



Book reviews

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In return, as a service to readers, this review section of *Ibis* is organized and edited by Michael G. Wilson and Professor Ben Sheldon of the Edward Grey Institute, with the help of a panel of contributors. They are always grateful for offers of further assistance with reviewing, especially with foreign-language titles.

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HAMMER, S., MADSEN, J.J., JENSEN, J.-K., PEDERSON, K.T., BLOCH, D. & THORUP, K. Færøsk Trækfugleatlas – **The Faroese Bird Migration Atlas**. Predominantly in Danish, with generous translation to English. 264 pages, abundant colour photographs, maps and diagrams. Torshavn: Faroe University Press, 2014. Paperback, £30.00, ISBN 978-99918-65-52-2.

Birdringing in the Faroes is administered by the University Zoological Museum, Copenhagen; it began in 1912 with the total reaching 100 000 in 2009 including 123 species. This has resulted in over 3000 recoveries or controls to which can be added almost 2000 recoveries in the Faroes of birds ringed elsewhere. This excellent book covers all this work and its results.

The bulk of the text is in Danish; however, it is all amply illustrated and the texts associated with maps, graphs and diagrams are given in English, as are generous summaries of each species account so language is not a drawback. The first 28 pages set the scene; the geography, the method of catching, often borrowed from traditional hunting, and the definitions adopted. This is followed by individual accounts for all 90 species recovered, each beginning with exquisite colour photographs of the species taken within the Faroes. The names in Danish, Faroese, and English are given plus a table with statistics such as the number ringed at sea, or on land, the oldest and the furthest travelled and so on and each ends with an extended summary. Exceptionally clear coloured maps show the ringing and recovery sites with in some cases the latter showing all ringing, not just recoveries. Graphs show the ringing and recovery by year, the centre of gravity of recoveries at different seasons and the month of ringing and recovery, pie diagrams the recovery details; shot, drowned in fishing gear, etc. Histograms show the age distribution of recoveries. The current breeding population sizes of resident species are also given.

The amount of work on some species has been extraordinary; more than 37 000 European Stormpetrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* ringed, with wintering off South Africa revealed. The ringing of more than 12 000 Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* has similarly resulted in a string of recoveries to South Africa. Far fewer Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* ringed (1556) have produced almost as many recoveries,

widely ranging from NW Africa to west Greenland. Some of the controls are remarkable; a Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* first ringed in Iceland was seen subsequently in Ireland, Norway, the Faroes and England.

There is much of interest in this impressive work. I was fascinated by the estimates of current population sizes in relation to the numbers there in 1960 and 1961 when I worked in the islands. Then there were some signs of a reversal of the favourable changes brought about by the North Atlantic warming in the 1920s and 1930s. Then, in the 1980s and 1990s, renewed warming brought concerns about declining food supplies of some species. Despite this, surprisingly, current numbers are remarkably similar to the early 1960s, with, for example, a marked recovery in Arctic Tern numbers. Perhaps the most spectacular change has been in the Greylag Goose *Anser anser* with only 26 in 1961 and licensed culling today! Data are given on the traditional harvesting, in most detail for the Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* showing a stable harvest of 500 per year with a slow but steady long-term increase in breeding numbers to the current 2500 pairs. Gannets are, however, no longer ringed on the Faroes owing to the risk of entrapment of the rings in fishing nets. In contrast to the Gannet management, successive introductions of Willow Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* and Rock Ptarmigan *Lagopus muta* have all eventually failed.

At the end of the book, there is a list of ringers showing that Faroese ornithology has been heavily dependent on visitors from overseas. Most have come from Denmark, but with the very first ringing in 1912, of Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, organized by the German Ornithological Society. During WWII, Kenneth Williamson's pioneering work resulted in some of the earliest data on Gannet migration. Later contributions came from the University of Durham, in 1960–1961 and the Brathay Exploration Group in 1968–1980. It is clear from the book that all such co-operations are greatly appreciated. Let us hope that this first-class presentation of factual material will stimulate further studies on these superbly situated islands.

G.R. (Dick) Potts