

First confirmed breeding of Common Snipe (Enkelbeckasin) on Landsort

(Common Snipe - *Gallinago gallinago*)

2017

On 3rd June a male Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) was heard calling from Bredmar and, later that day, was observed making prolonged display flights with characteristic 'drumming'.

These activities were repeated on the 4th to 6th of the month with the additional observation of the male pursuing a 2nd bird, undertaking exaggerated display flight which included turning on its side and flying in parallel to the 2nd bird. It was not clear if this was an attempt at pairing or if the activity related to seeing a competing male off site. Either way the 2nd bird continued north out of sight. However, on the 8th there were two birds on site, acting as a pair.

In the 22 days to the end of the month display flights and 'drumming' were recorded on a further 13 days, with only one record in the first half of July, that of a bird 'in nesting habitat'. It was assumed that the displaying male had failed to attract a mate.

However, on the afternoon of the 25th July, Chris Sharpe and Kay Collister, wardens at the Observatory for the season, walked down to the football pitch to see if a European Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) that had been observed catching a svaala over the Obs might have landed to eat it. No Hobby, but in the far corner of the pitch, near the reeds, three birds were seen briefly before two ran into cover. The third bird, which had adopted a 'frozen' posture with head up and bill pointed to the ground, was quickly identified as a Common Snipe. After a couple of minutes the bird relaxed its posture and the two other birds returned to the short grass to feed, revealing themselves to be young Common Snipe, approximately two-thirds the size of the adult.

This pattern of feeding, followed by the young running for cover whenever the adult sensed danger, was repeated on several occasions over a period of a few minutes, after which Chris returned to the Observatory to let Marie Lindholm, know of the sighting. Chris & Marie re-joined Kay at the site and were rewarded with good views of all three birds before they all walked slowly out of site into dense cover.

The following day, during routine checking of nets, Chris flushed what is assumed to be the same three birds from the rocks between the Bredmar reed beds and the road. All three birds flew strongly and dropped into the reed bed after about 100m of flight.

Previous records

Landsort records on the National database, 'Artportalan' were examined to determine the date of the last record of confirmed breeding of the species. A database query from 1900 to 2016 revealed a limited number of records that related to breeding and in only 17 years from the first record in 1969 until 2016. Most of these records related to displaying birds, dates varying between 23rd March and 24th June, with no record of confirmed breeding, thus the sighting of 25th July represents the first record of confirmed breeding for the species on the island.

Chris Sharpe. Warden Landsort Bird Observatory. 3rd August 2017