

Fetlar2013

Red-Necked Phalarope

Latin name: *Phalaropus lobatus*

Family: *Scolopacidae*

The red-necked phalarope is a rare breeding bird in the UK. Fetlar is home to most of the UK's small breeding population. It is a migratory bird, and spends much of its time on open water. It overwinters in tropical seas feeding on plankton.

This delicate wading bird is known for its sexual role reversal. In the spring, the female develops striking breeding plumage to attract a mate. During courtship and egg laying, the female defends her mate against the attention of other females. After egg laying the female abandons her eggs to the sole care of the male. He incubates the eggs for 17-21 days and broods or protects the young until fledging.

The red-necked phalarope is a Schedule 1 breeding bird, and is protected by law.

Description

Size: 18-19cm in length.

Behaviour: more likely to be swimming than wading.

Identifiers: straight, long, fine, dark bill. Black or grey legs with semi-webbed feet.

Breeding Plumage: Female has dark grey head and upper parts, white throat and under parts, orangey red sides of neck and light streaking on its dark back. The male is much duller which makes him more camouflaged when he is incubating his eggs.

Winter Plumage: Mostly grey or dark above and white or pale below with a black eye patch.

When and where?

Phalaropes are rare and breed here in very low numbers. They arrive in late May and leave by early August. Visitors can look for them from a hide at the RSPB Mires of Funzie nature reserve and the north shore of the adjacent Loch of Funzie, located on the eastern side of the island.

Due to their Schedule 1 status and vulnerability to egg collectors, access to breeding grounds is forbidden.

RSPB

RSPB Scotland has studied the breeding behaviour and habitat of phalaropes in Fetlar since the 1960s. Phalaropes are still the focus of its conservation work on the isle where the charity works with local crofters and farmers to manage areas and make them suitable for breeding phalaropes.

RSPB Scotland has recently launched its first pin badge to feature a red-necked phalarope. Available for a donation of £1, proceeds support the conservation work for red-necked phalaropes in Fetlar.

Contact

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More Information

[RSPB Scotland in Fetlar](#)

[The Scottish Outdoor Access Code, Schedule 1 protection and licensing](#)