

Rare birds in Guernsey



2014

La Société Guernesiaise
Ornithological Section

Report on rare birds in the Bailiwick of Guernsey in 2014

Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, Herm, Jethou, Brecqhou and associated islets

Mark Lawlor and the Bailiwick of Guernsey Rarities Committee

The following records have been submitted to, assessed by and accepted by the Bailiwick of Guernsey Rarities Committee which is organised through the Ornithological Section of La Société Guernesiaise. The members of the committee for 2014 (M.P.Lawlor, W.R.Turner, A.J.Bisson, J.P.Down, J.Hooper) would like to thank all the observers and photographers who sent in details of their rarity observations.



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The systematic list is based on the BOU British List. Although the Committee's area covers Guernsey, Alderney and Sark, there is currently no formal Bird Recorder for the two smaller islands, so we do not receive a lot of detail about sightings there, but records are included for completeness. For each record, the following information is given where available; number of birds, age and sex if known, date and location of first sighting, further locations, whether it was trapped or photographed, the names of the finder(s), and whether it was seen by anyone else (et al.). For each species, it states how many previous records there have been from that island (if known) and there is a comment on the birds natural range and migrations. There are also the editor's comments and analysis of sightings in Guernsey.

Cover drawing : Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*,
by Mark Lawlor

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

Two, 5th March, flying over Vazon Bay, then over L'Eree, photo.

These two birds were only seen in flight by a few observers. They did not appear to stop and were not seen to land. This is just the fourth record of this species on the island in the last ten years. The previous bird was seen on 6th March 2011 - note the very similar dates. There is a chance that, one day, a pair will arrive and take up residence. There are plenty of places that would be favourable for swans to live, as our resident Black Swan will testify.

(A common resident species throughout the UK and Northern and Central Europe)

Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*)

One, 14th August, off Chouet (J. Hooper, M. A. Guppy) - 9th Guernsey record.

Unusually, in the summer of 2014, large flocks of Balearic Shearwaters were noted off the coasts of Guernsey. One of these flocks lingered off Chouet in mid-August and attracted this Cory's Shearwater to join them. Although viewing was quite difficult, it was seen a couple of times during the day. All previous records of this species have been fly-bys, not lingering at all. This was only the second record in over a decade, which is surprising with regular seawatching taking place off the northern headlands, especially with the burst of records around the turn of the millennium.

(Breeds in colonies on islands in the East Atlantic and Mediterranean, some birds moving north into British waters after the breeding season)

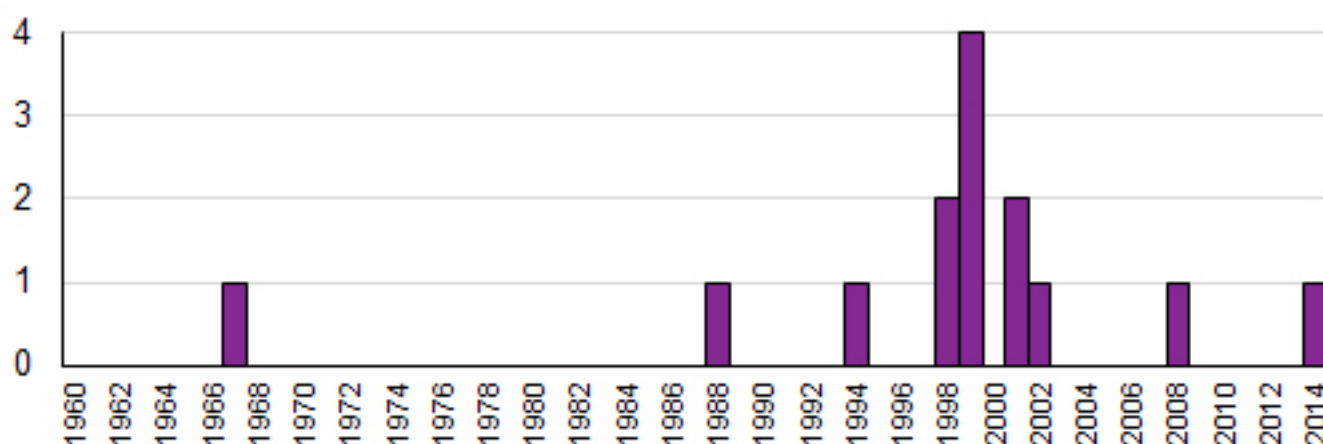


Figure 1 : Number of individual Cory's Shearwaters seen off Guernsey by year.

Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*)

Two, 7th June, over Rue des Bergers NR, photo - 4th Guernsey record.

Despite the species increasing in number throughout the region, Great White Egrets remain frustratingly elusive on Guernsey, all four records being of short-staying birds. These two individuals flew straight over the pond and were luckily snapped by a photographer as they moved through. This species will probably follow Little Egret and become a more regular visitor to the island, especially now it is breeding in the UK.

(Breeds in colonies in wetlands throughout Europe, increasing in NW Europe. Partial migrant, with many birds moving further south)



Great White Egret - D.Scott



Purple Heron - D.Scott

Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)

One, juvenile, 22nd July to 2nd August, Rue des Bergers NR, photo, (A. Loaring, et. al.)

- 26th Guernsey record.

As the chart below shows, with such a wide range of arrival dates, a Purple Heron can turn up in Guernsey at almost any time between early spring and mid-Autumn. Recently, as with this bird, the most regular sightings are of young birds dispersing from the breeding areas after fledging. This species has now been seen in nine out of the last ten years, and so the trend continues to be upwards.

(Breeds in marshland throughout central and southern Europe, wintering in sub-saharan Africa)

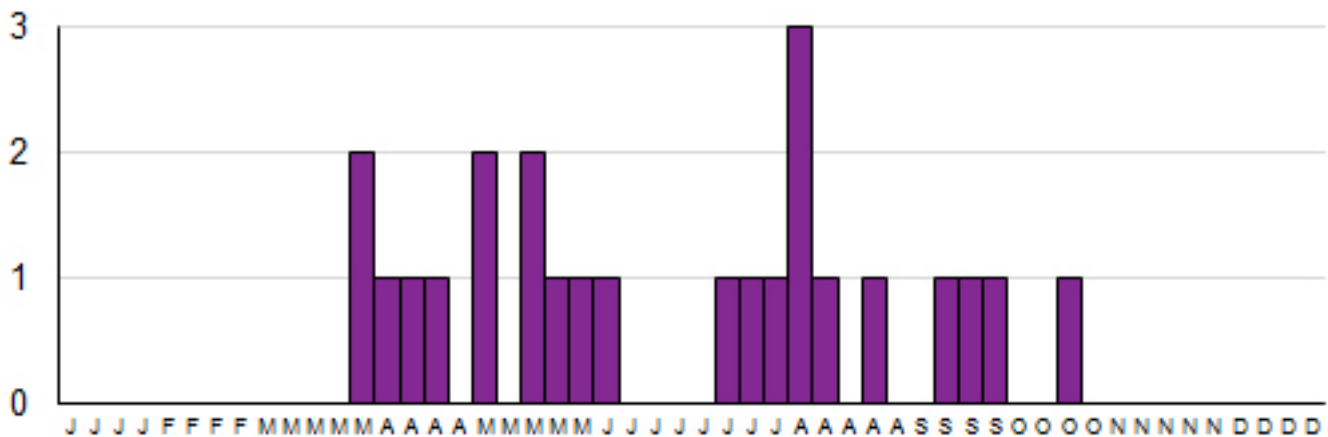


Figure 2 : Purple Heron records in Guernsey by week.

Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*)

One, 19th March, over Le Foulon, (A. Smith) - 12th Guernsey record.

This bird was seen briefly late in the evening and flew north, without stopping, over the outskirts of Town. The first 8 records of Red Kite in Guernsey (1926 - 2006) were all in the winter months, from November to January. However, the more recent records have all been seen during migration months - March, April, September & October. This seems to be a clear change in pattern which probably coincides with the growth of the reintroduced UK populations. The recent birds may be British-bred individuals, passing across the English Channel, to and from their wintering grounds.

(Breeds in western and central Europe and is partially migratory. Reintroduced widely in the UK)

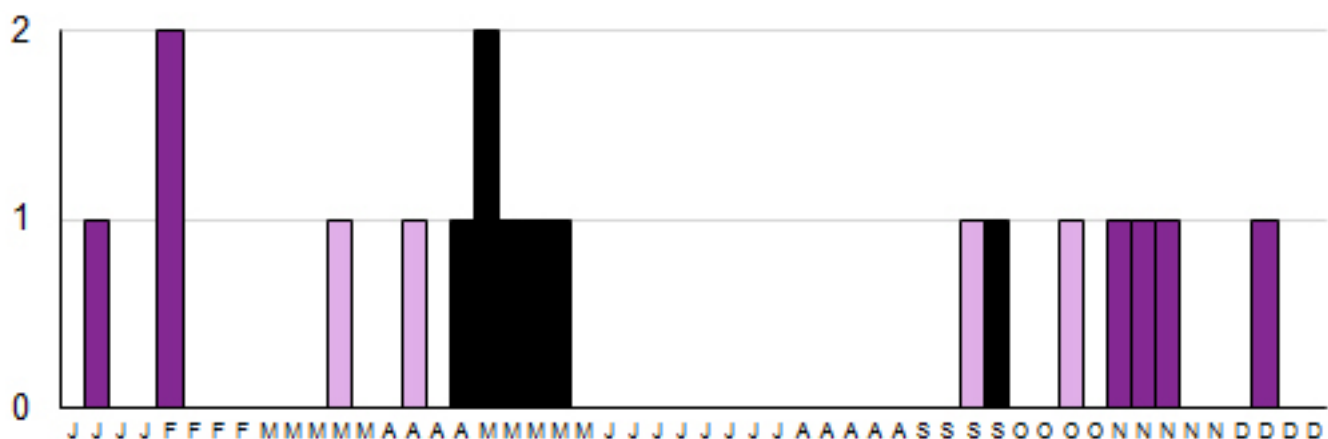


Figure 3 : kite records in Guernsey by week. Dark purple = Red Kite pre-2009, Light purple = Red Kite post-2009, Black = Black Kite (for comparison)

Rough-legged Buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*)

One, first-year, 25th to 31st May, Rue des Hougues and elsewhere, photo (W. R. Turner, et. al.)
- 4th Guernsey record.

This bird was a real surprise find, hunting the arable fields in the centre of the island for a few days, and it showed well for most local birders. The most surprising aspect of the sighting was the very late date, as this species is generally associated with the winter period and Guernsey is west of its usual range. However, we have had northern species very late in the spring before, and this was a young bird which would not probably be rushing back to breed.

Although mostly seen in the Rue des Hougues area, this bird was noted at various locations across the island, including the Airport, Grandes Havres and Baubigny. It may also have been seen on 1st June at a couple of locations. The very pale resident Common Buzzard caused some confusion at times, but this bird's dark belly, dark carpal patches, white uppertail and pale wing-patches were always obvious if seen well.

(Breeds in the mountains and tundra of the far north of Europe. Winters in northern and eastern Europe)



Rough-legged Buzzard - A.Loaring & M.Guppy

Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oedichnemus*)

One, 6th May, Rue des Hougues, St. Andrews (W.R. Turner) - 29th Guernsey record.

A brief, early-morning sighting, in the same fields as last year's bird. There have now been four records in the last five years, which is an increase since the previous four records were spread out over 20 years.

(Breeds mainly in central and southern Europe, also England, northern populations migrating south to winter in southern Europe and Africa)



Rough-legged Buzzard - A.Loaring

Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)

One, female, 30th April, Vale Pond, photo - 9th Guernsey record.

This species continues to become more regular with five of the nine records coming from the last nine years. Black-winged Stilts are notoriously short-stayers and this bird was likewise, available for just an afternoon.

(Breeds in the wetlands of southern Europe, wintering in Africa)



Black-winged Stilt - R.Carré

Kumlien's Gull (*Larus glaucoides kumlieni*)

One, adult, 15th to 28th January, St. Peter Port Harbour, photo (W. R. Turner, et. al.)

- 3rd Guernsey record.

One, first-year, 28th January (probably from 22nd) to 2nd April, Cobo, L'Eree, Pleinmont, then Chouet, photo (M. P. Lawlor, et. al.) - 4th Guernsey record.

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides glaucoides*)

One, first-year, 15th February to 2nd March, Chouet, then L'Eree, photo (K. Childs, et. al.)

- 23rd Guernsey record.

The first few months of 2014 was excellent for "white-winged" gulls, with at least five Iceland/Glaucous Gulls seen on the island (and perhaps more). This influx coincided with some severe winter storms rolling in from the Atlantic and gives an indication of where most of our arctic gulls are coming from. Rather than birds visiting us that have been wintering in the UK and northern Europe, it is suspected that most of our white-winged gulls are birds that are wintering in the Atlantic, pushed into the English Channel by the storms. Another piece of evidence for this is that a high proportion of our Iceland Gulls have been identified as belonging to the Canadian race of the species, known as Kumlien's Gull. Of only the 23 Iceland Gulls recorded in Guernsey, four have been identified as Kumlien's Gull.

Adult Kumlien's Gulls are differentiated from Iceland Gulls by the darker colouration in the primary feathers and the bird in the harbour was a superb example of this subspecies. First-year Kumlien's Gulls are more difficult to identify with certainty, but they are generally darker all over, with dark-shading in the wing-tips. Sometimes it is impossible to be certain, especially as many birds are intergrades between the two races. The Iceland Gull listed above showed a few features of Kumlien's Gull and may have been an intergrade.

(Breeds in the high Arctic of Greenland and Canada, wintering in the northern Atlantic including NW Europe)



first-year Kumlien's Gull - M.P.Lawlor



adult Kumlien's Gull - C.Bale



adult Kumlien's Gull - C.Bale



first-year Iceland Gull - M.Guppy

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*)

One, first-year, from December 2013 to 29th January, Grandes Havres & St. Peter Port Harbour, photo.

One, adult, 13th to 15th February, Baie des Pecqueries & Chouet, photo (*K. Childs, et. al.*) - 20th Guernsey record.

With 12 records in the last ten years, it is easy to forget that Glaucous Gull used to be a very rare bird. The famous returning bird of the late 90's was only the island's sixth record. This species continues to lag behind Iceland Gull overall, but at present they can be thought of as equally likely to occur here.

(Breeds on Arctic coasts, wintering in northern Europe)



adult Glaucous Gull - M.Guppy



first-year Glaucous Gull & adult Kumlien's Gull - A.Stoaling



first-year Glaucous Gull - A.Loaring

Woodchat Shrike (*Lanius senator*)

One, first-year male, 24th to 29th June, Rue des Pointes and surrounding area, Pleinmont, photo (J. Goldsmith, J. Hooper, et. al.) - 12th Guernsey record.

A nice mid-summer record of a wandering, non-breeding, immature male bird. Although the plumage seems quite dull, the dark blackish feathers indicate that it is a young male bird. Currently, of the three shrike species recorded on Guernsey, Woodchat is the most expected. The charts below show that the more southern Woodchat Shrike is about to overtake Red-backed as the most common, whilst the more northern Great Grey Shrike has all but disappeared.

(Breeds in southern Europe, as far north as central France, wintering in Africa)

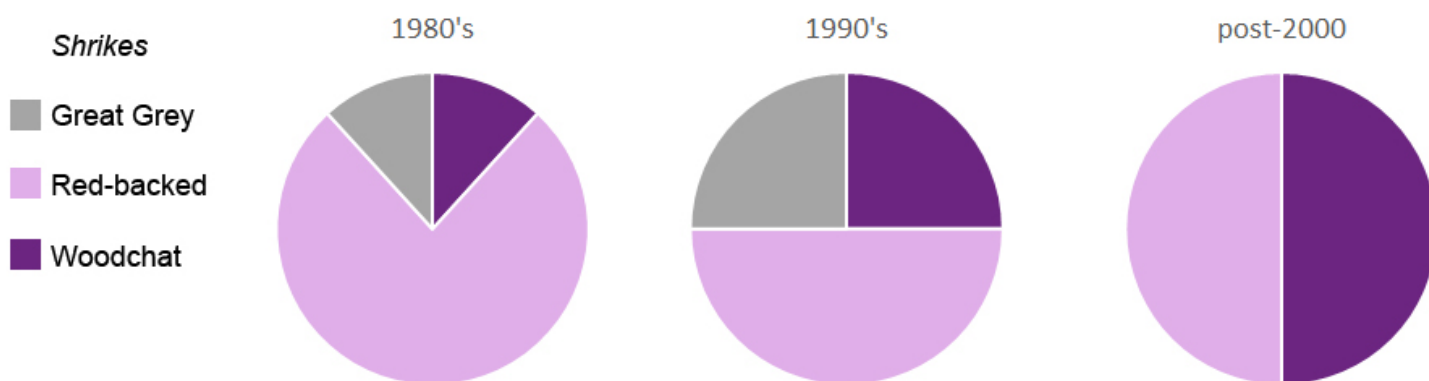


Figure 4 : the proportion of three species of shrikes recorded in Guernsey during each of the last three decades.



Woodchat Shrike - M.Cunningham



Woodchat Shrike - D.Scott

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)

One, 6th March, Pleinmont, and various widespread sites until 19th May, photo (J. Hooper, et. al.). Two birds at Mont Herault on 22nd March.

Rook records in Guernsey are often confusing and it is difficult to ascertain how many birds are involved, since they tend to be seen over a protracted period and over a wide range of sites, with gaps in between sightings. This year there could have been between two and five birds during the spring. With this in mind, and now being almost expected in the early spring, the Rarities Committee have removed the species from the rarities list of species requiring description for acceptance.

(Breeds in central and north-western Europe, with some birds migratory in the north of the range)

Subalpine Warbler (*Sylvia cantillans*)

One, first-year male, 10th to 13th April, Pleinmont, photo (J. Hooper, et. al.) - 3rd Guernsey record.

Compared to the last Subalpine Warbler on the island - at Pleinmont in June 2011 - this was a much paler bird, which may have suggested it was a female. However, it was heard to sing, and together with other plumage features, showed this to be a young male which hadn't developed the deep colour of an older bird. There was no evidence that this was anything other than a western-raced bird.

(Breeds in Mediterranean Europe, wintering in Africa)



Subalpine Warbler - K.Jehan



Icterine Warbler (*Hippolais icterina*)

One, juvenile, 3rd September, Grand Pré, trapped, photo (R. & M. Austin) - 4th Guernsey record.

This species is surprisingly rare on the island, this being the first record for thirty years, when one was present at Pleinmont on 9th September 1984. Unfortunately, this was discovered in a mist net and did not show at all in the field.

(Breeds in central and northern Europe, wintering in Africa)



Icterine Warbler - R. & M. Austin

Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*)

One, 2nd August, Claire Mare, trapped/photo (C. J. Mourant).

A single bird caught in the usual month of August at the usual site of the Claire Mare may not seem notable, but this is the earliest ever record of this species in Guernsey. Before this bird, the earliest was one caught on 5th August 1995. (STOP PRESS : this bird was re-trapped in June 2015 at its breeding grounds in Lithuania, a terrific record.)

(Rare breeder in eastern Europe, wintering in west Africa)



Aquatic Warbler - C.J.Mourant

Rose-coloured Starling (*Sturnus roseus*)

One, juvenile, 2nd September, Pleinmont (J. Hooper). Presumed same, Fort Hommet, 3rd September, photo (A. J. Bisson, et. al.)
- 38th Guernsey record.

One, juvenile, 26th to 28th September, Perelle & L'Eree area, photo (J. Hooper, et. al.). Presumed same, Pleinmont, 5th October, photo (J. P. Down & RSPB group) - 39th Guernsey record.

The island continues its excellent run of records of this species.

(Breeds in extreme south-eastern Europe and Asia, wintering in southern Asia. Small numbers regularly move westwards in the Autumn.)



Rose-coloured Starling, Claire Mare - C.Carre



Red-breasted Flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*)

One, female/juvenile, 12th October, Vaux de Monel, Pleinmont, (M. P. Lawlor) - 21st Guernsey record.

Unfortunately, a very brief sighting, which disappeared as soon as it was found. This species is a real October specialist, with all definite records occurring within this month. On the chart below, there is a cluster of 11 birds found on the four days between 11th and 14th October, this year's bird included.

(Breeds in eastern Europe and Asia, wintering in southern Asia)

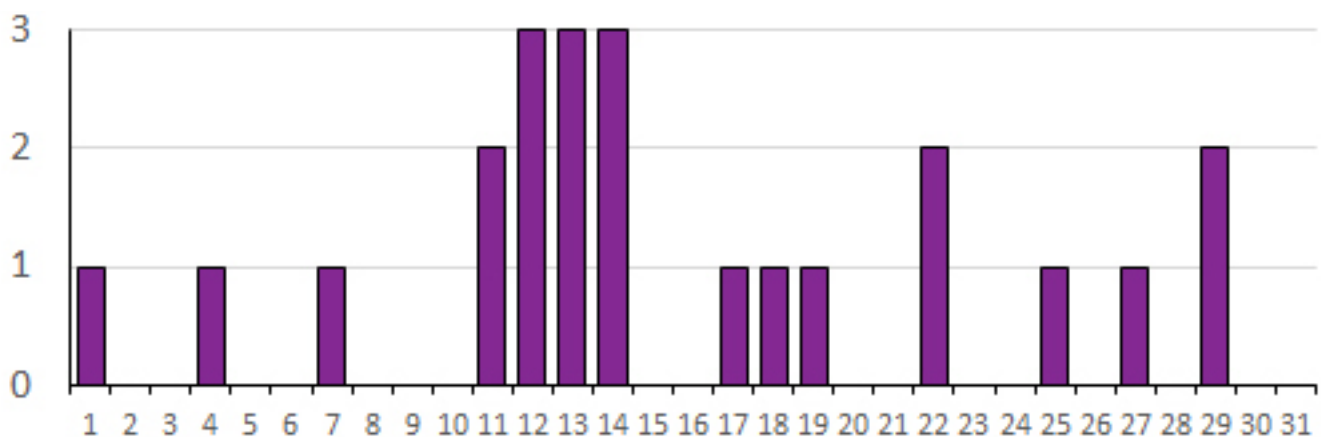


Figure 5 : the number of Red-breasted Flycatchers recorded in October, analysed by date/day found.

Common Rosefinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus*)

One, juvenile, 21st September, Pleinmont, (M. A. Guppy, W. R. Turner) - 5th Guernsey record.

Almost exactly one year since a similar record at the same site last year. This bird was very short-staying however and was not seen subsequently. Another species which is surprisingly under-recorded, with only 5 records.

(Breeds in eastern Europe and Asia, wintering in southern Asia)

Hawfinch (*Carpodacus erythrinus*)

One, 19th April, Pleinmont, (J. Hooper) - 20th Guernsey record.

Another brief sighting of a bird flying around the trees at Pleinmont, giving good but short views. It has been ten years since a Hawfinch that has stayed long enough for other birders to see. Nearly all records have been of single, short-staying individuals.

(Resident breeder throughout Europe, with northern birds wandering further south in autumn and winter)

Corn Bunting (*Emberiza calandra*)

One, juvenile, 15th November, Mont Herault, (W. R. Turner) - 6th Guernsey record.

This bird was discovered feeding with a large flock of late-autumn migrants in the crop fields at Mont Herault. Unfortunately it was extremely elusive and didn't show for very long, but luckily the observer managed to get a clear photo of the bird. The chunky body and bill, and few distinctive fieldmarks can be seen in the picture. This is a very rare bird on the island, with just three records since the 1940's - the others being in 1976 and 2004, the latter which was much more accommodating for the local birders.

(Resident breeder throughout central and southern Europe, rarely wandering)



Corn Bunting, Mont Herault - W.R.Turner

Alderney

[Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)]

One, female, from 17th November, various sites, photo.

Although spectacular and exciting, this Great Bustard proved to be a bird originally from captivity, from the UK reintroduction scheme in Wiltshire, rather than a wild bird. It was wearing a green ring which gave away its origin.

(Very rare and declining breeder in eastern Europe and Iberia, more widespread in Asia)

Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*)

One, 21st April, Barrackmasters Lane, trapped, photo (C. J. Mourant, et. al.).

(Breeds throughout Europe, wintering in Africa)



Nightingale - C.J.Mourant

Scarce species in Guernsey

Below is a list of other rare sightings in Guernsey in 2013. The species below occur too regularly to be classified as official rarities, and are generally labelled "scarcities". Some years, a scarce species may occur in higher than usual numbers and will be missing from this section. Since these species are not official rarities, no formal report form has had to be completed, and no assessment has taken place by the Rarities Committee. So, since these records are 'unchecked' they are listed with the assumption of correct identification by the observer, and the proviso that an error may have been made on occasion. A few reports of birds are not included due to circumstances indicating a high likelihood of a mistake being made.

[Mandarin (*Aix galericulata*)]

1 (m), Rue du Closel, Vale, 21st Apr (unknown origin).

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

1 (m), Grande Mare, 1st Jan to 10th Feb.

1 (m), Grande Mare, 4th May.

2 (m+f), Colin Best NR, 22nd May.

1, past Jaonneuse, 10th Aug.

Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

1 (m), Rue des Bergers, 12th to 15th Sep.

4, Colin Best NR, 13th to 17th Oct (with one until 18th Nov).

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)

2 (m+f), Colin Best NR, 29th Mar.

1 (m), Rocquaine Bay, 30th Mar (perhaps same as above).

1 (m), Rue des Bergers/Grande Mare, 5th to 6th May.



Pintail, RDB - M.Cunningham



Garganey, CBNR - A.Stoaling

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

1 (f/j), Vale Pond, 31st Oct.

Red-throated Diver (*Gavia stellata*)

1, past Jaonneuse, 5th Nov.
1, past Jaonneuse, 23rd Nov.
2, past Jaonneuse, 27th Dec.

Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)

1, Claire Mare & various sites, 6th Oct to 7th Nov.
up to 5, Vazon/L'Eree area, 28th & 29th Oct.
2, Claire Mare, 2nd Dec.
1, Claire Mare, 26th to 31st Dec.

Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*)

1, Rousse/Grandes Havres, 22nd to 24th Feb.

Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

1, Perelle, 19th to 22nd Mar.
2, Perelle, 2nd Nov.

Honey Buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*)

1, Courtil de Bas, 16th May.
1, Baubigny, 30th May.
1, Les Vauxbelets, 1st Jun.
1, Town Harbour, 18th Jul.
1, Jerbourg, 11th Oct.

Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)

1 (f/i), Pleinmont & Lihou Headland, 1st Apr.
1 (m), Fauxquets Valley, 29th Apr.
1 (f/i), L'Eree, 11th Jun.
1 (f/i), Talbot Valley, 10th Sep.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)

1, Les Gravees, 20th Mar.
1, Corbiere/Pleinmont/Claire Mare, 4th May.
1, Herm and many locations island-wide, 12th to 24th Sep.
1, Pleinmont, 14th Nov.

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

1, Colin Best NR, 8th Apr.
1, Colin Best NR, 18th to 20th Apr.
1 or 2, Colin Best NR, 25th to 27th Apr.
1, Colin Best NR, 7th May.
1, Rue du Closel, 6th Sep.

Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

1, Claire Mare, 11th Aug.
1, Colin Best NR/Claire Mare, 31st Aug to 3rd Sep.
1, Pecqueries/Pulias, 4th to 6th Sep.
4, L'Eree, 5th Sep.



Red-necked Grebe - M.Cunningham



Honey Buzzard, Baubigny - M.Lawlor



Hen Harrier, Fauxquets - R.Carré



Knot, Pulias - M.Lawlor



Osprey, Vale Pond - M.Cunningham



Spoonbill, CBNR - A.Loaring

Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)

1, Vazon, 27th Aug.

Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)

2, Colin Best NR, 7th Aug.

1, Fort Hommet/Vazon, 8th to 12th Sep.

up to 3, Colin Best NR, 12th to 20th Sep.

1, Herm, 12th Sep.

Grey Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

1, L'Eree, 6th to 11th Oct.

Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)

1, over Mount Row, SPP, 30th Apr.

Pomarine Skua (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)

1, off Chouet, 8th Apr.

1, off Jaonneuse, 25th Sep.

1, off Jaonneuse, 22nd Oct.

1 to 2, off Chouet/Jaonneuse, 20th to 27th Dec.

Little Gull (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*)

10 (ads), off Chouet, 22nd Jan.

1 (ad), Fort Hommet, 6th Feb.

up to 9, off Chouet to Fort le Marchant, 15th to 17th Feb.

Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*)

2+, Pleinmont, 4th May.

1, Rue des Bergers, 5th May.

1, Pine Forest, SM, 11th May.

1, Rue de la Corderie, 22nd May.

2, Rue du Marais, 30th May.

3, La Pomare, 2nd Jun.

1, Creux Mahie, 28th Jun.

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

1, Mont Herault, 19th Mar.

1, Pleinmont, 25th Apr.

1, Paradis, 23rd Sep.

1, Pleinmont, 27th Oct.

1, Mont Herault & L'Eree, 16th May.

Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

1, Belmont Road, SPP, 30th Mar.

1, Icart, 2nd Apr.

Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*)

1, Fort le Marchant, 20th Aug.

1, Fort Doyle, 31st Aug.

1, Fort Hommet, 4th Sep.

1, Pulias, 4th to 11th Sep.

1 to 2, Pleinmont, 6th to 7th Sep.



Little Stint, Ft. Hommet - M.Cunningham



Grey Phalarope - A.Loaring



Pomarine Skua, April - D.Spicer



Short-eared Owl, Paradis - A.Loaring

1, Bordeaux, 7th to 9th Sep.
 1, Fort Hommet, 18th Sep.
 1, Pleinmont, 22nd Sep.
 1, Bordeaux, 24th to 27th Sep.
 1, Fort Hommet, 29th Sep.

Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*)

1 (f), Talbot Valley, 17th May.
 1 (m), Pleinmont, 31st May.

Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*)

1, Icart, 20th Oct.
 3, Pleinmont, 26th Oct.

Yellow-browed Warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*)

1, Silbe NR, 10th to 11th Oct.
 up to 2, Silbe NR, 25th Oct to 2nd Nov.
 1, Vau de Monel, Pleinmont, 26th Oct.
 1, Marais Nord, 1st Nov.

Wood Warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*)

1, Saumarez Park, 19th to 21st Apr.
 up to 3, Reservoir, 4th May.
 1, Sous L'Eglise, 4th May
 1, Talbot Valley, 14th May.
 1, Pleinmont, 19th Sep.
 1, Herm, 22nd Sep.

Blue-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla flava flava*)

1, Colin Best NR, 1st to 3rd May.

Richard's Pipit (*Anthus richardi*)

1, Pleinmont, 15th to 28th Mar.
 1, Pleinmont, 29th Oct to 3rd Nov.

Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*)

1, St. Sampsons Marais, 30th Jan to 23rd Mar.
 1, Pulias, 1st Nov to 31st Dec.
 1, Picquerel, 6th Dec.

Serin (*Serinus serinus*)

1, Mont Herault, 29th Oct.

Lesser/Common Redpoll (*Carduelis cabaret/ flammea*)

1, Pleinmont, 30th Oct.

Common Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*)

4, Pleinmont, 27th Jun.
 2, Prevote, 28th Jun.
 3, Pleinmont, 16th Aug.



Hoopoe, Belmont Rd - C.Willcocks



Richard's Pipit, March - A.Loaring



Water Pipit, Pulias - A.Loaring

Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)

1, Pulias, 1st Nov.

Lapland Bunting (*Calcarius lapponicus*)

1, Pleinmont, 19th Oct.

1 (1-w m), Mont Herault, 15th to 16th Nov.



Lapland Bunting, Mt Herault - R.Ferbrache



Yellow-browed Warbler, Silbe - A.Loaring