

the north at high speed and took the food item in mid-air, between the two harriers. The falcon continued at pace in a southerly direction with its loot and then out of sight following this perfectly timed aerial manoeuvre.

Although there is evidence that Peregrines suffer kleptoparasitism, often by gulls or corvids (e.g. Ratcliffe 1993), there are relatively few published examples of Peregrines stealing food from other species, but these include Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius* (Enderson *et al.* 1995), Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* (Ratcliffe 1993), Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* (Schweigman 1942), Merlin *F. columbarius* (Collar 2002; Rees 2009), Hobby *F. subbuteo* (King 2009) and Carrion Crow

Corvus corone (Zuberogoitia *et al.* 2002).

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Great Skua feeding behaviour at sea off the Isles of Scilly

Non-breeding and post-breeding Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* are essentially pelagic. At sea, their feeding behaviour is largely parasitic, attacking and robbing species up to the size of Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*. They also kill weakened birds up to the size of large gulls, fish for themselves and scavenge around trawlers (Olsen & Larsson 1997; BWPI 2006; Furness *et al.* 2017).

This note gives examples of the feeding behaviour of Great Skuas offshore from the Isles of Scilly. I kept a record of feeding behaviour during June–October over 17 years of short-range pelagic trips (typically up to 10 km offshore) using chum to draw in seabirds. Great Skuas are often seen on these trips; in general, 2CY birds predominate in June and July, adults from late July and juveniles from late August.

The main target birds in the waters around Scilly are gulls. Typically, a Great Skua powers in towards the boat, often low over the water to achieve a surprise attack. The gulls quickly gain height in order to remain above the skua since it is more difficult to rob a gull from beneath. If the skua gets above the gull, the latter may be forced down to the sea surface and is then in danger of being killed. Regurgitation normally satisfies the skua. However, on one occasion, after a relentless attack, a Great Black-backed Gull

Larus marinus turned back on the Great Skua, viciously fought it and won the battle.

Great Skuas frequently attack the larger shearwaters (Cory's *Calonectris borealis*, Great *Ardenna gravis*, and Sooty *A. grisea* Shearwaters; plate 279) when these are on passage off Scilly, mainly July–September. Great Skuas are very successful at robbing the larger shearwaters, which cannot manoeuvre quickly like gulls and fly close to the sea surface in calm conditions, thus making easy targets. A Cory's Shearwater's attempt at evasion is particularly heavy and awkward.

I have witnessed numerous attempts to kill larger shearwaters. While not agile, the shearwaters are able to dive. However, Great Skuas are relentless in attack and each time the shearwater surfaces the skua immediately resumes its attack; the shearwater is forced to dive again and becomes increasingly fatigued. I have yet to witness a successful attempt to kill a larger shearwater, although several Sooty Shearwaters came close to perishing. In August 2017, I saw an adult Great Skua attack and kill a juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* (plate 280). The skua targeted a flock of about 20 gulls of various species and ages, singled out a juvenile Lesser Black-backed, drove it onto the water and stood on it, forcing its head underwater until it drowned. The event took about three minutes, after

which the skua plucked feathers from the belly of the gull and started to devour it.

I have not seen Great Skuas take a storm-petrel, but have witnessed half-hearted attacks on European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates*

pelagicus. Storm-petrels can easily evade a skua if they are aware of it. I occasionally see Great Skuas foraging over chum, hanging in the wind and dipping down like a gull to collect food (e.g. mealworms or fish offal).

Great Skuas are sometimes found behind trawlers off Scilly, where large quantities of fish discards are available, but even in these situations the skuas mainly attack and rob other seabirds.

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Joe Pender

279. Adult Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* robbing a Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis* of a Garfish *Belone belone*, off Scilly, August 2017.



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280. Adult Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* drowning a juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, off the Isles of Scilly, August 2017.

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Nocturnal calling by a Pied Flycatcher on arrival in breeding habitat during spring migration

Much research has been conducted on the behaviour and ecology of the Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*. The species is a visual forager and is active diurnally throughout the annual cycle, with the exception of its migration flights, which, as is the case with many

songbirds, are undertaken at night (Martin 1990). There appears to be no record in the literature of this species vocalising at night (Lundberg & Alatalo 1992; BWPi 2006). This note documents nocturnal calling by a Pied Flycatcher arriving in breeding