

FAIR ISLE TIMES

VOLUME 48 ISSUE 28

PUBLISHED SINCE 1978

8th NOVEMBER 2025

Our November Trip to mainland Shetland

Luca writes...

This was a “no time to breathe” school trip.

My favourite part of the school trip was swimming lessons. Mostly, because I got my Deep End Test. But I also like swimming more because I can swim now. What I needed to do to complete this was two lengths, then float on my back for five seconds and then float on my front for five seconds.

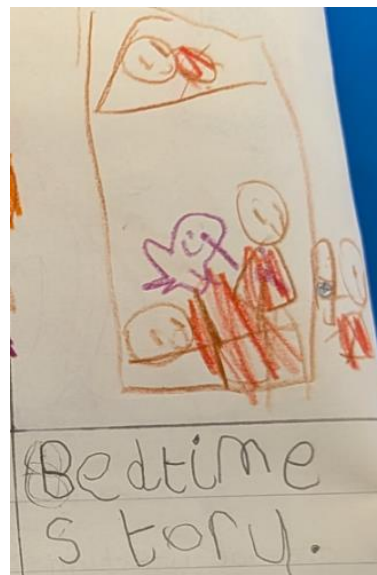
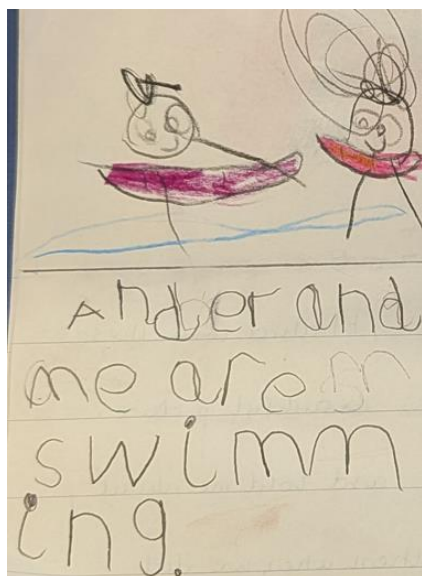
My next highlight was Freyja, all of us played games (games we made up). Then we went to tea. It was sausage pasta bake. The tea was not as bad as I thought it would be. It was actually good. I have never been a pasta bake person but I will maybe think about changing sides... Nope! Still not a fan of pasta bake. The hostel itself is really easy to navigate and I find the layout very satisfying.

My third highlight was Sandwick. Even though I didn't have any football at break, I still had a good time. I also was put under pressure by having to put their music on at the right time. I have never been in a P6/7 class before, this is rare for me but I enjoyed having more children my age around me.



Ander writes...

I had a brilliant swimming lesson. There were lots of splashes in the pool. It was at Clickimin. More swimming lessons help me get better at swimming. It was different because Khalicee was in the pool. I love the good quality equipment like the floats. I also love having Freyja over in the flat. On the way back, there was fog so we had to fly home early. But the trip was worth going on and we had great fun.



We are so proud of our P1, Khalicee, for her first ever school trip and sleeping away from home for the first time too. She was so determined and positive and says she is now happy to spend more nights in the hostel on future trips. Well done! She drew these pictures with some cool captions to tell you about the time away.

If you want to read more about the trip and all our other adventures, why not visit our website blog?

blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/sh/fairisleprimaryschool/

A birding autumn – Thanks to Alex at the Obs for this review of the past few months

The first autumn in the new Observatory has raced by, as every autumn seems to do, and was looking to be a relatively uneventful one until halfway through October, when the birding gods finally relented and allowed some easterly wind and exciting birds through.

September could be fairly described as a slow burn, with the feeling of guests outnumbering birds for much of the time, and scant returns for many miles walked. The first half of the month did see a scattering of the expected scarcities – Barred and Icterine Warblers, Rosefinches and Red-backed Shrikes – but more excitement came from the 'Other Wildlife' sections of Log.

A remarkable movement of Convolvulus Hawkmoth occurred at the beginning of the month, with the flowers of the Obs and croft gardens hosting whispers (yep, that's the collective noun!) of these impressive beasts, seen emerging on the wing well before dark to feed up for their next stage of their journey. A decidedly less energetic beast was the Ocean Sunfish that drifted lazily past Bunness on 6th – just the third isle record of this bizarre fish.



Sunfish – only the third record in the isle

Back to birds, and the second week of the month saw an increase in quality, with an all-too-brief Great Snipe flushed above the Obs, and the first of what was to be four autumn Greenish Warblers was fly catching around the Vaadal reservoir. The first Yellow-browed Warbler came on 11th – always a significant moment in the progression of any

autumn – and a Corncrake on 14th was the first of four records, in a better year for this struggling species. A Spotted Crake at Vaila's Trees on 15th sadly was not relocated, despite the best efforts of the Ornithology team (with encouragement/bemusement from Eileen).

The capital letters were broken out on the Obs website again on 19th, when a Brown Shrike was found at Chalet. Though records are on the increase (this is the fourth in three years) it remains a rare bird, being just the seventh record. The remainder of the month passed without much fanfare, though a Glossy Ibis on 28th added a touch of the Mediterranean to an overcast isle.

October began a little better, with a Firecrest in Easter Lothar and a skulky Olive-backed Pipit at Chalet, arriving ahead of Storm Amy which battered the isle from all directions over the course of a couple of days. Westerly winds then dominated through the middle of the month, with birds consequently fewer in number, though two separate records of Black-throated Diver were notable for the isle. Making up for the lack of birds however was an aggregation of cetaceans off the isle's east coast, with up to 16 Minke Whale and 25 White-beaked Dolphin seen over the course of several days, with the whales in particular often feeding very close inshore.



Firecrest



Black-throated Diver

The floodgates finally began creaking open on 19th October, with an arrival of migrants that included an Oriental Turtle Dove – the first isle record. Frustratingly, it was only conclusively identified from photos the following afternoon, and was not seen again.

The 21st October was a belter of a late-autumn day – a light south-easterly breeze bringing a mass arrival of birds, with thrushes and Blackcaps in every garden and geo. Quality came with the quantity, with both Pallas's Warbler and Firecrest on the cliffs at Guidicum outshone by news of an Isabelline Wheatear at Barkland - a long way from its semi-desert home in far eastern Europe. Fair Isle tends not to do brilliantly for rare wheatears, and this was just the second isle record, with the first being in 1998.



Pallas' Warbler



Isabelline Wheatear



Bullfinch

Two days later, the 'magic 23rd' lived up to its reputation, with a further arrival of birds in the calm conditions, with Goldcrest and Blackcap making up the bulk of the numbers. Top billing in the highlights was a Paddyfield Warbler along the walls at Setter, supported by the reappearance of the Isabelline Wheatear, Pallas's Warbler, Firecrest, two Bluethroat and an arrival of Bullfinch – the first of a movement that would continue for the next two weeks.

The final week or so of the season had a classic wintry tinge to proceedings, with the first Waxwings and Little Auks appearing, a late Little Bunting and our third Firecrest of the year, but there was more to come out of the autumn yet!

On 1st November, a Black-faced Bunting (*photo right*) was found by David at Shirva – just the second isle record and 14th for Britain. Even as buntings go, first-year Black-faced are undisputedly drab, but it made up for its dowdy plumage by showing incredibly well, calling regularly as it fed unconcerned in front of its handful of observers. Remarkably, a few days later on 6th November, Tommy discovered another Black-faced Bunting at the Walli Burn! It has been an extraordinary autumn for records of this species in Europe, with (at time of writing) seven birds in the UK alone, with only 10 British records in total before this year.



All in all then, not a bad autumn at all, though a shame that so many of the headline birds came too late for most of our guests at the Obs this year. With autumn migration seemingly stretching ever further into November, there's time for more yet...

Alex, FIBOT

The Harvest Festival was a huge success this year with £1100, being raised. We split the donations equally between the Red Cross Gaza fund and The Goodwill Children's Village in India as we have done for more than 40 years. We received the lovely thank you note below.

"Dear Pat and Friends,

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of the gift donation of £550 from the Fair Isle community.

Your continued support makes a real difference in the lives of the children we care for, helping us provide them with a safe and nurturing environment, access to education, and the opportunity to build a brighter future. We are profoundly grateful for the generosity and support for our work.

Thank you once again.

Best wishes,

Theresa van der Merwe

Administrator/Sponsorship Officer

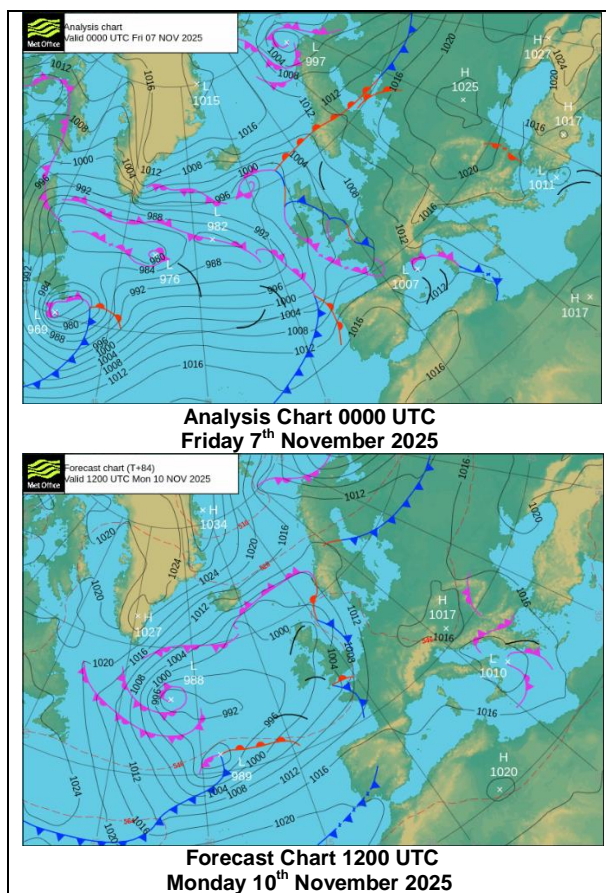
Goodwill Children's Homes"



Tomorrow is Remembrance Sunday and we will be observing both at the Chapel and graveyard as usual. All are very welcome to join.

There will be a short service in the Chapel which will begin at 10.45, followed by a brief ceremony with wreath laying at the war memorial at 11.30. Eileen

FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST



GENERAL SITUATION Friday 7th November 2025

The current situation with pressure relatively high across northern Europe and a slack pressure field established across the British Isles will change little during the next few days. A rather disrupted jet stream is likely to steer Atlantic low pressure systems east at lower latitudes towards southern Europe.

OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND

Temperatures 11° or 12° by day, 9° or 10° overnight.

SATURDAY 8th: Another foggy day though fog may thin at times though remaining overcast with mist and low cloud. with fog returning later. F3-4 SE winds.

Sea State: Slight or moderate at WNW 1 to 2 metre. East of Shetland slight at E 1 metre.

SUNDAY 9th: Mainly dry and brighter with sunny spells for a time. F3-4 SSE winds freshening F4-5 with chance of rain later.

Sea State: Slight or moderate at W 1 to 2 metre.

FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK

Temperature 11° or 12° by day, 8° or 9° overnight. A little cooler later.

MONDAY 10th: A few brighter spells otherwise often cloudy with some rain or showers. Moderate SE winds freshening ESE. **Sea State:** Mostly moderate at 2 metre W.

TUESDAY 11th: Brighter at times but mainly cloudy with some patchy rain. Light or moderate SE winds.

Sea State: Mostly moderate at 2 metre W

WEDNESDAY 12th – SUNDAY 16th: Wednesday cloudy and misty at times with patchy light rain or drizzle. Freshening NW or N winds. Cloudy and cooler on Thursday and Friday with chance of showers and fresh E winds. Possibly some rain by the weekend and stronger winds. **Sea State Wednesday:** Moderate at 2 metre NE.

Dave Wheeler

