



RAFOS/SEC/19

DATED 22 NOV 19

## FALO'S REPORT

### 2019 Programme

- The 2019 Field Activities programme is complete, with 6 out of 7 planned events mounted, involving 62 attendees at a cost of £2350 to the Society. Sadly, the Gibraltar Joint-Service Ringing Expedition had to be cancelled due to the lack of a 'core' ringing team.
  - Slimbridge Outing. Attended by 12 members, on 20th January. Slightly lower number than usual but lots of great birding was had by attendees.
  - Expedition WINTER DUCK (WD) 2019. Fifteen members (probably a realistic maximum for WD) split into 3 teams, covered 206 WeBS sites from an allocated 236, with 30 sites uncovered due to a combination of atrocious weather with associated access problems and a vehicle issue. Additionally, 66 BTO BirdTrack species lists (at the 10 Km square level) were completed. White-billed diver and whimbrel sightings were a 1<sup>st</sup> for Exped WD, with merlin and hen harrier sightings adding further interest. The white-billed diver sighting has been accepted by Highland recorder and will be published in the 2019 Highland Bird Report in due course. Overall survey results were hand-delivered to BTO WeBS' staff by the Chairman, FALO and John Wells on 28 Mar 19.
  - Somerset Levels weekend. The field outing to the Somerset Levels was another great success, with 12 participants attending the weekend. Weather was fair to good with rain on one day only. Around 157 records of 66 species entered on BirdTrack with highlights being cattle and great white egrets, bittern, garganey and hobby. Other observations were a distinct shortage of swifts and other hirundines and late sightings of circa 60 black-tailed godwit and 8 pochard.

- Expedition SIMMER DIM (SD) 2019. Thirteen participants, including 3 RNBWS members, and split into 2 teams, covered 243 Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) grid squares on the Mainland Shetland peninsulas of Northmavine and Western Mainland. Additionally, 18 species lists for BirdTrack at the 10 Km square level were completed, with a total of 961 BirdTrack records created for the survey area with 72 species recorded. Meanwhile, 3 British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC) Rarity Submissions were raised, several nest record cards covering a variety of species have been submitted for the BTO Nest Record Scheme, 4 Nest Incorporation of Debris Forms were generated and 3 Pollinator Monitoring Scheme, Flower Insect Timed (FIT) count records were submitted to the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology FIT database. Expedition costs were defrayed by a £2000 external grant award from the Seabird Group and by £1130 worth of sponsorship in the form of discounted ferry travel by NorthLink Ferries. Finally, a Grant Report article was published in The Seabird Group's October 2019 Newsletter and reproduced for members' information on the 'closed' RAFOS Facebook page on 12 Oct 19.
- Bird Fair and Catterick. Several members attended the Bird Fair, but no Catterick ringing event took place due to a lack of 'core ringers'.
- Expedition ISLAY MIST (IM) 2019. Took place from 26 Oct – 2 Nov and involved 10 participants. Survey tasks included support to the RSPB; counting and ageing geese, counting and identifying individual choughs and counting and identifying individual twite on the Oa reserve as well as surveying out to 8 kms from Islay Airport, again, in order to update the Wildlife Management Annex for the Airport Manual. A total of 112 species were observed, with a little egret being a new species for IM, white-tailed eagles numerous, and barnacle geese very numerous.
- The post-AGM Field Meeting is currently in abeyance, not least because of the paucity of good winter birding venues in High Wycombe. The meeting may be resurrected if alternative AGM venues and/or timings lend themselves to such an event.

### Summary of 2019 Programme.

201 9	Date	Venue	Leaders	Activity	Sponsored	Attendees
1	20 Jan	WWT Slimbridge	Bill Francis	Wetland Centre Tour	No bid	12
2	25 Jan - 2 Feb	Winter Duck 19	Martin Routledge	WeBS	£1100	15
3	31 May – 2 Jun	Somerset Levels	Pete Evans/Team Knight	Field meeting	No bid	12
4	17-29-Jun	Mainland Shetland	Keith Cowieson	JNCC Seabirds Count	£1000	13
5	TBC Sep/Oct	Gibraltar	Julia Springett	Joint service ringing exped	~£250	<b>Cancelled, no 'core' ringers</b>
6	26 Oct-2 Nov	Islay Mist	Team Knight	Field meeting	~£250	10
7	17 Nov	TBD	TBD	Post-AGM Field meeting	No bid	Only if volunteer

		found
<b>Total (to date)</b>	<b>£2350</b>	<b>62</b>

- Proposed 2020 Programme. Intended programme below – following the recent pattern of fewer but arguably higher quality, more focussed events. 2020 is the last year of JNCC Seabirds Count, gap filling and mopping-up under-counted areas. Perhaps involving RNBWS participation for a joint expedition again? As yet no location has been identified by JNCC, but is likely to be in the Scottish Northern or Western Isles.

2020	Date	Venue	Leaders	Activity	Sponsored
1	5 Jan	WWT Slimbridge	Bill Francis	Wetland Centre Tour	No bid
2	25 Jan - 2 Feb	Winter Duck 20	Martin Routledge	WeBS	£1100
3	17 - 19 Apr	Somerset Levels	Pete Evans <i>et al</i>	Field meeting	No bid
4	15 – 28 Jun	TBC	Keith Cowieson	JNCC Seabirds Count	£1000 (assumes grant received from Seabird Group)
5	24 Sep/ 8 Oct	Gibraltar	Julia Springett	Joint service ringing exped	~£250?
6	Nov	TBD	TBD	Post-AGM Field meeting	No bid
					<b>~£2350</b>

- Proposed 2021+ Programme.
  - Slimbridge & Somerset Levels field trips and Expeds WD, IM, GIBEX. Standard recurring outings & expeditions.
  - Revisit 2007-11 BTO Bird Atlas country. A proposal to revisit the areas covered during BTO Bird Atlas surveying 10 years on. Venues could include the Kintyre peninsula in Scotland and East Anglia.
  - Revisit overseas venues. Cyprus, Falkland Islands etc?
  - Defence Infrastructure Organisation's (DIO) Environmental Support and Compliance Team. Assist DIO's conservation team in fulfilling their statutory role in surveying and monitoring biodiversity on the MoD's estate, both at home and abroad. Possibilities could include Kenya and Belize, as well as UK sites in Dorset and Devon.
- Miscellaneous. Following recommendations from the Exped SD 2018 & 2019 reports, the Committee decided to renew RAFOS' membership of The Seabird Group for a further year, and to purchase a further set of 4 x 2-way radios for expedition usage.

Keith Cowieson  
FALO

Attachment:

- RAFOS AGM Guest Speaker

## **RAFOS AGM Guest Speaker**



### **Daisy Burnell, Seabirds Count project Co-ordinator, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)**

Daisy grew up in Yorkshire, only 7 miles away from the fantastic RSPB reserve at Fairburn Ings and 2 miles away from Lotherton Hall bird garden. Safe to say both these places were to blame for her love for birds and nature. Daisy is currently co-ordinating the 4<sup>th</sup> breeding seabird census for Britain and Ireland, a project developed by the Seabird Monitoring Programme partnership and led by the JNCC. Prior to working for the JNCC, she spent five years studying at the University of Aberdeen. The first four gained her a BSc in Marine Biology, and the last an MSc in Applied Marine and Fisheries Ecology. Daisy's passion for seabirds, and their conservation, was sparked during her MSc research thesis, which looked at the foraging behaviour of fulmars during the breeding season, in relation to proposed marine renewable sites. In Daisy's view, there is nothing quite like spending 3 weeks on an uninhabited island off Orkney, catching and tagging fulmars and then downloading GPS data showing some of the incredible distances they cover!