

## REVIEW

by Neil Metcalfe

Tay and Orkney Ringing Groups. THE SHORE-BIRDS OF THE ORKNEY ISLANDS. Pp 78; numerous figures, tables and illustrations; A5. Copies obtainable from M.Martin, Flat 9, Upper Springland, Isla Road, Perth, Tayside. Price £2.50.

This report is a detailed summary of two years of intensive surveying of the wintering waders, ducks and gulls of the Orkney Islands. The coverage is remarkably complete: virtually all the coastline was walked (except for the few areas of cliffs), which amounts to a surveying of 20 islands and 720 km of shoreline. The results include full species accounts, giving distribution maps, biometrics and recoveries of ringed birds.

However, the booklet is not merely a list of counts, for details are given of the coastal morphology and habitat types (mainly rocky coastline), counting methods and assessments of count accuracies (including inter-observer and day-to-day comparisons) and catching techniques. The latter includes a description of a mini-cannon net, used with great success on rocky shores.

The results of the survey are impressive. Although there are no major concentrations of birds, the major species are found in reasonable numbers on virtually every island,

and consequently the minimum overall total of 51 000 waders makes Orkney one of the most important wintering areas in Britain. It is of major European importance for wintering Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* and Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima*, with around 6 000 of each species; rather more surprising is the finding that the Curlew *Numenius arquata* is the most abundant wader. A total of 18 000 Curlews were seen on the shoreline, and many more were seen feeding inland, indicating that the islands hold at least 20% of the British wintering total.

Altogether this report is invaluable in highlighting the importance of the islands (and of rocky coasts in general) to wintering shorebirds, and the Tay and Orkney groups are to be thanked, not only for their enthusiasm for conducting such extensive and arduous surveys, but also for the production of such a thorough and attractively-produced summary of their work.

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