing, North Pond research hide, west of North Pond public hide and South Stream. Recorded from the 1st of March. Display was first noted at the beginning of April and continued until the end of the month. The first sign that eggs had hatched came on the 14th of May with hissing and alarming. Food deliveries were recorded from the 15th of May confirming that eggs had hatched within the previous few days. Magpies were seen robbing cache's on the 16th and 17th. Four chicks were found just 20m from the Farm on the 20th of May with further broods found at South Stream on the 21st, west of North Pond public hide on the 24th and North Pond research hide on the 29th. Chicks were clearly being fed plenty of small mammals as adult activity was almost non stop during the second half of May and chicks had already begun to wander by the beginning of June. One brood, probably from near the Farm, was tracked moving east across the central fields towards North Haven during June with four chicks calling from the bracken at the top of the track down to the Wardens House on the 21st. One of these chicks was found near the Wardens House on the 27th grasping a captured Rabbit but apparently too weak to eat it. Unfortunately both the Rabbit and the owl died later that day.

Counts in Spring probably mainly involve breeding birds but numbers are bolstered in autumn by locally fledged young and later on by migrants. There is usually a lull in activity during August as breeding draws to

an end with numbers recorded rising slowly through September. Peak counts in October and November include seven on the 18th of October and 7th of November.



Short-eared Owl, May 2018. (Photo by E. Stubbings)

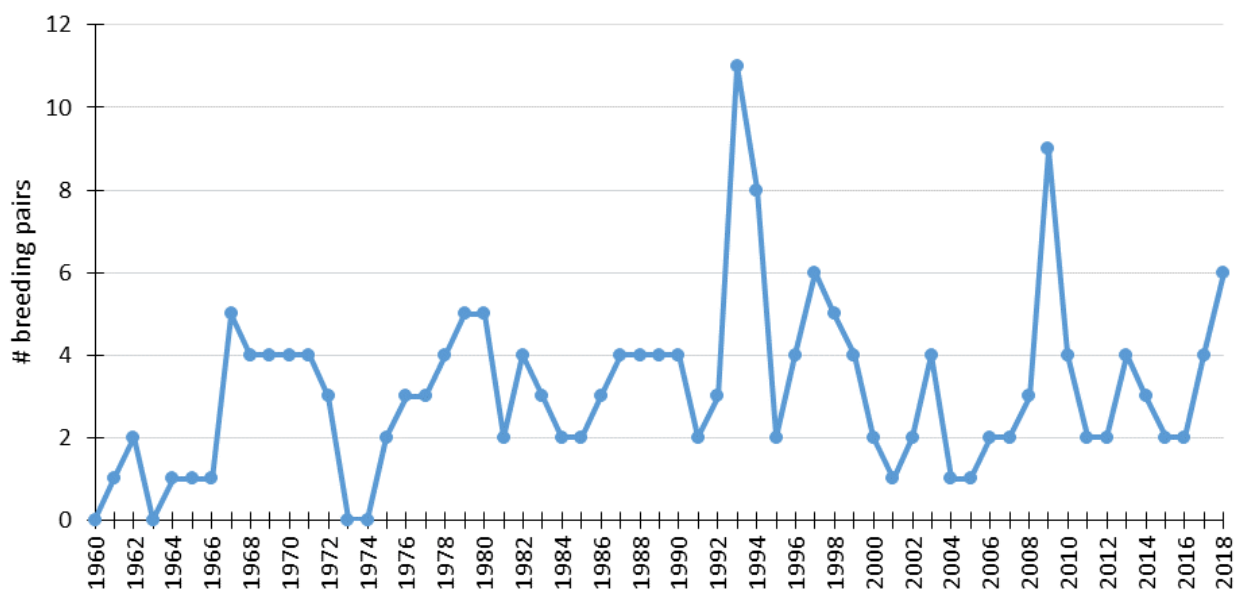


Figure 21. Population trend of Short-eared Owl on Skomer 1960-2018.

Common Swift *Apus apus*
Common migrant

The first swift was recorded on the 25th of April by a day visitor and one was seen over the Farm on the 28th. Passage in May was light, peaking on the 18th and 19th with 20 and ten respectively and another count of ten on the 24th. Some slightly higher counts were made in June with 16 on the 12th (including ten heading north east over Skomer Head), 24 on the 22nd and 36 on the 27th. July produced two counts of ten on the 3rd and 9th. August then produced two on the 4th, three on the 5th and two on the 12th. The final record of the year was of three on the 31st of August.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*
Vagrant. First record for the island on the 19th of May 2018

The first record for the island was seen and photographed over the north coast on the 19th of May, where it spent an hour or two flying back and forth feeding in company with a few Common Swifts.



Alpine Swift, May 2018. (Photo by Ted Wallen)

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*
Scarce migrant, though uncommon in some years

One was seen at the Farm between the 7th and 9th of September and there was one on the 11th. There was also one present in North Haven between the 26th and 28th of September.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*
Rare migrant

A species where the majority of records have come since 2007 (only five records previous to that date). Juveniles can now turn up in late summer and records can be spread throughout the rest of the autumn. 2018 was no exception to this trend with a late summer juvenile in North Valley on the 31st of August. The next record was on the 24th of September and there were four further records that month. October saw singles on six dates as well as an incredible three on the 7th.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Scarce and sporadic breeder. Last breeding attempt 2013. Uncommon migrant, though fairly common in some years

The first record came on the 28th of February. A female was then present for most of March. There were records of up to two until the 17th of April and a male was seen on the 30th. Records were then well spread throughout the rest of the spring and summer. There were eight records of singles in May and nine records in June, including males on five dates in June. This continued through July (13 records) with a male seen on a further five dates. Records increased in August with four seen on the 17th and two on the 21st, 28th, 30th and 31st including a male and female on the 31st. September saw records increase further with up to six present. Records were almost daily through October with five seen on the 5th and 19th. Between one and four were present in November and the last record was of two on the 22nd.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Uncommon migrant

The first Merlin was seen on the 28th of February during the 'beast from the east'. March and April brought almost daily records with up to three individuals being present, including an adult male on the 20th of March. One, possibly two, were still present at the beginning of May until records started to peter out from the 14th. The final confirmed record of the spring was of one going west over North Castle on the 24th of May.

The first confirmed record of the autumn was of a juvenile female on the 15th of September. Records were then sporadic until October when a juvenile male and a female type bird were recorded and two were logged on the 28th. There were then records involving single birds up until the 21st of November, this being the final record of the year.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Rare migrant. Twenty-seven previous records, most recently two in 2014

The only confirmed record in 2018 was of one on the 24th of September.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Scarce breeder. Maximum four pairs 1998 and 2003. Uncommon migrant

The first Peregrine was seen on the 28th of February. A pair came onto territory at Protheroe's Dock during March and although there were sightings of birds all around the island, including in some historically occupied territories, this was the only confirmed breeding pair in 2018. Juveniles were, as usual, seen interfering with the activities of adults, causing the adults to be constantly chasing them away. Two juveniles were recorded on the 5th of May. The breeding pair were reported 'going nuts' over Protheroe's Dock on the 7th of June, possibly indicating that eggs had hatched and the adults activity increased thereafter. Two chicks probably left the nest area on the 14th of July. From then on just one juvenile (a male) was regularly seen on the Neck and in North Haven, presumably meaning that the other one disappeared soon after fledging. The remaining chick was observed still begging from one of its parents close to the nest site on the 17th of August and being fed (in flight!) on the 22nd. There was evidence that this situation had changed towards the end of the month however as an adult was seen scolding and driving away the juvenile on the 29th of August. This is further backed up by there being no further reports of the juvenile until the very end of September. Sightings of Peregrines in general dwindled in October. The highest count of the year was of seven (probably involving

breeding birds and previous years young) on the 5th of April and the last record of the year was of three on the 21st of November.

Additional interesting sightings include one carrying prey at Pigstone Bay on the 18th of May (possibly indicating a missed pair) and one seen killing a Guillemot on the 19th of May. A bird reported as being 'pale grey' was seen at Pigstone Bay on the 30th of May.

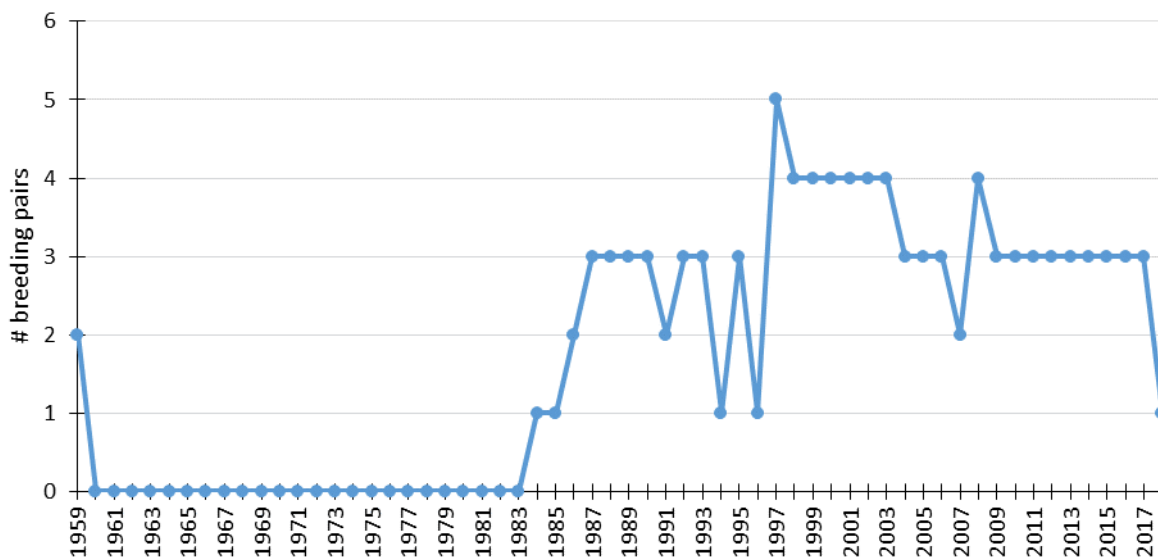


Figure 22. Population trend of Peregrine on Skomer 1959-2018.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

Rare migrant. Twelve previous records, most recently May 2016

One was found by SG on the 18th of April and stayed, almost exclusively in the same bush, until the 21st. During its stay it was able to find plenty of food in the form of bees, beetles and butterflies by simply dropping from its favoured bush onto the ground or nearby lynchet. Towards the end of its stay it was also observed catching lizards and carrying prey items to a location on the other side of the Farm for caching.

Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Scarce breeder. Fairly common visitor from the mainland

Five pairs are thought to have attempted breeding in 2018. All five pairs managed to get at least as far as having eggs in the nest. There have only been three or four years since 1993 (when the current annual surveillance of chough populations in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park commenced) in which as many as five pairs have attempted to breed on Skomer: three or four is more the "norm" for the island. Only one pair was known to have successfully fledged (two) young, although a second pair may also have fledged at least one young.

The first two birds were seen on the 27th of February. Fourteen were logged on the 13th of March including a floating flock of six. Nineteen were then logged on the 31st of March including a flock of ten heading to roost over North Haven at dusk. Eighteen were recorded on the 3rd and 4th of April including flocks of 14 and ten respectively. Birds were now occupying breeding territories and were being joined by various sized flocks of non-breeding birds. The first confirmed nesting activity came on the 7th with a pair carrying nest material

towards the Lantern and a pair courtship displaying at Captain Kites. A bird was seen with nesting material at Pigstone Bay on the 9th. A pair was seen repeatedly entering a nest site at Tom's House on the 16th and mating was seen at the Garland Stone and High Cliff on the 19th and 20th respectively. An incubation change over was then seen at the Wick on the 5th of May and one was seen entering South Castle Beach Cave on the 18th. The Paynes Ledge nest site, which is impossible to see from land, was visited several times by boat in June and was occupied once again. Assuming that the bird seen with nesting material at Pigstone Bay was heading to Paynes Ledge this puts the total number of breeding pairs at five, situated at the Lantern, South Castle Beach Cave, the Wick, the Basin and Paynes Ledge. The first two chicks of the year were seen at the Lantern on the 27th of June. This family then roamed South Haven and North Haven in July. There was also a tantalising report of a possible juvenile with adults at Paynes Ledge on the 21st of July.

An autumn flock of 30 was seen over the Neck on the 14th of September but was not seen again.

Table 5. Peak counts of Chough 2018.

Date	31 st March	3rd/4th April	2 nd May	17 th May	3 dates in June	25 th July	21 st Aug	14 th Sept	18 th Oct	16 th Nov
Max count	19	18	21	22	15	18	18	32	11	9

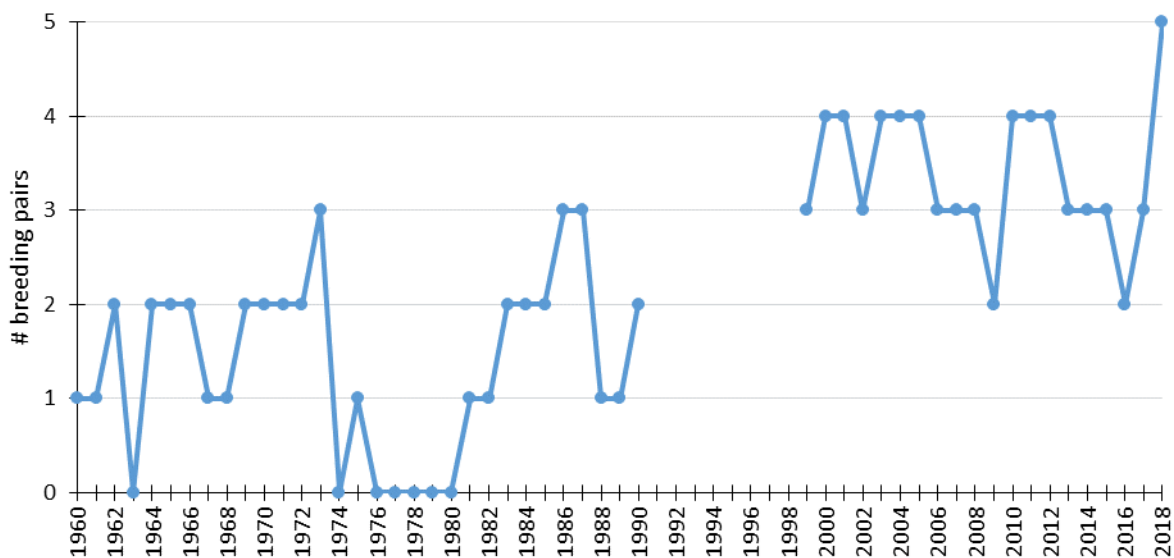


Figure 23. Population trend of Chough on Skomer 1960-2018

Magpie *Pica pica*
Uncommon breeder

Present throughout the season, with a total of four pairs recorded breeding. A nest in the Ivy in North Haven fledged chicks on the 5th of June. Peak counts in autumn include twelve on the 21st of August, 20 on the 22nd of September, 30 (highest count of year) on the 18th of October and 16 on the 16th of November. There were two separate incidences of Magpies being predated by a Sparrowhawk in October.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Fairly common breeder, though not censused every year. Fairly common to common migrant

Present on arrival, and throughout the season. Survey methods have serious limitations for an adaptable bird like the jackdaw. The numbers nesting in boulder screes, on cliff edges and in burrows is undoubtedly far higher than are currently picked up during breeding bird surveys, and thus we should be hesitant when using these figures, which have varied enormously as shown in figure 24.

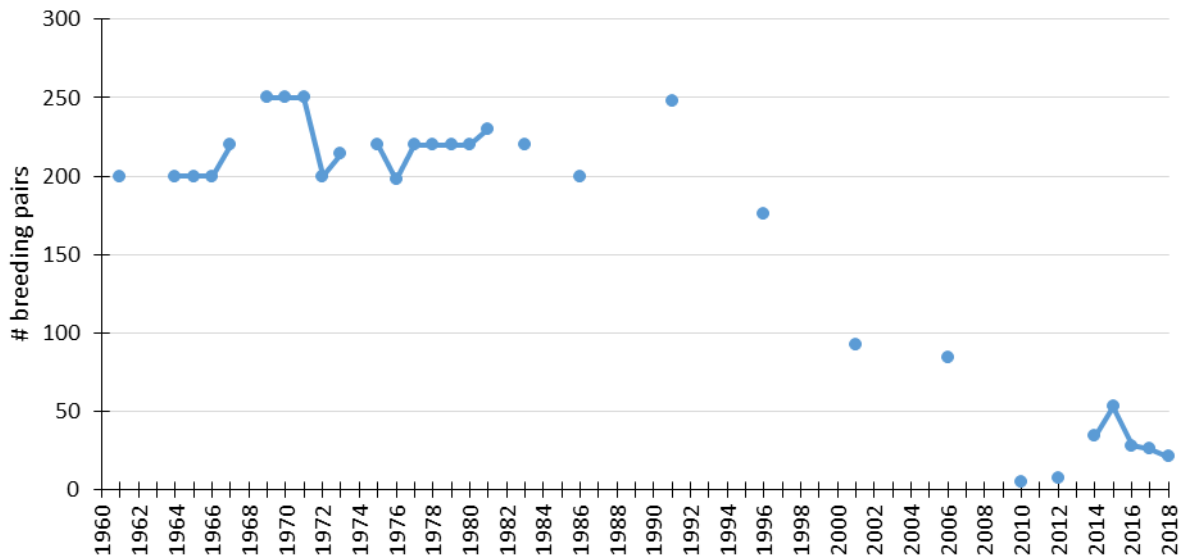


Figure 24. Number of breeding pairs of Jackdaw on Skomer, showing huge range in numbers.

Nest building commenced at the beginning of April with lots seen carrying nest material on the 4th. The first chicks were seen on the Isthmus on the 19th of May. The cliff top burrows around North and South Havens, including the Isthmus, are probably the largest concentration of nesting Jackdaws on the island and annual counts of occupied burrows in these areas could also provide a good measure of annual breeding figures.

Figure 25 shows the monthly peak counts over the last few years. The peaks in early spring and autumn reflect the departure and arrival of winter visitors.

Jackdaws were seen stealing fish from Puffins at the Wick on the 19th of June. The peak count of the year was on the 29th of October when 700 were counted. There was also another report of a white collared bird, possibly belonging to one of the non-british races ('Nordic' *C. m. monedula*, 'Russian' *C. c. Soemmerringii*, or an integrate), on the 20th of October.

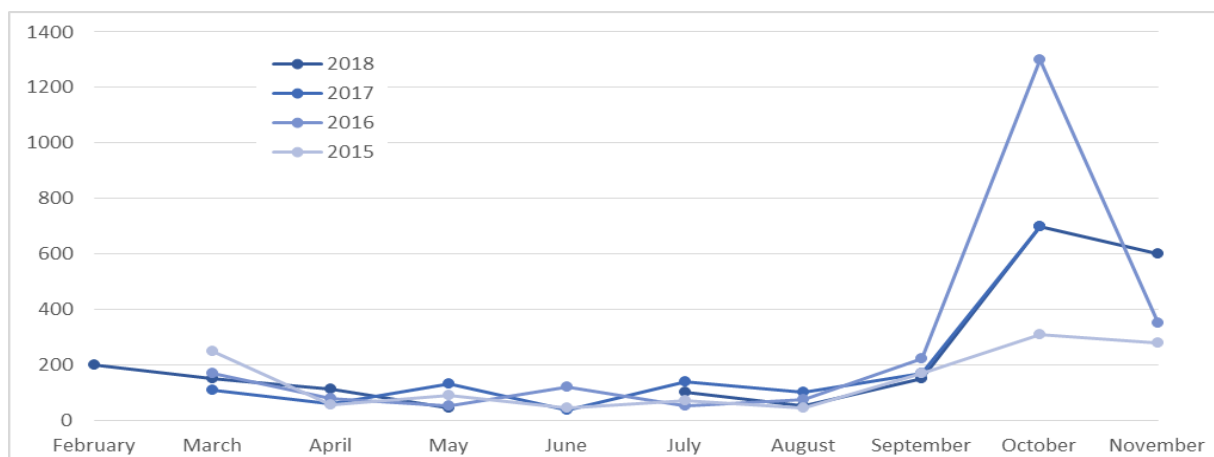


Figure 25. Monthly maxima of Jackdaw 2015-2018

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*
Uncommon migrant

The only records of the year were of one at North Pond on the 13th of September and one on the 7th of October.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*
Uncommon breeder

Present throughout the season. Ten breeding pairs were picked up on breeding bird surveys, which is less than the twelve pairs recorded last year. However, this is probably a slight underestimate and the population has probably remained stable at between ten and twelve pairs over the last couple of years. First noted carrying nesting material near the Amos on the 30th of March, with the first incubating bird recorded on the 14th of April, and chicks on the 17th and 18th of May. Chicks began fledging at the beginning of June. Peak counts include 23 on the 8th of April, 30 on the 22nd of September and 40 (highest count of year) on the 18th of November. One with white patches in its plumage was recorded on the 11th of October.

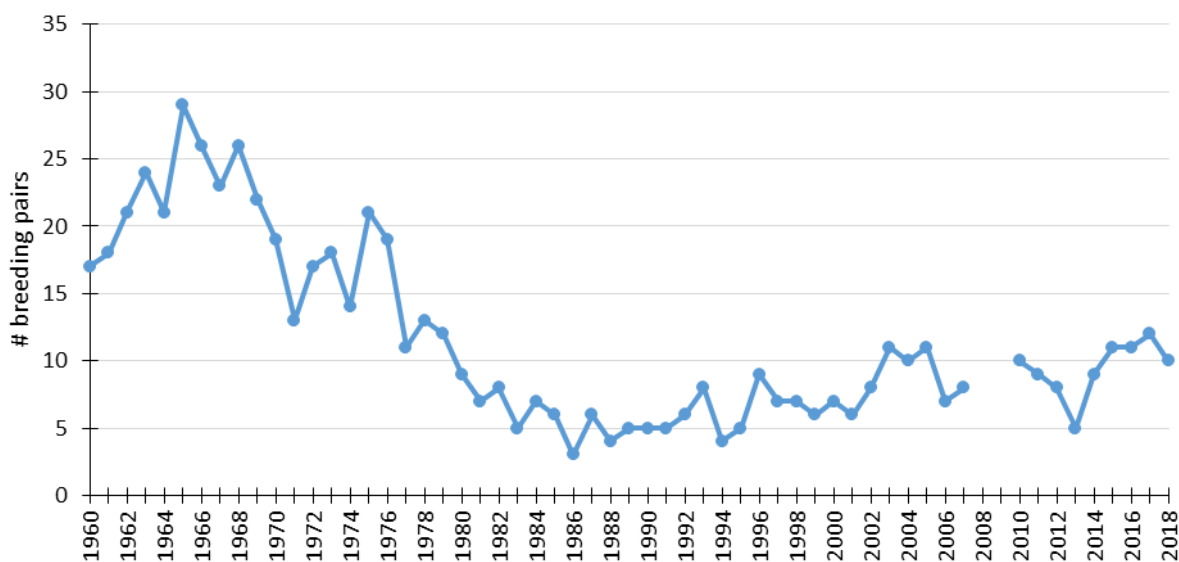


Figure 26. Population trend of Carrion Crow on Skomer 1960-2018

Raven *Corvus corax*
Scarce breeder. Fairly common autumn visitor

Seven or eight pairs bred. These were located at the Lantern, Castle Bay, South Haven, Mew Stone, the Wick, the Basin/Toms House and Paynes Ledge with a probable eighth nest at Pigstone Bay. A pair were nest building in South Haven during the extremely cold weather on the 28th of February. Eggs were first noted in the South Haven nest on the 10th of March and the first chicks in same nest on the 4th of April. This nest has been extremely successful over the past few years and adults and young are literally surrounded by food in the form of seabirds and their eggs. The first birds fledged on the 14th of May and most had fledged by the 19th. Predation events were recorded, ad hoc, in birdlog wherever possible and the results are summarised in Table 6.

Autumn flocks began to build in August with a peak count on the last day of that month of 120. September's peak count was a surprisingly low 60 on the 14th. Numbers began to drop again in October, as the number of fledging Manx Shearwaters dwindled. Numbers at the start of the month reached a maximum of 50 on the

5th before the population settled back down to what are probably breeding birds settling back into winter territories from the 28th.

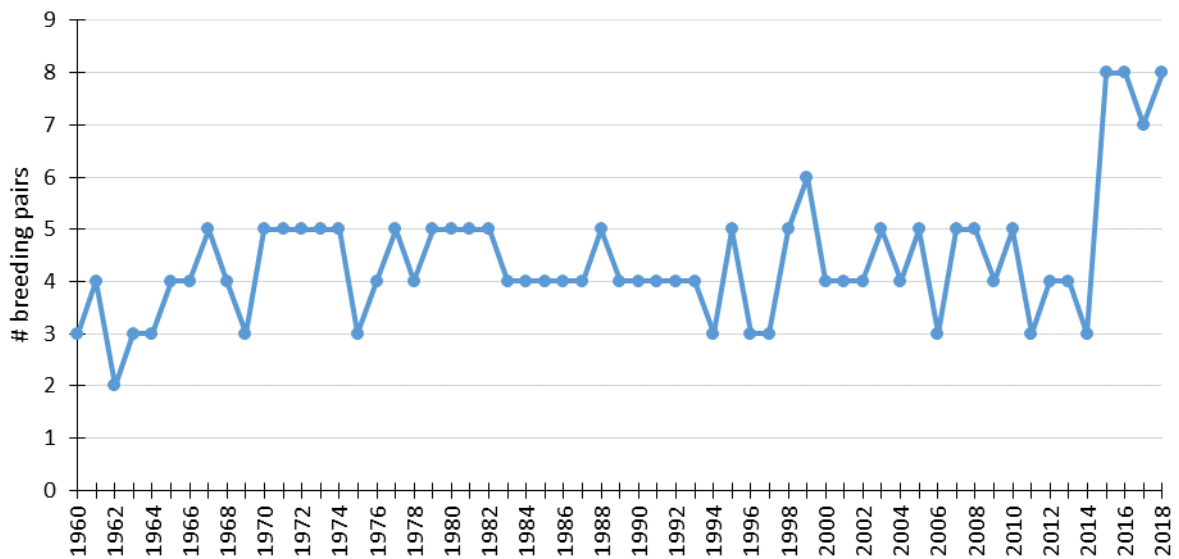


Figure 27. Population trend of Raven on Skomer 1960-2018

Table 6. Predation events by Ravens in 2018.

Date	Location	Event
17 th of April	South Haven	Adults feeding an adult Manx Shearwater to chicks
1 st of May	Wick	Adults 'terrorising' breeding auks
7 th of May	North Haven	Predating Puffin/shearwater egg
8 th of May	North Haven	Predating Puffin/shearwater egg
12 th of May	North Haven and Garland Stone	Predating Puffin/shearwater egg
18 th of May	Bull Hole and Wick	Digging into burrows (Bull Hole) and egg stashing (Wick)
29 th of May	Neck	Predating Razorbill egg
17 th of June	Bull Hole	Predating Puffin/shearwater egg



Raven tussling with Peregrine, November 2018. (Photo by E. Stubbings)

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Fairly common migrant

The first migrant Goldcrest was recorded on the 12th of March and the peak count that month was of six on the 27th. April saw small numbers passing through, especially at the start of the month with a peak count of six on the 9th. There were just three records in May with one on the 1st, two on the 2nd and one on the 3rd.

Autumn passage began in September with one on the Neck on the 5th. Records were then near daily through the rest of September, October and most of November. Some higher autumn counts include nine on the 23rd of September, eight on the 7th and 10th of October and seven on the 1st of November. One was found dead at the Farm on the 12th of September.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Scarce autumn migrant, though uncommon in some years. Rare spring migrant

There were once again no spring records and the first of the year was found in North Haven on the 30th of September. There were singles on the 14th, 23rd and 29th of October and two on the 31st (North Haven and Green Pond). The only November record and last of the year was of one at Green Pond on the 1st.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Fairly common autumn migrant

One was present during the sub zero temperatures at the beginning of March. Up to three were then present throughout that month. The final records of the spring were of singles on the 5th and 7th of April.

The next record involved a locally dispersed juvenile caught and ringed on the 12th of July. The same bird was then seen on and off, mostly at the Farm, for the rest of the month and into August. One, possibly two, were

present on and off in August and it wasn't until September that a few more arrived on the island. There were seven on the 27th and there were eight the next day. Some large arrivals occurred in October with 25 on the 7th, 58 (highest count of year) on the 17th and 46 on the 18th. The highest count in November was nine on the 2nd and the final record of the year was of two on the 22nd.



Blue Tit in North Valley, October 2018. (Photo S.K. Purdon)

Great Tit *Parus major*

Uncommon migrant. Scarce in some years, and occasionally absent

One was heard from the 5th of March giving its 'teacher teacher' call. There were two on the 3rd of April and the last record of the spring was of one on the 4th.

The next set of records came in late September with the first on the 27th and two on the 30th. Records increased slightly in October with eight on the 7th, 17th and 20th. There were no records in November, the last being one on the 29th of October.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Uncommon autumn migrant, though rather sporadic. Rare in spring and summer

There was just one record in 2018 with a single bird being seen on the 19th of October. This came during an influx of Blue Tits and Great Tits but wasn't a precursor to a larger influx by this species.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Scarce breeder. Previously an uncommon breeder, but is currently undergoing a drastic decline. Common migrant

Extremely sadly, no singing birds were picked up on early morning breeding birds surveys and, although a couple of birds were heard singing between the Farm and Skomer Head on a few occasions in spring, it was a very poor year for this species on Skomer, the first year on record with no breeding pairs recorded. At least one bird was present on the island on arrival on the 27th of February and up to ten were seen during the 'beast from the east'. One was seen at the Sales Point on the 19th of March in an exhausted state, possibly having struggled during the extremely cold weather earlier in the month. Small numbers were then recorded

infrequently throughout the rest of the spring and summer. A possible juvenile was seen in Calves Park on the 10th of July.

There were no records in the whole of August and until the 24th of September when 20 arrived. Autumn migration began in earnest in October with busy days of passage on the 7th (1,245 – highest count of year), 17th (407) and 18th (582). There were three days with over 70 birds in November and the final record of the year was of two on the 21st.

Table 7. Peak counts of Skylark in 2018.

Date	7 th Oct	16 th Oct	17 th Oct	18 th Oct	20 th Oct	29 th Oct	30 th Oct	2 nd Nov	1st/13th Oct
Max count	1,245	132	407	582	147	110	125	75	70

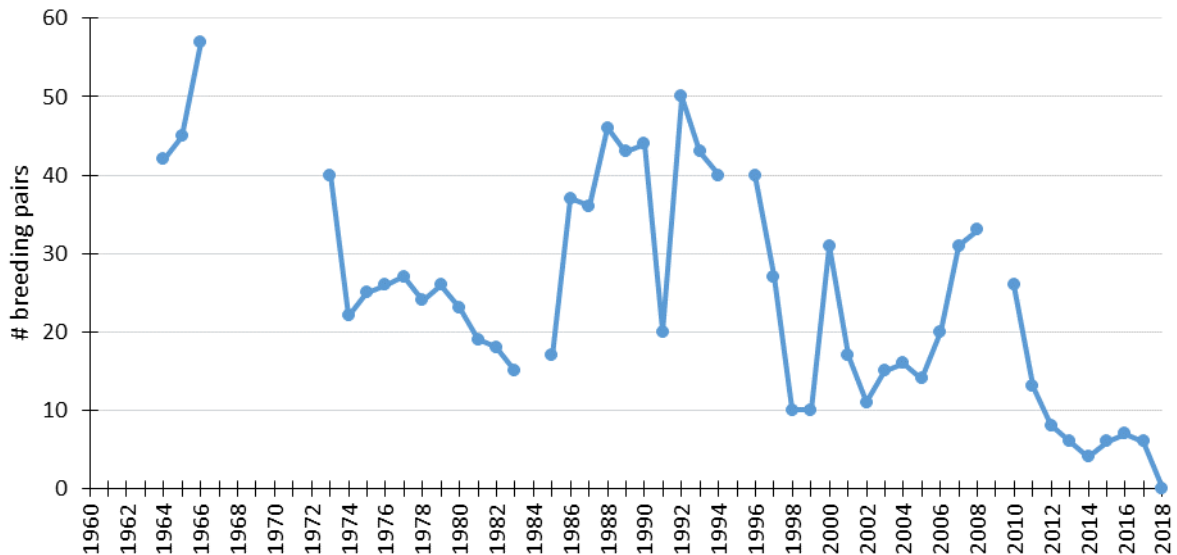


Figure 28. Population trend of Skylark on Skomer 1960-2018

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Common migrant

The first record was of three on the 30th of March, a whole 18 days later than last year but unsurprising given the weather at the start of the month. Spring passage was typically drawn out, stretching well into June. High counts for the period include 33 on the 20th of April and 121 on the 5th of May.

There were two records of singles in July, six on the 13th of August and a single on the 31st. The rest of autumn passage was light with a maximum of six on the 24th of September. The final record was of one on the 27th of September.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Uncommon breeder. Very abundant migrant

At least six pairs attempted to breed. The first Swallow was seen on the 2nd of April. They were then seen on a daily basis throughout the rest of the spring and summer with numbers fluctuating according to the numbers of migrants passing through. The first big influx in April came on the 7th when 61 were recorded and other peaks in migration came on the 22nd (97) and 28th (65). Numbers of migrants increased in May with counts into three figures on six days – 150 on the 4th, 250 on the 5th, 129 on the 10th, 140 on the 17th, 309 on

the 18th and 200 on the 19th – summarised in Table 8. Small numbers of migrants were noted on the 5th (four) and 14th (four) of June.

Migrants and locally dispersed juveniles began moving again in July. This can sometimes only become apparent when there is suddenly a flock of 30 or so at the Farm where previously there had just been the usual few breeding pairs. The same applies in August but numbers may rise a little higher, for example 60 on the 13th and 65 on the 31st. Autumn migration peaked in the later half of September, particularly in a five day period between the 23rd and 27th. Small numbers were recorded in the first half of October with the exception of 151 on the 7th. An extremely late migrant was seen on the 18th of November.

Table 8. Peak Spring counts of Barn Swallow.

Date	7 th April	22 nd April	28 th April	4 th May	5 th May	10 th May	17 th May	18 th May	19 th May
Max count	61	97	65	150	250	129	140	309	200

Table 9. Peak Autumn counts of Barn Swallow.

Date	13 th Aug	31 st Aug	2 nd Sept	23 rd Sept	24 th Sept	25 th Sept	27 th Sept	7 th Oct
Max count	60	65	170	2000	9819	200	3840	151

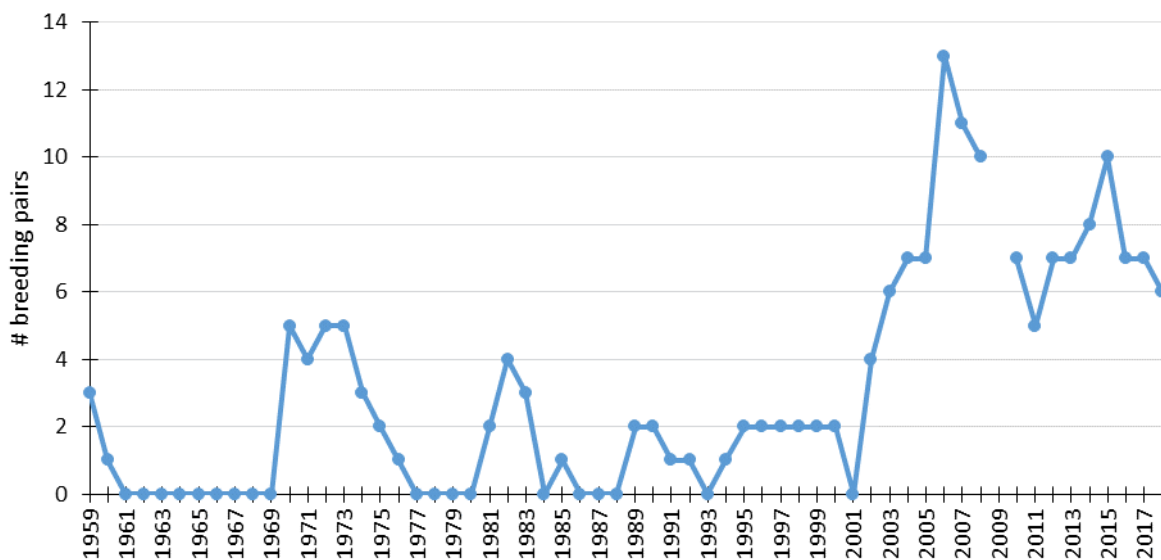


Figure 29. Population trend of Barn Swallow on Skomer 1959-2018

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Bred during the late 1960's/early 1970's. Common migrant

The first bird was seen on the 6th of April. The next sighting came on the 11th (two) after which sightings became more regular although still in small numbers. Peak spring counts include 15 on the 19th of April, 59 on the 5th of May, 75 on the 18th and 60 on the 19th of May. There were several sightings in June, peaking at eight on the 12th, with some even paying interest in the Farm. Two double nest boxes were put up at the Farm for House Martins in March 2018 but, although birds paid some interest in June, were unused in 2018. There were four, well spread, records on singles in July. August saw six pass on the 9th, one on the 25th and three on the 31st. Autumn migration, although peaking in September, was particularly light. Peak counts in that month were 21 on the 13th, 30 on the 24th and 19 on the 27th. The last record of the year was of eight on the 7th of October.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Vagrant. Eight previous records, most recently October 2011 and October 2015

One was seen briefly in the Ivy at North Haven on the 20th of October. This is the first record since 2015 and the ninth in total.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Scarce migrant, though not recorded annually

The sole record of the year concerned a flock of ten which flew over North Haven on the 24th of October before continuing on to the north.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Scarce autumn migrant

The first of the autumn was found by NW at North Valley Outfall on the 29th of September. This was followed by one, which was heard only, in North Haven on the 16th of October. There were two on the 18th (North Valley Crossing and at Moorey Mere), one on the 19th and two on the 20th.

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*

Vagrant. One previous record, August/September 2017

Another silent Bonelli's Warbler was found this year, this time in the Ivy in North Haven on the 16th of September. This is the second record for the island but frustratingly once again could not be confirmed as either 'Western' or 'Eastern'.



Bonelli's Warbler, North Haven, September 2018. (Photo by E. Stubbings)

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Very rare and sporadic breeder, noted 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2017. Abundant migrant

At least one pair bred again in 2018. A pair was seen feeding chicks at Moorey Mere in early June. There were also one or two pairs possibly breeding in North Valley but these could not be confirmed. The first Chiffchaff was seen, with pollen horns, on the 12th of March, during a mild spell in an otherwise freezing month. One was then found dead in North Haven on the 19th of March, during the next cold snap. Five were seen on the 24th of March and there were 13 on the 30th. Spring migration peaked in April with counts of 28 (highest count of year) on the 3rd, 26 on the 4th, 27 on the 8th and 22 on the 9th and 22nd. May saw high counts of 15 on the 12th and 20th. There were eleven records in June concerning between one and seven birds and four records in July concerning between one and three birds. Records increased slightly in August but still remained between just one and four birds.

Autumn migration began properly again in September with high counts of 15 on the 13th and 13 on the 15th. Peak counts in October include 14 on the 14th and 16 on the 16th. This continued into November with 16 on the 4th and ten on the 5th. The final record of the year was of one donning a metal ring in East Bog on the 22nd.

Siberian Chiffchaff *P. c. tristis*

Rare migrant. Twenty two previous records, with further records of 'eastern' birds possibly relating to this subspecies. However, owing to confusion regarding the identification of this sub-species in the past, this may represent a false status

The first of the year was seen and heard in East Bog on the 31st of October. There were three additional records in November, all in different locations on different dates (North Valley on the 2nd, North Haven on the 7th and Bull Hole on the 17th). All three showed classic *tristis* morphology but none were heard to call.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Abundant migrant

The first of the year was recorded on the 24th of March. As is also the case with Chiffchaff, migration peaked in April with counts of 20 on the 12th and 47 (highest count of year) on the 21st. May saw counts of 15 on the 3rd and ten on the 18th but had less than half the number of birds than April in total. In June a bird was recorded on the 4th and one was singing in North Valley on the 5th. Unusually for Skomer there were two late June records with an adult on the 28th and one on the 30th.

The next records involved dispersed juveniles in July. The first (two) came on the 18th and there was a peak of 18 on the 30th. August and September saw regular migrants passing through in small numbers with peaks of 18 on the 4th and 30 on the 21st of August and 13 on the 2nd and nine on the 13th of September. The last of the year was at North Pond on the 23rd of September.

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

Rare migrant. Twelve previous individuals, 2000, 2006, 2014 (five), 2015, 2016 and 2017 (three)

There were three records again in 2018. All records came in May with singles on the 3rd and 4th (possibly the same bird) and one on the 27th.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*
Fairly common migrant

The first record came on the 3rd of April (three). There were 13 the next day, 27 on the 8th, 17 on the 12th and 16 on the 13th. Smaller numbers passed through in May with five on the 3rd being the highest count. One was seen being taken by a Merlin at Moorey Mere on the 2nd of May.

The next records came in July with singles on the 13th, 26th and 29th. There were also singles on the 4th and 6th of August. Autumn migration proper began in September with a male on the 6th. Higher counts in September include 19 on the 13th and 16 on the 22nd. Migration continued throughout October and, to a certain degree, November. Peak counts in these months include 16 on the 7th and 13 on the 16th of October and five on the 1st of November. The final record of the year was of one on the 18th of November.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*
Uncommon migrant

The first record came on the 13th of May. There was a further single on the 16th and two on the 27th, including one singing in North Valley. The next record came on the 31st of July with one at the Farm. The final record was of one in the Ivy at North Haven on the 25th of September.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*
Vagrant. Ten previous records, most recently October 2014

SKP found a Barred Warbler at the Farm on the 5th of October. The bird was extremely skulky and the conditions less than ideal which meant that views were brief.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*
Scarce migrant

There were two spring records, concerning the same bird on the 22nd and 23rd of April. The bird was found at lunch time on the 22nd feeding in short vegetation in North Haven and, whilst the observers watched through binoculars, a Merlin swooped in and hit the bird in flight. The bird was picked up and placed in a box for an hour where it recovered and was released, seemingly none the worse for its experience.

The first of the autumn came on the 26th of September. The only other record in 2018 came from South Stream on the 5th of October.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*
Uncommon breeder, though scarce in some years.

First recorded on the island on the 12th of April. There were singles on five further dates, two on the 21st and four on the 29th. Records increased in the first half of May until local birds settled down to breed, and migrants became difficult to detect, half way through the month. Nest building was first recorded at the Farm on the 19th of May. Chick feeding was first noted on the 21st of June and the first fledged birds were seen on the 30th of June. A least 14 pairs bred again in 2018, although this number is a lower estimate.

Numbers started to build again in July as birds fledged and added to the population. Local birds probably begin to leave in August and September is probably dominated by migrants from elsewhere. The highest count of the autumn, and the year, was of 16 on the 2nd of September. The last birds (three) were recorded on the 13th of September.

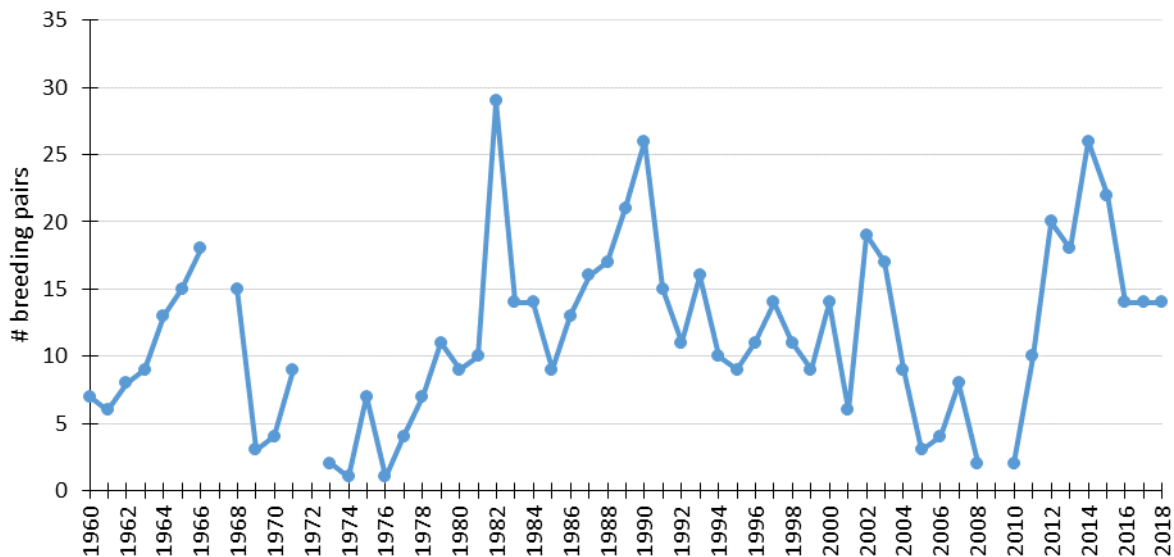


Figure 30. Population trend of Common Whitethroat on Skomer 1960-2018



Common Whitethroat, May 2018. (Photo by E. Stubbings)

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Vagrant

A Subalpine Warbler was caught and ringed in North Valley on the 20th of May. It appeared to show features intermediate between Eastern and Western Subalpine Warbler so a dropped feather was collected and sent off to Professor Martin Collinson at University of Aberdeen for DNA analysis. Unfortunately the species could not be determined from the initial test, although the tests did show the bird to be a female. Further tests may assign this bird to species but is 'pending' until then.

Eastern Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia albistriata*

Vagrant

Last year's Eastern Subalpine Warblers (Moorey Mere on the 20th of April and North Valley on the 8th of May) were accepted by BBRC as such and thus became the first and second records for Skomer.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Very rare, cryptic breeder, last record 1981. Uncommon migrant

Surprisingly the first record didn't come until June, in North Valley on the 10th, and a bird sang from close to Gorse Hill for two days later in the month (27th and 28th).

There were then two possible sighting in late July and up to four sightings in August. The last of the year was one at North Valley Crossing on the 17th of September.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Uncommon breeder. Uncommon migrant

First recorded on the 19th of April (three). The highest count of the spring was of 14 on the 4th and 7th of May. Birds settled down to breed in mid-May and were first recorded carrying nesting material on the 19th. Fledglings were seen from around mid-July.

Southward migration began in August and arrivals of migrants were noted with 30 (highest count of year) on the 9th and 20 plus on the 21st. September saw small numbers passing through with eight on the 15th and the last of the year on the 20th.

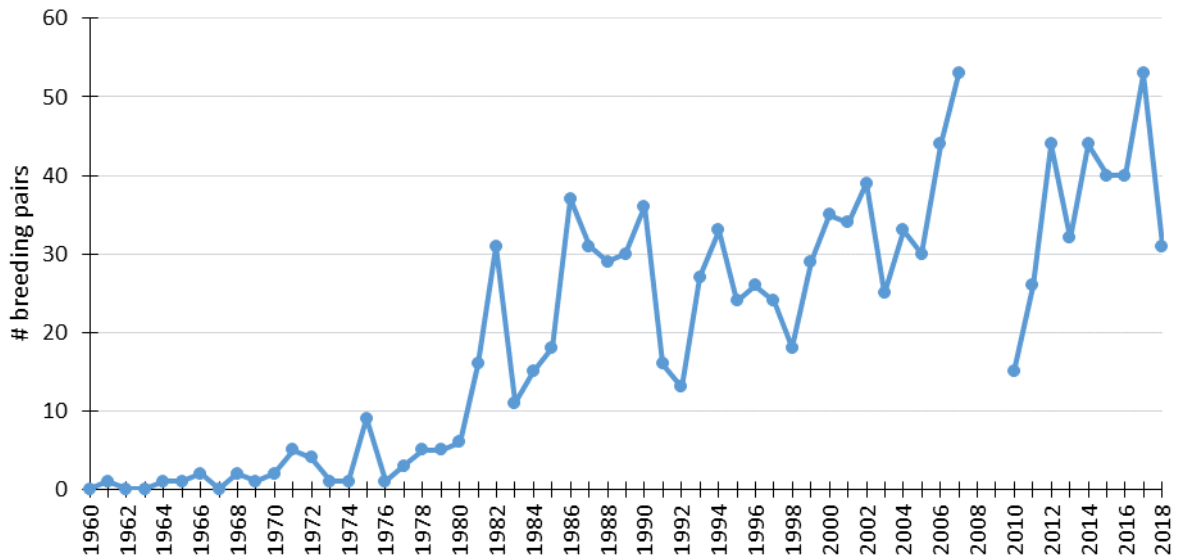


Figure 31. Population trend of Sedge Warbler on Skomer 1960-2018

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*
 Uncommon migrant

The first of the year was recorded in South Stream on the 20th of April and there was one in North Haven the next day. There were two further April records on the 29th and 30th. Single birds were present on five dates in May and there were birds singing at Moorey Mere and North Pond on the 21st.

The first and only record of the autumn came on the 13th of August.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*
 Fairly common breeder

Present on arrival and throughout the season. Sixty eight territories were recorded during the spring, which indicates that there was no great loss during 'the beast from the east'. Some chicks were still fledging in August. The highest total for the year in the log came on the 19th of October when 36 were recorded.

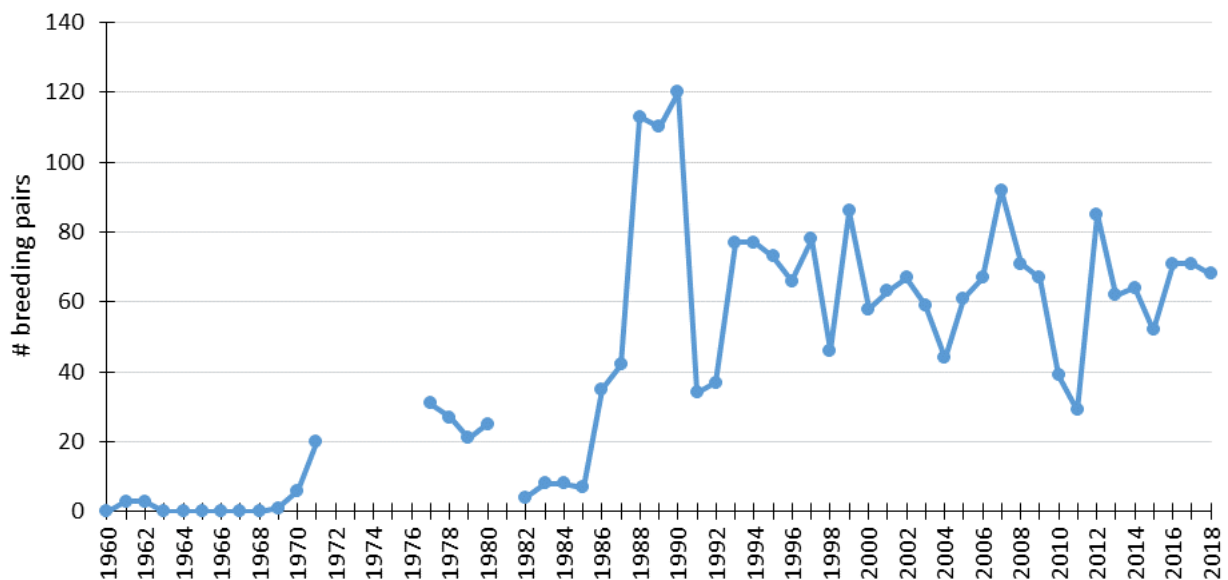


Figure 32. Population trend of Wren on Skomer 1960-2018

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
Very abundant migrant

Starlings were noted regularly during the cold weather in February and March, producing higher than usual spring counts. Twenty were recorded on the 27th of February and there were 15 the next day. There were then 160 on the 2nd of March, 113 on the 3rd and 100 on the 4th. Counts of between 13 and 62 were made on most dates in March thereafter (apart from one on the 9th). There were between eight and 40 on six dates at the start of April and singles on the 8th and 10th. The last records of the spring were four on the 18th of May and singles on the 19th and 21st.

With local birds probably fledging in June, some small flocks formed towards the end of that month with a maximum of 24 on the 29th. This continued through July and August with flocks of between ten and 30 on many dates. These post breeding flocks then disappeared in September and there were very few records until autumn migrants appeared again in mid-October. Some large counts were made on days when there was a passage of birds over the island including 1,540 on the 19th of October, 1,545 on the 23rd of October, 2,529 on the 5th of November, 2,079 on the 7th, 2,965 on the 11th and 5,065 on the 15th of November which was the highest count of the year. The last record was of 165 on the 22nd of November.

Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus*
Vagrant. Recorded 2011, 1990, 2002 and 2003

One was found at 06:00 on the 4th of June by SKP and ES. It was a bit flighty but was seen several times around the Farm until lunchtime. The crest was short, the pink parts were dullish and the undertail coverts were fringed pale, indicating a female or a first summer male. The arrival of this bird coincided with a larger movement of Rose-coloured Starlings into Western Europe.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*
Uncommon migrant

The first of the spring was seen on the 14th of April and there were two on 16th.

There were no further records until the 21st of September when an adult male was seen in North Haven. October saw two records of singles with one at the Farm on the 16th and a first winter in South Stream on the 23rd.

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

Present on wardens arrival to the island and almost daily thereafter. One was found dead at the Farm on the 6th of March, just after the 'beast from the east'. Numbers fell from up to twelve in March to what were most probably purely breeding birds in April. Five pairs are thought to have bred in total. Breeding began in April and the first adult seen carrying a bill full of worms was on the 10th of May, although nest building continued in some areas into May. Late nests were being fed in June. Two fledged chicks were seen being fed at the Farm on the 5th of July and more fledged throughout the month.

The first sign of immigration was in October with 19 on the 14th, 39 (highest count of year) on the 28th, 36 on the 29th and 32 on the 30th. Smaller numbers were recorded in November with 20 on the 17th and 21 on the 18th being the highest counts. Five recorded on the 22nd were the final record of the year.

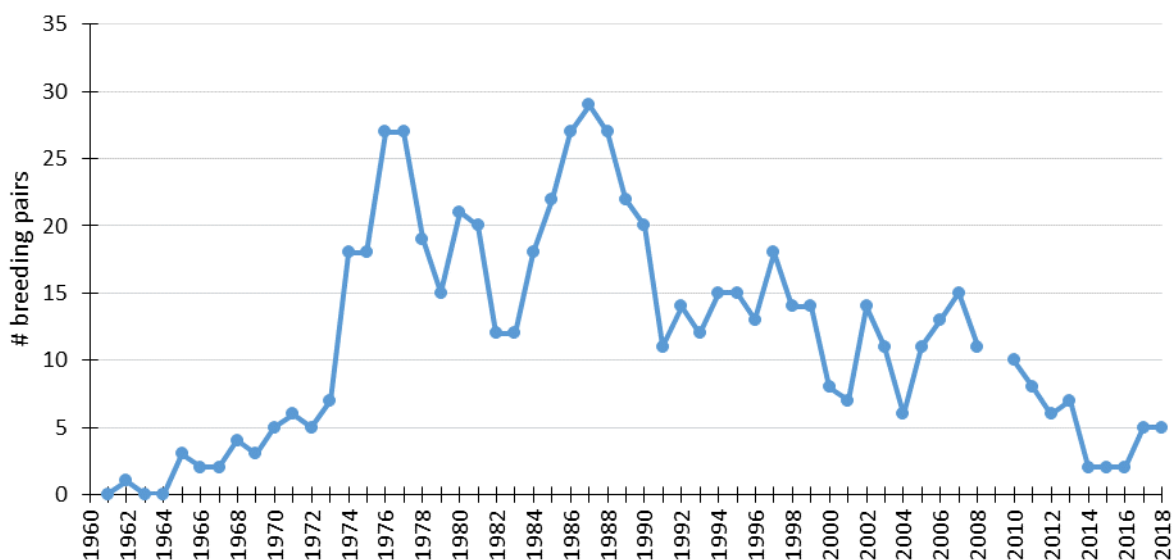


Figure 33. Population trend of Blackbird on Skomer 1960-2018

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Fairly common, occasionally common migrant.

Unprecedented numbers passed over the island during the 'beast from the east' as part of a wider movement of birds moving west or south west across north west Europe trying to escape freezing conditions and snow. The first really large movement of birds came on the 2nd of March when 1,700 were counted flying over. Numbers slowly dropped off in the following days until just a few struggling birds were left. Dead birds were found on the 4th (three), 5th (one), 6th (one), 9th (one), 21st (one), 25th (two) and 28th (one). A bird with a broken wing remained on the island throughout April and May.

The first Fieldfares (four) of the autumn were seen on the 20th of October and there were further records on the 26th (one), 29th (five) and 30th (two). November saw the bulk of the autumn's Fieldfares passing through. One hundred and twenty seven were recorded on the 15th including a single flock of 120 over North Haven. The final record of the year was of six on the 18th of November.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Scarce and very sporadic breeder. Common migrant

Small numbers of Song Thrushes were caught up in the much larger movement of Fieldfares and Redwings in late February and March and ten on the 8th of March was the highest count of the spring. The extreme cold also had a negative influence on some birds' survival. One was found dying by the wardens house on the 3rd of March and was later found dead. There were two records of singles in April and no records in May. Once again a very secretive pair bred somewhere west of the Farm and a juvenile was seen on the 26th of June at the Farm. There were several records in July including two on the 18th and a similar number in August including two juveniles on the 2nd.

September saw just four records of singles. October saw autumn migrants arriving from the 10th (one) with a peak count of ten on the 28th. Migration continued into November with five counts into double figures and the years highest count of 30 on the 18th. The final record of the year was of five on the 22nd.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Common migrant

Huge numbers of Redwings moved over the island during the 'beast from the east'. The highest count of the year was made on the 2nd of March when an incredible 7,500 flew over the island. In the four days following this there were totals of 270, 230, 153 and 185 respectively. Again the weather took a big toll on the survival of these desperate Redwings and at least 15 dead birds were found dead over the period. There were singles on the 4th and 5th of April and these were the last records of the spring.

As would be expected there was no return migration until October when twelve were recorded on the 17th. The highest count of the autumn came on the 23rd of October when 130 were recorded. November saw a steady number passing over with as many passing at night as during the day. Eighty four on the 7th was the highest count of the month and eight on the 22nd were the last record of the year.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*
Uncommon migrant

There were four records of singles in late October as well as singles on the 15th, 16th and 19th of November.

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

The first record of the year came on the 30th April with two birds recorded. Records slowly picked up in May with 56 individuals recorded through the month, though 20 of these were on the 27th (peak spring count). There were six on the 1st June, and five through the rest of the month.

There were no records in July, and autumn passage picked up with one on the 5th August and two on the 6th, and 16 individuals recorded in the second half of the month. September saw a good spread of records, typically between one and four birds but for twelve, the highest count of the autumn period, on the 2nd. The final record of the year was of one at Well Pond on the 29th of September.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*
Last confirmed breeding record 2016. Very abundant migrant

Present on arrival with low numbers (highest count six on the 28th of February) recorded most days through February and March, and becoming less regular in April.

After the 4th May, there were no records until a juvenile bird was seen in the garden at the farm on the 19th July. In August sightings became more regular again building to nine on the 31st. This increasing autumn movement continued into September and October with more than ten birds recorded on 18 days and 23 days of each month respectively. Peak counts being 41 on the 24th September, 44 on the 7th October, 48 on the 14th, 47 on the 18th and 42 on the 30th. Records of between 20 and 40 continued into November with 15 recorded on the last day of the season, 22nd November.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*
Rare migrant 19 previous records, most recently 2015

The only record of the year concerned an individual, likely a first winter, in North Valley near Green Pond on the 9th October.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*
Uncommon migrant

A quiet year brought only one spring record with a male on the 13th April.

Following this there was an individual at the farm on the 31st August, followed by another individual on the 2nd September. This was the last record of the year.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*
Uncommon migrant

The first record of the year was on the 17th March. Following this there was one on the 3rd and 4th April, and two birds on the 5th and 6th with one individual at the farm and one at North Haven on both days. In May, a female was around the farm from the 15th to the 19th, and another on the 27th and 28th.

There were two records in early July (3rd and 4th). Autumn records kicked off with two birds on the 11th October and singles on the 12th, 14th and 16th, two birds on the 17th, 19th and 21st, and one on the 24th. In November, there was one or possibly two on the 15th, and two on the 17th, this being the last record of the year.



Black Redstart at the Farm, October 2018. (Photo by S.K. Purdon)

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
Uncommon migrant

The first record of the year was a male at the farm on the 4th May, followed by two birds the following day. There was a further possible female at the farm on the 20th May.

The next record was in Autumn with individual females on the 2nd and 9th of September. On the 16th and 17th October a single female was seen around the farm. This was the final record of the year.



Common Redstart at the Farm, September 2018. (Photo by S.K. Purdon)

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*
Uncommon migrant

The first of the year was a male on the 18th May, this was also the only spring record.

Autumn came with many more sightings however, kicking off with at least two on the 2nd of September. This was followed by a female at the farm on the 9th September, and single bird sightings on the 13th, 17th, 19th, 20th, 23rd, 24th and the 27th.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*
Scarce breeder. Uncommon migrant

Present on the wardens arrival on the island, with two seen on the 27th February. The highest count of the spring was ten on the 7th of April. Just two pairs are thought to have bred this year (Figure 34) with the first record of breeding behaviour being nest building at North Valley Crossing on the 14th and 15th April. The North Valley Crossing nest had five eggs on the 2nd May, and the male was noted as feeding chicks on the 8th. It is thought that at least three chicks fledged from this nest in early June. The adults must have started the next nest with minimal delay as food deliveries were seen at North Valley Crossing again from the 21st. At least three chicks fledged from this second breeding attempt around the 8th of July. A second pair are thought to have bred in a more remote part of the island at Bull Hole.

September produced counts of twelve on the 13th and ten on the 28th. Eight were counted on two dates (5th and 17th) in October. The highest count in November was five on the 15th and the last record of the year was of three on the 21st.

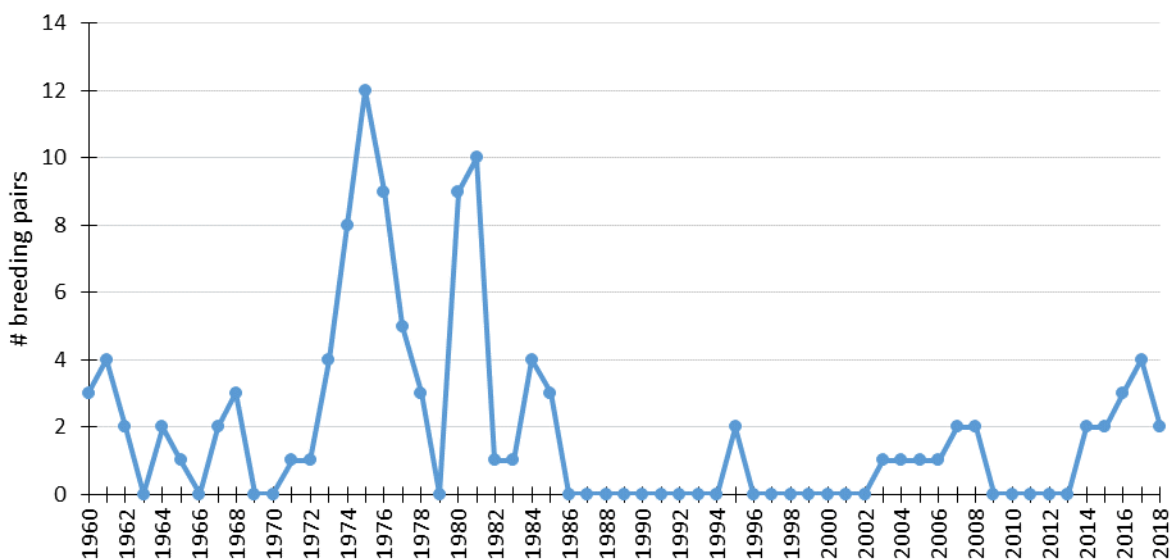


Figure 34. Population trend of European Stonechat on Skomer 1960-2018

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*
Common migrant. Uncommon breeder

19 pairs are thought to have bred on the island this year. This represents a 10.4% decrease on the previous five year average, but as shown in Figure 35 this is a fairly reasonable number in comparison to the last 20 years. The first birds were seen on the 13th March, with three individuals seen across the island, after this spring migration picked up slowly into April however it never reached the numbers of last year, with a peak count of just 26 on the 8th April. Mating was noted on the 27th April and nest building on 6th May. The first birds carrying food were recorded on the 15th May and the first fledglings were on the 6th June.

Many breeding birds appeared to leave (their territories at least) at the beginning of August. Larger counts that month include 16 on the 8th and 22 on the 29th. Smaller numbers passed through in September with six on the 2nd and 13th and five on the 24th. The last record of the year was a single bird on the 18th October.

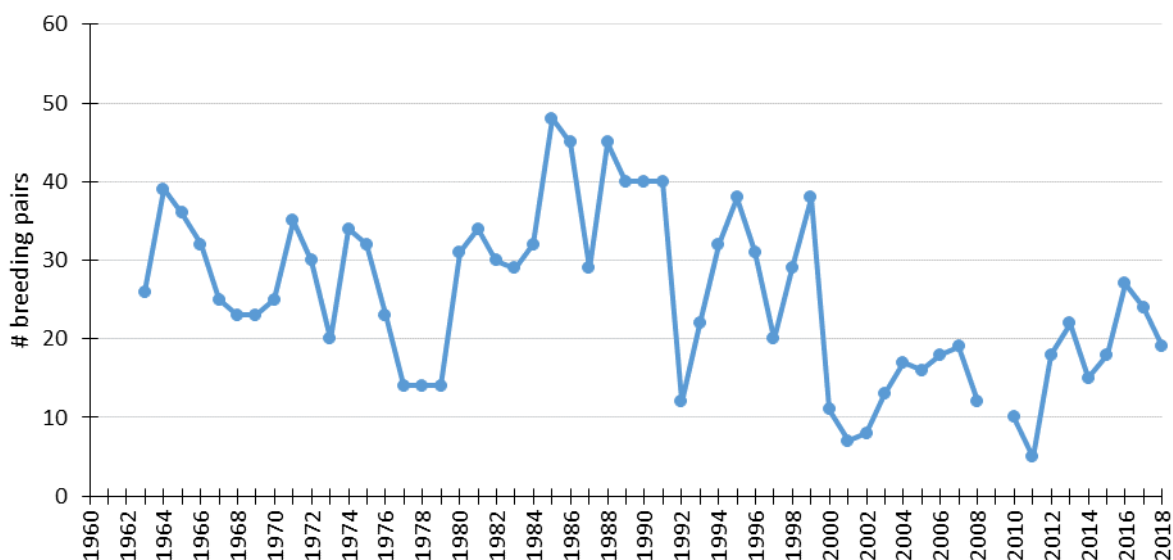


Figure 35. Population trend of Northern Wheatear on Skomer 1960-2018

'Greenland' Wheatear *O. o. leucorhoa*
Uncommon migrant

The first record of the year was of one bird on the 5th April, followed by 6 birds on April 29th, and nine the following day. Following this there were at least three more records in late May, one of which was of at least one bird but possibly more, and at least two other days where there were suspected but unconfirmed records.

There was only one or possibly two records in autumn with a single bird recorded on the 24th September but also a 'possible' on the 14th.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*
Uncommon breeder. Fairly common autumn migrant

Present throughout the season with nine pairs mapped. This is a 39.2% decrease on the average of the previous five years as shown in Figure 36. There is no known reason for this, other than the unseasonably cold weather at the beginning of the season which seemed to have affected some of our small breeders

(except notably wren). We will have to wait a few more years before we can see if this is a blip or part of a larger trend.

First noted singing on the 12th March, carrying nesting material on the 3rd May and carrying food on 17th May.

Larger counts of Dunnocks were made in October with two counts of 13, one of 16 and the highest count of the year of 32 on the 14th. One larger count of twelve was made on the 4th of November and the final record came on the day of departure from the island on the 22nd.



Figure 36. Population trend of Dunnock on Skomer 1960-2018

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Bred sporadically between 1965 and 1969. Uncommon migrant

There was an unconfirmed record on the 2nd May.

There was a spate of six records in October with 14 recorded on the 17th and 18th, twelve on the 20th, 15 on the 23rd, two on the 24th, and at least one on the 29th (heard). Four more records followed in November, mostly of pairs with two recorded on the 1st, 4th and 11th, and nine on the 2nd.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima*

Uncommon migrant

The three records of the year all fell in October, the first being an individual flying east over North Haven in the morning of the 10th. After this there was a juvenile on the 14th, and another single bird recorded on the 19th.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
Uncommon migrant

The first record of the year was of a juvenile in North Haven on the 11th July. This was then followed by one on the 30th August, before records really picked up in September. There were records on 14 days in September, generally of between one and five birds, but with peaks of 18 on the 13th September, nine on the 15th and ten on the 24th. In October there were single bird records only on twelve days, and in November, there was a single bird recorded on the 1st, two birds recorded on the 2nd and the final record of the year was a single bird on the 4th.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*
Scarce breeder. Fairly common migrant

Two pairs bred this year, equalling 2014 and representing a 37.5% decrease on the previous five year average, as shown in Figure 37. However, as can be seen from the figure, this is a regular number to breed on the island. The first record of the year was on the 4th March, and numbers remained low but increasing until the end of the month when six were seen.

The first breeding behaviour noted on the island this year was, interestingly, two male types mating in the farm courtyard on the 28th March. It was then not until the 2nd of May that a male and female were displaying at the farm, and another pair were nest building in North Haven. On the 18th May, two males were again noted mating, this time at Moorey Mere, and the pair in North Haven had the first egg in their nest near the house. This nest produced five chicks which were ringed. On the 1st of June the pair at the farm were feeding three chicks. The first fledgling of the year was a juvenile seen at the Basin on the 12th, but, as the farm chicks weren't noted out of the nest till a few days later, it's not clear if this bird was from another nest, be it on the island or elsewhere. The farm pair were nest building again by the 19th June, and the North Haven pair were incubating a second brood of six eggs on the 9th July, and on the 10th the male was seen carrying food, either to newly hatched chicks, or feeding the female on the nest. The farm pair were feeding their second brood of chicks on the 14th July.

Fifteen were recorded on the 9th of September including twelve seen going to roost in at North Pond in the evening. Smaller numbers were present in October and November with the last record of the year coming on the 18th November.

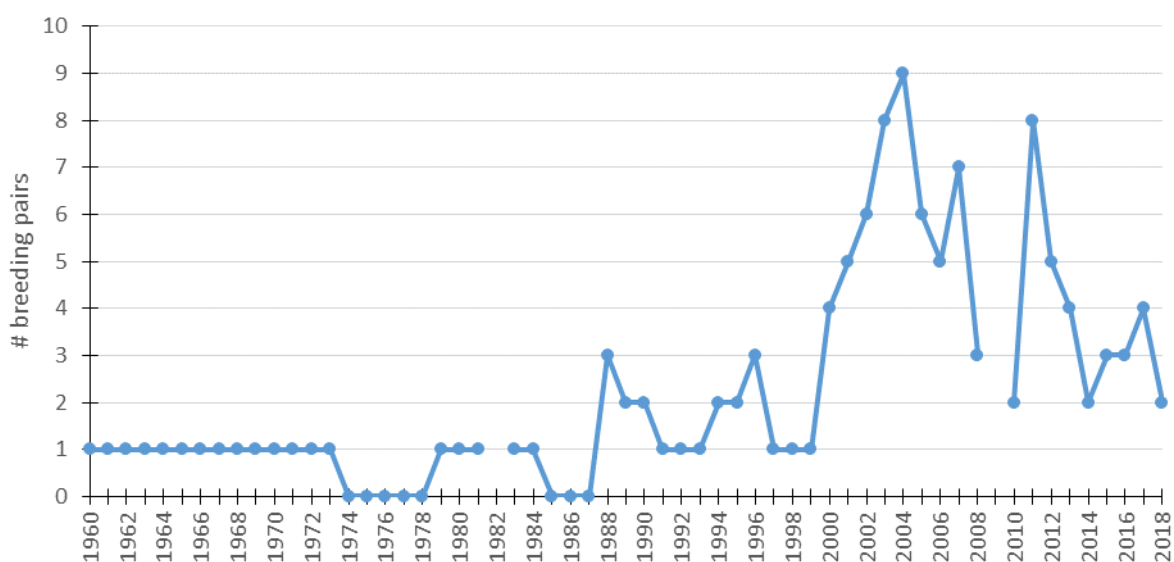


Figure 37. Population trend of Pied Wagtail on Skomer 1960-2018

White Wagtail *M. a. alba*

Uncommon migrant

There were five records this year concerning 13 birds, the first being an individual on the 7th April, followed again by a single bird on the 12th May.

Five were seen on the 31st August, shortly followed by three on the 2nd September, one on the 7th, and two on the 8th, this being the final record of the year.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Uncommon migrant

There were four records this year, the first was amazingly caught in a mist net during a CES session on the 31st May. The next record was exactly three months later, on the 31st August. This was then followed by individuals on both the 6th and 7th of September and the last record of the year was of an individual on the 24th.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Fairly common breeder. Abundant migrant

Present throughout the year, but building slowly, with spring counts often in the 20s, and the peak spring count being 39 on the 13th March. 102 pairs were mapped on breeding bird surveys this year, almost identical to the previous 5 year average of 102.6 pairs, though as Figure 38 shows, this is not the result of a steady population, which has varied significantly over the past few decades.

The first record of breeding behaviour was a bird carrying nesting material on the 22nd May. This was clearly a late observation as many birds were noted as feeding chicks on the 30th May.

Peak counts for the autumn were mostly in September, and are summarised in Table 10. Into October and November, numbers gradually dropped off again, with regular counts of between 20 and 50 through to the end of the year.

Table 10. Peak Autumn counts of Meadow Pipit.

Date	10 th Sep	11 th Sep	12 th Sep	13 th Sep	20 th Sep	24 th Sep	26 th Sep	28 th Sep	19 th Oct
Max count	145	140	120	135	240	180	130	160	138

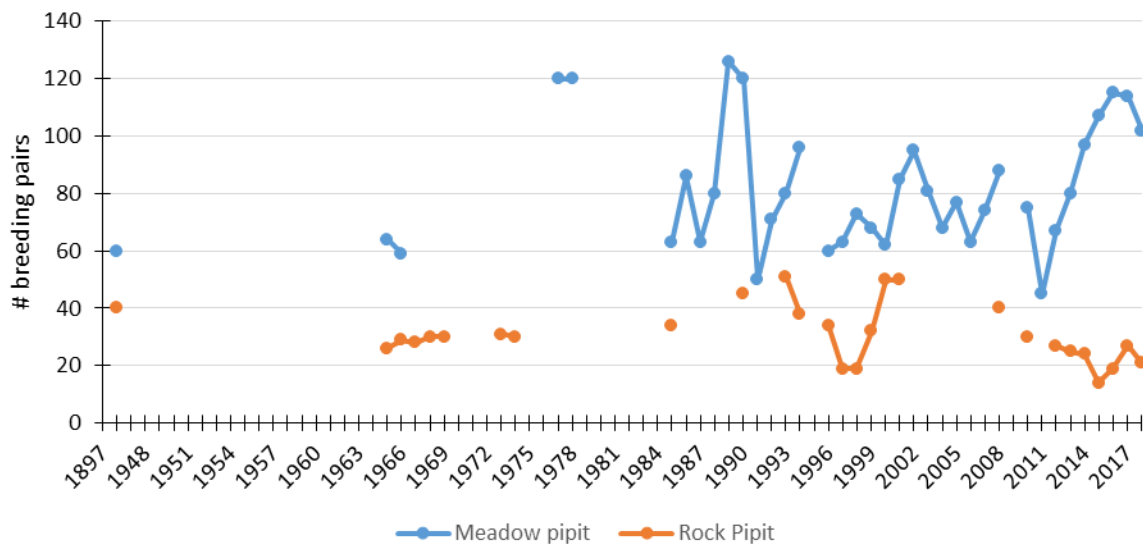


Figure 38. Population trend of Meadow and Rock Pipits on Skomer 1897-2018

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

Uncommon breeder. Fairly common migrant

Present on arrival and throughout the season, however due to their breeding habitat being some of the worst covered areas of the island, they continue to be significantly under-recorded in both numbers and breeding territories. This year 21 territories were mapped, which is still undoubtedly an under-estimate and shows a -3.7% decrease over the previous five years. This does at least reassure that the population is at least fairly stable and there is no major cause for concern, as shown in Figure 38.

The first record of breeding activity was on the 23rd April with nesting material being carried at the North Haven slip. Food was being carried by an individual at Pigstone Bay on the 16th May, and the first young seen out of the nest was perching on the balcony at North Haven on the 9th June.

The highest counts of the year were all in November, with four records of over 40 birds: 42 on the 5th, 54 on the 7th, 63 on the 17th, and 42 on the 18th.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*
Vagrant. Last recorded 1990

All four records came in November and probably concern the same bird. The first sighting was on the 5th, where a single bird was picked up amongst Rock Pipits on South Haven beach. The following day, it was picked up, again amongst Rock pipits, on the Neck. The final two records were again both single birds, on the 18th in North Haven and on the 21st on the Neck.

Large pipit sp.

A large pipit was heard and seen in flight over North castle on the 7th of November. It's call was a short 'chub' similar to Tawny Pipit and resembling a House Sparrow. It was larger than the Meadow Pipits that were chasing it around and moderately long tailed. Unfortunately it was not seen on the ground and eventually flew off strongly to the west. A frustrating glimpse of what could well have been a Blyth's Pipit.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*
Uncommon migrant

The first record of the year was of two birds on the 18th October which was then followed by ten more records in October and November. The highest count of the year was of seven birds on the 2nd November.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*
Common migrant

Noted in spring and autumn. The first record, and highest of the spring, was of six birds on the 2nd March. This was followed by ten more records in the spring, concerning 13 birds.

Autumn records started slowly in September with seven records concerning 13 birds, however in October and November there were 878 and 656 individuals recorded respectively. Most of the records in October and November fell on days with lots of finch migration. In October this included 68 on the 17th, 277 on the 28th (the highest count of the year), 55 on the 29th and 83 on the 31st, and in November 122 on the 5th, and 178 on the 15th. There were 25 other records of between ten and 50 birds across the two months and the last recorded of the year was of 23 on the 22nd of November.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*
Uncommon migrant, though fairly common in some years.

There were four records this year, concerning 7 birds, all in the autumn. In October single birds were seen on the 11th, 20th, and 30th, and in November four birds were seen on the 2nd.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Scarce and sporadic breeder, with breeding occurring most recently 2009, 2015, 2016 and 2017. Very abundant migrant

Three pairs bred on Skomer in 2018, a decrease on the last two years, but breeding numbers of this species have been quite variable. Nesting material was seen being carried on the 1st of May and the first juveniles of the year were seen on 28th June.

First recorded on the 2nd March with a count of 14, this was the highest count of the month with low numbers seen throughout the rest of the month. Table 11 summarises the highest counts of Linnet from the year. The final record of the year was on the 18th November.

Table 11. Peak counts of Linnet.

Date	18 th Apr	21 st Apr	24 th Sept	26 th Sept	5 th Oct	7 th Oct	14 th Oct	18 th Oct	2 nd Nov
Max count	66	91	120	91	78	169	252	215	79



Figure 39. Population trend of Linnet on Skomer 1960-2018

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

Uncommon migrant

The first sighting of the year was a male seen on North Valley Rise on the 21st April, closely followed by a fly-over on the 23rd. Two were then seen on the 7th of May, five on the 18th, two on the 19th and one on the 21st. After this spate of records in May, there were just two records in the rest of the year. One at the farm, on the 9th July, and one heard on the 2nd of November.

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Rare migrant. Eighteen previous records, last recorded in 2015.

The only record of the year concerned ten birds flying west over North Haven at 09.30 on the 24th September.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
Rare breeder. Abundant migrant

After successful breeding over the past two years, a breeding attempt was made in 2018 but the pair was unsuccessful. It was however, a bumper year in terms of counts of flocks across the island in both spring and autumn.

The first record of the year was of two birds seen on the 27th February, after which low numbers were seen regularly through early March, but numbers dropped off again in late March as the weather turned colder again. There were 59 birds on the 26th March. Numbers gradually rose again into April with many large flocks seen, contributing to 276 individuals recorded in the month. These mostly came in the second half of the month with counts of 27 on the 19th, 23 on the 21st, 38 on the 23rd and 59 on the 26th. Sightings continued through May, with some flocks in relatively low numbers seen most days. A dead individual was found at North Valley Crossing on the 10th May.

There was a lot of breeding activity in the location at the farm where they have previously bred in 2016 and 2017, with an individual carrying nesting material seen on the 4th June, however breeding activity beyond this was never confirmed. The first juvenile of the year was seen on the 23rd June, presumably having travelled from elsewhere, followed by four juveniles on the 24th and 28th, and five on the 29th. Sightings of adults and juveniles continued through June and the first half of July.

From the 22nd of July until mid-September sightings were much scarcer, with only 20 individuals recorded during this time. In late September and into October numbers increased again with regular counts into the teens, and high counts of 55 on the 24th and 65 on the 27th of September, and in October, counts of 118 on the 6th, 177 on the 14th, 128 on the 23rd. Records continued into November, with counts of up to 31 up until the time the wardens left the island.

Siskin *Spinus spinus*
Uncommon migrant

A fair year for spring records with a possible sighting on the 8th April, followed by confirmed singles seen on April 14th and 21st and on May 28th.

Autumn records were much fewer than last year, with just 23 individuals recorded in the second half of October, kicking off with four on the 17th and six on the 18th. There were five on the 24th, otherwise all other records that month involved between one and three birds. There were two on the 2nd of November, one on the 5th and the final record of the year was of one on the 21st.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*
Scarce autumn migrant, though absent in some years

The only record of the year concerned a male which was seen flying past North Valley Crossing heading in the direction of North Haven, on the 4th November.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*
Scarce breeder. Uncommon migrant

Three pairs are thought to have bred on the island in 2018. First noted on the 28th February, with up to four birds present in March, and other than a peak of nine on the 8th April, there were generally up to six birds present throughout the spring.

After much activity in the area, breeding was confirmed in North Valley with a female seen carrying food on the 10th June, and from another territory a male was seen carrying food south of the farm on 23rd July. The first juveniles of the year were seen at the farm on the 15th July. The third territory was in South Stream

Towards the end of the year numbers gradually increased, presumably with the fledglings and some movement adding to the mix. Ten individuals were seen on two occasions in September. In October there were a few counts of up to 15, and the highest count of the year was on the 14th October with 33 individuals recorded. The last record of the year was of four on the 21st November.



Figure 40. Population trend of Reed Bunting on Skomer 1960-2018



Reed Bunting at North Pond Research Hide, October 2018. (Photo S.K. Purdon)

Rarity Report

Jason Moss /Edward Stubbings

The below tables give a full summary of rare bird submissions from 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, involving both species assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) and the Welsh Rarities Panel (WRP). Please see reports from that year for more details of the record.

Accepted rarity decisions 2013

Species	Location, Date	Observer	Rarity committee
Pallid Harrier	Island top, 20 th Apr-1 st May	EMS, DB et. al.	BBRC
Montagu's Harrier	Island top, 26 th Apr-2 st May	EMS et. al	WRP
Corncrake	Neck, 8 th Sept	EMS	WRP
Barred Warbler	31 st Oct-2 nd Nov		WRP

Accepted rarity decisions 2014

Species	Location, Date	Observer	Rarity committee
Black Kite	Farm, 16 th May	EMS et. al.	WRP
Lesser Yellowlegs	North Pond, 11 th Sept	LPL et. al.	BBRC
Red-backed Shrike	Farm, 8 th June	JWM	WRP
Greenish Warbler	North Haven, 7 th June	EMS	WRP
Barred Warbler	North Valley, 25 th Oct	JWM	WRP
Icterine Warbler	North Valley, 2 nd Sept	JWM, LPL	WRP
Melodious Warbler	Farm, 3 rd Sept	LPL, JWM, EMS	WRP
Melodious Warbler	East Bog, 26 th Sept	JWM	WRP
Melodious Warbler	East Bog, 2 nd -10 th Oct	JWM	WRP
Blyth's Reed Warbler	North Haven, 26 th May	EMS, OP	BBRC
Red-breasted Flycatcher	North Valley Crossing, 19 th Sept	JWM	WRP
Desert Wheatear	Neck, 28 th Oct	EMS	BBRC
Ortolan Bunting	Farm, 2 nd Sept	JWM	WRP
Ortolan Bunting	Farm, 10 th Sept	JWM	WRP
Black-headed Bunting	Farm, 21 st May	JWM	BBRC

Accepted rarity decisions 2015

Species	Location, Date	Observer	Rarity committee
Black Stork	Garland Stone, 25 th May	MW, TW	BBRC
Spotted Crake	North Pond, 10 th Sept	JWM, OP	WRP
Golden Oriole (four ind.)	North Valley, 10 th -13 th May	LN et. al.	WRP
Greenish Warbler	North Haven, 12 th June	EMS	WRP
Greenish Warbler	North Haven, 23 rd July	EMS	WRP
Common Nightingale	North Valley, 11 th May	EMS et. al.	WRP
Red-breasted Flycatcher	South Stream, 3 rd October	EMS, BB	WRP
Common Rosefinch	Farm, 13 th June	JWM, LN	WRP
Common Rosefinch	North Valley Crossing, 14 th Oct	JWM	WRP
Black-headed Bunting	Wick Stream, 7 th -8 th June	SR et. al.	BBRC

Accepted rarity decisions 2016

Species	Location, Date	Observer	Rarity committee
Woodchat Shrike	Farm, 4 th May	JWM, EMR	WRP
Ortolan Bunting	North Haven, 8 th Sept	EMS, BB	WRP
Gull-billed Tern	North Valley, 9 th May	EMS, BB	BBRC
Nightingale	Moorey Mere, 13 th May	EMS	WRP
Pallas's Warbler	South Stream, 13 th Nov	EMS, BB	WRP
Great Egret	North Haven, 14 th Sept	EMS, BB	WRP
Black-headed Bunting	Farm, 24 th May	EMS	BBRC
Red-backed Shrike	North Valley, 26 th May	EMS	WRP
Woodchat Shrike	North Valley, 25 th May	JWM	WRP
Serin	North Haven, 26 th Oct	EMS, BB	WRP
Pallas's Warbler	Farm, 27 th Oct	JWM	WRP
Icterine Warbler	North Valley, 29 th Aug	JWM	WRP

Accepted rarity decisions 2017

Species	Location, Date	Observer	Rarity committee
Eastern Subalpine Warbler	Moorey Mere, 20 th April and North Valley, 8 th May	Elizabeth Seakins; EMS and JB	BBRC
Dark-eyed Junco	Farm, 8 th May	LN et al.	BBRC
Common Rosefinch	North Haven, 22-25th June	JWM	WRP
Melodious Warbler	North Valley, 17 th Aug	BB	WRP
Bonelli's Warbler sp.	North Haven, 30-31st Sept	EMS	BBRC
Radde's Warbler	Garland Stone, 20 th Oct	LN	WRP
Red-breasted Flycatcher	North Valley, 27 th Oct	EMS	WRP
Siberian Stonechat	North Valley, 2 nd Nov	LN	BBRC

Recent rarity records 'Pending' or 'Not Proven'

Species	Location, Date	Comments	Rarity committee
Olive-backed Pipit	North Haven, Oct 2013		BBRC
'Iberiae' Yellow Wagtail	Moorey Mere, 15 th May 2014	Not proven due to lack of vocalisation and possibility of being hybrid zone 'flava'	BBRC
Subalpine Warbler	South Stream, 2013	In circulation. Submitted as Eastern.	BBRC

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References were also made to previous Skomer Island Seabird, Bird and Wildlife Reports over the past years. These can be found on the WTSWW [website](#).

Acknowledgements

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Systematic checklist of the birds of Skomer Island

Jason Moss, revised by Edward Stubbings 2019

The following is a checklist of the birds of Skomer Island, as of the start of 2019. All species included have been accepted by the relevant records committees, but for those at the end, entitled either as category E (presumed escapes), unidentified to species, hybrid and extinct, these being included for completeness. The Skomer Island List currently stands at 293 at the start of 2019.

Status categories

<i>Vagrant (V)</i>	<i>one to 10 records</i>
<i>Rare (R)</i>	<i>11 to 40 records</i>
<i>Scarce (S)</i>	<i>one to five records per year</i>
<i>Uncommon (U)</i>	<i>six to 50 records per year</i>
<i>Fairly common (FC)</i>	<i>51 to 250 records per year</i>
<i>Common (C)</i>	<i>251 to 1000 records per year</i>
<i>Abundant (A)</i>	<i>1001 to 2500 records per year</i>
<i>Very abundant (VA)</i>	<i>more than 2500 records per year</i>

Breeding categories

<i>Very rare breeder (VRB)</i>	<i>one to 10 breeding records</i>
<i>Rare breeder (RB)</i>	<i>11 to 40 breeding records</i>
<i>Scarce breeder (SB)</i>	<i>one to five breeding records per year</i>
<i>Uncommon breeder (UB)</i>	<i>six to 50 breeding records per year</i>
<i>Fairly common breeder (FCB)</i>	<i>51 to 250 breeding records per year</i>
<i>Common breeder (CB)</i>	<i>251 to 1000 breeding records per year</i>
<i>Abundant breeder (AB)</i>	<i>1001 to 2500 breeding records per year</i>
<i>Very abundant breeder (VAB)</i>	<i>more than 2500 breeding records per year</i>

- Mute Swan (V)
- Bewick's Swan (V)
- Whooper Swan (V)
- Bean Goose (V)
- Pink-footed Goose (V)
- Greater White-fronted Goose (R)
- Greylag Goose (V)
- Canada Goose (UB)
- Barnacle Goose (R)
- Brent Goose (R)
- Common Shelduck (SB) (SM)
- Eurasian Wigeon (U)
- Gadwall (RB)
- Eurasian Teal (RB) (FC)
- Green-winged Teal (V)
- Mallard (UB) (FC)
- Northern Pintail (RB) (S)
- Garganey (RM)
- Northern Shoveler (SB) (UM)
- Common Pochard (R)
- Ring-necked Duck (V)
- Tufted Duck (RB) (S)
- Greater Scaup (V)
- Common Eider (V)
- Long-tailed Duck (V)
- Common Scoter (C)
- Velvet Scoter (V)
- Common Goldeneye (V)
- Red-breasted Merganser (R)
- Goosander (V)
- Ruddy Duck (V)
- Common Quail (R)
- Red-legged Partridge (V)
- Grey Partridge (V)
- Common Pheasant (UB)
- Red-throated Diver (S)
- Black-throated Diver (V)
- Great Northern Diver (S)
- Northern Fulmar (CB)
- Great Shearwater (V)
- Sooty Shearwater (R)
- Manx Shearwater (VAB)
- Balearic Shearwater (R)
- Macronesian (Barolo) Shearwater (V)
- European Storm Petrel (FCB)
- Leach's Storm Petrel (V)
- Northern Gannet (VA)
- Great Cormorant (UB) (FC)
- European Shag (UB)
- Eurasian Bittern (V)
- Night Heron (V)
- Cattle Egret (V)
- Little Egret (R)
- Great Egret (V)
- Grey Heron (FC)
- Purple Heron (V)
- Black Stork (V)
- Eurasian Spoonbill (V)
- Little Grebe (S)
- Great Crested Grebe (V)
- Red-necked Grebe (V)
- European Honey Buzzard (V)
- Black Kite (V)
- Red Kite (S)
- White-tailed Eagle (V)
- Marsh Harrier (S)
- Hen Harrier (U)
- Pallid Harrier (V)
- Montagu's Harrier (R)
- Northern Goshawk (V)
- Eurasian Sparrowhawk (U)
- Common Buzzard (SB) (FC)
- Rough-legged Buzzard (V)
- Osprey (R)
- Water Rail (VRB) (RC)
- Spotted Crake (V)
- Corncrake (R)
- Moorhen (UB)
- Eurasian Coot (VRB) (S)
- Common Crane (V)
- Oystercatcher (FCB)
- European Golden Plover (U)
- Grey plover (R)
- Northern Lapwing (U)
- Little Ringed Plover (V)
- Ringed Plover (U)
- Eurasian Dotterel (V)
- Upland Sandpiper (V)
- Whimbrel (C)
- Eurasian Curlew (SB) (C)

- Black-tailed Godwit (S)
- Bar-tailed Godwit (S)
- Turnstone (C)
- Knot (R)
- Ruff (R)
- Curlew Sandpiper (V)
- Sanderling (V)
- Dunlin (U)
- Purple Sandpiper (U)
- Little Stint (R)
- Pectoral Sandpiper (V)
- Grey Phalarope (V)
- Red-necked Phalarope (V)
- Common Sandpiper (U)
- Green Sandpiper (S)
- Spotted Redshank (R)
- Common Greenshank (S)
- Lesser Yellowlegs (V)
- Wood Sandpiper (R)
- Common Redshank (S)
- Jack Snipe (S)
- Woodcock (U)
- Common Snipe (C)
- Pomarine Skua (V)
- Arctic Skua (S)
- Long-tailed Skua (V)
- Great Skua (S)
- Atlantic Puffin (VAB)
- Black Guillemot (R)
- Razorbill (VAB)
- Little Auk (V)
- Guillemot (VAB)
- Little Tern (R)
- Caspian Tern (V)
- Black Tern (R)
- Sandwich Tern (S)
- Gull-billed Tern (V)
- Common Tern (S)
- Roseate Tern (V)
- Arctic Tern (S)
- Sabine's Gull (V)
- Kittiwake (AB)
- Black-headed Gull (A)
- Little Gull (R)
- Laughing Gull (V)
- Mediterranean Gull (U)
- Common Gull (U)
- Lesser Black-backed Gull (VAB)
- European Herring Gull (C)
- Yellow-legged Gull (V)
- Iceland Gull (V)
- Glaucous Gull (R)
- Great Black-backed Gull (FCB)
- Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon (FC)
- Stock Dove (S)
- Woodpigeon (SB) (C)
- Collared Dove (U)
- European Turtle Dove (S)
- Common Cuckoo (RB) (S)
- Barn Owl (SB)
- Snowy Owl (V)
- Little Owl (SB)
- Tawny Owl (V)
- Long-eared Owl (R)
- Short-eared Owl (SB) (U)
- European Nightjar (R)
- Common Swift (C)
- Alpine Swift (V)
- Hoopoe (R)
- Bee-eater (V)
- Kingfisher (V)
- Wryneck (S)
- Green Woodpecker (R)
- Great Spotted Woodpecker (R)
- Kestrel (SB) (U)
- Red-footed Falcon (V)
- Merlin (U)
- Hobby (R)
- Peregrine (SB) (U)
- Golden Oriole (R)
- Red-backed Shrike (R)
- Lesser Grey Shrike (V)
- Great Grey Shrike (V)
- Woodchat Shrike (R)
- Chough (SB) (FC)
- Magpie (UB)
- Jay (R)
- Jackdaw (FCB) (C)
- Rook (U)
- Carrion Crow (UB)
- Hooded Crow (R)
- Raven (SB) (FC)

- Goldcrest (FC)
- Firecrest (S)
- Blue Tit (FC)
- Great Tit (U)
- Coal Tit (U)
- Marsh Tit (V)
- Short-toed Lark (V)
- Woodlark (R)
- Skylark (SB) (C)
- Shore Lark (V)
- Sand Martin (C)
- Barn Swallow (UB) (VA)
- House Martin (C)
- Cetti's Warbler (V)
- Long-tailed Tit (S)
- Greenish Warbler (V)
- Pallas's Warbler (V)
- Yellow-browed Warbler (S)
- Radde's Warbler (V)
- Wood Warbler (S)
- Chiffchaff (VRB) (A)
- Willow Warbler (A)
- Blackcap (FC)
- Garden Warbler (U)
- Barred Warbler (V)
- Lesser Whitethroat (S)
- Common Whitethroat (UB)
- Dartford Warbler (V)
- Subalpine Warbler (R)
- Eastern Subalpine Warbler (V)
- Grasshopper Warbler (VRB) (U)
- Booted Warbler (V)
- Icterine Warbler (V)
- Melodious Warbler (V)
- Aquatic Warbler (V)
- Sedge Warbler (UB) (U)
- Blyth's Reed Warbler (V)
- Marsh Warbler (V)
- Reed Warbler (U)
- Great Reed Warbler (V)
- Nuthatch (V)
- Treecreeper (R)
- Wren (FCB)
- Starling (VA)
- Rose-coloured Starling (V)
- Dipper (V)
- Ring Ouzel (U)
- Blackbird (SB) (C)
- Dusky Thrush (V)
- Fieldfare (FC)
- Song Thrush (SB) (C)
- Redwing (C)
- Mistle Thrush (U)
- Spotted Flycatcher (C)
- Robin (VRB) (VA)
- Common Nightingale (V)
- Bluethroat (V)
- Red-flanked Bluetail (V)
- Red-breasted Flycatcher (R)
- Pied Flycatcher (U)
- Black Redstart (U)
- Common Redstart (U)
- Whinchat (U)
- European Stonechat (SB) (U)
- Siberian Stonechat (V)
- Northern Wheatear (UB) (C)
- Desert Wheatear (V)
- Black-eared Wheatear (V)
- Dunnock (UB) (FC)
- House Sparrow (U)
- Tree Sparrow (S)
- Yellow Wagtail (U)
- Citrine Wagtail (V)
- Grey Wagtail (U)
- Pied Wagtail (SB) (FC)
- Richards Pipit (R)
- Tawny Pipit (V)
- Olive-backed Pipit (V)
- Tree Pipit (U)
- Meadow Pipit (FCB) (A)
- Red-throated Pipit (V)
- Rock Pipit (UB) (FC)
- Water Pipit (V)
- Brambling (U)
- Chaffinch (C)
- Hawfinch (V)
- Common Rosefinch (R)
- Bullfinch (R)
- Greenfinch (U)
- Linnet (SB) (VA)
- Twite (V)
- Lesser Redpoll (U)

- Common Redpoll (V)
- Crossbill (R)
- Goldfinch (VRB) (A)
- Serin (V)
- Siskin (U)
- Snow Bunting (S)
- Lapland Bunting (U)
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak (V)
- Dark-eyed Junco (V)
- Yellowhammer (S)
- Ortolan Bunting (R)
- Rustic Bunting (V)
- Little Bunting (V)
- Reed Bunting (SB) (U)
- Black-headed Bunting (V)
- Corn Bunting (V)
- Bobolink (V)
- Black-and-white Warbler (V)
- Blackburnian Warbler (V)

Category E

- Snow Goose
- Ferruginous Duck
- Flamingo sp.
- Saker Falcon
- Gyr Falcon
- Laughing Dove
- Red-headed Bunting

Unidentified to species

- Frigatebird sp.
- Albatross sp.

Hybrids

- Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull
- Nelsons' Gull

Extinct

- Great Auk