

## **A Sanderlings Movement – St Mary's, Autumn 2014.**

A recent increase in the number of Sanderling arriving at St Mary's Island, Whitley Bay, to around the 180 mark, has allowed close study of the variation in plumage between the adult birds, moulting out of summer plumage, showing various stages of change, and the juveniles with their neat checked upperpart pattern.

Always a delight to watch; careful approach on the beach resulted in many birds coming within a few feet of me. One of the birds carrying coloured leg-rings has returned for its fourth year, remaining faithful to this wintering site. Investigation reveals the movements of this tiny long distance traveller.

It was ringed as an adult at its breeding site in Iceland in May 2010, then by July that year, it was found on the beach at East Chevington, a flight of over 800 miles. The next sighting, as it wintered in Northumberland, was at St Mary's Island, Whitley Bay the following January. It remained at this site, with a brief sojourn north to Newbiggin, throughout the winter of 2010/2011; last seen on the 1st May 2011, before returning north to Iceland where it was seen again on May 20th. After breeding, the route was the same, as it returned to St. Mary's, observed on August 21st 2011. The pattern was repeated the following year, with the bird wintering between St. Mary's and Newbiggin.

In Iceland, over the summer of 2012 it was not seen at all, but then reappeared at St. Mary's in August of that year, with subsequent sightings here and at Newbiggin, again into December 2012.

Over the past two years, the bird has not been located back in Iceland and sightings have been restricted to one in August 2013 at, guess where, St. Mary's, and then very recently, having returned this year once more, to be seen in August 2014 at this site.

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