

**What might you be disturbing and how can you tell?**

## **Ringed Plover (sandy loo).**

The Ringed Plover is one of the birds most often found nesting on, or near, beaches. Its eggs are usually laid in late April or May in a shallow scrape in the sand or shingle. While incubating their eggs, adults keep very quiet and will often slip away unnoticed, only starting to call when they are some distance from the nest. Once the chicks hatch, adults become noisier - repeatedly uttering a two-toned whistle - a soft 'too-ii' or 'puu-ee', falling and then rising. This is an alarm call that sends an important message to its chicks - 'sit still! There is danger approaching'.



Motionless birds are far more difficult to locate than moving ones. You may sometimes see Ringed Plovers pretending to have a broken wing in an attempt to lure intruders away - a sure sign the chicks are nearby. Any predator would be tempted by the prospect of making an easy meal of the injured bird, but once it has been drawn safely away from the chicks, its dinner flies off.

## **Oystercatcher (shalder)**

Oystercatchers also frequently nest on or near beaches, especially where turricks are found. Just like the Ringed Plover they lay their eggs in shallow scrapes in April or May. They too remain very secretive when incubating their eggs. Once the chicks hatch, however, anything wandering into the breeding territory is met with endless noisy piping, occasionally accompanied by half-hearted dive-bombing.



## **Arctic Tern (turrick)**



Turricks are only just arriving back in Shetland when Ringed Plovers and Oystercatchers are settling down to incubate their eggs. Terns do not lay eggs until late May or early June, so they are unlikely to be disturbed by the Redd Up. It is usually obvious when turricks are being disturbed since they tend to nest in colonies, and a flurry of calling birds usually rises to meet an intruder. It is wise to respect their wishes and move away - anyone who strays too close to the nests can receive a painful peck on the head! Occasionally a single pair of turricks will nest alone on a beach and these may be much less aggressive towards intruders. If you see a pair of turricks that aren't frightened off but continue flying over the same general area, it is likely that they have a nest nearby.

## **Eider (dunter)**

Eiders occasionally nest on the upper shore. If you accidentally scare a female Eider off its nest, then it is important to cover the eggs with a little eider-down taken from the side of the nest. This will protect the eggs from predators. Once you have done this, move away quickly.



Other birds may also nest in the vicinity of beaches, particularly where there is a wet or marshy area behind the beach. Common and Black-headed Gulls, Redshank and Snipe all commonly nest in this type of habitat.