

FAIR ISLE TIMES

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BANANAS

Our 3 minute writing exercise on Monday was on the topic of bananas. Luca said that he thought bananas were herbs so we looked up some facts about bananas. We found out that, the banana plant is in fact the world's largest herb. While the banana plant is usually called a banana tree, it is actually a herb, distantly related to ginger. The yellow thing you peel and eat is, in fact, a fruit because it contains the seeds of the plant. Bananas are also berries BUT strawberries and raspberries are not. Bananas grow in large hanging bunches called hands. Bananas contain around 75% water. Humans share 50% of our DNA with bananas.



Over 100 billion bananas are eaten every year in the world. India produces more bananas than any other country, 30.5 million tons, significantly more than any other country. It also holds the title of the largest banana consumer. Bananas have been depicted in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs.

Our News

On Friday we tidied up outside round the house. We tidied up plastic, metal and glass and got rid of it. On Saturday Luca was not feeling well but we did catch some frogs. We caught them in Tommy's pond. There were loads of them and they were massive. After we caught them, we put them back. There were just so many of them. In the evening we watched *Gladiators*. On Sunday we went outside our house and tried to catch a rabbit for about 2 hours! We didn't manage to catch one. Then we went on our bikes and cycled for a bit and then Luca walked up and down the Houll. Luca and Ander



Reminder: Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA community update 7pm Friday 21st March at the Fair Isle community hall. Katie will be providing a recap of DR MPA priority research progress to date, as well a summary of research plans moving forward. All welcome, with tea, coffee and homebakes. The presentation will be circulated afterwards and there will be opportunity for those who can't attend to make comment or ask questions. It would be great to hear people's thoughts on how research has progressed so far and its future direction.

Many thanks,
Katie

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Chapel – this week we will congregate at Utra for informal worship, all very welcome at 11am.

Da week dat's awa this week comes from one of our newest permanent residents here in the Isle, though we have known Alex for 5 years through his seasonal work at Fair Isle Bird Observatory:

Friday

An early start sees Jonnie and I walking up to the Obs to see how the kitchen fitters have got on – it's a flying visit from them but they've done a great job. We catch up with Derek on-site, swapping questions and answers, and spend the rest of the morning making ourselves as useful as two unskilled pairs of hands can manage, retrieving and bagging up all the windblown plastic we can find, and burning cardboard waste down at the Haven as the sun shines.

Back to Burkle via the shop, relishing in Jonnie's disapproving tutts at my additions to the basket, and time for some catching up on emails over lunch. The *Good Shepherd* has gone after a delayed start this morning, and I get word that the boxes of most of my worldly goods have made it onto the boat after coming across from Orkney the night before – a relief and an exciting step towards my residency in the isle starting to feel real! Now we just need a furnished flat to put it in...

I fill the rest of the afternoon with a walk to South Light to check through some Obs ringing data, via South Harbour to finish off a Beached Birds survey – a monthly check of three of the isle's beaches to monitor seabird mortality. My sister Hannah rings from France for a catch-up which is very welcome, and the evening is rounded off with curry and dahl made by Jonnie, and an old episode of some Louis Theroux.

Saturday

Yesterday's sun is replaced by grey skies and rain pattering on the Velux. It's a morning to be inside, so I spend it setting up our new work laptops which arrived on yesterday's boat, and getting my head around the process of updating the Obs website. I've never been a coder or programmer, but the simple logic of HTML code is easy enough to pick up. That same simplicity can also be faintly infuriating when I can't work out what I've done wrong, as I quickly discover, but soon enough I've managed to publish an update to the Latest Sightings page, complete with a photo.

The day dries up, and though fog descends to replace the rain, it's fine enough after lunch to walk up to the Obs, so Jonnie and I do so to measure up the Ringing Room and Boot Room for an IKEA order. We take

Mac with us, who insists on checking every suspicious-looking pipe or hole along the way for hidden rabbits – a job he takes very seriously.

Sunday

A quieter day today, and with the best of the weather set to be in the morning, I decline joining Jonnie on a run and instead head out for a walk around the crofts after a quick check of emails over breakfast. It's flat calm (conditions not to be wasted here!) and the air is filled with Skylark song. I walk down to South Light, where the Oystercatchers and Ringed Plovers are already noisily setting up their territories for another year, before heading up the road to Plantation. The first Lesser Black-backed Gull of the spring is reported by Susannah, and a little later on I see it floating around overhead. There's clearly been some movement of Stonechats too, as I see several birds on my wander around the roads, pleasingly obvious as they perch openly along the fences, making regular sallies out to catch tiny airborne insects.

As forecast, the cloud comes down and the rain begins as I make my way back to Burkle. The afternoon is therefore decidedly more sedentary and screen-heavy, taken up with data entry, emails, IKEA browsing and photo editing for the upcoming Birds of Fair Isle book.



*A fence full
of
Stonechats*

Monday
A laptop-heavy morning passes without much worthy of mention, punctuated only by the lingering Hen Harrier

floating through the garden – the first time I've seen it, despite it being here several days already.

In the afternoon, we head up to the Obs for some more Ringing Room deliberations and measurements, whilst Mac makes a nuisance of himself around some wet concrete outside. It's a much colder day with the brisk wind swinging northerly, and the planes don't go, meaning contractors are delayed getting back in. Jobs at the site done, we head back, blown southwards along the road, with Mac protecting an excellent stick from the envious eyes of the Setter dogs along the way.

After tea (enchiladas, a favourite of mine), the two of us walk up to the Hall where Marie joins us for an evening badminton session. I love racket sports, so it's great to be able to play here, and with us all at a similar skill level the games are good fun. Heading back, the moon is bright enough to light our way and throw strong shadows, but there's no activity from the aurora tonight.

Tuesday

With the northerly wind persisting, accompanied by sleety showers today, it's another morning of admin with little to highlight (there's a theme developing) with Jonnie juggling furniture, kitchen and bedding

orders, before a Zoom meeting with Douglas. There's no flights still. The morning's work gives us a few bits to follow up at the Obs site, and Del runs us up there after lunch.

I walk back, taking advantage of having the wind at my back to get some (very) fresh air. There's still a few Stonechats around, but most wildlife seems to be sensibly keeping a low profile out of the wind. I use the rest of the afternoon generating some summary ringing data for the 2024 Annual Report before a tasty stir fry tea made by Hollie.

Wednesday

This morning is more of the same I'm afraid – sitting at the laptop. This time, I write up a few other short sections of the Annual Report – though not the most exciting work, it's always nice to look back and be reminded of some great birds, days and experiences in summarising the previous year's work. It's a productive morning, and I end up with a few new documents written and sent off for editing.

Del gets in and promptly calls out the first Chiffchaff of the year, flitting around the Burkle garden. By the time I get out a little later, it's moved on, but a Goldcrest is still around, fluffed up against the cold into a tiny, golden-crowned orb. They're one of my favourite birds – impossibly small and delicate for the tough migrations and harsh conditions they manage to survive.

The rest of the day goes by in a flurry of meetings, with two FIBO Zoom calls in the afternoon followed by two isle AGMs at the Hall in the evening.



Goldcrest in the Burkle garden

Thursday

The wind finally relents and the morning is flat calm – happy days! Jonnie goes out for an early run, so I head to South Light after breakfast to check our stock of bird

rings. From there I head onwards up Malcolm's Head to make the most of the weather – it's not often you can stand at the top without there being a breath of wind, and the view is one of my favourites on the island. The cliffs are blanketed in Fulmars today, with birds swirling below me in all directions. They bicker constantly, combining with the waves crashing at the shore to create a wall of sound that drifts up the cliffs.

Fair Isle is never silent, but always peaceful.

Late morning we head up to the Obs, cleaning and tidying where we can, and unwrapping the newly-fitted kitchen. The planes have brought in a good number of folk, and the site is busy. The *Good Shepherd* comes

in, bringing our Obs car back, along with lots of animal feed to unload and distribute. We head back after this for a very late lunch, and meet Jonathan, the isle's new principal teacher – we'll not be the newest isle residents for long! What's left of the afternoon is spent unloading the Burkle and Taft bags of feed, and taking a walk around the SE corner of the isle, enjoying the speed at which the evenings are drawing out.

Alex, FIBO



Suggestions for last week's caption competition:

"HELP!!!!!! That man wants to brush my teeth again!"

Guillermo

"See Ruth, I told you we didn't need one of those Ring doorbells" Jonnie

"Hey there's no parking left here" Ian

"If you're not on the list, you're not getting in!!" Eileen

And for this week's caption competition... Suggestions to Eileen please! ☺

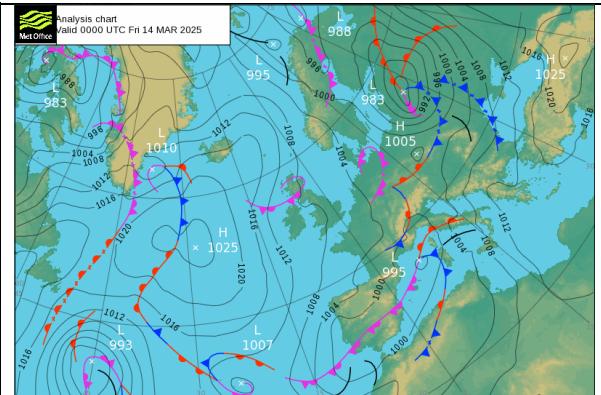
"I'm sure I left my dignity in here somewhere..." Eileen

"Hide and seek game needs work!" Alex

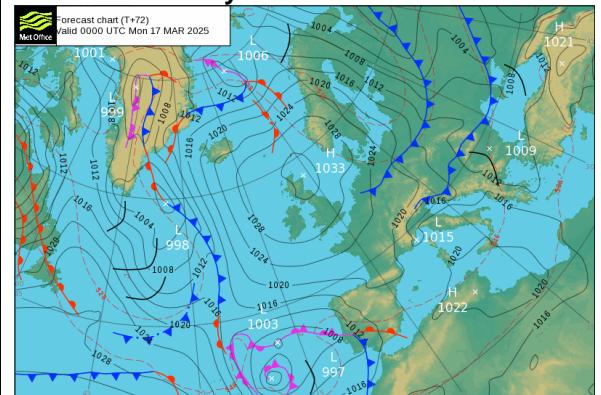
Maavi – we miss you, hope you are having a fine holiday – fly back to us soon!!



FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST



Analysis Chart 0000 UTC
Friday 14th March 2025



Forecast Chart 0000 UTC
Monday 17th March 2025

GENERAL SITUATION Friday 14th March 2025

A mid-Atlantic anticyclone maintains a cool northerly airflow across the north of Scotland. During the weekend, as the high migrates northeast across Scotland the airflow eases. By the start of next week with the anticyclone expected over southern Scandinavia a slack airflow will become southerly. During the week, though migrating further east high pressure persists while an Atlantic depression tracks northeast towards the British Isles, bringing a strengthening south or south-easterly airflow ahead of fronts pushed northeast over the UK.

OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND

Friday temperatures 6° or 7° by day 2° or 3° overnight. A milder weekend around 9° by day 4° or 5° overnight.

FRIDAY 14th: A small chance of a wintry shower at first otherwise dry with bright or sunny spells. F4-5 N winds easing F3-4 NW. Little change overnight.

Sea State: Mostly moderate at 2 metre NW.

SATURDAY 15th: Rather cloudy at first with a few showers possible then dry and bright with sunny spells. F4-5 W winds easing. Mainly dry overnight

with F4 winds turning N. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate at 2 metre NW.

SUNDAY 16th: Rather cloudy with brighter spells. Mainly dry with F3-4 N or NE winds becoming variable F3 overnight. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate at 2 metre NNW.

FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK

A cooler start around 7° by day, 5° overnight. Milder later at 9° by day 6° overnight.

MONDAY 17th: Cloudy, mainly dry with some bright or sunny spells and light winds. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate 2 metre NNE.

TUESDAY 18th: Cloudy, mostly dry with freshening S to SE winds. **Sea State:** Mostly slight at 1 metre variable.

WEDNESDAY 19th – SUNDAY 23rd: Wednesday and Thursday dry, brighter and milder with moderate S or SW winds freshening SSE later. Strengthening SE winds on Friday with rain edging in from the south. Probably a cloudy windy weekend with rain at times. **Sea State**

Wednesday: Mostly slight at 1 metre NW.

Dave Wheeler