



Icelandic Ringing Scheme 2010. A short report of the Icelandic Ringing Scheme presented to EURING General Assembly in Malta in October 2011

History

Bird ringing in Iceland began in 1921 when the Danish ornithologist from Viborg Peter Skovgaard provided rings to a few volunteer ringers. When the Icelandic Ringing Scheme (ISRS) was initiated by the Icelandic Society of Natural History in 1932 most of Skovgaard's ringers moved to the new scheme, but some of them continued to ring for the old scheme as late as 1954 (a total of 13,729 birds ringed and 752 recovered). Therefore, 2010 was the 90th year of bird ringing in Iceland and the 79th year of the ISRS. The Icelandic Ringing Scheme was first managed by Magnus Björnsson, but from 1942 and after the ISRS was moved to the Icelandic Museum of Natural History (later Icelandic Institute of Natural History, IINH) in 1947 Dr. Finnur Gudmundsson managed the scheme, until his death in 1979. Dr. Ævar Petersen managed the scheme from 1979 to 2010. When IINH finally moved to new premises in October 2010 steps were taken to reorganize and prioritize the ISRS. Now all ornithologists and several of the technical staff at IINH are members of the Ringing Committee. Dr. Gudmundur A. Gudmundsson chairs the RC and has since 1st November 2010 been the new Lord of the Rings.

Organisation

The Icelandic Ringing Scheme is run by the Icelandic Institute of Natural History under the Ministry for the Environment.

Ringing Unit staff

Ringing committee: Gudmundur A. Gudmundsson (chair), Kristinn H. Skarphéðinsson, Ólafur K. Nielsen, Svenja N.V. Auhage, Ævar Petersen, Freydís Vigfúsdóttir, Helga Valdimarsson, Anna Sveinsdóttir, Kjartan Birgisson and Borgthor Magnusson.

Daily management: Gudmundur A. Gudmundsson (75% position), Svenja N.V. Auhage (75%) and Helga Valdimarsson (50%). Furthermore, three temporary employees worked in summer 2011 for 2 months each (total 50% position) checking and validating database entries. A total effort since the reorganization a year ago has been 2.5 full positions compared to 0.75 or less annually for many years in recent past.

Ringing scheme operations

Number ringed birds in 2010 was 10,032 (total 1921-2010, 612,000) of 64 species (148).

Number recovered (and controlled) birds 2010 was 399 (total 1921-2010, 39,700) of which 18.3% were foreign rings. The recoveries were of 43 species (total 1921-2010, 102).

Number of active ringers in 2010 was 39 (42 in 2009). One ringing station is operated in Iceland which is running one constant effort site (CES). Two ringers licensed nearly 70 years ago (1942) are still active: No. 091 Hálfán Björnsson and No. 097 Tryggvi Eyjólfsson.

Most numerous ringed species in 2010: Arctic Tern 1485 birds.

Most numerous recovered species in 2010: Whooper (59), Eider (38), Ptarmigan (29).

Most birds ringed by one ringer in 2010: 2416 birds by Sverrir Thorstensen.

Ten most ringed species 1921-2010: Atlantic Puffin (75,619 birds), Snow Bunting (72,480), Redwing (55,677), Arctic Tern (46,349), Black-legged Kittiwake (32,442), Fulmar (29,961), Great Skua (20,913), Black Guillemot (19,427), Meadow Pipit (14,778) and Common Guillemot (14,493).

Among spectacular recoveries 2010 was the 25th recovery of an Arctic Tern abroad and the very first West of the Atlantic Ocean. Reykjavik 771203 was ringed as pullus on 19.07.2009 Bakkagerði, Kaldrananeshr., Strand. (65.700°N, 21.417°W) was found exhausted 9996 km from ringing location on 24.10.2010 Praia do Pero, Cabo Frio, Rio de Janeiro state, Brazil (22.861°S, 41.986°W). A Fulmar at least 41.7 years old was

recovered and is a new longevity record for Icelandic Fulmars. It was ringed in the Westman Islands as fullgrown 17.10.1970 and drowned in a gill-net on 18.02.2011 only 19 km from ringing site.

Data storage

Ringing- and recovery data are stored in a SQL database managed through a home-made software and accessible through Microsoft Access queries. About 40% of new ringing data 2010 were delivered in Excel spreadsheets ready for import in the database. Today 82% of all ringing data has been entered into the database (50% checked) and 94% of all recovery data (>30% re-checked).

	Estimated total 1921-2010	Entries 1 st Nov. 2010	Entries 1 st Oct. 2011	Presently in DB
Ringing records	612,000	427,000	504,000	82%
Recoveries*	39,700	36,500	37,400	94%

*includes numerous ringers' own recoveries

Problems

The software used to manage the database is neither stable nor flexible enough to be maintained. The organisation of data is unnecessarily complicated. The database is being modified and a Microsoft Access window is being constructed to manage the database and to serve daily routines. Coding of records is not in good agreement with any standards. The main problem is that status, conditions and manipulation are mixed with age codes (104 codes) and recovery circumstances (525 codes) and need to be split before translation to EURING 2000 codes. Simplification and translation of tables is in process.

Annual report

Annual reports were published 1932-1953. After that only brief reports 1993-1996 have been printed and a preliminary report for 2008 published on web page.

Internet

A portal for ringers is under construction. First priority is having each ringer's data available for them as well as possibility for ringers to enter their ringing data electronically and map own recoveries. Annual reporting is planned on a web-page as well as having published papers, recovery maps and other analysed data accessible for general users.

Long-term ringing projects

Several large research projects are based on colour-ringing. Some are in co-operation with foreign researches, especially from the UK. The largest CR-projects are Whooper Swan, Brent Goose, Greylag, Pink-footed Goose, Black-tailed Godwit, Ringed Plover and Lesser Black-backed Gull. These projects maintain their own databases (containing tenths and even hundreds of thousands of records) with or aiming at annual reporting and backup to ISRS.

Research

Several datasets are presently being analysed (Atlantic Puffin) and datasets, recoveries or statistics have been delivered to Icelandic and foreign researchers for analysis in the past year: Manx's Shearwater, Long-tailed Duck, Ringed Plover, Seabirds, Thick-billed Murre, Black-headed Gull, Redwing.

Finances

The ISRS is financed through the annual budget of the IINH. There is no ringers' fee, but large projects by research institutes or individuals with project grants have occasionally been charged for cost of rings.

Reykjavik, 10th October 2011



Guðmundur A. Guðmundsson (Ph.D. Migration Ecology)
Co-ordinator of the Icelandic Ringing Scheme