

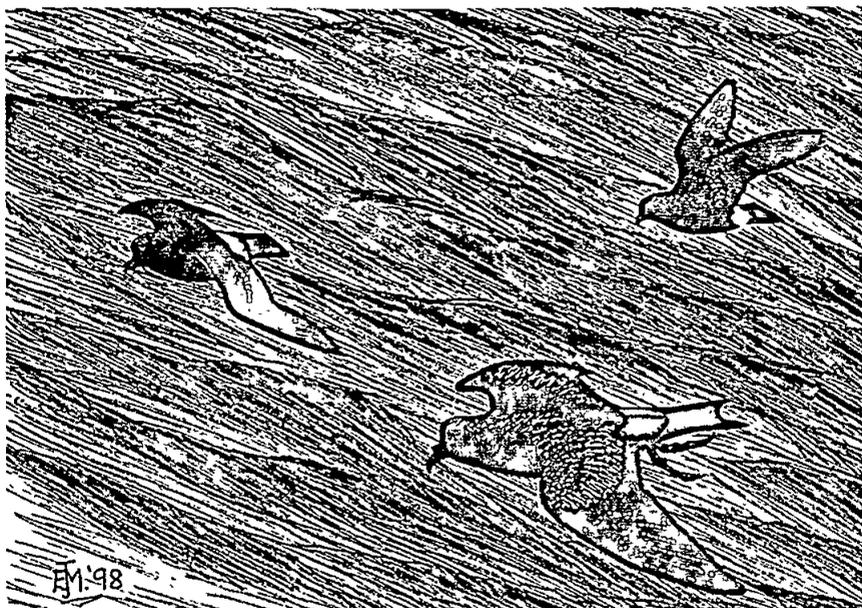
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# ARGYLL BIRD REPORT

with Systematic List for the year

## 1997

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Volume 14 (1998)

PUBLISHED BY THE  
ARGYLL BIRD CLUB



Cover Illustration

**LEACH'S PETREL** (foreground) and **STORM PETRELS**  
*Drawing by EDDIE MAGUIRE*

**The Fourteenth  
ARGYLL BIRD REPORT  
with Systematic List for the year  
1997**

Edited by  
**J.C.A. Craik**

Assisted by  
**P.C. Daw**

Systematic List by  
**P.C. Daw**

**Published by the  
Argyll Bird Club**  
(Scottish Charity Number SC008782)

**October 1998**  
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## ABOUT THE ARGYLL BIRD CLUB

The Argyll Bird Club was formed in 1985. Its main purpose is to play an active part in the promotion of ornithology in Argyll. It is recognised by the Inland Revenue as a charity in Scotland.

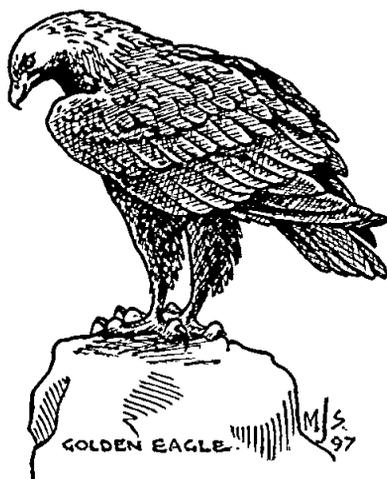
The Club holds two one-day meetings each year, in spring and autumn. The venue of the spring meeting is rotated between different towns (Dunoon, Oban, Lochgilphead and Tarbert) while the autumn meeting and AGM are held in Inveraray, a conveniently central location.

The Club organises field trips for members. It also publishes the annual *Argyll Bird Report* and a quarterly members' newsletter, *The Eider*, which includes details of club activities, reports from meetings and field trips, and feature articles by members and others.

Each year the subscription entitles you to the *Argyll Bird Report*, four issues of *The Eider*, and free admission to the two annual meetings. There are four kinds of membership: current rates (at 1 October 1998) are: Ordinary £10; Junior (under 17) £3; Family £15; Corporate £25. Subscriptions (by cheque or standing order) are due on 1 January. Anyone joining after 1 October is covered until the end of the following year.

*Further information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary: Peter Staley, Lincluden, Blairmore, Dunoon, PA23 8TL.*

**THERE IS A DETACHABLE APPLICATION FORM AT THE BACK OF THIS REPORT.**



**Argyll Bird Club  
Officials and Committee as at 1 October 1998**

**Chairman:** Nigel Scriven, 2 Allt na Blathaich, Loch Eck, Dunoon PA23 8SG.

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**Treasurer:** Prof. Robert Furness, The Cnoc, Tarbet, Loch Lomondside G83 7DG.

**Membership Secretary:** Peter Staley, Lincluden, Blairmore, Dunoon PA23 8TL.

**Committee:** Roger Broad, Dr Clive Craik, Paul Daw, Prof. Robert Furness, Dr Steve Petty, Nigel Scriven, Bill Staley, David Wood.

**Argyll Bird Records Committee:** Dr Tristan ap Rheinallt, Roger Broad, Paul Daw, David Jardine, Dr Arthur Jennings, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie.

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**Editor of Newsletter (*The Eider*):** Nigel Scriven, 2 Allt na Blathaich, Loch Eck, Dunoon PA23 8SG.

**Other useful addresses**

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**Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) Organiser for Argyll:** Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN.

**B.T.O. Representatives for Argyll:** *North Argyll including Mull, Coll and Tiree:* Mike Madders, Carnduncan, Gruinart, Bridgend, Isle of Islay PA44 7PS. *Islay, Jura and Colonsay:* Dr Malcolm Ogilvie (address above).

**R.S.P.B. Conservation Officer, Argyll & Bute:** Roger Broad (address above).

Further copies of this report can be obtained from Bill Staley, 16 Glengilp, Ardrishaig, PA30 8HT. Price £5 including postage. Most previous annual *Argyll Bird Reports* are also available at £4 including postage.

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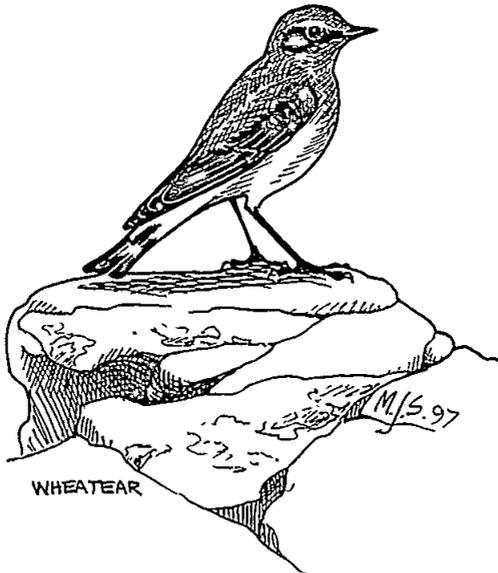
## Editorial

Many people contribute each year to the Argyll Bird Report, but by far the greatest burden of work falls on the shoulders of the County Recorder. I would like to thank the new Recorder for Argyll, Paul Daw, for his excellent Systematic List which forms the greater part of this year's volume. Thanks also to David Jardine for his valuable paper on the Fulmars of Colonsay; studies such as this, summarising changes over many years, make fascinating reading. I would also like to thank Eddie Maguire for the drawing on the this year's cover and for the vignette of the tern, and Margaret Staley for the other vignettes.

I would like to repeat my plea for more people to submit papers or notes to the Argyll Bird Report. Much interesting work has been carried out in the county, but very little of it finds its way into these pages. Please consider whether you can contribute something to next year's report.

Finally, very many thanks to all who have contributed to this year's Report, particularly to the many observers who send their records to the Recorder, to various committee members for helpful comments, and to Printworks Oban for their speedy and helpful co-operation in printing the final product.

J C A Craik  
Editor of *Argyll Bird Report*  
October 1998



## Systematic list for 1997

Paul Daw

*Tigh-na-Tulloch, Minard, Inveraray, Argyll PA32 8YQ*

### ORNITHOLOGICAL REVIEW OF 1997

#### Introduction

The systematic list below includes entries for 216 species, not including escapes or races. Eleven of these species were not recorded in 1997 and their entries below describe records from 1996 (5 species), 1995 (3), 1994 (one), 1989 (one) and 1987 (one). These records were omitted, or in some cases deleted due to lack of evidence, from previous *Argyll Bird Reports*.

This leaves a total of 205 species recorded in Argyll during 1997 (*cf* revised totals of 213 in 1996, 203 in 1995, 213 in 1994 and 213 in 1993), with claimed sightings of a further five currently under consideration by the rarities committees. Two of the 205 species, Stone Curlew and Scops Owl, are additions to the Argyll list which now stands at 311 species.

Significant omissions from the systematic list for 1997 are: Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus*, Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus*, Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*. Some of these may simply have been overlooked, but it is the first time for many years that not a single Tree Sparrow has been reported.

#### January to March

On the first day of the New Year a single Waxwing at Younger Botanical Garden *Cowal* was presumably a last remnant of the influx from the previous year. Only one other was seen, at Connel *North Argyll* on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan. A report of 50+ Siskins at Kilmichael Beg, Minard *Mid-Argyll* on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan heralded a spate of reports of flocks of up to 80 birds from many areas of Argyll.

A Puffin at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 13<sup>th</sup> Jan was an unusual visitor for that time of year. More typical was the Iceland Gull at Oban *Mid-Argyll* on 19<sup>th</sup> Jan, the first of at least 4 individuals that were seen around the town until early May. Two Crossbills at Loch Leathan *Mid-Argyll*, also on 19<sup>th</sup>, were the first of many early reports in an unusually good year for the species. On the following day 38 Slavonian Grebes at Loch na Keal *Mull* in flat calm conditions was the highest count on the island for many years. This species was generally more numerous this year: 12 on the same day (20<sup>th</sup> Jan) at Loch Indaal *Islay* increased to 44 by 15<sup>th</sup> Apr, also a high count for *Islay*. Also on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan, our only winter Blackcap for the early part of the year was at *Islay House Islay*. A Kingfisher in Glen Shira *Mid-Argyll* on 24<sup>th</sup> Jan was a splash of colour in the winter landscape. More in keeping were the 50 Snow Buntings at Kilchoman

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*Islay* on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan, our largest flock of the early winter period. At the end of the month high numbers of some of our scarcer duck congregated at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* including 43 Pochard, 98 Tufted Ducks and 38 Goldeneye. These were followed on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb by 105 Whooper Swans at Loch a'Phuill also on *Tiree*.

February was relatively quiet, although on the 8<sup>th</sup> a Great Crested Grebe at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* was an uncommon visitor. On 6<sup>th</sup> Mar a large flock of about 120 Hooded Crows were feeding at the head of Loch Feochan *Mid-Argyll*. On 9<sup>th</sup> Mar a Wheatear, our first summer migrant, was near Keills, Loch Sween *Mid-Argyll*. This was the first of many early arrivals, and 30<sup>th</sup> Mar was also an early date for the Willow Warbler at Bunessan *Mull*.

Rare bird of the period was the Lapland Bunting at Loch Gruinart on 23<sup>rd</sup> Mar, our first since 1993. A Little Gull at Frenchman's Rocks, on the same day, was one of five in *Argyll* during the year.

A co-ordinated *Argyll*-wide count of geese at the end of March produced totals of 35,053 Barnacle Geese, 2,675 Greylag Geese, and 16,985 Greenland White-fronted Geese. Numbers of the first two species were well up on last year while those of the last were slightly lower.

### April and May

The 15<sup>th</sup> Apr was a fairly typical date for our first Cuckoo (at Mulindry *Islay*) but arrival dates for many summer migrants were earlier than usual. At Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, for example, 2<sup>nd</sup> May for Garden Warbler, 22<sup>nd</sup> Apr for Wood Warbler and 9<sup>th</sup> Apr for Willow Warbler were all earliest dates on record for the reserve. Similarly 12<sup>th</sup> Apr was a very early date for the male Pied Flycatcher seen at Minard *Mid-Argyll*. These were not just isolated individuals as the main arrival of Willow Warblers, for example, was also earlier than usual.

A male Ring Ouzel on Kerrera *Mid-Argyll* on 4<sup>th</sup> Apr was one of only two records for the species this year.

This period also saw the arrival of our two 'star' rarities for the year. Unfortunately a domestic cat was the first to encounter the Scops Owl that arrived on *Tiree* at this time. It was thus as a corpse that it arrived on a doorstep at Scarinish on 6<sup>th</sup> Apr. At least this made the task easier for Mark Williamson to whom it was presented for identification. The species is a rare visitor to Scotland and this is the first record for *Argyll*.

Just as unexpected was the Stone Curlew that appeared on Gruinart Flats *Islay* on 23<sup>rd</sup> May and was still there to be photographed on the following day. Also a vagrant in Scotland, this too is a first record for *Argyll*.

Early May was a good time for scarce migrants, including 5 Surf Scoters off Ronachan Point *Kintyre* on 2<sup>nd</sup>, a male Golden Oriole seen at three localities on *Islay* on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, a Reed Warbler (first in *Argyll* since 1981) in the garden of the Colonsay Hotel on

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3<sup>rd</sup>, the first of five Turtle Doves at Islay House *Islay* on 4<sup>th</sup> and a Spotted Redshank at An Fhaodhail *Tiree* on 9<sup>th</sup>. Later in the month a female Marsh Harrier was at Machrihanish Airstrip *Kintyre* on 17<sup>th</sup> and, on 21<sup>st</sup>, a female or 1<sup>st</sup> year Black Redstart was at Portnahaven *Islay*. Also on *Islay* a Spotted Crake was heard calling on three dates in May at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve.

### The breeding season

Wildfowl breeding in Argyll experienced mixed fortunes this year. Mute Swans did badly with 10 of 17 pairs monitored along the mainland coast failing to rear any young at all. Conversely Shelduck on *Colonsay* had their most successful season since 1992, producing 9 broods totalling 67 young. A successful pair of Garganey at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve was the first breeding record for *Islay* and only the second for Argyll in recent years. Common Scoter bred at a new location in *North Argyll* and raised 5 young.

Levels of success for raptors also varied. At 91 monitored sites, Buzzards raised a total of 109 young, while 31 young Golden Eagles raised at the 53 occupied sites in Argyll included 5 broods of two. High vole numbers this year probably helped Kestrels to fledge 51 young at 11 sites in *Cowal*, but none of the 3 Osprey nests in Argyll managed to produce young.

There were many more records of Quail during the breeding season than usual, with calling birds on *Coll*, *Islay*, *Mull*, *Tiree* and in *Kintyre*, although breeding was not confirmed.

Corncrakes had their best year since the recent recovery began, with 211 calling males recorded in the main breeding areas (compared to 177 in 1996).

A Dotterel performing distraction display at a traditional site in *North Argyll* was the first evidence of breeding since at least 1990. Despite large numbers of breeding Lapwings at some sites on the islands, productivity was poor with a 91% failure rate on *Coll*, largely due to predation by Crows.

Among the seabirds, Black-headed Gulls continued to decline at monitored sites, with 6 colonies now completely deserted. There was, however, a continued increase in the numbers of young fledged at Common Gull colonies, largely thanks to an organised programme of control of mink *Mustela vison*. This also contributed to a much improved season for the Common Tern colonies which produced nearly twice as many young as last year. On the Treshnish Isles there was another large increase in the numbers of Razorbills nesting. They have increased by more than 40% per annum for the last two years.

On the mainland Barn Owls produced slightly fewer young than last year, despite high vole numbers, but on *Islay* they had the best year since monitoring began in 1987. In *North Argyll*, a pair of Green Woodpeckers on territory at Blarreen, and one heard 'yaffling' at Barcaldine, raise hopes that their range may be increasing.

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Among the passerine birds, numbers of nest holes in use at our two largest monitored Sand Martin colonies (at Kilmichael Glen *Mid-Argyll* and North Connel *North Argyll*) increased substantially.

The CBC plots at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* showed clearly that, here at least, numbers of small birds breeding had recovered remarkably quickly from the crash following the cold winter of 1995/96. Wren territories were up from 28 in 1996 to 40 in 1997, those of Robin from 10 to 22, and those of Blue Tit from 24 to 33. Reports from *Islay* and *Colonsay* showed that Whinchats and Stonechats had also made up lost ground, with the latter up from 8 pairs in 1996 to 27 pairs in 1997 on *Colonsay*. Sedge Warbler numbers continued to increase at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve where the number of pairs present doubled in each of the last two years.

It was not all good news, however. Predation by pine martens *Martes martes* caused serious problems for Redstarts and Pied Flycatchers using nest boxes at Bonawe *North Argyll*. Corn Buntings, with apparently a lone individual left on *Tiree*, are close to extinction in Argyll. Scarce species recorded in June included, amazingly, another Golden Oriole, this time an immature male singing at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 6<sup>th</sup>, at the site where individuals were seen in 1992 and 1993, a Wood Sandpiper on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 12<sup>th</sup>, a Little Egret at Bridgend Merse *Islay* on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, and a female Marsh Harrier at two locations on *Islay* on 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, the first summer record in Argyll for several years. Also in Jun, 87 Crossbills were counted moving N and W from the north tip of *Jura* on 28<sup>th</sup>.

### July and August

In the absence of regular sea-watching at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay*, records of seabird migration were fewer this year. However an observer was there on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug to record a remarkable passage of Manx Shearwaters. In 3 hours of watching it was estimated that 6,500 birds flew past southwards, with 4,000 of these in just one hour. As usual, small numbers of Sooty Shearwaters were encountered in Aug with 6 on 12<sup>th</sup>, 2 on 13<sup>th</sup> and 7 on 18<sup>th</sup> at Machrihanish SBO, one seen from the *Islay* Ferry on 23<sup>rd</sup> and, at Frenchman's Rocks, two on 26<sup>th</sup> and 6 on 30<sup>th</sup>. The only record so far accepted of what we must now refer to as Balearic (formerly Mediterranean) Shearwater, was also seen from the *Islay* Ferry on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug. One of this year's five Little Gulls, a juvenile, was seen at Machrihanish SBO on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug.

Two more sightings of a female Marsh Harrier were made at different localities on *Islay* in July, although this may have been the same bird as in June.

Moulting flocks of wildfowl gather at favoured localities at this time of year: 249 Eiders at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* on 2<sup>nd</sup> Aug and 157 Red-breasted Mergansers on Loch Indaal *Islay* were the highest counts of the year for these species.

Among the more interesting waders seen on autumn passage were a juvenile Spotted Redshank at Machrihanish SBO from 14<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Aug, single Green Sandpipers at Machrihanish Water *Kintyre* on 21<sup>st</sup> Aug and at Cornaigbeg *Tiree* on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug and our only Little Stint of the year at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug. With the Little Stint

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was a single Curlew Sandpiper, and two more of the latter were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on the same day.

Late August is a time when flocks of sparrows and finches frequently gather. The first Twite flocks of the year were 50 at Balmeanach and 40 at Fidden, both on *Mull* on 20<sup>th</sup>. Two days later, 100+ House Sparrows at Lyrabus *Islay* was the largest gathering reported this year, as was the flock of 20 Redpolls at Kynagarry plantation *Islay* on 26<sup>th</sup>. At the end of the month, 30 Goldfinches were seen near Kames *Cowal* on 30<sup>th</sup> and, on 31<sup>st</sup>, 60 Linnets were counted at Ledaig Point *North Argyll*.

### September and October

Divers and grebes were well in evidence at this time with high counts, in the Sound of *Gigha*, of 26 Black-throated Divers on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct and 80 Great Northern Divers on the following day. More remarkable, however, were 23 Little Grebes in outer Loch Etive *Mid-Argyll* on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct during a WeBS count. This is by far the largest assembly of this species recorded in Argyll in recent years and up to 22 were there until the year end. A Great Crested Grebe in the Port Ann area of Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* from 18<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> Sep was a good find, but the Red-necked Grebe at the Mishnish Lochs *Mull* on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct is an even less frequent visitor.

A severe gale on 13<sup>th</sup> Sep was probably responsible for the appearance of 2 juvenile Long-tailed Skuas at Machrihanish SBO. Leach's Petrels are also scarce visitors to Argyll, so 19 on 8<sup>th</sup> Sep, at Machrihanish SBO was a good count. Even less frequent visitors are Ring-necked Ducks and an adult male at Ardnave Loch *Islay* on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct was only the second record for the island and the sixth for Argyll.

In mid-Sep a co-ordinated count of Eiders took place in the Firth of Clyde which revealed some large concentrations in certain places, such as 929 near Otter Ferry *Cowal*. There was a grand total of 5,715 birds in the Argyll part of the Firth.

A wing-tagged Red Kite in Glen Shira *Mid-Argyll* on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct was descended from re-introduced stock and had fledged in Highland Region the same year. Rough-legged Buzzard is a less easily identified raptor, but excellent views were had of a classically pale individual near Moss *Tiree* on 17<sup>th</sup> Sep. This is the first confirmed record of the species since one on *Islay* in 1988.

Thirteen Greenshank at The Strand *Colonsay* on 17<sup>th</sup> Sep was a good number for one place, and 50 Grey Plovers at Loch Indaal on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct was one of the highest ever counts on *Islay*. A Grey Phalarope at Machrihanish SBO on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct was the sole record for the year.

From 19<sup>th</sup> Oct to early Nov an influx of thrushes was noted by several observers, both on the mainland and on the islands. This included not only the usual flocks of over 100 Fieldfares and Redwings, but also flocks of 20 or more Blackbirds and smaller numbers of Song and Mistle Thrushes. Flocks of Starlings were reported on *Islay*, with 1500 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct among the largest. Although only in ones and twos, the appearance on *Tiree*, from 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct onwards, of Coal, Blue

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and Great Tits as well as Goldfinches was equally notable for species that are not normally resident on the island.

### November and December

Notable concentrations of swans occurred in November. A total of 100 Whooper Swans was recorded on *Tiree* on 15<sup>th</sup>, and the increasing winter flock of Mute Swans in Oban Bay, presumably attracted by regular feeding, reached a new high of 75 (inc. 11 juveniles) on 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The mid-November co-ordinated count of geese produced another record total of 34,123 Barnacle Geese in Argyll, together with 18,077 Greenland White-fronts and 3,998 Greylags. At about the same time another record high was reached, 556 Wigeon at Loch Gruinart on 20<sup>th</sup> Nov. The 980 Teal recorded there on the same day was also notable. This was a good time for wildfowl on *Islay* with 1,026 Scaup at Loch Indaal on 22<sup>nd</sup>, the highest number recorded there since 1993.

The only unusual species of wader at this period was a late Ruff at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. Although a relatively common species, 1,500 was a notably high count for Golden Plover, also at Loch Gruinart, on 26<sup>th</sup> Nov.

*Tiree* completed its collection of Tit species infrequently seen on the island when a single Long-tailed Tit stayed at Balemartine from 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Observers involved with the 'NEWS' counts of coastal waterfowl found the weather during December so atrocious that it was difficult to find a day when the tidal conditions were suitable and it was not pouring with rain. As a result many counts were deferred to January and, from the dearth of records for December, it appears that many other birders were similarly dissuaded from venturing out. The only records of note were a most unusual count of 110 Little Auks, flying past the mouth of East Loch Tarbert *Kintyre* on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec, and 14 Long-tailed Ducks off Traigh Thodhrasdail *Tiree* on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec.

## BIRD RECORDING IN ARGYLL

### Advice to contributors

When submitting records, sightings should be listed in Voous order (as in this report) and should include the following details:

**Species name.** The commonly used English name is usually sufficient (if preferred, the names in "*British Birds* – List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds" are acceptable) but scientific (Latin) name is helpful if reporting sub-species.

**EURING Code No.** - if possible (helps to speed up computer input).

**Date.** Please give exact date if possible (rather than 'June' or 'Spring') as this makes the record much more valuable and enables us to relate it to other records received.

**Grid reference** if known (six figure ref. preferred but a four figure ref. is often sufficient).

**Location.** Used in conjunction with grid reference to avoid ambiguity; e.g. there are umpteen Loch Dubhs in Argyll (but take care - mistakes can occur even with grid refs!)

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Number of individuals. Precise number whenever possible or, failing this, an estimate. Even a rough estimate is more useful than 'many', 'large flock', 'several' or 'few', which are too subjective to have much value.

Sex and age - if known.

Other interesting comments are always welcome e.g. indications of breeding, behaviour, food, interactions with other birds/animals etc. Individual anecdotes add value to what can otherwise be rather a 'dry' report.

### Rare birds

Details of rarities should be sent in as soon as possible after the sighting, if possible on a standard form (available from Recorder). They will be judged locally by the Argyll Bird Records Committee (whose members are listed on p. 3), sent on to the *Scottish Birds Records Committee* (SBRC), or sent on to the *British Birds Rarities Committee* (BBRC), as appropriate.

The list below details rare species whose occurrence in Argyll needs to be fully documented. It is made up of the ABRC list of Argyll rarities (in lower case) and the SBRC list of Scottish rarities (in capitals), but excludes the large number of UK rarities assessed by BBRC. Asterisked species have occurred in Argyll.

No record of any of the species and plumage phases listed below will be published unless adequate supporting details (including a description) are available. In addition, brief details may be requested for occurrences of scarce species not on the list where the circumstances appear to warrant this.

### List of SBRC and ABRC species and subspecies, 1998

Black-necked Grebe*	Goshawk*
CORY'S SHEARWATER*	ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD*
GREAT SHEARWATER*	HOBBY*
MEDITERRANEAN SHEARWATER*#	CRANE*
Bittern*	Avocet*
LITTLE EGRET*	STONE CURLEW *
PURPLE HERON	LITTLE RINGED PLOVER*
WHITE STORK*	KENTISH PLOVER
SPOONBILL*	Temminck's Stint*
Bean Goose*	PECTORAL SANDPIPER*
European White-fronted Goose*	BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER*
GREEN-WINGED TEAL*	Red-necked Phalarope*
Red-crested Pochard*	Long-tailed Skua (except adult)*
RING-NECKED DUCK*	MEDITERRANEAN GULL*
FERRUGINOUS DUCK	SABINE'S GULL*
SURF SCOTER*	RING-BILLED GULL*
Smew*	HERRING GULL (yellow-legged race <i>michahellis</i> )
Ruddy Duck*	Roseate Tern*
HONEY BUZZARD*	Black Tern*
MONTAGU'S HARRIER	

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Little Owl	Lesser Whitethroat*
BEE-EATER*	PALLAS'S WARBLER
Wryneck*	Yellow-browed Warbler*
LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER	FIRECREST*
SHORT-TOED LARK	RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER*
WOODLARK	BEARDED TIT
Shore Lark*	Marsh Tit
RICHARD'S PIPIT*	Willow Tit*
TAWNY PIPIT	Crested Tit*
WATER PIPIT	Nuthatch*
NIGHTINGALE*	Red-backed Shrike*
Bluethroat*	WOODCHAT SHRIKE*
CETTI'S WARBLER	SERIN
SAVI'S WARBLER	Scottish Crossbill
AQUATIC WARBLER	COMMON ROSEFINCH*
MARSH WARBLER	Hawfinch*
Reed Warbler*	CIRL BUNTING*
ICTERINE WARBLER*	ORTOLAN BUNTING
MELODIOUS WARBLER	LITTLE BUNTING*
DARTFORD WARBLER	
BARRED WARBLER*	

#Because of the frequency of records in Argyll, the SBRC has recently delegated decisions on this species to the County Recorder. Normally a description will not now be required, but the ABRC reserve the right to request one if the circumstances seem to require it.

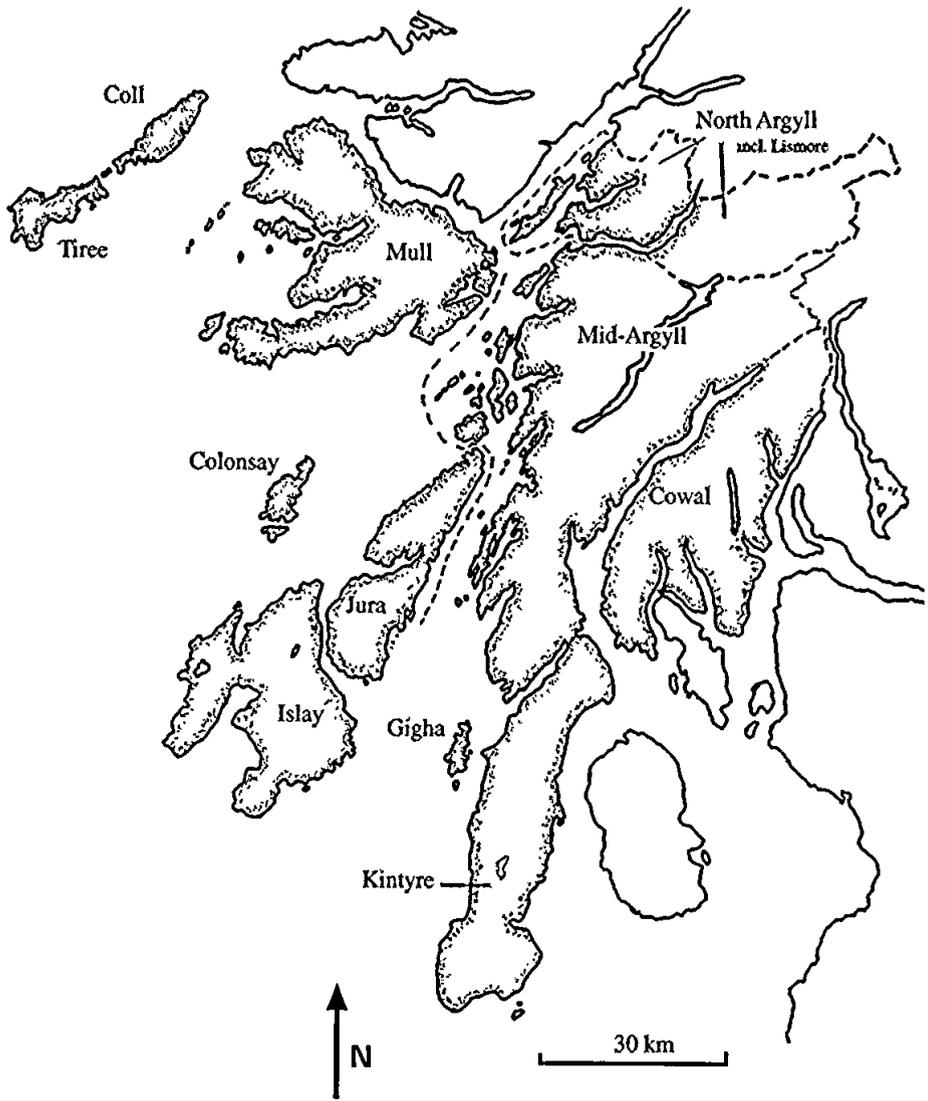
### INTERPRETATION OF THE SPECIES ACCOUNTS

In the species accounts below, English and scientific names are as in the latest *Scottish Bird Report*; the sequence of species follows the Voous order as in the same report. Each species heading in the report contains the following information:

Common name	Scientific name	Gaelic name	EURING code
e.g. RAVEN	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Fitheach	1572

Each heading is followed by a summary of the bird's known status and distribution within Argyll, together with any other relevant information. Significant 1997 records are then listed in approximate chronological order. For scarcer species, records for 1997 may be followed by late records or recent acceptances from earlier years.

For the purposes of this report, Argyll is divided into 11 areas, which are named on the accompanying sketch map (p. 14). Because very few records have been received from Lismore in recent years, it is no longer considered a separate area but has been merged with North Argyll. Note that, for the moment at least, boundaries of the



Map showing the areas of Argyll used in this Report

## SYSTEMATIC LIST 1997

Argyll recording area remain unchanged despite local government reorganisation in 1996.

Records of rarities in the systematic list are accompanied by the names of the observers, starting with the finder(s)/identifier(s) (or, in the absence of this information, the person who first reported the bird to me), followed by the observer(s) who submitted details of the record, if different. All these records are also accompanied by an asterisk, to indicate acceptance by the relevant rarities committee. Summarised data from many surveys of breeding birds are also accompanied by the initials of the observers or organisations responsible, in order to help readers who are interested in obtaining more detailed information.

An attempt has been made to ensure that all place names in the systematic list feature on the 1:50,000 (Landranger Series) Ordnance Survey maps. An exception is The Laggan (Kintyre) which refers to the roughly triangular area west of Campbeltown, bordered by the B843, the A83, and Machrihanish Bay. Campbeltown Airport (previously RAF Machrihanish) is in this area. The Machrihanish Seabird Observatory (SBO) is situated at Uisaed Point on the western outskirts of Machrihanish (NR628209). In Mid-Argyll, Kilmichael Glen extends north eastwards from Kilmichael Glassary at NR85/93. On Mull, the Mishnish Lochs are the series of lochs extending from NM46/52 to NM48/53.

On Islay, the term 'Loch Gruinart' may refer to the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB) reserve at Loch Gruinart, or to parts of the loch lying outside the reserve. When a distinction has been made by the observer, or when presenting counts of breeding pairs within the reserve, the term 'Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve' is used. The same applies to the use of the terms 'Moine Mhor' and 'Moine Mhor National Nature Reserve (NNR)' (Mid-Argyll); I have used the former term to cover an area extending west to the landward edge of Loch Crinan and north to Barsloisnoch.

Tables 1 to 4 are derived from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) goose counts. Tables 5 to 28 are based principally on data from the Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS), The Islay Bird and Natural History Report 1997 and John Halliday's Moine Mhor NNR and Loch Crinan Bird Reports 1997, although higher counts have been included where available.

### **Special studies carried out in 1997**

Regular monitoring of certain species and groups of species in Argyll continued in 1997; examples are the goose counts carried out by SNH, the monthly wildfowl and wader counts (WeBS) at several sites, and the Common Birds Census (CBC) carried out on two plots at Taynish NNR (Mid-Argyll) by John Halliday. Other single-species studies, either new in 1997 or continued from previous years, are referred to in the species accounts.

Three further multi-species studies are summarised here to avoid repetition of details in the species accounts.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST 1997

### (1) Breeding Birds Survey (BBS)

The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), which started in 1994, gives all birdwatchers a chance to take part in important survey work. Its objective is to extend and improve the monitoring of population changes of common breeding birds. It now counts birds annually in more than 2,000 randomly chosen one-km squares in the UK, using a line-transect method. If you have a few hours to spare each year and wish to take part in the BBS, please contact your local BTO Representative (see p. 3 for details) or Richard Bashford at the BTO, National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, (01842) 750050 or e-mail: r.bashford@bto.org.

In 1997, 16 such squares were surveyed in Argyll. They were located in *Kintyre* (NR68/29), *Colonsay* (NR35/88, NR38/95), *Cowal* (NR92/75, NS08/84, NS12/80), *Mid-Argyll* (NM82/24, NM83/19, NN01/04, NN06/15, NR77/70, NR79/92), *Mull* (NM30/21, NM39/39, NM44/21), and *N. Argyll* (NN10/35). They include 14 of the 21 squares surveyed in 1996.

This represents a disappointing drop in coverage for Argyll and more volunteers are urgently required locally for this survey. If you think you might be interested but are not sure how much time it would take or how expert you need to be, or would like to know the location of the squares needing coverage, the BTO representatives listed on p. 3 or your Recorder Paul Daw would be happy to talk to you about it.

In the systematic list below, BBS data are quoted for species which are widely distributed or for which little other information was available.

### (2) Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) study of seabird breeding success [J. C. A. Craik]

As part of a wider study of seabird breeding success, selected species were monitored in a study area along the west coasts of *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll*, and *N. Argyll* (including Lismore), and at additional sites in Loch Fyne (*Cowall/Mid-Argyll*) and *Mull*. Further details can be found in *ABR 11*.

### (3) Systematic sea-watching at Machrihanish SBO (*Kintyre*) [E. J. Maguire] and Frenchman's Rocks (*Islay*) [T. ap Rheinallt]. The latter ceased, for the time being, at the end of April 1997.

Movements of seabirds, wildfowl and waders past these two sites were monitored regularly during certain months of the year. With a few exceptions, all individual birds flying past were identified and logged. Hours of observation during each month were as follows (c = casual observations):

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mach. SBO	c	c	c	c	c	c	61	140	84	39	c	c
F. Rocks	17.5	16.5	7	17.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

This information can be used to convert total counts in the systematic list to hourly rates, and *vice versa*. At both sites, the vast majority of birds flew south during all months.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST 1997

More comprehensive data for Machrihanish SBO can be found in Maguire (1998).

### (4) 'NEWS'

The European Non-Estuarine Coastal Waterfowl Survey (NEWS) took place in Dec 1997/Jan 1998 and several coastal areas of Argyll were covered. This survey was a follow up to the 1984/85 winter shorebird count which was (until NEWS) the only comprehensive survey of the non-estuarine coastline (coverage 90%) of the UK. The aim of the new survey was to repeat this and to cover as much as possible of the East Atlantic Flyway of Europe, so as to produce total population estimates for wader species and possibly ducks. Pilot studies had suggested significant decreases in numbers of certain wader species and the results of the main survey were expected to give a clearer picture of current trends.

The BTO will be providing an extract of the data acquired for Argyll but this is not yet available. For this reason and because, in any case, much of the counting took place in Jan 1998, a summary will be included in the 1998 Systematic List.

### Categories of the British list (as revised by the BOURC - Jan 1998)

- Category A. Species that have been recorded in an apparently natural state at least once since 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1950.
- Category B. Species that would otherwise be in Category A but have not been recorded since 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 1949.
- Category C. Species which, although originally introduced by man, either deliberately or accidentally, have now established breeding populations derived from introduced stock that maintain themselves without necessary recourse to further introduction.
- C1. *Naturalised Introductions* Species that have occurred only as a result of introduction e.g. Mandarin Duck, Little Owl.
  - C2. *Naturalised Establishments* Species with established populations as a result of introduction by man, but which also occur in an apparently natural state e.g. Canada Goose.
  - C3. *Naturalised Re-establishments* Species with populations successfully re-established by man in areas of former occurrence e.g. Red Kite, Capercaillie.
  - C4. *Naturalised Feral Species* Domesticated species with populations established in the wild e.g. Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon).
  - C5. *Vagrant Naturalised Species* Species from established naturalised populations abroad (none accepted yet although most Ruddy Shelducks occurring here must fall into this category).
- Category D. Species that would otherwise appear in Categories A or B except that there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a natural state.
- Category E. Species that have been recorded as introductions, transportees, or escapes from captivity, and whose breeding populations (if any) are thought not to be self-sustaining.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST 1997

### Symbols and abbreviations

#### Species status categories

- R Resident and sedentary  
B Breeding species; breeding and wintering ranges may differ  
S Summer visitor; breeds unless otherwise stated  
P Passage migrant  
W Winter visitor  
I Introduced species; recorded in Argyll, may or may not breed here  
V Vagrant; fewer than 5 records since 1980

#### Others

- \* Record accepted by relevant rarities committee  
*ABR* *Argyll Bird Report*  
ABRC Argyll Bird Records Committee  
ARSG Argyll Raptor Study Group  
AOB apparently occupied burrows  
AON apparently occupied nest-sites  
AOS apparently occupied sites  
b/- brood of...young  
BBRC *British Birds* Rarities Committee  
BBS Breeding Birds Survey  
BOURC British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee  
BTO British Trust for Ornithology  
c/- clutch of...eggs  
CBC Common Birds Census  
JNCC Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
max. maximum (the highest of 2 or more counts at a given locality during the period being analysed)  
NCC Nature Conservancy Council  
NNR National Nature Reserve  
n/r not recorded (in tables of counts, where no count was made)  
SAMS Scottish Association for Marine Science  
SBO Seabird Observatory  
*SBR* *Scottish Bird Report*  
SBRC *Scottish Birds* Records Committee  
SNH Scottish Natural Heritage

## ARGYLL BIRD RECORDS 1997

**RED-THROATED DIVER** *Gavia stellata* Learga ruadh 0002  
B W P Widely distributed but sparse breeding species. Breeding recorded in 26% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

36 recorded on Loch Indaal *Islay* during a WeBS count on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr was the highest count of the year at any one location. Apart from 13 in the same area on 30<sup>th</sup> Mar, no other counts amounted to more than single figures.

**Breeding.** On *Coll*, breeding was confirmed or strongly suspected on 6 lochs. Broods of 2 and 1 young were seen on two of the lochs (RSPB). In *Mid-Argyll*, the Ederline/Eredine survey area had six pairs attempting to nest (five using rafts) and laying eggs. Of these two successfully produced one fledged young each. Failures were attributed to predation or storm damage [DM]. A further pair was present during the breeding season at a hill lochan to the north of there. On *Islay*, 3 nesting pairs were found during a survey. Apart from a single young seen at one location, the outcomes are unknown. A pair was reported regularly from a known breeding site in *Cowal*, but breeding was not confirmed. On *Colonsay*, a pair nested at a regular site. Breeding season records were also received from *Jura* and *Mull*.

Records during the latter part the year were mostly from the islands and rarely exceeded single figures. The exceptions were 12 recorded on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct from Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* and 10 seen off *Gribun Mull* on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. From 13<sup>th</sup> Aug–10<sup>th</sup> Oct, a total of 116 were recorded flying south past Machrihanish SBO, with 28 in a 10 hr period on 8<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**BLACK-THROATED DIVER** *Gavia arctica* Learga dhubb 0003  
B W P Scarce, though probably under-recorded in winter. Breeding now only in *Mid-Argyll* and *N. Argyll*.

*Islay* had 4 birds on two dates in Jan & Feb, on Loch Indaal, and 7 were at Port Charlotte, Loch Indaal, on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr. Two birds were reported from Oronsay *Colonsay* on 19<sup>th</sup> Mar, and on the *Kintyre* coast approx. 10 were seen from Ronachan Point on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, while a group of 6 were diving and preening in West Loch Tarbert on 18<sup>th</sup> May. Single birds were also seen on various dates in these areas and in *Cowal*, *Mull* and *Tiree*.

**Breeding.** Nine sites with summering pairs were monitored and two further sites had 1 or 2 additional adults. Breeding was confirmed at all 9 sites (3 natural and 6 rafts), chicks were hatched at 3 sites (all rafts) but only 2 young survived to fledging. One of the latter was at a site where the water level dropped so low in late summer that it was thought that it might be unable to get airborne. Fortunately these fears seem to have been unfounded.

In the latter part of the year, 12 birds on Loch Indaal at Port Charlotte on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct was an unusually large flock for *Islay*. In the same month *Kintyre* had 15 birds at the mouth of West Loch Tarbert on 25<sup>th</sup>, but the highest count was 26 birds in the Sound of *Gigha* on 27<sup>th</sup>. Two birds flew south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct, and single birds also flying south were seen at Machrihanish SBO on 9<sup>th</sup> Aug, 8<sup>th</sup> Sep and 12<sup>th</sup> Oct and off *Iona Mull* on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct. There were no reports from elsewhere in Argyll and, apart from singles on Loch Indaal *Islay*, none after the end of October.

**GREAT NORTHERN DIVER** *Gavia immer* Muir bhuachail 0004  
W P The Argyll coast is an important wintering locality. Summer-plumaged birds

## SYSTEMATIC LIST 1997

regularly recorded Apr to early Jun in all areas except Cowal. Pre-migratory gatherings occur off some coasts in late Apr and early May. A few individuals summer.

During the period Jan-Apr birds were seen at Colonsay (Oronsay), Islay, Kintyre, Mull, North Argyll and Tiree, usually in single figures. The largest counts were of 13 at Port Ban, Loch Indaal Islay on 1<sup>st</sup> Mar, 10 at Port Ellen Islay on 28<sup>th</sup> Mar, c. 20 at Bruichladdich, Loch Indaal Islay on 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Apr, 26 coming in to roost at dusk on Loch Scridain Mull on 7<sup>th</sup> Apr, and 11 on Loch Indaal Islay on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr. A winter population in excess of 40 birds was estimated for the whole of Mull (RJE).

Early May produced good numbers of birds with 40 off Ronachan Point Kintyre on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 14 off Scalasaig Colonsay on 4<sup>th</sup>, 12 around Oronsay on 5<sup>th</sup>, and 10 seen from the Oban-Colonsay ferry on 7<sup>th</sup>. Later in May a total of 71 birds was counted along the Kintyre coast from Machrihanish Bay to Rhunahaorine Point on 17<sup>th</sup>.

During the summer months, adults in breeding plumage were recorded at Ardlamont Bay Cowal on 17<sup>th</sup> May, Sorobaidh Bay Tiree (2) on 20<sup>th</sup> May, Loch Scridain Mull on 5<sup>th</sup> Jun and Loch na Keal Mull on 24<sup>th</sup> Jun. Otherwise the birds reported from Colonsay, Islay, Kintyre and Mull at this time were mainly immatures in ones and twos.

The first returning flock in autumn was of 16 birds at Loch Indaal Islay on 25<sup>th</sup> Sept. Following this, the only flocks of 10 or more were 10 at Claggain Bay Islay on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct, 16 at West Loch Tarbert Kintyre on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct, an impressive 80 in the Sound of Gigha on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct (11 seen from Rhunahaorine Point the same day by another observer were probably from among this number), 10 at Pennygael Mull on 8<sup>th</sup> Nov and 10 at Loch na Keal, and 15 at Loch Scridain, both Mull, on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**LITTLE GREBE** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Spagriton 0007  
BW Uncommon. Breeds widely, mainly on small, low-lying eutrophic lochs. Breeding recorded in 18% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Small numbers gather in sheltered coastal waters in winter.

The highest count for the early part of the year was 7 on outer Loch Etive N. Argyll on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan. Otherwise 1-4 birds were reported from various locations in Colonsay, Cowal, Islay, Mid-Argyll (several sites) and Mull. One at Loch Gearach Islay on 16<sup>th</sup> Apr was an unusual record for this site.

Breeding. Breeding was confirmed at East Loch Fada (b/2) and Dubh Loch (b/3), both Colonsay, Camas Daoine Loch (b/2), Loch Airigh na Creige and Loch nam Breac Buidhe (all in the Ederline/Eredine area) and Kilmory Lake (b/2), Mid-Argyll, and the Mishnish Lochs Mull (2 pairs, one with b/2). Other breeding season records came from three lochs on Islay and another in Cowal. An adult with two juvs. was seen at the mouth of the River Osde Cowal on 24<sup>th</sup> Sept.

Exceptional numbers were recorded on outer Loch Etive during the latter months of the year. A count of 9 birds on 7<sup>th</sup> Sept had risen to 23 on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct, falling to 13 on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov but rising again to 22 on 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. At the same time Campbeltown Loch Kintyre also had unusually high numbers with 14 birds present throughout Dec. Elsewhere 1-6 birds were recorded at various places in Colonsay, Cowal, Islay, Mid-Argyll and Mull.

**GREAT CRESTED GREBE** *Podiceps cristatus* Gobhlachan Iaparan 0009  
W P Uncommon, with 2-6 records annually since 1984. Recorded in all months

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except Jun.

The only records were from *Islay*, where one was at RSPB Loch Gruinart on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb, two on Loch Indaal on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb and one there on 1<sup>st</sup> Mar, and from Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll*, where one in winter plumage was at Port Ann and East Kames 18<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**RED-NECKED GREBE** *Podiceps grisegena* Gobhlachan ruadh 0010  
*W P Less than annual. Of 14 records during 1980-96, 12 were during the period Sep-Mar, with one in May and one in Jun.*

There was a single record, of one at the Mishnish Lochs *Mull* on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**SLAVONIAN GREBE** *Podiceps auritus* Gobhlachan mara 0011  
*W P Regular wintering species in sea lochs and sounds, particularly West Loch Tarbert (Kintyre), Sound of Gigha, Loch Indaal (Islay) and Loch na Keal (Mull).*

Exceptional numbers were present during the early part of the year, when a count of 38 birds at Loch na Keal *Mull* in flat calm conditions on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan was the highest number recorded there since at least 1980. 12 individuals on Loch Indaal *Islay* on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan had increased to 44 on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr, the highest count there since 1992. Elsewhere, between Jan and Apr, 1-4 birds were recorded at Ardmucknish Bay and Loch Linnhe *North Argyll* and West Loch Tarbert and Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre*, while 8 were in the Sound of *Gigha* on 31<sup>st</sup> Mar.

Summer records of this species are unusual, so one in breeding plumage in the Sound of *Gigha* on 7<sup>th</sup> Jul is of note.

The first report of returning birds was of 12 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 25<sup>th</sup> Sep. Numbers there built up quickly to 34 on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct before falling to 11 in Nov and Dec. The maximum count for Loch na Keal *Mull* during this period was 30 on 30<sup>th</sup> Nov. The only other large gatherings were 18 birds in the Sound of *Gigha* on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct and 24 there on 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. A single individual on freshwater Loch Gorm *Islay* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct was unusual, as this species is usually marine in this area. Otherwise 1-4 birds were seen at Loch Etive *North Argyll*, West Loch Tarbert *Kintyre*, Loch Scridain *Mull* and Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree*.

**FULMAR** *Fulmarus glacialis* Eun crom 0022  
*B W P Common but localised breeding species in all areas except Cowal and North Argyll. Large numbers on passage off western headlands.*

The maximum daily count of birds passing Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* during April was 500 flying S and 12 flying N in 2 hrs watching on 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Breeding.** Counts at sample census cliffs on *Colonsay* in June gave: 577 AOS at Uragaig, 54 AOS at Kiloran Bay and 22 at Turnigil, total 653 (cf 693 in 1996 and 677 in 1995; see paper on pp. 94-97 on long term trends at these sites). At Sanda *Kintyre* there were 480 AON (cf 460 in 1996 and 475 in 1995) and breeding success appeared to be good. The other continuing monitoring programme, at Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull*, produced a total of 570 AON (cf 641 in 1996 and 435 in 1995). 10 pairs were recorded at the RSPB Reserve *Coll*. At Mull of Cara *Gigha* 42-44 sitting birds were counted on 24<sup>th</sup> June.

In autumn 230 birds passed Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in 5 hrs on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug and 134 flew south there in 2 hrs on 1<sup>st</sup> Sep. An intermediate phase bird flew past

## SYSTEMATIC LIST 1997

Frenchman's Rocks on 21<sup>st</sup> Feb and a dark phase bird was at Machrihanish SBO on 28<sup>th</sup> Mar.

Two birds found dead on the Isle of Man in 1996 had been ringed on Sanda as chicks, one 2 and the other 11 years previously.

**SOOTY SHEARWATER** *Puffinus griseus* Fachadh dubh 0043  
*P Large numbers sometimes recorded off headlands during Aug-Sep; very few records outside the period Jul-Oct*

In the absence of regular sea-watching at Frenchman's Rocks, there were no counts of large numbers in 1997. All records are given. One was at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 6, 2 and 7 flew past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Aug, one was seen from Kennacraig-*Islay* ferry on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug, while 2 and 6 were at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Aug. In September one was seen from the ferry SE of *Coll* on 8<sup>th</sup>, 6 were seen from the Oban-Colonsay ferry on 10<sup>th</sup>, and one was off *Hynish Tiree* on 28<sup>th</sup>. The last birds were in Oct, with one at Machrihanish SBO on 1<sup>st</sup>, 20 seen from the Oban-Colonsay ferry on 8<sup>th</sup>, and one seen from the ferry SE of *Coll* on 16<sup>th</sup>.

**MANX SHEARWATER** *Puffinus puffinus* Fachadh ban 0046/1  
*B P Very localised breeding species. Colonies confirmed only on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull). Another colony may await discovery on or near Garvellachs (Mid-Argyll). Large numbers on passage, especially during Aug-Sep.*

Early birds were one flying north at Port Askaig *Islay* on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb and three passing Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb, while the first at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* were two on 13<sup>th</sup> Mar. The largest count during spring passage was 232 birds passing Frenchman's Rocks southwards in 2 hrs on 24<sup>th</sup> April.

**Breeding.** No counts were available from the Treshnish Isles *Mull* for 1997 but Sanda *Kintyre* had 160 AOB in June.

At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* the monthly peaks for passage were 680 in 3 hrs on 5<sup>th</sup> Jul, 1035 in 4 hrs on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug, and 750 in 7 hrs on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept. On *Islay* approx. 6500 passed Frenchman's Rocks in 3 hrs on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug, c. 4000 of these in just one hour. A week earlier, on 23<sup>rd</sup>, Aug, a rough count of 5000 birds was obtained during a ferry crossing from Kennacraig to *Islay*. The last records of the year were 12 at Machrihanish SBO and a single from the ferry south of *Coll*, both on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct, 45 seen from the Oban-Colonsay ferry on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct, and 3 passing Frenchman's Rocks on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct.

Ringling recoveries of Sanda birds in 1996 included one killed by mink that had been ringed as a nestling at Copeland Bird Observatory, N. Ireland, in 1989, and three re-traps of individuals ringed as nestlings on Sanda in 1988, 1989 and 1992, examples of birds returning to their natal colony.

**Average numbers of Manx Shearwaters flying south per hour past  
 Machrihanish SBO Kintyre and Frenchman's Rocks Islay in 1997**

	Apr	Jul	Aug	Sep
Machrihanish SBO	-	48	56	33
Frenchman's Rocks	14	-	-	-

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### **BALEARIC (MEDITERRANEAN) SHEARWATER** *Puffinus (yelkouan) mauretanicus* 0046/2

*P* Extremely rare in the past (only 2 accepted Argyll records prior to 1992), but a recent large increase starting in 1992-93. Recorded in autumn (Aug-Dec), usually with Manx Shearwaters. Only recently (1991) separated taxonomically from the Manx Shearwater; it has now been further split into two species: Balearic Shearwater *P. mauretanicus* and Yelkouan (or Levantine) Shearwater *P. yelkouan*. All existing Argyll records refer to *P. mauretanicus*. There are, at present, no accepted British records of *P. yelkouan*.

The only accepted record for this species is of a single bird seen from the Kennacraig-Islay ferry on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug [TapR]\*. Other records, from Frenchman's Rocks Islay and Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, are awaiting descriptions or decisions by SBRC.

### **STORM PETREL** *Hydrobates pelagicus* Paraig 0052

*B P* Very localised breeding species; large colonies known only on Sanda (*Kintyre*) and Treshnish Isles (*Mull*). Breeding birds first come ashore in late May or Jun. Most sightings away from breeding colonies are during Jul-Sep.

There were no reports of birds seen prior to the breeding season.

**Breeding.** There was no count of breeding birds on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* this season but 1278 were ringed including 174 re-traps. On Sanda *Kintyre* an estimate of 160 AOB was made but 627 adults were ringed.

At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* three flew south in 5 hrs on 1<sup>st</sup> Jul, 18 in 3 hrs on 15<sup>th</sup> Jul and 37 in 3 hrs on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug. Elsewhere five were off Iona *Mull* on 9<sup>th</sup> Jul, two were in the Sound of Mull on 8<sup>th</sup> Sep, and one to four birds were seen from various locations on *Tiree* from Jul to Sep. The last bird of the year was a single at the south end of the Sound of Islay on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct.

Interesting ringing recoveries included a bird found dazzled by a lighthouse beam on Orsay Island *Islay* 26 days after being ringed as an adult on Sanda, and a bird found breeding on Sanda that had been ringed at Copeland Bird Observatory, N. Ireland, 22 years previously. Another individual first ringed as an adult on Sanda in 1992 was re-trapped on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) four years later, having apparently changed its breeding colony.

### **LEACH'S PETREL** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* Gobhlan mara 0055

*P* Scarce, but regular in autumn off western headlands following strong westerlies.

All this year's records come from a single week in Sep which culminated in a severe WNW gale on 13<sup>th</sup>. On 8<sup>th</sup> Sep a single was seen from the *Tiree* ferry between Coll and Ardnamurchan and there was another individual SE of Lismore. On the same day 19 passed Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during 10 hrs of sea-watching. Numbers there fell to 5 in 8 hrs on 12<sup>th</sup> but rose again to 63 in 7 hrs on 13<sup>th</sup>.

### **GANNET** *Morus bassanus* Sulaire 0071

*S P W* Does not breed in Argyll; nearest colonies are Ailsa Craig (40 km east of Mull of *Kintyre*) and the Shiant Isles (140 km north of Mull). Common inshore from May to Sep, and often seen high up sea-lochs. Scarce in winter.

One at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 6<sup>th</sup> Jan was the first of 111 recorded there

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during the month. Other early birds were 4 at Sorobaídh Bay *Tiree* on 11<sup>th</sup> Jan and one at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. These were followed by ones and twos at various localities throughout Feb and Mar.

Mean hourly rates of southward movement past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* increased from 5 in Jan to 20 in Feb, 21 in Mar and 51 in Apr, the maximum daily count being 330 (+ 6 moving north) on 24<sup>th</sup> Apr. Frequent during the summer in Loch Fyne, with an average of 15-20 passing East Kames *Mid-Argyll* each day. The last record of the year was of two at Killinallan *Islay* on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct.

Of a sample of 4682 birds passing Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during Jul-Oct, 89% were adults (cf 88% in 1996) but only 8 juveniles were logged (0.2%), similar to 1996.

**CORMORANT** *Phalacrocorax carbo* Sgarbh 0072  
*R W Breeds in Kintyre, Cowal, Mid-Argyll, Mull and N. Argyll. Less numerous than Shag. Small numbers occur on some inland waters, often moving to the coast in autumn.*

The only counts of 10 or more birds during the early part of the year were 11 at the mouth of West Loch Tarbert *Kintyre* on 12<sup>th</sup> Jan, 15 at Blairmore, Loch Long *Cowal* on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan and 31 at West Loch Tarbert on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb.

**Breeding.** In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area 107-108 pairs bred at 5 sites (colony size varied from 3 to 47 pairs). At four of these sites c. 100-110 young fledged from 102 pairs. Cormorants continued to be absent from the former large colony at Corr Eilean (Sound of Jura) *Mid-Argyll*. The 23 active nests on Sanda *Kintyre* were about average for recent years and nesting success appeared good with broods of three frequent.

During the latter part of the year, the only sites with counts exceeding 10 birds were Loch Indaal (max. 20 on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov), Traigh Nostaig *Islay* (max. 20 or more on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov) and Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 16 on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug and 4<sup>th</sup> Oct).

Two birds ringed as chicks on Sanda in 1996 were subsequently found dead, one on the River Ness near Inverness on 21<sup>st</sup> Aug 1996, and the other at Carstairs, Lanarkshire, on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb 1997.

**SHAG** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* Sgarbh an sgumain 0080  
*R W Very common coastal species, but rare inland.*

During the early part of the year up to 50 birds daily were in the vicinity of Port Ellen, *Islay*; at least 80 were on Eilean Aoghainn, Loch Fyne *Mid Argyll* on 24<sup>th</sup> Jan; and the 52 that passed south at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 27<sup>th</sup> Mar was the maximum daily count for the period.

**Breeding.** In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 310 pairs at 7 colonies (ranging from 11 to 96 pairs in size) fledged c. 297-313 young. At another four sites, a further 130-190 pairs were breeding. Shags were again absent from the former 500 pair colony at Eilean nan Coinean and Eilean Fraoich (Sound of Jura) *Mid-Argyll*. Elsewhere, there were 241 AON on Lunga (Treshnish Isles) *Mull* (cf 190 in 1996), 37 AON at the RSPB reserve *Coll*, and 650 active nests on Sanda, *Kintyre* where breeding success was considered good. Counts at sample census sites on *Colonsay* yielded 11 nests at Uragaig and 35 nests at Pigs Paradise (mean clutch size 2.61).

During the latter part of the year, the only sites with counts exceeding 50 birds

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were Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 109 on 25<sup>th</sup> Sep); Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 208 on 21<sup>st</sup> Sep); Eilean Lean *Gigha* (85 on 29<sup>th</sup> Sep); Eilean Aoghainn, Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* (55 on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov); and Loch na Keal *Mull* (max. 62 on 30<sup>th</sup> Nov).

Of 1773 birds sampled at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during the year, 46% were non-adults; and a bird ringed as a nestling on Sanda in 1995 was found dead at Loch Melfort *Mid-Argyll* on 21<sup>st</sup> Jul 1996, the only movement of more than 100 km.

**LITTLE EGRET** *Egretta garzetta* Corra gheal bheag 0119  
*V No Argyll records prior to 1958 but several since, mostly in spring and autumn. Could be seen more frequently now that breeding colonies have become established in southern England and Ireland.*

One at Bridgend Merse *Islay* on 12/13<sup>th</sup> Jun was seen by several observers [TapR, MAO,JO,PNB,APS,PS]\* near where the last was seen on *Islay*, in 1995.

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea* Corra ghritheach 0122  
*R Widespread, breeding in all areas. Breeding recorded in 7% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

During the early part of the year, counts of more than 10 or more birds were made at outer Loch Etive *North Argyll* (12 on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan), Loch Don *Mull* (max. 13 on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar), and Loch Craignish *Mid-Argyll* (10 on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar).

**Breeding.** On Oronsay *Colonsay*, 3 occupied nests were found on 29<sup>th</sup> May. Elsewhere on *Colonsay*, 6 pairs at Garvard laid at least 19 eggs and reared 11 young, and a single occupied nest was found at Mid Loch Fada, but no nests were found at the former heronry sites at Loch Cholla and Scalasaig. On *Islay*, pairs were present and probably breeding at Loch Allan and three pairs bred at Foreland Wood; and on *Coll* a total of 24 occupied nests were found at two heronries. At Kilfinichen *Mull*, 4 nests were occupied, and there were a further 5 nests at the heronry near Kinloch Hotel. No breeding records were received from elsewhere in the county.

The only sites with counts of 10 or more birds during the latter part of the year were Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 19 on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug), outer Loch Etive *North Argyll* (max. 14 on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep), Loch Don *Mull* (max. 17 on 21<sup>st</sup> Sep), Oronsay *Colonsay* (22 on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct) and on *Islay*, 15 at Loch Indaal on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct and 38 at Lily Loch, Ballygrant on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**MUTE SWAN** *Cygnus olor* Eala 0152  
*R Widespread but uncommon breeding species, both inland and at sheltered coastal locations. Scarce breeder in Kintyre; absent from Colonsay. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration from some breeding localities in winter.*

During the first winter period the count at Oban Bay *Mid-Argyll* reached 57 on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. The only other sites with counts of more than 10 birds were Loch a' Phuill *Tiree* (11 on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb), Loch Craignish, *Mid-Argyll* (max 11 on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb), and outer Loch Etive *N. Argyll* (max. 14 on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar).

**Breeding.** In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 12 pairs (one in *Kintyre*, 8 in *Mid-Argyll* and 3 in *N. Argyll*) are known to have bred. At final sightings (usually mid-late summer) five of these had lost all young and 7 pairs had 22 young in total. A further five pairs observed in late summer had no young. Thus of 17 pairs, 10 failed

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to rear any young. Elsewhere, 4 of 8 pairs recorded on *Islay* either did not nest or did not rear young, and the other 4 pairs had a total of 18+ young of which at least 8 survived by late summer. Five pairs were reported nesting on *Mull* of which three pairs were later seen with a total of 17 young, all but two of which had disappeared by the end of June. A pair with three young were present at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* in July and a pair with two young were at Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* on 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug. The highest count during the breeding season was 65 (inc. 7 young) at Loch a' Phuill *Tiree* on 27<sup>th</sup> Jul.

The highest counts during the second half of the year were max. 30 at Loch Etive on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep, 12 (inc. 2 juvs) in Small Isles Bay *Jura* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep, max. 57 (inc. 8 juvs) at Loch Craignish on 24<sup>th</sup> Sep, 54 at Loch a' Phuill on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct, and 21 (inc. 4 juvs) at Port Ellen *Islay* on 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec. The flock in Oban Bay, attracted no doubt by regular feeding, reached an impressive 75 (inc. 11 juvs) on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. No other site had counts exceeding 10 birds.

**WHOOPEER SWAN** *Cygnus cygnus* Eala bhan 0154  
*WP Common passage species; small numbers winter. A few birds summer in most years and breeding has been recorded.*

More numerous and widespread than usual during winter. Up to 25 birds were considered to have wintered on *Islay*, for example, mainly in small groups. By far the largest flock was 105 birds at Loch a' Phuill *Tiree* on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb. Elsewhere groups of up to 9 birds were at various locations in *Colonsay*, *Cowal*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*.

Spring passage was evident from about 13<sup>th</sup> Mar when 26 paused briefly in Brainport Bay, Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* and 9 flew down Loch Long past Blairmore *Cowal*. Later in March, flocks of 10 or more were at Loch Uisg *Mull* (13, inc. on 17<sup>th</sup> 2 birds ringed at Welney WWT Reserve, Ouse Washes, Cambs), Loch Indaal *Islay* (where, on 29<sup>th</sup>, a newly arrived flock of 20 were near Gortan with 30 more flying north up the loch), Loch Gruinart *Islay* (18 on 30<sup>th</sup>) and Loch Don *Mull* (10 flying over northwards, also on 30<sup>th</sup>). Passage continued into mid-April with flocks of 15 at Loch Gruinart on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10 at Oronsay *Colonsay* on 5<sup>th</sup>, 24 flying west over Loch an Losgainn Mor *Mid-Argyll* on 15<sup>th</sup>, and 18 departing NW from Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 18<sup>th</sup>.

An immature bird was at Backs Water, The Laggan *Kintyre* from 2<sup>nd</sup>- 22<sup>nd</sup> May, and a single adult was reported from several sites on *Islay* during June. On *Tiree*, also in June, four birds were at Loch Bhasapol on 10<sup>th</sup> and a single at Loch a' Phuill on 19<sup>th</sup>.

The first returning birds were on *Tiree*, where 7 flew past Cornaig on 20<sup>th</sup> Sep. The next records were 30 flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 28<sup>th</sup> Sep, four there on 29<sup>th</sup> Sep and 12 on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. In the following week 17 were in flight near Dunoon *Cowal* on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct, 10 flew south over Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 5<sup>th</sup>, 12 flew over Imeravale *Islay* and 2 were on *Colonsay*, both on 6<sup>th</sup>, 25 flew in for the night at Loch Don *Mull* late on 7<sup>th</sup>, and 20 came down and spent the night at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 9<sup>th</sup>. Three birds at Linne Mhuirich *Mid-Argyll* on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct included one with a yellow Darvic ring that had been attached at Miklavatn, Iceland in 1995. This individual had spent the winter of 1996-97 at Loch Swilly, Donegal. The largest flock during this period was 63, in fields near Machir Bay *Islay* during 25<sup>th</sup>- 30<sup>th</sup> Oct.

Notable wintering flocks were at Tayinloan *Kintyre* (max. 29 on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct), a

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total of 100 birds at five sites on *Tiree* on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov, and 11 at Port Ellen *Islay* on 11<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE** *Anser brachyrhynchus* Geadh gorm 0158  
*P W Variable numbers on passage, with occasional large flocks. Relatively few winter.*

Two were at Balephetrish Hill *Tiree* on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan. Apart from this, all Jan-Apr records were from *Islay* where up to nine were seen at several localities until numbers peaked at 74 at Sanaigmore on 1<sup>st</sup> Apr. Two were at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 1<sup>st</sup> May, and the last of spring were four at Old Poltalloch *Mid-Argyll* on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

After the first autumn arrival, of 42 passing N at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 19<sup>th</sup> Sep, numbers on *Islay* built up rapidly, with 70 flying in to roost on the mud at Bridgend Merse on 21<sup>st</sup>, followed by 118 at RSPB Gruinart on 22<sup>nd</sup>, and peaking at 140 at Loch Gorm on 24<sup>th</sup> Sep. Significant flocks thereafter were 99 at RSPB Gruinart on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct, 80 at Loch Gruinart on 12<sup>th</sup> Oct, 26 at RSPB Gruinart on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct, 76 at Sunderland on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct and, much later in the season, 120 at Corran Ban on 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec. Elsewhere only small numbers were reported, with up to three at the Laggan *Kintyre* Oct-Dec, four at outer Loch Etive and four with Greylags at Blarcreen (both *North Argyll* on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct), 11 at Bagh na Diorlinne *Gigha* on 8<sup>th</sup> Nov, four at Cliad *Coll* on 17<sup>th</sup> Nov, and singles at Kilkenneth *Tiree* on 6<sup>th</sup> Dec and at West Loch Fada *Colonsay* on 13<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** *Anser albifrons* Geadh bhlar 0159  
*W I Birds are of the Greenland race A. a. flavirostris. Argyll holds about 40% of the world population of this race in winter, mainly on Islay. A small introduced population breeds on the Rhinns of Islay. Birds of the European race A. a. albifrons occur as vagrants.*

On *Islay*, there were 11,853 birds on 28<sup>th</sup> Jan (cf 12,132 on 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Jan 1996), numbers falling off only slightly by early Apr.

A co-ordinated count in late Mar and early Apr produced a total of 16,985 in *Argyll* [Table 1]. In *Kintyre* birds were at The Laggan (1,629), Clachan (183) and Rhunahaorine (1,272). The total of 95 birds recorded on Mull included some birds ringed at Wexford among the 57 seen at Fidden [SNH Goose Project]. The main spring departure from *Islay* occurred during the last 10 days of Apr and the first few days of May, with the last 3 at Loch Gruinart on 13<sup>th</sup> May.

**Breeding.** Four pairs of introduced birds bred in the southern part of the Rhinns of *Islay*, but only one brood of 3 young was seen. Elsewhere, the only breeding season record was one seen at Crossapol *Tiree* on 10<sup>th</sup> Jun.

The first returning birds were 18 at Loch Gorm and 10 at RSPB Gruinart *Islay* on 18<sup>th</sup> Sep (an early date). In Oct, 400 were at Loch Gorm on 1<sup>st</sup> and 55 on *Colonsay* on 6<sup>th</sup>. A whole island count on *Islay* in mid-Nov gave a total of 13,414, slightly up on the same time last year. The co-ordinated count carried out at this time gave a total of 18,077 birds in *Argyll* [Table 2] (cf 18,809 mid-Nov 1996). As in spring, most of the *Kintyre* birds were at The Laggan (931) and Rhunahaorine (1,193), the remainder (61) being at Clachan; 370 of those counted in *Mid-Argyll* were on the Tayvallich peninsula, the remaining 23 being at Moine Mhor [SNH Goose Project].

Ageing of samples on *Islay* in the second winter period showed that breeding

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success in summer 1997 was average, with 14.2% young birds in a sample of 5,007 birds (*cf* 6% in 1996), and a mean brood size of 3.63 in a sample of 103 broods (*cf* 3.1 in 1996).

Table 1. *Numbers of White-fronted Geese in Argyll areas, 29<sup>th</sup> Mar to 3<sup>rd</sup> Apr 1997*

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
3,084	217	95	896	1,227	110	nil	11,210	136

Table 2. *Numbers of White-fronted Geese in Argyll areas, 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1997*

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
2,185	393	4	677	1,240	127	37	13,414	n/r

**GREYLAG GOOSE** *Anser anser* Geadh glas 0161  
*R W P I* Increasing breeding population on Colonsay, Mull, Tiree and Coll. These may be native birds that have colonised from the Outer Hebrides, while introduced birds breed in Mid-Argyll. Breeding recorded in 6% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

In late Mar and early Apr, a total of 3,998 was counted in Argyll, 52% of these birds being on *Tiree* [Table 3]. No birds were recorded in some areas which had flocks earlier in the year, such as Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* where the count peaked at 276 in Mar. A migratory flock of 90 flew over *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll* on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr.

**Breeding.** Confirmed breeding records came from *Coll*, *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*. A count of breeding and summering birds covering the whole of *Coll* revealed 175 breeding pairs, 93 non or failed breeders and a total of 274 juveniles (considered to be an underestimate). *Colonsay* had 13 breeding pairs (+ 4 possibly feral pairs) which produced 12 broods totalling 36 young (+ 3 broods totalling 11 feral). A further 24 non-breeders were present plus 8 possibly feral birds. In *Mid-Argyll*, 2 pairs each had broods of young at *Kilmarnaig (Connel)* on 19<sup>th</sup> May (pair + 4 large young seen here on 19<sup>th</sup> Jul), the remains of 5 hatched eggs were found on *Eilean an Ruisg (Loch Feochan)*, and a pair at *Heather Island (Sound of Kerrera)* had four small young on 19<sup>th</sup> May. On *Mull*, 2 pairs were on *Eileanan Glasa*, at least one of which had a brood of small young on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, and at *Ban Eileanan* a nest with hatched eggs was found in Jun and a pair was seen with four large young on 8<sup>th</sup> Jul. On *Tiree*, there was no count of breeding pairs but a count in Aug found 2,075 birds. The other definite report came from *Islay*, where 2 pairs at *Loch Gorm* had broods of three and four small young on 12<sup>th</sup> Jun, the first confirmed breeding record for the island, although it is not known how many young fledged.

On *Islay*, passage and/or wintering birds were seen from 20<sup>th</sup> Aug, when 60 were at *Arднаve Loch*. Numbers on the island peaked with 111 birds at *Coille* on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov. In mid-Nov, a co-ordinated count produced a total of 2,675 in Argyll [Table 4]. Of this total 63% were on *Tiree*. All the *Mid-Argyll* birds were at *Moine Mhor* [SNH Goose project].

Table 3. Numbers of Greylag Geese in Argyll areas, 29<sup>th</sup> Mar to 3<sup>rd</sup> Apr 1997

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
743	nil	nil	1,016	2,086	121	3	29	nil

Table 4. Numbers of Greylag Geese in Argyll areas, 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1997

Kintyre	Mid-Argyll	Mull	Coll	Tiree	Colonsay	Oronsay	Islay	Jura
122	156	nil	477	1,695	173	52	nil	n/r

**SNOW GOOSE** *Anser caerulescens* Geadh ban 0163  
*I W A small introduced population breeds on Mull, wintering mainly on Coll. Stragglers among wintering Greenland Whitefronts on Islay may have a wild origin.*

An adult white-phase bird was present for the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year in the Port Charlotte-Kilchiaran area from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan – 1<sup>st</sup> Apr. On *Coll* 49 were counted during the co-ordinated goose count in early Apr.

**Breeding.** There were no breeding season records.

The *Islay* bird did not re-appear in autumn but a single white-phase adult with Greenland Whitefronts at Loch a' Phuill *Tiree* from 19<sup>th</sup> Oct – 6<sup>th</sup> Dec could have been the same individual. The feral flock on *Coll* numbered 48 on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**CANADA GOOSE** *Branta canadensis* Geadh dubh 0166  
*I W Resident population on Colonsay, introduced in 1934. Regular breeding in Mid-Argyll since 1992, and occasional breeding attempts elsewhere. A transatlantic origin seems probable for at least some of the medium-sized and small individuals seen in winter goose flocks on Islay*

Possibly vagrant small or medium sized birds included three with Greenland Whitefronts at Kenovay and one that looked smaller than the Barnacle Geese it was with at Balephetrish, both on 4<sup>th</sup> Jan on *Tiree*. Other singles were at RSPB Gruinart *Islay* on 17<sup>th</sup> Feb and 11<sup>th</sup> Mar and two were there on 21<sup>st</sup> Mar and 29<sup>th</sup> Apr. Elsewhere 9 on Oronsay *Colonsay* during Jan/Feb, 34 on Kiloran Meadows *Colonsay* on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan, and six on Loch Leathan *Mid-Argyll* during Feb were probably local breeders..

**Breeding.** Breeding was confirmed on *Colonsay* and in *Mid-Argyll*. On *Colonsay*, 5 pairs with broods totalling 16 young, and a further 28 non-breeders, were found in Jun. A nest containing 6 eggs was found on Oronsay on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr. In *Mid-Argyll* a pair with three young in Lachlan Bay, Loch Fyne on 19<sup>th</sup> May may have been the same as the pair with two small goslings seen at Eilean Aoghainn on 14<sup>th</sup> Jun. Elsewhere a pair with two small young were at Loch na Sreinge near Kilmelford on 24<sup>th</sup> Jun, a pair bred on Eilean Inshaig, Ardfern and had 5 large young on 26<sup>th</sup> Jul, and a pair with 5 young at Crinan Ferry on 20<sup>th</sup> Aug had been ringed in Yorkshire. There were two abandoned nests on the island in Fincharn Loch on 4<sup>th</sup> Aug but no evidence of breeding.

Flocks of 49 and 22 birds in heavy moult passing Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* northwards on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jun could well have been part of the annual moult migration of

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birds from Yorkshire to Beaulieu Firth.

In the second winter period, possible vagrants accompanying migrant geese of other species on *Islay* included: one small individual at Loch Gruinart 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> Oct, two small birds at Coullabus on 18<sup>th</sup> Nov, and one at Laggan on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec. Counts of 'large' birds included 37 at The Strand *Colonsay* on 18<sup>th</sup> Jul, 27 on Loch Awe *Mid-Argyll* on 6<sup>th</sup> Aug, 6 at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec, and a total of 59 birds on *Colonsay* on 13<sup>th</sup> Dec.

### BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* Cathan 0167

*WI* Very large numbers of birds from the Greenland population winter on *Islay*, with smaller numbers elsewhere. A few birds occasionally summer, and at least some of these are probably injured. A few introduced birds also breed on the Rhinns of *Islay*

On *Islay*, there were 29,277 on 28<sup>th</sup> Jan. Numbers on the island had risen to 32,398 by the time of a co-ordinated count on 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Apr, when they accounted for over 90% of the Argyll total of 35,053 birds. The remaining birds were on *Tiree* (1,479), *Coll* (861) and *Oronsay Colonsay* (304). Birds were also seen during Jan-Apr at Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* (1 on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan), McCormaig Mor Island *Mid-Argyll* (85 on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan) and Inch Kenneth *Mull* (120 on 17<sup>th</sup> Mar and 48 on 24<sup>th</sup> Mar). The main spring departure from *Islay* was in the middle of Apr, with the last flocks being 40 at Loch Gruinart on 30<sup>th</sup> Apr and 6 there on 4<sup>th</sup> May.

Single birds were seen in summer at Traigh Nostaig *Islay* on 2<sup>nd</sup> Jun and on *Oronsay Colonsay* on 5<sup>th</sup> Aug. Only one introduced bird was present around the waterfowl collection near Easter Ellister *Islay*.

The first wintering birds arrived on *Islay* on 18<sup>th</sup> Sep, when 5 were at Loch Gruinart, followed by 17 there on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep. The only other late Sep record was of two with Canada Geese at *Colonsay Ho. Colonsay* on 24<sup>th</sup>. The first birds at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* were 36 on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. A co-ordinated count was carried out in mid-Nov: *Islay* had 32,812 birds and accounted for 96% of the Argyll total of 34,123 birds, with the remainder on *Tiree* (863), *Coll* (178) and *Oronsay Colonsay* (270). Elsewhere 155 were at Balmeanach *Mull* on 25<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Ageing of samples on *Islay* showed that breeding success in 1996 had been poor, with 6.10% young in the flocks (sample 10,902), and a mean brood size of 1.95 (sample 189).

### BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla* Geadh got 0168

*WP* Uncommon passage migrant. Very few winter. Most birds seen in Argyll are of the light-bellied race *B. b. hrota*, which breeds in Greenland and arctic Canada, wintering mainly in Ireland. Birds of the dark-bellied race *B. b. bernicla* occur occasionally, and there has been one record of the Black Brant *B. b. nigricans*.

In the period Jan-Mar all records were from *Islay*, where numbers were in single figures apart from 17 at Bruichladdich on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb and 12 at Bridgend on 14<sup>th</sup> Mar. Birds on spring passage included, on *Islay*, 26 at Frenchman's Rocks on 13<sup>th</sup> Apr, 52 in front of Loch Gorm House on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr and 64 near Gortan on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr, 15 at Craighouse Bay *Jura* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Apr, and at least 40 near the Ringing Stone *Tiree* in late Apr-early May. The last spring record was of 6 at Bruichladdich on 5<sup>th</sup> May.

The first birds of autumn appeared on *Islay* where 3 were at Loch Indaal on 31<sup>st</sup> Aug. Numbers on the island peaked on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct when 65 flew in to Loch Gruinart

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with Barnacle and White-fronted Geese. Thereafter only ones and two were noted until 4<sup>th</sup> Dec. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* a total of 34 were seen on 3 dates in Sep but numbers peaked on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct when 140 flew past southward in 7 hrs. Elsewhere 4 flew past Balevullin *Tiree* on 5<sup>th</sup> Sep, 6 were at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct, and one was on the shore at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 19<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**SHELDUCK** *Tadorna tadorna* Cra-gheadh 0173  
*B W Widespread breeding species, especially on sandy coasts. Breeding recorded in 39% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). The majority are absent from Aug to Nov when they migrate to moulting grounds.*

At Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay*, numbers peaked at 271 in Jan (cf max. 259 in Mar 1996) [Table 5]. Elsewhere, the highest count was max. 48 at Loch Don *Mull* on 12<sup>th</sup> Jan, while max. 33 were at The Strand *Colonsay* on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan and 21 were at Loch a' Phuill *Tiree* on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb. No other site had counts exceeding 20 birds.

**Breeding.** On *Colonsay*, a total of 28 pairs and a single bird were found in May, and 9 broods totalling 67 young were seen in Jun (highest total since 1992). *Islay* had at least 5 broods of young at Loch Indaal and a pair at Ardtalla had 8 young on 6<sup>th</sup> Jun, but despite 10 pairs being present at Loch Gruinart only three young were seen. In June, 8 adults and 9 young were reported from Iona *Mull*. Other breeding records (all in June) included an adult and 6 small young at Strone, Loch Long *Cowal*, a pair with 5 half-grown young at Aird, Loch Beag *Mid-Argyll*, a pair with 9 medium-sized young in Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll*, and a pair with small young at Loch Don *Mull*.

After a single juvenile flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug, none were reported until late Oct, when 10 were at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 26<sup>th</sup>. By Dec numbers at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal had built up to 132 [Table 5]. The only other site with more than 10 birds later in the year was Loch Don *Mull* (max. 14 on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec).

Table 5 *Maximum monthly counts of Shelduck at two sea-lochs on Islay in 1997*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	189	108	122	67	35	77	18	1	0	13	45	39
L. Indaal	82	84	66	55	103	47	41	0	0	10	13	63

**MANDARIN** *Aix galericulata* 0178  
*I Has bred regularly at Loch Eck (Cowal) in recent years. The recent expansion of the Argyll population (whose origin is unknown) suggests that it is well on the way to becoming self-sustaining.*

No specific information on breeding success was submitted this year, but a single female was at Loch Loskin *Cowal* on 3<sup>rd</sup> Apr, and a minimum of two pairs was considered to have been present on Lock Eck *Cowal* in May.

**WIGEON** *Anas penelope* Glas lach 0179  
*B W P Scarce and irregular breeding species. Common winter visitor to all areas.*

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In the early part of the year numbers at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 464 birds in Jan [Table 6] (cf 484 in Mar 1996). The only other sites with counts of more than 100 birds were Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* (120 on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan), and Loch Don *Mull* (max. 102 on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb). Flocks of 30 or more were reported from 8 lochs: Holy Loch *Cowal*, Loch Ruel *Cowal*, West Loch *Tarbert Kintyre*, Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* [Table 6], Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll*, Loch Spelve *Mull*, Loch Etive *N. Argyll* and Loch Bhasapol *Tiree*; and also from Oronsay *Colonsay*.

**Breeding.** Breeding occurred near Loch Awe *Mid-Argyll*, where a female with 5 small young were seen on 24<sup>th</sup> Jun, and at Loch Tulla *N Argyll* where 4 broods of young (totalling 19), each with a female, were seen on 28<sup>th</sup> Jun. Three pairs stayed at least until mid-Jun in suitable habitat at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, but there was no proof of breeding.

Later in the year, numbers at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal built up to a peak of 885 in Nov [Table 6], 556 being a record count for Loch Gruinart. Other sites with counts of more than 100 birds were Loch Don (max. 130 on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct), Loch Ruel *Cowal* (100+ on 10<sup>th</sup> Nov) and Holy Loch (max. 152 on 13<sup>th</sup> Dec).

Table 6. *Maximum monthly counts of Wigeon at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) in 1997*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	204	136	126	10	0	0	0	0	1	194	556	310
L. Indaal	260	277	115	2	1	0	0	0	248	363	329	323
L. Crinan	57	97	89	57	0	0	0	1	26	420	351	74

**GADWALL** *Anas strepera* Lach glas 0182  
*B W P Scarce but regular on passage and in winter, with most recent records from Kintyre, Islay, Mid-Argyll and Tiree. Breeding confirmed on Tiree in 1986, 1987 and 1989, and probable on Islay during 1992-94.*

Two moving S past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 31<sup>st</sup> Mar were the only birds seen during the first part of the year.

**Breeding.** A pair was present at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 4<sup>th</sup> May and a single bird on 8<sup>th</sup> Jun, but there was no evidence of breeding this year.

All autumn records were also from *Islay*: three (2 males, 1 female) at Gartnatra on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct, a pair at Loch Gruinart on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct, two there on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov and four on 20<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**TEAL** *Anas crecca* Crann lach 0184  
*B W P Widespread but uncommon breeding species. Common winter visitor. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

At Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay*, numbers in the early part of the year peaked at 664 in Jan [Table 7]. The only other sites with counts of more than 50 birds during the early part of the year were Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 79 on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan), Loch Tallant *Islay* (max 270 on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb), and Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 56 in Feb) [Table 7].

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**Breeding.** At least 28 pairs were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* in spring; most of these probably attempted to breed. The only definite records were of a female with 6 juvs at Loch Gorm *Islay* on 24<sup>th</sup> Jun and a pair with a brood of young at Loch Leathan *Mid-Argyll* in Jul. However, five pairs at five hill lochs in the Eredine/Ederline area of *Mid-Argyll* on 20<sup>th</sup> May were considered to be breeding, and three pairs were at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* in Apr.

During the latter part of the year, numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart peaked at 1,272 in Nov [Table 7]. Other counts of more than 50 birds included 68 at Loch a'Phuill *Tiree* on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug, 63 at Loch Gorm *Islay* on 14<sup>th</sup> Oct, Loch Crinan (max. 178 on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct), 75 at Loch Tallant *Islay* on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct, 100 at Loch Gearach *Islay* on 19<sup>th</sup> Nov, Loch Don *Mull* (max. 90 on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec), 80 at Loch Skerrols *Islay* on 15<sup>th</sup> Dec, 190 at Easter Ellister *Islay* on 28<sup>th</sup> Dec, and 70 on floods at Sanaigmore *Islay* on 30<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Table 7. Maximum monthly counts of Teal at two sea-lochs on *Islay* and Loch Crinan (*Mid-Argyll*) in 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	511	5	1	100	7	34	0	0	0	317	980	682
L. Indaal	153	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	167	292	236
L. Crinan	48	56	40	19	0	0	0	38	41	178	135	110

**MALLARD** *Anas platyrhynchos* Lach 0186  
*BWP Common breeding and wintering species. Breeding recorded in 67% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 290 in Jan [Table 8]. Other counts exceeding 30 birds came from Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 91 on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan), Loch Etive *N. Argyll* (max. 34 on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb), and Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max. 36 on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb).

**Breeding.** On *Colonsay* three females with broods of young totalling 14 were found in Jun, while on Sanda *Kintyre* breeding pairs were down to two or three instead of the usual total of around 10. Three broods of young were seen on Loch Caolisport in Jun, and there were a few scattered records of confirmed breeding by lone pairs elsewhere in *Mid-Argyll* and on *Mull*.

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart rose to a peak of 258 in Dec [Table 8]. Other sites holding more than 50 birds were Loch Allan *Islay* (130 on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug), Holy Loch (max. 114 on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct), Loch a' Phuill *Tiree* (91 on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct) and outer Loch Etive (max. 107 on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov). Reversing the recent downward trend at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* in autumn, numbers were up to early 1990s levels.

Table 8. *Maximum monthly counts of Mallard at two sea-lochs on Islay and Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) in 1997*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	132	6	8	10	15	9	0	0	0	144	57	65
L. Indaal	158	95	1	11	14	60	30	2	6	52	95	193
L. Crinan	11	5	4	3	12	12	7	25	101	80	9	150

**PINTAIL** *Anas acuta* Lach stiuireach 0189  
*B W P* Very scarce breeding species. Localised in winter, with a regular flock on Islay.

By far the highest numbers during the early part of the year were at Loch Gruinart Islay (max. 30 on 15<sup>th</sup> Jan) and Loch Indaal Islay (max. 38 on 30<sup>th</sup> Mar) [Table 9]. The only other records came from Tìree, where there were 4 at Loch a' Phuill on 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan and a pair at Loch an Eilean on 11<sup>th</sup> Apr.

Breeding. On Tìree 7 pairs bred successfully rearing 5 young. On Islay, a pair was at Loch Indaal on 23<sup>rd</sup> Apr, but there was no evidence of breeding.

During the latter part of the year, numbers at Loch Indaal peaked at 35 on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec [Table 9] but there were no Islay records except at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart. On Tìree there were 2 females at Loch a' Phuill on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct. The only other record was of two flying south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct.

Table 9. *Maximum monthly counts of Pintails at two sea-lochs on Islay in 1997.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	30	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6	0
L. Indaal	37	21	38	2	0	0	0	0	4	20	16	35

**GARGANEY** *Anas querquedula* Lach crann 0191  
*S Rare*. Bred in Kintyre in 1994 and may have bred on Islay in 1993.

A pair was at Loch Gruinart Islay from 16<sup>th</sup> May and the female was seen with 9 young on 27<sup>th</sup> May. This is the first confirmed breeding record for Islay and only the second for Argyll in recent years. There were no other records.

**SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata* Lach a'ghuib leathainn 0194  
*B W P* Uncommon. Most records from Islay and Tìree.

The majority of records during the year came from Loch Gruinart Islay [see Table 10]. Elsewhere records during the early part of the year came from Tìree, where a male was at Loch a' Phuill on 23<sup>rd</sup> Mar and pairs were at Loch Bhasapol on 10<sup>th</sup> Apr and on a pool near Loch Stanail on 16<sup>th</sup> Apr. The only other record was of two on Oronsay Colonsay on 15<sup>th</sup> May.

Breeding. On Islay 7 pairs were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve in May; most of these probably bred. No other breeding records were received.

During the latter part of the year, numbers at Loch Gruinart peaked at 48 on

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20<sup>th</sup> Nov; the only sighting elsewhere on the island was of 2 at Loch Indaal on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug. The only other record was 7 at Loch a'Phuill *Tiree* on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct.

Table 10. *Maximum monthly counts of Shovelers at Loch Gruinart, Islay, in 1997.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	11	0	16	10	8	14	0	2	0	17	48	35

**POCHARD** *Aythya ferina* Lach mhasach 0198

*W No confirmed breeding in recent years. Wintering flocks generally small.*

All records were from the periods Jan-Mar and Oct-Dec and, as in 1996, the highest count during the early part of the year came from Loch Bhasapol *Tiree*, where 43 were present on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan. Elsewhere, *Islay* had small flocks at several sites inc. 25 at Machir Bay on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan and 17 at Loch Ballygrant on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb, while *Colonsay* held 12 at Loch Turraman in Jan and 5 there on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. The only other site was Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* where the regular flock peaked at 12 in Mar.

Most of the same localities featured in the latter part of the year: Loch Bhasapol had approx. 20 birds on 17<sup>th</sup> Nov, *Islay* had maxima of 15 at Loch Gorm on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct and 27 on Loch Skerrols on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec, while at Loch Leathan numbers reached only 3, in Dec.

**RING-NECKED DUCK** *Aythya collaris* 0200

*V First accepted Argyll record was in 1982, with 5 further records to 1994.*

Like all previous Argyll records, this was an adult male. It was seen at Ardnave Loch *Islay* on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct; this is only the second record for the island [P. J. Collier & family]\*.

**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula* Lach thopach 0203

*B W Scarce breeding species. Breeding recorded in 12% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Common winter visitor.*

Once again the highest count during the early part of the year was at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* where 98 were present on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan. The only other sites with counts of more than 10 birds were Ardnave Loch *Islay* [see Table 11], Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* [see Table 11] and Dubh Loch (Inveraray) *Mid-Argyll* (max. 24 on 15<sup>th</sup> Jan).

**Breeding.** A total of 4-5 breeding pairs were found on *Colonsay* in May-Jun, and pairs were seen in the breeding season at a lochan near Cruach Mac Fhionnlaidh *Mid-Argyll* and at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*.

During the latter part of the year, peak counts were 25 at Dubh Loch (Inveraray) on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct and the same number at Ardnave Loch on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct [see Table 11]. The only other counts of more than 10 birds were 12 on *Colonsay* on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct and 15 at Loch Skerrols *Islay* on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. Smaller numbers were at various sites on *Islay*, *Mull* and in *Mid-Argyll*.

Table 11 Maximum monthly counts of Tufted Ducks at Ardnave Loch (Islay) and Loch Leathan (Mid-Argyll) in 1997.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ardnave L.	1	9	29	12	0	0	0	0	2	25	20	n/r
L. Leathan	10	17	9	10	4	0	1	0	1	10	3	4

SCAUP *Aythya marila* Lach mhara 0204  
*W P Large wintering flock at Loch Indaal (Islay). Scarce elsewhere. Occasionally summers.*

Numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 895 on 4<sup>th</sup> Jan, with 380 still present on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr [Table 12] and 40 on 4<sup>th</sup> May. The only other records during the early part of the year were all on *Islay*, one passing southwards at Frenchman's Rocks on 13<sup>th</sup> Jan, one at Ardnave Loch on 1<sup>st</sup> Mar and a male on Claddach Loch on 23<sup>rd</sup> Apr.

A single female was seen in suitable breeding habitat on *Mull* on 30<sup>th</sup> May but there were no further reports from the site.

The first returning birds at Loch Indaal were 3 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul but numbers at this site did not really build up until 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov, when the count of 1026 was the first time numbers there had exceeded 1000 since 1993 [Table 12]. The only record from elsewhere on *Islay* was 5 at Loch Gorm on 14<sup>th</sup> Oct. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, 33 flew south in 7 hrs on 9<sup>th</sup> Aug, 90 (4 hrs) on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug, a further 10 on 3 dates in Sep, and 30 on 3 dates in Oct.

Table 12 Maximum monthly counts of Scaup at Loch Indaal (Islay) in 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Indaal	895	266	270	380	40	0	3	20	136	300	1026	980

EIDER *Somateria mollissima* Lach lochlannach 0206  
*B W P Common in all areas. Breeding recorded in 66% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Large flocks of moulting drakes and first-year birds gather at some sites during Jun to Aug. Many Argyll breeding birds winter in the Firth of Clyde.*

During Jan-Apr, flocks of 100 or more birds were reported from Loch Spelve *Mull* (105 on 1<sup>st</sup> Apr), Braiport Bay, Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* (105 on 8<sup>th</sup> Apr), Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 145 on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr) and Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 118 on 24<sup>th</sup> Apr).

Breeding. A sample census on *Colonsay* gave a total of 54 females with 51 broods totalling 154 juvs. (mean brood size 3.06, cf 2.50 in 1996). Around Eilean Aoghainn, Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* 16 females were with a crèche of 30 juvs. on 31<sup>st</sup> May, and 10 females were with 18 juvs. on Holy Loch on 7<sup>th</sup> June. Reports of single females with broods of young came from several sites in *Islay*, *Mull*, *Mid-Argyll* and *North Argyll*.

A co-ordinated count of Eiders in the Firth of Clyde which took place in mid-Sep gave a total of 5715 for the Argyll part of the area. The largest concentrations were in *Cowal*, where counts of more than 200 were at Otter Ferry-Creagan Dubh

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(929), Ardentinny-Holy Loch (796), in Holy Loch (583), Holy Loch-Dunoon Pier (620), Dunoon-Innellan Pier (787), Innellan Pier-Toward Pt. (202) and Loch Striven (342). Elsewhere 206 were counted between Ardrishaig and Tarbert *Mid-Argyll*.

Numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 252 on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct [Table 13] and the only other count of more than 200 was 330 near a mussel farm at Aird Fada *Mull* on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov [C. Waltho].

Table 13 *Maximum monthly counts of Eider at Loch Indaal (Islay) in 1997*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>L. Indaal</b>	52	118	119	145	103	141	190	149	147	252	109	85

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** *Clangula hyemalis* Eun buchainn 0212  
*W P Uncommon winter visitor, most numerous in Kintyre, Islay, Tiree and Coll. Usually marine but occasionally seen on inland lochs. Occasional summer records.*

On 1<sup>st</sup> Jan at least 11 were off Sandaig *Tiree*, but the highest count during the early part of the year was 20 on Loch Indaal *Islay* on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr. Two were near Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* on 30<sup>th</sup> Mar.

An adult female off Iona on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jul was an unusual summer record.

Birds returned to *Islay* from 15<sup>th</sup> Oct with one or two at various locations after this date and up to three on Loch Indaal (two males and one 1<sup>st</sup>-winter female on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct). Elsewhere three were present in the Sound of *Gigha* from 27<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> Oct, but the highest count of this period was off Traigh Thodhrasdail *Tiree* where 10 on 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec had increased to 14 by 26<sup>th</sup>.

**COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra* Lach bheag dubh 0213  
*B W P Very rare breeding species in Islay and Mid-Argyll. Present throughout the year in the Sound of Gigha and at Loch Indaal (Islay). Scarce winter visitor elsewhere, although birds may be present well offshore.*

During the early part of the year, numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 52 on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr [Table 14]. The highest count of this period, however, was at Ronachan Point *Kintyre* where 65 were counted on 17<sup>th</sup> May. Elsewhere in *Kintyre*, 27 were off Rhunahaorine Point on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan, 30 were seen nearby on 16<sup>th</sup> Mar, and three were in West Loch Tarbert on 14<sup>th</sup> Mar. Single birds were reported from *Mull* and *Tiree*.

**Breeding.** On *Islay*, there was a maximum of 4 pairs, plus an additional 9 males, at the usual breeding site on 12<sup>th</sup> Jun, and a pair was present at a second site on 15<sup>th</sup>. In *Mid-Argyll*, a female was flushed from a nest with eggs at the usual site in Jun. A pair was seen at a new locality in *North Argyll* in Jun and the female, seen regularly throughout the month, was accompanied by 5 small chicks on 7<sup>th</sup> Jul.

Only 21 were recorded flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during late summer-early autumn, many fewer than usual. The Loch Indaal flock peaked at 72 on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug [Table 14]. The only other records during the latter part of the year came from *Kintyre*, where a single bird was at West Loch Tarbert on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug, and from the Sound of *Gigha* where c. 50 were seen from the ferry on 8<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Table 14. Maximum monthly counts of Common Scoter at Loch Indaal (Islay) in 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Indaal	57	50	48	52	8	0	50	72	56	58	63	40

**SURF SCOTER** *Melanitta perspicillata* 0214  
*V* Only 6 Argyll records prior to 1997: a male at Ballochroy (Kintyre) on 16<sup>th</sup>- 21<sup>st</sup> Apr 1977, 5 flying past Frenchman's Rocks (Islay) on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1977, single males at Loch Indaal (Islay) on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct 1982 and May-Jun 1990, a male off Tiree on 22<sup>nd</sup>- 30<sup>th</sup> Mar 1983, and a female at Lagganulva (Mull) on 21<sup>st</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> Apr 1996.

A group of 5 birds comprising 4 males and a female were seen off Ronachan Point Kintyre on 2<sup>nd</sup> May [A. Stevenson]\*.

**VELVET SCOTER** *Melanitta fusca* Lach dubh 0215  
*W P* Scarce but regular on the west coast of Kintyre and at Loch Indaal (Islay), with birds present during most months at the former location.

Three males were seen near Rhunahaorine Point on 16<sup>th</sup> Mar and (presumably the same) 3 were in the Sound of Gigha on 31<sup>st</sup> Mar. Later in the year, 3 were on Loch Indaal Islay on 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug, 5 flew south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct, and two females were in Saligo Bay Islay on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct and again on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

**GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula* Lach bhreac 0218  
*W* Common. Birds regularly present from late Sep or Oct to Apr or early May, with occasional summer records.

During the early part of the year, by far the highest count was 55 in Port Ellen Bay Islay on 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. Other sites holding more than 20 birds were Holy Loch Cowal (max. 21 on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan & 8<sup>th</sup> Mar), Loch Bhasapol Tiree (38 on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan), Loch Gilp Mid-Argyll (30 on 11<sup>th</sup> Mar), near Rhunahaorine Point Kintyre (27 on 16<sup>th</sup> Mar) and Loch Sween Mid-Argyll (24 on 6<sup>th</sup> Apr).

Late-staying or summering birds were on Loch Awe Mid-Argyll (2 males & 2 females on 26<sup>th</sup> May), Holy Loch (single on 7<sup>th</sup> Jun) and Loch Gorm Islay (immature male on 24<sup>th</sup> Jun).

The first returning birds were not seen until 15<sup>th</sup> Oct when one was on Loch Indaal Islay. Counts exceeding 20 birds during the second winter period were 56 at Rhunahaorine Point Kintyre on 19<sup>th</sup> Nov, max. 33 at Holy Loch on 13<sup>th</sup> Dec, and max. 29 at Loch Craiginl Mid-Argyll on 16<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Table 15. Maximum monthly counts of Goldeneyes at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Leathan (Mid-Argyll) in 1997.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	3	7	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	3
L.Indaal	2	20	18	13	5	0	0	0	0	6	15	10
L. Leathan	5	9	11	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** *Mergus serrator* Siolta dhearg 0221  
*B W Common. Breeding recorded in 52% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Large moulting flocks gather at some sites during Jul-Aug.*

During the early part of the year, the only sites with more than 30 birds were Loch na Keal Mull (31 on 19<sup>th</sup> Jan) and Loch Indaal Islay (max. 79 on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr) [see Table 16].

**Breeding.** Isolated instances of successful breeding were reported, mainly from *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*, but there were no systematic counts of breeding pairs.

Flocks of moulting birds in July included 107 at Kintra (Laggan Bay) Islay on 19<sup>th</sup>, 66 at Loch Ruel Cowal on 20<sup>th</sup>, and 68 at Skipness Kintyre on 22<sup>nd</sup>. Later in the year, numbers at Loch Indaal peaked at 157 on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug [Table 16]. The only other sites with counts exceeding 40 birds during the latter part of the year were Loch Gruinart Islay (max.45 on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct) and Loch na Keal Mull (max. 43 on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec).

Table 16. Maximum monthly counts of Red-breasted Mergansers at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) in 1997.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	6	3	8	6	0	9	1	0	11	45	20	n/r
L.Indaal	26	18	11	79	29	31	80	157	83	131	66	46
L. Crinan	8	5	2	2	0	13*	24**	0	17	15	1	2

\*includes 11 juvs. \*\* includes 20 juvs.

**GOOSANDER** *Mergus merganser* Siolta 0223  
*B W Scarce breeding species, mainly in Mid-Argyll, with an estimated 40-50 pairs. Many (but apparently not all) drakes leave Argyll waters to moult at the end of May, and may gather at Loch Awe (Mid-Argyll) beforehand.*

Counts of 5 or more birds during Jan to mid-Apr were: 6 at Loch Leathan (Kilmichael Forest) *Mid-Argyll* in Jan; 5 on River Awe *Mid-Argyll* on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar; 8 on Mishnish Lochs Mull on 24<sup>th</sup> Mar; and 8 at Dubh Loch, Glen Shira *Mid-Argyll* on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr. Records of 1-4 birds came from *Mid-Argyll* (2 other sites), *Mull* (5 other sites), *Cowal* (3 sites) and *N. Argyll* (Loch Etive and Loch Creran). More unusually, single birds were seen at Loch Ardnahoe Islay in Jan and at Machrihanish SBO Kintyre in Mar.

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**Breeding.** Records include some obtained during the BTO sawbill survey which took place on selected rivers during April. Breeding was confirmed at Lock Eck Cowal (4-5 pairs – broods of 2 & 4 seen), Loch Glashan *Mid-Argyll* (female with 5 young), and Loch Tulla *North Argyll* (female with 7 young). There were records of females or pairs during the breeding season at 2 further sites in Cowal, 4 further sites in *Mid-Argyll*, and three further sites in *N. Argyll*.

A flock of moulting redheads at the head of Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* numbered 32 on 20<sup>th</sup> Aug, but a complete count for the north end of Loch Fyne (inc. Loch Shira) reached 65 on 14<sup>th</sup> Sep. There were no other records exceeding 3 birds during the second winter period. The distribution of records was: Cowal (4 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (3 sites), Mull (1 site) and *N. Argyll* (1 site).

**RED KITE** *Milvus milvus* Clamhan gobhlach 0239  
*I V* Genuine vagrants have occurred in the past, but most recent Argyll records refer to birds released in Highland Region as part of a re-introduction project begun in 1989. Further re-introductions began in Central Scotland in 1996. All records are requested, ideally with details of activity and presence/absence of wing tags.

An individual was at the south end of Loch Awe *Mid-Argyll* in Apr and June, one was reported from Kilninver *Mid-Argyll* on 20<sup>th</sup> Aug, and one was near Assapol Mull in Sep. No wing tags were seen on these birds. A wing-tagged juvenile seen in Glen Shira on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct had fledged in Highland region in 1997 [ARSG].

**WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** *Haliaeetus albicilla* Iolair mhara 0243  
*I* Formerly resident breeder in Argyll, but released birds currently placed in Category D of the British list. A total of 82 birds imported from Norway was released on Rum between 1974 and 1985 as part of the NCC's re-establishment programme. An additional 47 chicks, also from Norway, were released in northern Scotland by SNH between 1993 and 1997. All records are requested, ideally with details of age, activity and presence/absence of wing tags.

**Breeding.** In Scotland, there were 13-15 pairs or trios holding territory (cf 12 in 1996). Five successful pairs reared a total of 9 young (including an unprecedented 3 fledged from one site), equalling the record 1996 figure [ARSG per RAB].

Wandering or dispersing birds were reported from several areas during the year, including *Islay*, *Jura* and *Mull* and with mainland records from *Mid-Argyll* (Lochs Feochan and Ariogan), Cowal (Glen Branter and Loch Restil) and *Kintyre* (Tarbert).

**MARSH HARRIER** *Circus aeruginosus* Clamhan Ioin 0260  
*P* Scarce but now more or less annual, with records in 9 of the 11 years 1985-95. Most records are in May.

There were three records, all of females. The first was at Machrihanish Airport *Kintyre* on 17<sup>th</sup> May and one was in the Ballymeanach/Cladville area of *Islay* on 6<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> June. Another, presumably different, individual was seen at Bowmore *Islay* on 12<sup>th</sup> Jul and again at Eorrabus on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul.

**HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus* Breid air toin 0261  
*B W P* Sparse but widespread breeding species. Breeding recorded in forty-eight 10 km squares in Argyll. A total of 471 Argyll chicks was fitted with wing-tags during

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1990-93, as part of a national study by RSPB; details of all sightings of these birds are requested, even if the letter/digit on the tag cannot be read.

At the beginning of the year, birds at the two roosts at Moine Mhor Mid-Argyll totalled 9 in Feb. Numbers using the roost at Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 7 in Jan, while up to 2 birds were seen roosting at Aros Moss *Kintyre*. Away from the usual breeding areas, a male was seen on Oronsay *Colonsay* from 16<sup>th</sup>- 25<sup>th</sup> Jan and again on 20<sup>th</sup> Feb, while on *Tiree* a male was present on 4<sup>th</sup> Feb, a 'ringtail' on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb and another male on 10<sup>th</sup> Mar.

**Breeding.** A total of 37 occupied territories (of which 21 were on *Islay*) were monitored in Argyll but breeding attempts were not proved in every case. Of these, 25 (67%) were successful, rearing at least 79 young. Mean clutch size was 4.89 and overall productivity, at 3.16 young per successful territory, was better than average. At RSPB Loch Gruinart *Islay*, although 11 territories were occupied, only 4 nests successfully produced (16) young. A sample of 10 successful sites elsewhere on *Islay* reared many more female (24) than male (10) young [ARSG per RAB]. On *Mull* adults were seen at 11 or more locations during the breeding season.

Apparent passage migrants were seen flying south over the sea off Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 11<sup>th</sup> Aug (one) and 17<sup>th</sup> Sep (one). Away from the regular breeding areas, Oronsay *Colonsay* had two females on 25<sup>th</sup> Aug and a male from late Sep to mid-Oct. On 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep it and a Merlin were together chasing a Skylark. On *Tiree* a male and a female were at different locations on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct, a single male was seen on several dates to the year end, and a ringtail flew in off the sea on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec. The Loch Gruinart roost held up to 10 birds in Oct and Nov, while the 2 Moine Mhor roosts held a combined total of up to 8 birds in Nov, with fewer in Oct and Dec; 2 birds used the Aros Moss roost during Dec.

**SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus* Speireag 0269  
*B W P* Widespread. Breeding recorded in 36% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Individuals, mostly female, were regular visitors to bird tables in various areas of Argyll. Prey items recorded included white domestic dove, Feral Pigeon (2 gardens), Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, tits and Twite.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 14 BBS squares (7%), (*cf* one of 21 in 1996). In the *Cowal* study area, 4 of 6 occupied sites were successful and fledged 18 young. Of the other two sites, one failed very early in the nesting attempt and the other when the female was killed by a Tawny Owl [ARSG per RAB]. No other breeding records were received.

**BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo* Clamhan 0287  
*B W* Common in all areas. Breeding recorded in 78% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 6 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 4 of 21 in 1996). On *Coll*, 14 pairs were located, all of which were believed to have nested, at least 5 of which had eggs or young and one of which is known to have failed [CS]. On *Colonsay* including Oronsay, at least 47 known territories were checked and a minimum of 22 pairs were considered to have bred. Of these, 11 nests fledged a total of 16 young [DCJ]. In *Cowal*, 29 pairs reared a total of 49+ chicks in the Loch Eck

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and Glen Branter study area; 21 further nest sites were located outside the study area and all were successful, fledging at least one chick each [DA, AF]. Of 20 occupied territories monitored in SW Mull, 13 nests fledged a minimum of 22 young [ARSG per RAB]. Elsewhere a pair at North Ledaig *North Argyll* reared 2 young, and 3 young fledged from a nest at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*.

**ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD** *Buteo lagopus* Bleidir molach 0290  
*W Scarce visitor. Seldom recorded in recent years.*

Excellent views of a classic pale-plumaged individual were obtained near Moss Tree on 17<sup>th</sup> Sep [MW, CRM]\*. This is the first confirmed record of this species since two were seen on Islay in 1988.

**GOLDEN EAGLE** *Aquila chrysaetos* Iolaire 0296  
*B W Breeding recorded in 39% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Immatures tend to wander in winter and may be recorded in areas where breeding does not occur.*

**Breeding.** A total of 58 known territories were checked, 53 of which were occupied. The earliest laying date from the long-running mainland study area was recorded and 25 successful nests fledged a total of 31 young, including five broods of two. At 1.23 per successful pair productivity was slightly up again (*cf* 1.16 in 1996). Results were patchy, however, with no successful pairs in the usually productive NE mainland area.

Proposals for both forestry and windfarm developments in Argyll threaten to affect several eagle territories but, so far, planning permission has been conditional on the adoption of measures aimed at protecting their interests [ARSG per RAB].

**OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus* Iolaire iasgach 0301  
*SP Very scarce breeding species; recent re-colonist. Occurs more widely on passage.*

The first returning bird was off Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 4<sup>th</sup> Apr. Following one at Loch Don on 9<sup>th</sup> May, passage migrants were seen at several sites in Mull until 25<sup>th</sup> May. The only other area from which reports were received was Cowal, where singles were seen at Loch Eck on several dates in the first two weeks of May.

**Breeding.** The same 3 sites as in 1996 were occupied by pairs, but there was evidence at one site to indicate that at least one of the pair was a different bird from 1996. Sadly none of the nesting attempts were successful. One site had broken eggs in late Jun/early Jul, three dead chicks were found at the second in Jul, and the clutch of eggs at the third was apparently abandoned. At a fourth area 1-2 birds were present Jun-Aug, but there was no breeding attempt.

In Jul one was in the area of Loch Gruinart/Loch Indaal *Islay* from 9<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, and another was at Loch Gruinart on 19<sup>th</sup> Aug. The only other reports away from the breeding areas were one at Loch Airigh na Creige, Eredine *Mid-Argyll* on 5<sup>th</sup> Aug, and the last bird seen, one at Crinan Ferry *Mid-Argyll* on 20<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus* Clamhan ruadh 0304  
*B W P Widespread but uncommon. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Marked decrease in breeding population reported from Kintyre in recent years. Population in some other areas appears to fluctuate from year to*

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year. *Emigration from some areas in autumn (e.g. Mull).*

Away from known breeding areas, singles were seen on *Tiree*, at *Balemartine* on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan and 1<sup>st</sup> Feb and at two other locations on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb.

**Breeding.** Recorded in 3 of the 16 BBS squares surveyed (*cf* none of 21 in 1996). In *Cowal*, 12 occupied sites were located; of these, 11 sites fledged a minimum of 51 young. Vole numbers were reported as high in the *Glen Branter Study Area* [DA, AF]. The 13 sites monitored on *SW Mull* were slightly less successful; 11 sites here raised a minimum of 40 young [ARSG per RAB]. The pair on *Colonsay* were unsuccessful this year.

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius* Meirneal 0309  
*B W P Scarce breeding species, probably under-recorded.*

Records during Jan-Apr came from *Islay* (in Mar), *Mull* (in Mar/Apr), *Oronsay Colonsay* (singles Jan/Feb, both male and female on several dates in Apr/early May) and *Tiree* (Jan/Feb).

**Breeding.** Occupied territories were recorded on *Cowal, Islay, Kintyre, Mid-Argyll, Mull* and *North Argyll*. On *Mull* there were more breeding season records than usual, with reports from 3 areas that have no known previous breeding history within the immediate area. Of 8 territories checked, 6 are known to have been successful, producing a minimum of 17 fledged young [ARSG per RAB]. Breeding season records were also received from *Coll* and *Colonsay*.

The first autumn migrant was seen at *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug. Other records during the second winter period came from *Islay* (regular early Oct-early Dec), *Colonsay* (inc. regular records *Oronsay* late Aug-late Oct), *Mid-Argyll, Mull* and *Tiree*.

**PEREGRINE** *Falco peregrinus* Seabhag 0320  
*B W P Sparsely distributed but widespread breeding species, found in all areas. Breeding recorded in fifty-two 10 km squares in 1991 survey [RSPB et al.].*

**Breeding.** Of 20 known sites monitored in *Cowal*, 12 were occupied. Seven sites were successful, fledging a total of at least 13 young [DA, AF]. Elsewhere in *Argyll*, seven further sites were monitored. Six were occupied and, of these, 3 successful nests produced at least 5 fledged young [ARSG per RAB]. Confirmed breeding records were received from *Coll* (one site), *Islay* (2 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (one site) and *Mull* (one site).

**RED GROUSE** *Lagopus lagopus* Coileach fraoich 0329  
*R Sparsely distributed. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 1 of 14 BBS squares (7%), (*cf* 3 of 21 in 1996). Four pairs were reported from *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay*, and other records during the breeding season were received from *Cowal, Kintyre* and *Mid-Argyll*.

**BLACK GROUSE** *Tetrao tetrix* Caoileach dubh 0332  
*RI Local. Populations in some areas may derive from released birds. Recent increases as a result of birds colonising forestry plantations may obscure general steep decline*

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*in numbers. Breeding recorded in 21% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** Birds were recorded in 2 of 16 BBS squares. Small leks of 1-4 males were reported from near Portavadie Cowal, near Tarbert Kintyre, Kilmartin Mid-Argyll and Loch Tulla, North Argyll.

Later in the year, two were seen near Spion Kop Kintyre on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct and one at Loch na Dhubhaich Islay on 8<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE** *Alectoris rufa* Cearc thomain dhearg chasach 0358

*I Birds (some hybrids with Chukar A. chukar) introduced to several areas. Although this species is in Category C of the British list, populations in Argyll do not appear to be self-sustaining.*

Birds recorded in Jul and Aug from the area to the south of Machrihanish Kintyre could well have originated from a large release which reportedly took place at Lochorodale Kintyre during the year. Similarly, two at Cornaig Tiree on 20<sup>th</sup> Aug were probably recently released birds. On Islay one was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb, and 21 recently released birds were at Kilchiaran on 12<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**GREY PARTRIDGE** *Perdix perdix* Cearc thomainn 0367

*R I Very localised distribution. Introductions, which take place in several areas, do not appear to result in self-sustaining populations. All records required.*

Birds seen at Cornaig Tiree (single) on 20<sup>th</sup> Aug and at Ballinaby Islay (15+) on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct were considered to be recent releases.

**QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix* Gearradh gort 0370  
*S Rare and irregular visitor.*

A very good year for this species. Eight were singing from meadows at RSPB Coll in early Jun, one was calling at Machrihanish Airport Kintyre in Jun-Jul, two were reported from Kilchoman Islay on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jun, one was at Glen Forsa Mull on 14<sup>th</sup> Jun, and one at Craigens Islay on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jun. Birds were also reported from Tiree but no details were provided.

**PHEASANT** *Phasianus colchicus* Easag 0394

*I Long-established, widespread and common resident. Birds also annually reared and released on many estates. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 16 BBS squares (cf 3 of 21 in 1996). On Colonsay, a total of 17 calling males were found in May. Pairs with broods of young were also reported from Ballymeanach and Imeraval Islay.

At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay, 66 birds were counted in a stubble field on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus* Snagan allt 0407  
*B W P Scarce, but under-recorded.*

The only record during the early part of the year was one in a ditch at Kilchattan Colonsay on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan.

**Breeding.** The only breeding season record came from Islay, where 2 birds

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were seen at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 9<sup>th</sup> Apr.

During the second winter period, singles on *Tiree* were at Sorobaidh on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct and near Loch Bhasapol on 25<sup>th</sup> Nov. One caught in a mink trap at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* in Dec was only the third record for the reserve, and one was calling regularly at Aros Moss *Kintyre* during Oct-Dec.

**SPOTTED CRAKE** *Porzana porzana* Traon breac 0408  
*S Rare and irregular. First confirmed breeding record for Argyll was in 1993.*

On *Islay*, one was calling at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on three dates in May.

**CORNCRAKE** *Crex crex* Traon 0421  
*S Localised distribution. Breeding mainly on Islay, Colonsay, Iona (Mull), Tiree and Coll.*

The first returning bird was at Garden House *Coll* on 13<sup>th</sup> Apr.

**Breeding.** Calling males were recorded in fourteen 10 km squares (13 on the islands and one in *Kintyre*, at Southend). After a drop in the numbers of calling males during the main census period (20<sup>th</sup> May to 10<sup>th</sup> Jul) in 1996, numbers rose again in 1997 to 211, the highest figure since the recovery began (see Table 17) [RSPB]. A large part of the increase was attributable to a range expansion on *Islay*, where records were confirmed from three 10 km squares additional to the one (at Loch Gruinart) to which birds had been restricted in 1996.

Additional birds were reported on islands that are not censused annually including Lunga, Treshnish Isles *Mull* (2), *Jura* (2, unconfirmed) and, on the mainland of Argyll, one again called in May at Southend *Kintyre* until the first silage cut towards the end of the month.

One bird was flushed from a field on Oronsay *Colonsay* during silage cutting on 20<sup>th</sup> Aug.

Table 17. Numbers of calling Corncrakes in Argyll areas in 1997, with revised 1996 and 1995 totals for comparison.

Area	1995	1996	1997
<i>Coll</i>	37	40	42
<i>Tiree</i>	140	117	136
<i>Mull</i>	0	0	0
<i>Iona</i>	4	5	8
<i>Colonsay &amp; Oronsay</i>	12	8	8
<i>Islay</i>	14	7	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>211</b>

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**MOORHEN** *Gallinula chloropus* Cearc uisge 0424  
*R Very localised. Breeding recorded in 16% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** On *Islay*, several pairs bred in the Loch Gruinart area, and breeding also occurred at Carnain (near Bridgend), Easter Ellister, Loch Tallant and elsewhere. The only other breeding record was a pair with a single young at Benderloch Gravel Pit *North Argyll* on 7<sup>th</sup> Jun.

During the year, birds were also recorded at Ardkenish *Colonsay* (one on 9<sup>th</sup> Jun), Aros Moss *Kintyre* (calling throughout the year) and Loch Cearn a Choin, Kilmory Lake (one on 28<sup>th</sup> Jun), Loch Ederline (2 on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct) and Crinan Canal (one on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct), all *Mid-Argyll*. On *Tiree* an immature was at Balinoe in Jan & Feb, one was at Cornaigmore on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb, and one was at Loch a 'Phuill on 6<sup>th</sup> Sep.

**COOT** *Fulica atra* Lach a bhlairst 0429  
*B W P Scarce breeder and uncommon winter visitor. Breeding recorded in only two 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

By far the highest count during the early part of the year was max. 14 at Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* on 31<sup>st</sup> Mar. The only other records were: one at East Loch Fada *Colonsay* 25<sup>th</sup> Jan - 9<sup>th</sup> Mar, one at Tayvallich Harbour *Mid-Argyll* on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan and, on *Islay*, two at Loch Ballygrant 9<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> Feb, one at Loch Skerrols on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb and one at Loch na Cadhan on 24<sup>th</sup> Apr. The only record from later in the year was one at Loch Ballygrant on 17<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**Breeding.** There were no breeding records.

**OYSTERCATCHER** *Haematopus ostralegus* Gille brighde 0450  
*B W P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 70% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 944 in Apr (Table 18), about average for the time of year. The only other sites with counts of more than 100 birds during the early part of the year were Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (max. 250 on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan) and Holy Loch *Cowal* (max. 425 on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb).

**Breeding.** Counts of breeding pairs were 57 at *Coll* RSPB Reserve (cf 65 in 1996), 11 on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, and 22 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (cf 18 in 1996). On *Iona Mull* in June, 28 adults were present, two nests found and one young seen. As usual, several hundred non-breeding birds were still present on *Islay* in mid-summer (Table 18) and at Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* 175 were at roost on 21<sup>st</sup> May.

Southward passage was observed at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in Jul (total of 462; max. 106 in 4 hrs on 31<sup>st</sup>) and Aug (total 2,923; max. 1,180 in 6 hrs on 10<sup>th</sup>). Other counts exceeding 100 birds came from Dunoon Bay *Cowal* (120 on 23<sup>rd</sup> Sep) and Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (360 on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec).

Table 18. *Maximum monthly counts of Oystercatcher at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) and Holy Loch (Cowal) in 1997*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	174	204	284	347	248	452	202	70	162	141	90	n/r
L. Indaal	351	465	570	597	464	490	434	442	350	312	463	530
L. Crinan	27	54	82	81	75	72	70	49	24	36	35	35
Holy Loch	280	425	259	136	85	n/r	n/r	n/r	250	501	418	405

**STONE CURLEW** *Burhinus oedicnemus*

0459

*V No previous records for Argyll.*

One present on the Gruinart Flats *Islay* on 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May was seen by several observers and photographed [T. ap Rheinallt, A. Knight, M. Peacock, G. Jackson, M. A. Ogilvie *et al.*]\*. On the rare occasions that it appears in Scotland, this species is usually found on the east coast.

**RINGED PLOVER** *Charadrius hiaticula* Trilleachan traghad

0470

*B W P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 55% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

During the early part of the year, numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* peaked at 251 in May [Table 19]. Other sites with counts exceeding 30 birds were Ledaig Point *North Argyll* (max. 70+ on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan) and Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 101 on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan).

**Breeding.** On *Colonsay*, 39 breeding pairs were located in Jun (*cf* 21 in 1996 and 20 in 1995). The only other counts of breeding pairs were 6 at *Coll RSPB Reserve* (*cf* 13 in 1996), 3 on *Sanda Islands Kintyre* and 3 at *Kilvecuen Mull*.

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart peaked in Oct with 229 [Table 19]. Southward passage was observed at *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* in Jul (36 on 24<sup>th</sup> and 41 on 31<sup>st</sup>), Aug (total 363; max 60 on 12<sup>th</sup>) and Sep (total 210; max. 32 on 12<sup>th</sup>). Other sites with counts of 30 or more birds were *Camas Cuil an t-Saimh (Iona) Mull* (30 on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct), *The Strand Colonsay* (max. 111 on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct) [Table 19], *Ledaig Point N. Argyll* (max. 70 on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct), *Loch Don Mull* (max. 30 on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec) and *Loch Gilp Mid-Argyll* (max. 30 on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec).

Table 19. *Maximum monthly counts of Ringed Plover at two sea-lochs on Islay and Oronsay in 1997*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	113	11	6	4	200	12	4	76	42	159	0	n/r
L. Indaal	23	37	10	148	51	33	25	110	51	70	12	18
Oronsay	101	n/r	14	27	31	n/r	5	50	n/r	111	4	8

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**DOTTEREL** *Charadrius morinellus* Amadan-mointich 0482  
*P B? Scarce migrant, mostly in late Apr and May. Has bred in N. Argyll in the past and may still do so.*

Distraction display was seen from a pair, on 28<sup>th</sup> Jun, at a site in *North Argyll* where breeding has occurred in the past. This is the first firm indication of breeding since a possible record on *Islay* in 1990.

**GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis apricaria* Feadag 0485  
*B W P Sparse but widespread breeding species. Upland afforestation has greatly reduced available breeding habitat in some areas. Breeding recorded in 28% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The only sites with counts of more than 50 birds during Jan-Mar were *Machrins Colonsay* (max. 200 on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb) and *Loch Gruinart Islay* (max. 400 on 13<sup>th</sup> Mar). A flock of 2,500 at *The Reef Tiree* on 16<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> Apr was by far the largest of the year. Also in Apr, up to 330 birds were still at *Loch Gruinart*, and up to 250 at *Coll RSPB Reserve*.

**Breeding.** Recorded in 4 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 4 of 21 in 1996). Otherwise the only records of birds on territories were 2-3 pairs in the *Cruach Mor* area *Mid-Argyll* and a nesting pair near *Loch Spelve Mull*.

Numbers in the *Loch Gruinart* area reached an unusually high peak at 1500 on 26<sup>th</sup> Nov, while numbers at *The Laggan Kintyre* peaked at 243 on 11<sup>th</sup> Oct. The only other sites with maximum counts of 40 or more birds were *Traigh an Tobar Fhuair Colonsay* (40 on 26<sup>th</sup> Sep), *Oronsay Colonsay* (45 on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct), *Ardtalla Islay* (max. 100 on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct), *Loch Indaal Islay* (max. 300 on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct & 4<sup>th</sup> Nov), and *Loch Don Mull* (85 on 17<sup>th</sup> Nov).

**GREY PLOVER** *Pluvialis squatarola* Trilleachan 0486  
*P W Uncommon passage migrant, mostly to islands. A few winter, mainly on Islay.*

During the early part of the year, the largest count was of only 4 birds, at *Loch Indaal Islay* on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb. The remaining records were all of singles: at *Urvaig Tiree* on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan, on *Oronsay Colonsay* on 1<sup>st</sup> May and on *Islay: Corran Bay* on 30<sup>th</sup> Mar, *Ardnave Pt.* on 13<sup>th</sup> Apr, *Frenchman's Rocks* on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr and *Kintra* on 4<sup>th</sup> May.

Four birds in breeding plumage flew north past *Machrihanish SBO* on 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

In autumn, the first returning bird was at *Loch Indaal Islay* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul, with one at *Bridgend Islay* on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug then another gap until 25<sup>th</sup> Sep when one was at *Oronsay Colonsay* and 9 were at *Loch Indaal*. Most records thereafter came from *Islay*, where numbers at *Loch Indaal* peaked at 50 on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct, one of the highest counts ever recorded on the island. Numbers there fell back later to max. 4 in Nov (on 21<sup>st</sup>) and 12 in Dec (on 14<sup>th</sup>). Numbers at *Loch Gruinart* built up from 2 on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct to max. 14 on 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. At *Machrihanish SBO Kintyre* 6 flew south on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct and 2 on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. The only records elsewhere were singles, at *Oronsay* on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct, on *Colonsay* on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct and at *Loch na Cille Mid-Argyll* on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**LAPWING** *Vanellus vanellus* Carracag 0493  
*B W P Localised breeder and widespread wintering species. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

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During the early part of the year, numbers in the Loch Gruinart area *Islay* peaked at 858 on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb [Table 20]. Other sites with counts exceeding 50 birds were Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* (76 on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan), Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* (60 on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan), Loch Bhasapol *Tiree* (c. 250 on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan) and Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 87 on 30<sup>th</sup> Apr).

**Breeding.** A total of 232 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*; a slight improvement on the 221 in 1996 but still down on 263 in 1995 and productivity was still poor. The only other counts involving more than a handful of breeding pairs were 116 at *Coll* RSPB Reserve (cf 109 in 1996), and c. 30 at Rhunahaorine Point. Productivity studies on the birds breeding on *Coll* showed 91% nest failure at the egg stage with crows the main predator.

In autumn, numbers in the Loch Gruinart area and at Loch Indaal *Islay* reached a peak in Nov with a total of 1,045 [Table 20] Nov. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, the autumn maximum was 130 on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct. Elsewhere there were counts of 50 at Oronsay on 19<sup>th</sup> Sep, 65 on *Colonsay* on 30<sup>th</sup> Sep and 50 at Loch Gorm *Islay* on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct.

Table 20. *Maximum monthly counts of Lapwing at two sea-lochs on Islay in 1997*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	317	858	315	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	6	190	900	276
L. Indaal	38	40	8	9	1	6	0	0	36	100	145	0

**KNOT** *Calidris canutus* Luatharan gainmhich 0496  
*W P Uncommon passage migrant with main passage Aug-Sep. A few winter.*

Most records during the early part of the year were from *Islay* where numbers at Loch Indaal peaked at only 26 on 30<sup>th</sup> Mar in contrast to the large numbers there in 1996. Only 6 were present there on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr, with 8 on 19<sup>th</sup> May being the last. The only other records were 2 at Bridgend Merse *Islay* on 28<sup>th</sup> Feb, singles at The Strand *Colonsay* on 5<sup>th</sup> May and on Oronsay on 13<sup>th</sup> May, and 3 at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 17<sup>th</sup> May.

The first 2 returning birds were at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, 26 flew past south on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jul (7 hrs) and 30 on 24<sup>th</sup> Jul (6.5 hrs). A total of 200 flew past there in Aug, with a highest day-count of 80 on the 13<sup>th</sup>; then a total of 29 were seen on three dates in Sep with the last on 12<sup>th</sup>. Numbers at Loch Indaal built up from 3 on 17<sup>th</sup> Aug to a peak of only 15 on 31<sup>st</sup> Aug, with 8 on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct and 11 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. The only other records during the latter part of the year were at Ledaig Point *North Argyll*, where one was present on 4<sup>th</sup> Aug, 5 on 31<sup>st</sup> Aug and 3 on 7<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba* Luatharan glas 0497  
*W P Uncommon passage migrant, with main passage in May and Aug. A few winter, mainly on Islay and Tiree. Occasionally recorded in summer.*

The only record prior to May was a single bird at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 15<sup>th</sup> Feb.

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The first record after this was 5 at Craigens, Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 4<sup>th</sup> May following which there were a continuous series of sightings until mid Dec. The highest number of birds was seen at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, with totals of 110 during July (max. day-count 40 on 24<sup>th</sup>), 198 during Aug (max. 66 on 12<sup>th</sup>) and 23 on 3 dates in Sep. About 70 were seen on Iona *Mull* on 27<sup>th</sup> May and, on *Tiree*, 17 were at Sorobaidh Bay on 6<sup>th</sup> Jun and 42 at Gott Bay on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul. On *Islay*, 32 passed Frenchman's Rocks on 24<sup>th</sup> Jul, numbers at Loch Gruinart peaked at 50 on 4<sup>th</sup> Sep, falling to 14 on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct and 8 on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec, and 10 were at Killinallan Point, Loch Gruinart on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct. Elsewhere, counts at Oronsay *Colonsay*, Ledaig Point *N. Argyll* and Machir Bay *Islay* were all in single figures.

**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta* Luatharan beag 0501  
*P Scarce but annual, with the majority of records in autumn.*

Only a single record during the year: one at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug .

**CURLEW SANDPIPER** *Calidris ferruginea* Luatharan crom 0509  
*P Scarce but more or less annual, with the majority of records in autumn.*

There were no spring records.

The first autumn birds were on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug, when one was at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* and two at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*. In Sep a juvenile was at Carnain, Loch Indaal *Islay* on 1<sup>st</sup> and two were seen with Dunlin at Loch Gruinart on 7<sup>th</sup>. A late bird was at Loch Gruinart on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**PURPLE SANDPIPER** *Calidris maritima* Luatharan rioghail 0510  
*W P Widely distributed along rocky coasts from Sep to May.*

During the early part of the year, most records were from *Islay*, with 7 at Rhinns Point on 4<sup>th</sup> Jan, 4 moving north on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan and 3 moving south on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan at Frenchman's Rocks, 6 at Port Wemyss on 21<sup>st</sup> Feb, 12 at Portnahaven on 29<sup>th</sup> Mar, 3 at Bruichladdich, Loch Indaal on 12<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> Apr, and ones or twos at a few other sites. The only reports from elsewhere were a single at Oronsay on 19<sup>th</sup> Feb and 10 at Sorobaidh *Tiree* on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar.

In autumn, there were no reports until 31<sup>st</sup> Oct when 6 were seen at Saligo Bay *Islay*. On Loch Indaal *Islay*, 3 were at Port Charlotte on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov, one at Bridgend Merse on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2 at Bruichladdich on 7<sup>th</sup> Nov and a total of 7 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov and 3 on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec. The only other records were 2 on Eilean Aoghainn, Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* on 27<sup>th</sup> Nov, 7 at Traigh Hough *Tiree* on 29<sup>th</sup> Nov, and a 'small flock' reported at Kintra *Mull* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec.

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina* Graillig 0512  
*B W P Very localised breeding species. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Numbers highest on passage, except on Islay where several hundred birds winter.*

The highest count early in the year was on Oronsay *Colonsay* with 263 on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan [Table 21]. Numbers on *Islay* did not peak until May when a total of 765 was counted at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal [Table 21]. Elsewhere, over 100 were at Kirm (Dunoon) *Cowal* in Feb and Mar, and 50 adults in summer plumage were on Iona *Mull* on 20<sup>th</sup> May.

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**Breeding.** The only records of breeding birds were of one pair at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve and 3 pairs at *Coll* RSPB Reserve. Also, 4 birds at Ardskenish *Colonsay* and 11 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Jun were thought to be local breeders.

Higher numbers than usual were recorded flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during Jul-Sep: 587 in Jul (max. 233 on 24<sup>th</sup>), 1,150 in Aug (max. 210 on 12<sup>th</sup>) and 70 in Sep. Numbers on *Islay* reached a peak in Nov with a total of 864 at Loch Gruinart and Loch Indaal on 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> Nov [Table 21]. The only other site with more than 50 birds during the second winter period was Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* with 60 on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec, but smaller numbers were recorded regularly at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* and Loch Don *Mull*.

Table 21. *Maximum monthly counts of Dunlin at two sea-lochs on Islay and on Oronsay in 1997.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	26	50	12	25	675	5	316	0	22	190	727	n/r
L. Indaal	35	194	5	91	90	25	20	350	0	75	137	147
Oronsay	263	0	8	32	21	0	0	40	0	10	0	2

**RUFF** *Philomachus pugnax* Gibeagan 0517

*P Scarce but annual passage migrant, more numerous in autumn.*

Most records came from Loch Gruinart *Islay*, where singles were seen on 10<sup>th</sup> Apr, 5<sup>th</sup> Jun and 31<sup>st</sup> Aug, with 5 on 5<sup>th</sup> Sep and a late individual on 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. One was at Bridgend Merse, Loch Indaal, on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug and, away from *Islay*, one was present at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

**JACK SNIPE** *Lymnocyptes minimus* Gobhrag bheag 0518

*W P Scarce but probably under-recorded.*

There were 2 records of singles during the first winter period: at Bruichladdich *Islay* on 5<sup>th</sup> Feb and at The Reef *Tiree* on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb.

One was found dead on the road at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct and single live birds were seen there on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct and 6<sup>th</sup> Nov. On *Tiree*, one was at Hynish on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov, while *Islay* had further single birds on 16<sup>th</sup> Nov (Carnduncan), 21<sup>st</sup> Nov (Loch Tallant) and 21<sup>st</sup> Dec (Bruichladdich). One seen on the north moor at Moine Mhor *Mid-Argyll* on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec was only the third record for the reserve.

**SNIPE** *Gallinago gallinago* Naosg 0519

*B W P Widespread and locally common. Breeding recorded in 51% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Nine birds were in the Portnahaven *Islay* area on 4<sup>th</sup> Jan but by far the highest count during Jan-Apr was 32 on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 30<sup>th</sup> Apr. Records of up to three birds were received from widely scattered sites in *Colonsay*, *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Mull*.

**Breeding.** A circuit of the *Colonsay* road network at dusk on 8<sup>th</sup> Jun located 30 drumming birds (*cf* 52 in 1996). Elsewhere, there were 112 drumming males at

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Coll RSPB Reserve, and at least 64 territories at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*. The only counts of 10 or more birds during the latter part of the year were 18 flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 8<sup>th</sup> Aug, and 10 at Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec.

**WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola* Coileach coille 0529  
*BWP* Widespread but under-recorded. Breeding recorded in 35% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Single birds were reported from most areas, but at least 10 were flushed from deciduous woodland at Loch Ba *Mull* on 7<sup>th</sup> Mar.

Breeding. A circuit of the *Colonsay* road network at dusk on 8<sup>th</sup> Jun located only 4 roding birds, all in the *Colonsay House* area (cf 10 along the same route in 1996). Roding birds were also reported from *Mull* and *North Argyll*.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa limosa* Cearra ghob 0532  
*P* Regular in recent years on *Islay* and *Tiree*, both in spring and in autumn. Scarce elsewhere.

Two early birds were at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 19<sup>th</sup> Mar, but the next record was not until 10<sup>th</sup> Apr, when one was at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*. Large numbers passed through *Tiree* 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> Apr; 27 at Loch an Eilein on 23<sup>rd</sup> had built up to a total of 213, there and in the Loch Bhasapol area, on the following day. On 25<sup>th</sup> only 22 remained at Loch an Eilein, most of which had departed by late afternoon. In the next few days most of the records came from *Islay*; 23 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 27<sup>th</sup> Apr, 62 at Ardnave Loch on 29<sup>th</sup> Apr, the same total at Loch Gruinart on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 3 at Ardnave Loch on 4<sup>th</sup> May with one at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 15<sup>th</sup> May being the last spring record for the island. Elsewhere in May, singles were at Oronsay *Colonsay* on 13<sup>th</sup> and Killean *Kintyre* on 17<sup>th</sup>, and 4 were at Fidden *Mull* on 20<sup>th</sup>.

The first returning birds at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* were 3 on 24<sup>th</sup> Jul, followed by a total of 42 in Aug, the highest day-count being 17 (3 hr) on 31<sup>st</sup>, and 4 on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sep. Two birds were at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 9<sup>th</sup> Aug, while Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* had 3 on 12<sup>th</sup> and 5 on 16<sup>th</sup> Aug. The last birds were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve with singles on 4<sup>th</sup> Sep, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov and 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica* Cearra ghob mhor 0534  
*WP* Uncommon passage migrant, with most records in autumn. Wintering birds on *Islay* and small numbers elsewhere. Regular on *Islay* in summer.

Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* at the beginning of the year peaked at 165 in Feb [Table 22] (cf 342 in Jan 1996). The only other site with a count of more than 10 birds during Jan-May was Loch Don *Mull* (max. 22 on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar). Smaller numbers were recorded from *Tiree*, Oronsay *Colonsay* and Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll*.

There were 80 birds at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart in Jun [Table 22]. The only other summer records came from Loch Don *Mull* (singles on 6<sup>th</sup> Jun and 7<sup>th</sup> Jul), Killinallan, Loch Gruinart *Islay* (one on 1<sup>st</sup> Jun) and *Tiree* (6 at Gott Bay on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul).

In *Kintyre*, 12 flew past Machrihanish SBO southwards on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jul and a total of 21 were recorded in Aug (max. 7 on 21<sup>st</sup>). Elsewhere, the only sites with counts of

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10 or more birds were Loch Don (max 10 on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct), Killinallan, Loch Gruinart *Islay* (20+ on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct), Gott Bay *Tiree* (18 on 13<sup>th</sup> Dec) and Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (12 on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec). Single-figure counts came from other sites in *Islay*, *Colonsay*, and *North Argyll*.

Table 22. *Maximum monthly counts of Bar-tailed Godwits at two sea-lochs on Islay in 1997.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	34	59	83	6	83	1	0	0	30	36	0	n/r
L. Indaal	13	106	38	32	53	79	70	13	26	15	70	21

**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus* Eun bealltain 0538  
*P* A regular migrant in small numbers, with main passage late Apr to May and late Jul to Aug. Summer records not infrequent.

One at Loch an Eilein *Tiree* on 14<sup>th</sup> Apr was the first spring record followed by one at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 17<sup>th</sup>. Flocks of 10 or more were reported on *Islay* from Gartmain (12 on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr), Claddach (13 on 27<sup>th</sup> Apr), Loch Indaal (max. 20 on 5<sup>th</sup> May), Port Charlotte (25 on 10<sup>th</sup> May) and at Heylipol *Tiree* (12 on 13<sup>th</sup> May). Small groups of up to 7 birds were widespread, with reports from *Colonsay*, *Islay*, *Jura*, *Kintyre* and *Mull*. The peak period was 26<sup>th</sup> Apr to 11<sup>th</sup> May with a few to the end of the month.

Mid-summer records came from Iona *Mull* (2 on 6<sup>th</sup> Jun), Scalasaig *Colonsay* (one on 9<sup>th</sup> Jun), Port Wemyss *Islay* (singles on 19<sup>th</sup> Jun and 3<sup>rd</sup> Jul), Loch Indaal (8 on 19<sup>th</sup> Jun) and Oronsay *Colonsay* (one on 4<sup>th</sup> Jul).

Four birds at Grasspoint *Mull* on 13<sup>th</sup> Jul were probably early return migrants. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, 5 flew south on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul, 7 on 8<sup>th</sup> Aug, singles were seen on 28<sup>th</sup> Aug and 1<sup>st</sup> Sep, and 10 on 5<sup>th</sup> Sep were the last records of the year. The remaining records, mostly from the last week in Aug and first week in Sep, were all singles and came from *Colonsay*, *Islay* and *Tiree*.

**CURLEW** *Numenius arquata* Guilbneach 0541  
*B W P* Common. Breeding recorded in 50% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

Numbers generally reached a peak in Feb, with a total of 486 at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* and 142 at Holy Loch *Cowal* [Table 23]. The only other sites with counts of more than 50 birds during the early part of the year were Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* (126 on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan), and Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* where 81 on 16<sup>th</sup> Mar was a record for the locality.

**Breeding.** The only count of breeding birds was 31 pairs at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (cf 37 in 1996).

Counts at the main sites in autumn peaked during Sep, with a total of 889 at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart and 150 at Holy Loch [Table 23]. Numbers passing Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* totalled 111 in Jul (max. 33 on 15<sup>th</sup>) and 143 in Aug (max. 28 on 18<sup>th</sup>). Other counts of 50 or more birds were 66 at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on 24<sup>th</sup> Aug, 58 at The Strand *Colonsay* on 28<sup>th</sup> Aug, 272 at West Machrihanish *Kintyre* on 19<sup>th</sup> Sep, max. 50 at Loch Don *Mull* on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct and, on *Islay*, 90 at Machir Bay on 31<sup>st</sup>

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Oct, 50+ at Kintra on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov and 90 at Lossit Bay on 29<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Table 23. Maximum monthly counts of Curlew at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Holy Loch (Cowal) in 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	151	386	271	166	52	103	454	102	358	310	287	107
L. Indaal	106	100	44	120	27	47	196	439	531	493	300	715
Holy Loch	96	142	80	102	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	150	128	39	55

**SPOTTED REDSHANK** *Tringa erythropus* Gearradh bhreac 0545  
*P Rare, with only 7 records in Argyll during 1980-96: 2 in May, 3 in Aug one in Sep and one in Oct.*

A good year for this species, with two records: one at An Fhaodhail *Tiree* on 9<sup>th</sup> May, and a juvenile that stayed around Uisaed Point, Machrihanish *Kintyre* from 14<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Aug.

**REDSHANK** *Tringa totanus* Cam ghlas 0546  
*B W P Localised breeder. Breeding recorded in 40% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Widespread passage migrant and wintering species.*

The highest count during the early part of the year came from Holy Loch *Cowal*, with max. 56 on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb [Table 24]. The only other sites with counts exceeding 20 birds were the mouth of West Loch Tarbert *Kintyre* (max. 33 on 12<sup>th</sup> Jan) and Loch Gruinart *Islay* (max. 28 on 28<sup>th</sup> Mar) [Table 24].

**Breeding.** A total of 95 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (*cf* 114 in 1996), and 40 pairs at Coll RSPB Reserve (*cf* 33 pairs in 1996). On *Colonsay* (excluding *Oronsay*), 12 pairs were found (*cf* 13 in 1995) while on *Oronsay* itself 9 pairs were located. At Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* two pairs were seen with young.

Three colour-ringed birds seen on *Tiree* during the breeding season had been marked as part of the Cardiff Bay study into the effects of a barrage on wintering waders.

Southward passage was observed in autumn at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, with 192 recorded in Jul (max. 141 on 24<sup>th</sup>), 116 in Aug (max. 60 on 10<sup>th</sup>), and 38 in Sep. At Frenchman's Rocks *Islay*, 40 were counted flying south in 3.25 hrs on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug. Numbers at Loch Indaal *Islay* peaked at 46 on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct [Table 24]. The only other sites with counts exceeding 20 birds during the latter part of the year were Holy Loch (max. 53 on 4<sup>th</sup> Oct) [Table 24], The Strand *Colonsay* (max. 32 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct), Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 22 in Nov) and Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (23 on 21<sup>st</sup> Nov).

Table 24. Maximum monthly counts of Redshank at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Holy Loch (Cowal) in 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	11	0	28	13	5	8	0	0	0	46	15	12
L. Indaal	13	4	8	21	11	9	6	17	15	10	10	10
Holy Loch	20	56	35	38	0	0	0	4	2	53	6	11

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**GREENSHANK** *Tringa nebularia* Deoch bhuidhe 0548  
*B W P Very scarce breeding species (only in Mull and N. Argyll in recent years). Breeding recorded in 4% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Small numbers on passage with a few birds wintering in some localities.*

During Jan-Apr, birds were regularly sighted at various sites on *Mull*, with max. 4 at Loch Don on 6<sup>th</sup> Apr, and max. 4 at Loch Scridain on 20<sup>th</sup> Mar. Also, one was seen regularly at Holy Loch *Cowal*, 4 were at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 20<sup>th</sup> Mar, max. 3 were on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 3<sup>rd</sup> Apr, and 2 were at a site in *North Argyll* on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr. Singles were seen in *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll*, and *Tiree* in Apr and May.

**Breeding.** Breeding probably occurred at a regular site on *Mull* and a single bird was seen close to a regular breeding site in *North Argyll* in mid-May.

The only Jun record was one at Loch a 'Phuill *Tiree* on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

During the latter part of the year, the greatest numbers were seen at The Strand *Colonsay* with 13 on 17<sup>th</sup> Sep, 12 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct, falling to 3 on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. Records of up to 3 birds were widespread from sites in *Islay*, *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll* and *Tiree*, and on *Mull* max. 4 were at Loch Don on 24<sup>th</sup> Dec with 6 at Kinloch on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**GREEN SANDPIPER** *Tringa ochropus* Luatharan uaine 0553  
*P Scarce but more or less annual. Majority of records in autumn (mostly mid-Jul to mid-Oct); very rare in spring.*

One was at Machrihanish Water *Kintyre* on 21<sup>st</sup> Aug and another at Cornaigbeg *Tiree* on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**WOOD SANDPIPER** *Tringa glareola* Luatharan coille 0554  
*P Scarce and less than annual. Recorded in 9 of the 17 years 1980-96, with 6 of the 11 records in spring.*

One was on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 12<sup>th</sup> June.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** *Actitis hypoleucos* Luatharan 0556  
*S P Widespread and common breeding visitor. Breeding recorded in 68% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first record of the spring was of three flying in from the sea at Claggain Bay *Islay* on 18<sup>th</sup> Apr, and birds had been reported from most areas of Argyll by the end of the month.

**Breeding.** On 41 hill lochs in the Ederline/Eredine Forest area of *Mid-Argyll*, 18 pairs were located. Along the River Laggan near Laggan Bridge *Islay*, 5 pairs were counted on 1<sup>st</sup> Jun. On *Colonsay*, a total of 26 pairs were found in Jun (cf 27 in 1996) and two pairs were on the RSPB Reserve *Coll*.

At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*, 28 birds were counted flying south on 24<sup>th</sup> Jul, 14 on 14<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2 on 1<sup>st</sup> Sep and one, the very last, on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sep.

**TURNSTONE** *Arenaria interpres* Trilleachan beag 0561  
*W P Widespread and common, mainly from Aug to May. Summer records not unusual.*

Very low numbers during the early part of the year, the peak count at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart *Islay* being only 22, in Apr [Table 25]. The only sites with peak counts exceeding 20 birds during the early part of the year were Rhunahaorine

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Point Kintyre (40 on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan), Loch Spelve Mull (23 on 21<sup>st</sup> Mar), Camas Cuil an t-Saimh (Iona) Mull (25 on 24<sup>th</sup> Mar) and Tìree, where flocks of up to 40 were seen on the machair in Feb-Mar.

A single bird in breeding plumage was on Oronsay Colonsay on 12<sup>th</sup> Jun.

A total of 93 were recorded flying south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre during Jul-Sep, the highest day-count being 12 on 13<sup>th</sup> Aug. Numbers at Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart built up to 174 in Nov [Table 25]. The only other counts exceeding 20 birds were max. 40 on Oronsay Colonsay on 21<sup>st</sup> Sep, max. 44 at Traigh Nostaig Islay on 12<sup>th</sup> Nov, 70 at Tayinloan Kintyre on 19<sup>th</sup> Nov and max. 26 at Minard (Loch Fyne) Mid-Argyll on 27<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Table 25. Maximum monthly counts of Turnstone at two sea-lochs on Islay in 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L.Gruinart	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	3	29	102	n/r
L. Indaal	9	6	9	16	5	0	0	16	20	39	72	29

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus lobatus* Deargan allt 0564  
*P* Very rare on migration. Last bred in Argyll in 1992.

1995 A juvenile at Machrihanish SBO on 9<sup>th</sup> Sep [EJM]\* was the first record since 1992, when migrant birds were recorded here in Sep and when birds were last recorded breeding at the traditional Argyll site.

**GREY PHALAROPE** *Phalaropus fulicarius* Liathag allt 0565  
*P* Irregular, associated with autumn gales. All but 4 of 36 Argyll records during 1980-96 were in the period mid-Sep to mid-Oct.

The only record was a single bird flying south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**POMARINE SKUA** *Stercorarius pomarinus* Fasgadair donn 0566  
*P* Scarce but annual, with several records most years. Majority seen in autumn.

The only spring record was one flying north-east past Scarinish Tìree on 5<sup>th</sup> May.

Most records in autumn were of birds flying south past Machrihanish SBO Kintyre: the first was an adult on 25<sup>th</sup> Aug with 3 more on 8<sup>th</sup> Sep, followed by a series of juveniles: 2 on 13<sup>th</sup> Sep, one on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct and 3 on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. The only other records were: a single off Balevullin Tìree on 5<sup>th</sup> Sep, and 2 immatures chasing Kittiwakes off the north end of Gigha on 29<sup>th</sup> Sep.

**ARCTIC SKUA** *Stercorarius parasiticus* Fasgadair 0567  
*SP* The commonest skua in Argyll, regularly seen in small numbers near large seabird colonies. Small breeding colonies on Jura and Coll. Passage birds regular and widespread in spring and especially autumn.

The only spring records were one seen off the south side of Ulva Mull on 6<sup>th</sup> May, and one seen off Hynish Tìree on 11<sup>th</sup> May.

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**Breeding.** No counts were received from *Jura*, but 21 pairs were located on *Coll*. Other summer records were singles flying W at Port Olmsa *Colonsay* on 8th Jul, at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 24<sup>th</sup> Jun and 3<sup>rd</sup> Jul, and 1-3 off Grasspoint *Mull* during Jul.

Southward passage past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* was sparse; after a single bird on 16<sup>th</sup> Jul, birds seen during Aug-Sep totalled only 25 (max. 8 on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug). Of 20 adults included in this total, 12 were pale and 8 were dark morph. Apart from 21 seen from the Oban-Colonsay Ferry on 10<sup>th</sup> Sep there were scattered records, from late Aug to early Sep, of 1-2 birds from Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* and several localities on *Tiree*. The last individual was one passing Frenchman's Rocks on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**LONG-TAILED SKUA** *Stercorarius longicaudus* Fasgadair stiuirich 0568  
*P* Less than annual. Recorded in both spring and autumn off western coasts and islands.

Two juveniles flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 13<sup>th</sup> Sep during a severe WNW gale, when various other scarce migrants appeared [EJM]\*.

**GREAT SKUA** *Stercorarius skua* Fasgadair mor 0569  
*S P* Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor. Bred unsuccessfully on *Coll* in 1989.

There were several early records starting with one passing south at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb. Then one passed Port Askaig *Islay* northwards on 10<sup>th</sup> Feb and another was at Frenchman's Rocks on 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. Then no further records until one flew south past Frenchman's Rocks on 24<sup>th</sup> Apr and 2 were over Oronsay *Colonsay* on 5<sup>th</sup> May.

**Breeding.** A pair finally bred on *Coll* and had two chicks, the first successful breeding record for Argyll. One was again seen on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* in late Jun but with no proof of breeding.

In early Jul singles were at Grasspoint *Mull* on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> and at Frenchman's Rocks on 6<sup>th</sup>. A total of 20 flew south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during Aug-Oct. At Frenchman's Rocks two were seen on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug and one flew past southward on 4<sup>th</sup> Sep. Elsewhere, 4 were seen from the ferry SW of *Coll* on 13<sup>th</sup> Sep, singles were recorded on *Tiree* on four dates in Sep, and the last was recorded in Gunna Sound *Coll/Tiree* on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**MEDITERRANEAN GULL** *Larus melanocephalus* 0575  
*V* The only Argyll record since 1980 was one on *Mull* in 1992.

1995 A first-winter bird was at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* from 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Sep [EJM *et al*].

**LITTLE GULL** *Larus minutus* Crann fhaoileag 0578  
*S W P* Irregular, with several records most years but none in others. Typically seen Aug or Sep, but summer records (usually involving first-year birds) and winter records not infrequent.

There was a total of 5 records for the year, the first being an adult in winter plumage at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 23<sup>rd</sup> Mar, followed by one on Oronsay

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Colonsay on 6<sup>th</sup> Apr.

All the autumn records came from Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre*: single juveniles on 18<sup>th</sup> Aug and 5<sup>th</sup> Sep, and a first-winter on 10<sup>th</sup> Oct, all flying south.

**SABINE'S GULL** *Larus sabini*

0579

*P* Mainly autumn. Formerly irregular but, with recent increased interest in sea-watching, recorded annually since 1989.

1996 Single juveniles were seen at Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 24<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Sep and two juveniles on 30<sup>th</sup> Sep [TapR]\*.

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** *Larus ridibundus* Faoileag a'chinn duibh 0582  
*B W P* Patchily distributed breeder. Breeding recorded in 16% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Scarce in many areas in winter.

During the early part of the year, the only sites with counts of more than 50 birds were Loch Gruinart *Islay* (max. 56 on 21<sup>st</sup> Jan), near Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* (65 on 16<sup>th</sup> Mar), and Loch Indaal *Islay* (max. 65 on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr) [Table 26].

Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 284 pairs bred at 6 colonies (5 in *Mid-Argyll* and one in *Kintyre*), varying in size from 2 to 121 pairs, and fledged a total of 133-138 young. Birds no longer breed at 6 former colony sites, particularly the large (300 pair) colony at Eilean Inshaig (Loch Craignish) *Mid-Argyll*. The Whitehouse Bay, Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* colony, formerly some 100-200 pairs, held only 5 pairs this year.

The only other counts of breeding birds came from Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (8 pairs) and from Colonsay (18 pairs). There were no records of this species at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* during the year, though it was a common breeder only a few years ago.

During the latter part of the year, the only counts exceeding 100 birds came from Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* (max. 119 on 20<sup>th</sup> Jul), and Loch Gruinart (max. 147 on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug) [Table 26].

Table 26. Maximum monthly counts of Black-headed Gulls at two sea-lochs on *Islay* and at Loch Crinan (*Mid-Argyll*) in 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	56	n/r	40	2	4	31	71	147	n/r	14	0	n/r
L. Indaal	5	16	53	65	29	66	39	9	46	10	20	13
L. Crinan	0	1	12	41	32	39	119	96	12	12	4	1

**RING-BILLED GULL** *Larus delawarensis*

0589

*W P* Scarce. First recorded on *Tiree* in Jan 1983; now more or less annual.

A first summer bird was at Port Askaig *Islay* on 3<sup>rd</sup> Apr [Colin Bradshaw *et al.*]\*.

1996 An individual at Port Charlotte *Islay* from 17<sup>th</sup> Feb to 16<sup>th</sup> Mar was presumed to be the returning bird from 1994-1995 [MAO]\*.

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**COMMON GULL** *Larus canus* Faoleag 0590  
*B W P* Widespread and common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 45% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The highest count during the early part of the year was max. 355 at Loch Indaal Islay on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr. Also on Islay, numbers at Loch Gruinart peaked at 272 on 20<sup>th</sup> Mar [Table 27]. No other site had counts exceeding 250 birds.

**Breeding.** In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 994 pairs were noted breeding at 22 colonies (one to 344 pairs in size). At 15 of these sites, 819 pairs fledged 447-574 young, while the other seven sites 175 pairs fledged no young. [Mink were killed in spring at seven of the 15 successful sites as part of the mink/seabird protection programme.] At a further 19 sites, another 90-111 pairs were noted breeding but were not followed up. Birds were absent from 14 traditional sites that had all been occupied in the 1980s.

Elsewhere, 20 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart but reared no young, 5 colonies in Eredine Forest area *Mid-Argyll* had min. 35 nests but raised only 4 young, there were at least 58 AON at Garmony *Mull* on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 21 pairs bred at *Coll* RSPB Reserve and 39 active nests were found on Sanda Island *Kintyre*, some of which failed at the egg stage.

In autumn, counts in excess of 100 were made at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* (480 on 1<sup>st</sup> Aug), Loch Indaal (max. 397 on 25<sup>th</sup> Sep), Machir Bay *Islay* (200+ on 7<sup>th</sup> Nov), and Loch Gruinart (max. 336 on 21<sup>st</sup> Nov).

An adult killed by a Peregrine on Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland, had been ringed as a chick on Sanda Island 9 years previously.

Table 27. Maximum monthly counts of Common Gulls at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Crinan (*Mid-Argyll*) in 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	0	n/r	272	2	28	28	9	61	n/r	37	336	n/r
L. Indaal	112	139	275	355	128	165	102	296	397	91	159	208
L. Crinan	50	95	110	59	32	14	23	85	18	14	12	10

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus* Faoleag bheag 0591  
*S P* Widespread breeding species, generally present from Mar to Sep. Breeding recorded in 20% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). A few remain in winter.

Single birds were seen during Jan-Feb: on *Islay* at Bridgend Merse (Loch Indaal), Frenchman's Rocks, and Lossit Bay; in *Mid-Argyll* at Loch Crinan and Loch Gilp, and at West Loch Tarbert *Kintyre*. The main arrival was from mid-Mar.

**Breeding.** In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 890-1,010 pairs were noted breeding at 8 colonies (40-400 nests in size). Young fledged in good numbers at most of these. Single or a few pairs were seen at another five sites, all in large Herring Gull colonies. The species was absent from the former large colony at Eilean nan Coinean/Eilean Fraoich in the Sound of Jura. There were 66 active nests on Sanda *Kintyre* in June and some pairs had colonised new areas. Elsewhere, 5 pairs bred on the Treshnish Isles *Mull*, and 12 pairs bred at *Coll* RSPB Reserve.

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Of 332 passing Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* in Aug, 37% were aged as adults. The only winter records for the latter part of the year were singles at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov and at Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (an adult) on 26<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**HERRING GULL** *Larus argentatus* Faoileag an sgadain 0592  
*BWP Widespread and abundant breeding species. Breeding recorded in 33% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some evidence for immigration into Argyll in winter; colour-ringing studies have shown that these birds are probably from the Clyde and NE England.*

During the early part of the year, the only counts exceeding 200 birds were at Eilean Aoghainn *Mid-Argyll* (max. 700+ on 18<sup>th</sup> Feb) and at Loch Indaal *Islay* (201 on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr) [Table 28].

**Breeding.** In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 1,685 pairs at 18 colonies (1 to 435 pairs in size) fledged 999-1,063 young. A further 3,047-3,648 pairs were counted breeding at another 24 colonies (1 to c.750 pairs in size) at eleven of which many young were seen to have fledged. Other counts of breeding birds came from; Treshnish Isles *Mull* (97 nests, cf 71 in 1996), Fionnphort *Mull* (50 pairs with eggs and young along the Fidden road), Coll RSPB Reserve (33 pairs), Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (1 pair) and from Sanda Islands *Kintyre* where 980 active nests represent continuation of slow decline in numbers.

In autumn, the highest counts were 740 at Loch Gruinart on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug [Table 28], 236 at Loch Indaal on 25<sup>th</sup> Sep, and 450 at the refuse tip at Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec. No other site had counts exceeding 250 birds.

Table 28. *Maximum monthly counts of Herring Gulls at two sea-lochs on Islay and at Loch Crinan (Mid-Argyll) in 1997*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
L. Gruinart	0	n/r	21	5	76	35	105	740	n/r	2	22	n/r
L. Indaal	16	82	65	201	102	19	55	161	236	147	122	120
L. Crinan	60	38	75	15	23	69	68	51	82	30	20	112

**ICELAND GULL** *Larus glaucooides* Faoileag liath 0598  
*W Scarce but normally at least 5 records annually, and sometimes many more.*

A total of about 12 birds was recorded during the early part of the year. A series of records from Oban *Mid-Argyll* involved a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter bird seen from 19<sup>th</sup> Jan to 10<sup>th</sup> Mar, and two 1<sup>st</sup> winter birds from 16<sup>th</sup> Feb increasing to three by 10<sup>th</sup> Mar which were still there on 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar. Two 2<sup>nd</sup> summer birds seen from 18<sup>th</sup> Apr to 7<sup>th</sup> May may have been the same individuals as the 1<sup>st</sup> winter birds seen earlier. In addition, an adult bird was seen there on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb. At Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* an adult passed southwards on 19<sup>th</sup> Jan and a 1<sup>st</sup> winter/summer bird was noted on 13<sup>th</sup> Apr, while at Loch Gruinart *Islay* a 3<sup>rd</sup> winter bird was seen on 11<sup>th</sup> Mar and a 1<sup>st</sup> winter on 29<sup>th</sup> Mar. Elsewhere birds were recorded near Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* (one 1<sup>st</sup> winter on 16<sup>th</sup> Mar), at Tarbert *Kintyre* (one 1<sup>st</sup> summer on 18<sup>th</sup> May) and on Oronsay *Colonsay* (an immature bird on 31<sup>st</sup> May).

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By contrast, there were only three records in the second half of the year; a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter bird at Campbeltown *Kintyre* on 5<sup>th</sup> Sep, a 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> winter at Bruichladdich *Islay* on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov, and a 1<sup>st</sup> winter at Loch Spelve *Mull* on 24 Dec.

**GLAUCOUS GULL** *Larus hyperboreus* Faileag mhor 0599  
*W Scarce but normally at least 5 records annually, and sometimes many more.*

There was a total of about 11 records during the year. On *Tiree* an adult winter was at Loch a 'Phuill on 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan, a 1<sup>st</sup> winter was at Loch Bhasapol and possibly the same bird was at Gott Bay on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb. All the remaining records for the early part of the year were from *Islay*: an adult at Bunnahabhainn on 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Feb, a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter on 1<sup>st</sup> Mar and a 1<sup>st</sup> winter on 13<sup>th</sup> Mar at Machir Bay, an immature at Frenchman's Rocks on 1<sup>st</sup> Apr, a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter/summer at Portnahaven on 24<sup>th</sup> Apr, and a 1<sup>st</sup> summer bird at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve from 25<sup>th</sup> Apr to 5<sup>th</sup> May and at Craigen on 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

During the latter part of the year, a 1<sup>st</sup> winter was at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 15<sup>th</sup> Oct, a 1<sup>st</sup> winter at Machir Bay *Islay* on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter at Hynish *Tiree* on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus marinus* Farspag 0600  
*B W Common and widespread. Breeding recorded in 22% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The only substantial counts during the early part of the year were 40 at Loch Crinan *Mid-Argyll* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb and max. 65 at Holy Loch *Cowal* on 9<sup>th</sup> Apr.

**Breeding.** In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 171 pairs bred at 14 colonies (size range 1-44 pairs) and fledged 154-172 young. Another 162-229 pairs were noted breeding at a further 21 colonies (size range 1 - c.50 pairs) and many of these bred successfully.

Other counts of breeding birds came from Treshnish Isles *Mull* (38 nests, *cf* 64 in 1996), Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (40 active nests), *Coll* RSPB Reserve (2 pairs) and Fionnphort *Mull*, where 15+ pairs had eggs or young on 29<sup>th</sup> May.

The highest counts during the latter part of the year came from Holy Loch (max. 50 on 7<sup>th</sup> Jun), Loch Crinan (max. 56 in Oct), and Loch Gilp *Mid-Argyll* (48 on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec).

**KITTIWAKE** *Rissa tridactyla* Ruideag 0602  
*B P Strictly marine. Main colonies are on Islay, Colonsay, Treshnish Isles (Mull) and Tiree.*

On 21<sup>st</sup> Feb, 860 birds flew south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* in 1.5 hrs. One was found dead at Claddach *Islay* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb during a beached bird survey. The only inland record for the early part of the year was an immature near the head of Loch Long *Cowal* on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb.

**Breeding.** There were 735 AON on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* (*cf* 710 in 1996). On *Colonsay*, the Uragaig sample colony totalled 96 pairs (*cf* 79 in 1996) and the sample ledge at Pigs Paradise held 16 nests (*cf* 15 in 1996). There were 15 AON on Eilean Mor *Jura* on 10<sup>th</sup> Jul. No nests were found on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* and the colony there appears to have been extinct since 1994.

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The first fledged juveniles were seen off Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 5<sup>th</sup> Aug. Of 1,190 birds flying south past Machrihanish SBO on 7 dates between 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug and 10<sup>th</sup> Oct, 792 (66%) were adults. The proportion of juveniles (34%) in the aged samples was once again (*cf* 35% in Sep 1996) considerably lower than the 64% in Sep 1994 and Sep 1995, suggesting another poor breeding season. On Oronsay *Colonsay* 440 birds were counted roosting offshore on 21<sup>st</sup> Sep.

**SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis* Stearnag mhor 0611  
*B P Very rare and irregular breeding species. Uncommon passage migrant.*

The first bird of the year was at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 8<sup>th</sup> Apr, followed by 3 at Southend *Kintyre* on the 10<sup>th</sup>. The only other spring records were one at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2 at Hynish *Tiree* on 18<sup>th</sup> May, and 2 at Campbeltown Loch *Kintyre* on 21<sup>st</sup> May.

Breeding. Up to 3 birds were present at the Machrihanish Bay tern colony in May-June but there was no evidence of breeding. Other summer records were: 4 at Port Wemyss *Islay* on 12<sup>th</sup> Jun and 2 there on 19<sup>th</sup>, one at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 19<sup>th</sup> Jun, and 7 at Kintra *Islay* on 25<sup>th</sup> Jun.

A total of 17 flew south past Machrihanish SBO on 7 dates in Jul, a further 51 on 15 dates in Aug (max. 8 on 1<sup>st</sup>), and 20 on 4 dates in Sep (max. 16 on 12<sup>th</sup> were also the last of the year). From late Jul most records were from *Cowal*, with 12 at Carry Point (Kames) on 27<sup>th</sup> Jul, 2 at Blairmore (Loch Long) on 7<sup>th</sup> Aug and one there on 19<sup>th</sup>, and 10 at Rubha Mor (Kames) on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug and 5 there on 4<sup>th</sup> Sep. The only records from elsewhere were 5 near Rhunahaorine Point *Kintyre* on 2<sup>nd</sup> Aug, and 2 at Kilnave *Islay* on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct being the last of the year.

**ROSEATE TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis* Stearnag stiuireach 0614  
*S P Rare non breeding visitor. Last accepted record 1985.*

1995 An adult in breeding plumage was at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul [EJM]\*.

1994 An adult in breeding plumage was at Machrihanish SBO on 27<sup>th</sup> Jul [EJM]\*.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo* Stearnag 0615  
*S P Locally common breeding species, considerably more numerous than Arctic Tern, at least on small islands close to the mainland. Breeding recorded in 14% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first birds of the year were 2 at Ardnave Point *Islay* on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, followed by 4 at Loch Indaal *Islay* on 4<sup>th</sup> and 2 at Balnahard *Colonsay* on 6<sup>th</sup>.

Breeding. In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 889 pairs bred at 7 sites (colony size 1 – 580 pairs). Together they fledged 695-915 young (*cf* 291-363 young from 875 pairs at 11 colonies in 1996). Mink were killed in the spring at four of these sites, where 96% of the pairs bred and 98% of the young fledged.

On *Islay*, 2 pairs bred at Loch Gruinart raising 3 young, and 8 nests were found at Loch Indaal. There were no breeding records from *Colonsay*, *Tiree* or the Treshnish Isles *Mull*. On *Coll*, 11 pairs were at the RSPB reserve. Some 10 pairs nested at Machrihanish *Kintyre*, but the colony was largely deserted by the end of

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Jun, and no young were seen.

Of a sample of 148 passage birds monitored flying past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* from 24<sup>th</sup> Jul to 10<sup>th</sup> Oct, 133 (88%) were adults (cf 96% in 1996).

**ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea* Stearnal 0616  
*S P Locally numerous breeding species. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Confusion with the last species has tended to lead to over-recording of Arctic Tern and under-recording of Common Tern at colonies.*

The first birds of the year were 8 at Bridgend Merse, Loch Indaal *Islay* on 4<sup>th</sup> May, followed by 2 on *Oronsay Colonsay* on 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Breeding.** In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, 270 pairs bred at 11 sites (colony size 1 – 60 pairs) and fledged c. 96-126 young.

On *Islay*, 2 pairs nested at Machrie Golf Course and 9 nests were found at Loch Indaal. No breeding reports were received from *Colonsay, Tiree* or the Treshnish Isles *Mull*. On *Coll*, 9 pairs nested at the RSPB reserve. Four pairs were at the Machrihanish *Kintyre* tern colony, but no young were seen.

A total of 146 adults were monitored flying south past Machrihanish SBO between 23<sup>rd</sup> Jul and 12<sup>th</sup> Sep of which 133 (91%) were adults. On *Oronsay* 25 passage birds were seen on 7<sup>th</sup> Sep, 14 were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 24<sup>th</sup> Sep, and the last birds were 5 at *Ardnave Islay* on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**LITTLE TERN** *Sterna albifrons* Stearnag bheag 0624  
*S P Scarce breeding species confined to Islay, Tiree and Coll. Scarce elsewhere on migration.*

The first bird of the year was at Balemartine *Tiree* on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr.

**Breeding.** On *Islay*, there were 10 pairs at one site, and 16 birds at a second site included at least 1 fledged young on 11<sup>th</sup> Jul. A pair at a third site were unsuccessful. On *Tiree*, 52 pairs were found in 3 colonies. On *Coll*, there were 6 pairs at one colony [RSPB].

Of 7 migrants flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 5<sup>th</sup> Aug, 3 were juveniles, and the last of the year was a single juvenile there on 29<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**BLACK TERN** *Chlidonias niger* Stearnal dhubh 0627  
*P Scarce and irregular. Only 5 records 1980 – 1995.*

1996 A juvenile was seen off Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 27<sup>th</sup> Sep [TapR]\*.

**GUILLEMOT** *Uria aalge* Eun dubh an sgadain 0634  
*B W P Highly colonial, locally abundant breeding species. Adults with small young appear on the sea far from colonies in late summer; regularly seen in sea-lochs in winter.*

Of a sample of 130 birds flying south past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 26<sup>th</sup> Mar, 81% were in full breeding plumage.

**Breeding.** 7,516 birds were counted on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* in late Jun, a similar number to last year. On Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, where the species is now restricted to Glunimore, an estimate of 2,500 birds was made in late Jun and the numbers of young present indicated excellent breeding success. Elsewhere an estimated 200+ pairs were at Uamh Ropa, South *Kintyre* and 128 birds were counted on a new

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sample cliff at Uragaig *Colonsay*.

See below for movements of auks (Guillemot/Razorbill) past sea-watching sites.

**RAZORBILL** *Alca torda* Falc 0636

*BWP Locally common breeding species, although less numerous and with smaller colonies than Guillemot. Regularly seen in sea-lochs in winter.*

Of a sample of 86 birds passing Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 81% were in full breeding plumage.

**Breeding.** 1,348 birds were counted on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* in late Jun, another large increase on the previous year's total (*cf* 850-1,000 in 1996 and 640 in 1995). An estimate was made of 3,000 birds on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* in late Jun with good numbers of young present, indicating an excellent breeding season. Elsewhere an estimated 80+ pairs were at Uamh Ropa, South *Kintyre*, and 26 birds were counted on a new sample cliff at Uragaig *Colonsay*.

See below for movements of auks (Guillemot/Razorbill) past sea-watching sites.

### AUK sp. (GUILLEMOT/RAZORBILL)

During the period Jan-Apr when southward movement past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* was monitored, the highest mean hourly rate (including birds identified to species) was 241 in Jan and the overall total was 10,327 in 58.5 hrs. As usual, mean hourly rates of movement past Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* were generally lower but 1,040 were counted in 4 hrs on 28<sup>th</sup> Sep.

**BLACK GUILLEMOT** *Cephus grylle* Gearra-breac 0638

*BW Common coastal breeding species. Breeding recorded in 38% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** In the Argyll part of the SAMS study area, at least 9 nests were confirmed at four sites and these fledged at least 6 young (including one in a purpose built nestbox). In the breeding season 149-156 adults were seen at 17 other sites including 81 at a single site near *Gigha*. The species was absent in 1997 from 5 former breeding sites, all known to have been affected by mink. Elsewhere, 155 individuals were seen on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* in late June. Although this represents a decline since the peak year of 1993 (260 birds), this has not been as serious as had been expected following the arrival of mink on the islands. Only a single bird was seen on the Treshnish Isles *Mull* (*cf* 30 pairs in 1996).

The largest post-breeding flocks were 110 on the sea off Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 14<sup>th</sup> Aug and 144 in the Sound of *Gigha* on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**LITTLE AUK** *Alle alle* Colcach bheag 0647

*W Irregular, usually seen during sea-watches or after severe gales.*

During the year, single dead birds were found on beaches at Loch Spelve *Mull* on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb, Lossit Bay *Islay* on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct and at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec.

The only live bird in the early part of the year was one which flew south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan. Later in the year one was seen drifting along the

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beach at Balemartine *Tiree* on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct, and 2 flew south-westwards off Am Barradhu *Tiree* on 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. At Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* 9 were present on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec and 2 remained the following day. More unusually, a flock of 110 reported flying past East Loch Tarbert *Kintyre* on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec was the highest count at a single location in Argyll in recent years. The last of the year was one off Java Point *Mull* on 21<sup>st</sup> Dec.

**PUFFIN** *Fratercula arctica* Buthaid 0654  
*B P Very localised breeding species with main colonies on Sanda (Kintyre) and Treshnish Isles (Mull). Occasionally recorded in winter.*

One flying south past Frenchman's Rocks *Islay* on 13<sup>th</sup> Jan was a most unusual winter record for this location.

**Breeding.** On Treshnish Isles *Mull*, there were 1,866 AON in late Jun-early Jul (*cf* 1,643 in 1996). 290 birds were counted on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* in late Jun, when 4 monitored nests contained well-grown young. Later in the season, 25 burrows showing signs of recent occupation were found on Staffa *Mull*.

During Jul-Aug: 19 passed Frenchman's Rocks in 1 hr on 6<sup>th</sup> Jul and 18 flew south there on 13<sup>th</sup> Jul; at least 10 were seen near Eilean Mor *Jura* on 10<sup>th</sup> Jul, and a similar number in the Sound of Sanda on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jul; and at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* 6 flew south on 31<sup>st</sup> Jul and singles were seen on 8<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup> Aug. The last of the year were on *Tiree* on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct when one was at Gott Bay and another, in winter plumage, was off Soa Point.

**ROCK DOVE** *Columba livia* Calman creige 0665  
*R I Resident breeder except in Cowal, most numerous in the islands. Breeding recorded in 33% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Large flocks often gather on arable fields outwith breeding season. Feral Pigeons recorded from most areas, but no information on population size.*

During the early part of the year, the only counts exceeding 50 birds were a flock of 105 at Redhouses *Islay* on 15<sup>th</sup> Jan and, at Kiloran Meadows *Colonsay*, 78 on 4<sup>th</sup> May including 6 showing signs of interbreeding with Feral Pigeon, while a flock of 100 there on 6<sup>th</sup> May were all pure-blooded.

**Breeding.** On Sanda Islands *Kintyre* only 4 pairs bred compared to 10 or so pairs in former years. For the first time, a feral bird was found breeding with the natives.

Apart from 69 on a ploughed field near *Tiree* High School on 10<sup>th</sup> Jun, all records of flocks exceeding 50 birds came from *Islay*: 135 at Craigen (the vast majority of which were wild type) on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct, 100 at Gruinart on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct, and 120 at Uiskentuie on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Records of Feral Pigeons came only from *Mid-Argyll* and *Cowal*. Up to 8 were seen regularly in one part of Dunoon *Cowal*.

**STOCK DOVE** *Columba oenas* Calman gorm 0668  
*RP? Recorded in Kintyre, Gigha, Colonsay, Cowal, Mid-Argyll and N. Argyll during 1980-95. Regular during 1991-94 in a small area centred on Kilmartin Mid-Argyll, where breeding was confirmed in 1993. All records required.*

Only two records during the year: 3 seen in the Loch Sween area *Mid-Argyll* in spring and one with Rock Doves at Cornaigmore *Tiree* on 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Sep.

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**WOODPIGEON** *Columba palumbus* Calman fiadhaich 0670  
*B W Common resident breeding species except on some islands, such as Mull, where more numerous in winter. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

A flock of 100 was recorded at Eallabus Islay on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan. One was at Balemartine Tree on 25<sup>th</sup> May and two were seen at Ballymeanach Islay on 26<sup>th</sup> May, both unusual locations for this species.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 4 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 5 of 21 in 1996).

Flocks of 20 or more were seen feeding on acorns at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll in autumn.

**COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto* Calman a chrios 0684  
*B P Sparse but widespread distribution throughout Argyll. Evidence of continued immigration involving small numbers of birds each spring. Breeding recorded in 23% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Three at Balemartine Tree on 26<sup>th</sup> Apr and one to four in the Wester Ellister area of Islay from 2<sup>nd</sup> Apr to 26<sup>th</sup> May were probably spring migrants.

**Breeding.** No significant records.

The only count exceeding 20 birds during the year was 24 at Cornaig Tree on 1<sup>st</sup> Jun.

**TURTLE DOVE** *Streptopelia turtur* Calman tuchan 0687  
*P Scarce, but several records annually. Majority recorded during May-Jun.*

There were 5 records, all in spring. Two were reported from Lower Vault Tree in May, and singles were at: Islay House Islay on 4<sup>th</sup> May, Carradale Kintyre 11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> May, Balemartine Tree on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May, and Cornaig Tree from 30<sup>th</sup> May to 2<sup>nd</sup> Jun.

**CUCKOO** *Cuculus canorus* Cuthag 0724  
*S P Common. Main host species is Meadow Pipit. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was at Mulindry Islay on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr. The only other Apr records were at Stillaig Cowal on 20<sup>th</sup> and Loch Ba Mull on 30<sup>th</sup>. Birds were widely distributed from 1<sup>st</sup> May.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 5 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 9 of 21 in 1996). There were 3 territories in CBC plots at Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll. Nine calling birds were reported from Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay on 15<sup>th</sup> Jun, and 2 or 3 were watched looking for Meadow Pipit nests near Loch Leacann (Eredine Forest) Mid-Argyll on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jun.

There were no autumn records.

**BARN OWL** *Tyto alba* Comhachag 0735  
*B W Scarce breeding species, but probably under-recorded. Breeding recorded in 11% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.*

**Breeding.** In Cowal (where breeding is believed to be under-recorded) 5 pairs

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nested in boxes and fledged 18 young and 8 pairs nested in crags where the outcome could not be checked [DA]. In the *Kintyre* and *Knapdale Mid-Argyll* areas, 14 pairs occupied nesting barrels, and 9 of these fledged 27 young. These figures were lower than for some previous years, which was surprising in view of the high level of vole numbers [Forest Enterprise]. Although the whole of *Islay* was not searched, 16 nesting pairs were found at the 27 sites visited and two sites had single adults present. They were all successful and reared at least 49 young, the highest total since the study began in 1987. Mean clutch size (3.6) and mean brood size at fledging (3.1) were both above average, and the highest since 1990 [MAO]. Breeding was also confirmed at one site on *Mull*.

Outside the breeding season, birds were reported from additional sites in *Mid-Argyll* (1) and *Mull* (11).

**SCOPS OWL** *Otus scops* 0735  
V No previous records for *Argyll*. Very rare in Scotland, most records being from the Northern Isles.

On 6<sup>th</sup> Apr one was found dead on the doorstep of a house in *Scarinish Tìree*, having apparently been killed by a cat [Elizabeth Robertson, Mark Williamson]\*. The corpse was sent to the Royal Museum of Scotland and, although no longer fresh, was successfully mounted by staff and is now in their collection.

**TAWNY OWL** *Strix aluco* Comhachag dhonn 0761  
R Widespread and common, but absent from *Tìree* and *Coll*. Breeding recorded in 43% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

**Breeding.** In the *Glen Branter* study area *Cowal*, 53 pairs laid a minimum of 150 eggs. A total of 95 young were ringed and presumably fledged. Of a further 11 pairs known to have bred in the study area, 6 failed at the egg stage and 5 fledged an unknown number of young. Vole numbers were very high and, for the first time in this study, 2 females each incubated clutches of 5 eggs [D. Anderson]. Two young fledged from a nest box at *Tìroran Mull*.

Other records during the year came from 6 sites on *Islay*, 2 sites in *Cowal*, 2 sites in *Mid-Argyll*, 4 sites on *Mull* and 1 site in *Kintyre*.

**LONG-EARED OWL** *Asio otus* Comhachag adharcaiche 0767  
R P W Very scarce, but almost certainly under-recorded. All records required.

**Breeding.** One pair reared 2 chicks in an old Sparrowhawk nest near *Otter Ferry Cowal*; a successful nest (number of chicks unknown) was found on *Black Mount Estate North Argyll*, and a pair reared at least two young on *Colonsay*.

No other records were received of this elusive species.

**SHORT-EARED OWL** *Asio flammeus* Comhachag chluassach 0768  
B W P Widespread breeder. Numbers fluctuate and distribution varies with abundance of small rodents, especially field voles *Microtus agrestis*. Breeding recorded in 30% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Widespread emigration in autumn.

Records of singles during Jan-Mar came, on *Mull*, from *Glen More* on 28<sup>th</sup> Jan, *Grasspoint* on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan, *Pennygael* on 20<sup>th</sup> Mar and *Ardachoil* (*Loch Spelve*) on 29<sup>th</sup> Mar. Elsewhere there were singles at *Loch Etive North Argyll* on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb and

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Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb.

Breeding. A pair seen with 2 juveniles at Loch Tarbert *Jura* on 27<sup>th</sup> Jun had presumably bred locally. There were no other reports of successful breeding but displaying pairs were seen at Glen Aros and Glen More *Mull* and in *Mid-Argyll*. On *Islay*, this was yet another poor year, with only 1-2 pairs in the Rinns forestry and a pair near Port Ellen. A pair was present in suitable breeding habitat on *Coll* but unfortunately one of the birds was hit by a car and taken to the SSPCA with a broken wing. Other breeding season records came from *Mull* (7 locations).

A maximum of 12 birds were seen at Campbeltown Airport *Kintyre* on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug. The only other record during Aug-Dec was one at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct.

**SWIFT** *Apus apus* Gobhlan mor 0795  
*SP Localised breeding species, mainland only; natural nest sites have been used in Kintyre. Breeding recorded in 4% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Regular passage migrant in all areas.*

The first report came from Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 15<sup>th</sup> May, followed by one flying west at the Mull of *Kintyre* on 18<sup>th</sup>, Dunoon *Cowal* on 22<sup>nd</sup> and Minard *Mid-Argyll* on 25<sup>th</sup>. There were no other May records.

Breeding. Pairs were present in Campbeltown *Kintyre* and in *Cowal*, at Blairmore and Dunoon, but there were no instances of confirmed breeding.

There was the usual peak of sightings in the second half of Jun and the first half of Jul, when birds were reported from *Islay*, *Kintyre*, *Mid-Argyll*, *Mull* and *Tiree*. The only double-figure counts were 35 at Port Wemyss *Islay* on 8<sup>th</sup> Jul, and 11 at Knockangle Point *Islay* on 11<sup>th</sup> Jul. Birds were seen in Aug, with singles at Oban *Mid-Argyll* on 5<sup>th</sup> and Tralee *North Argyll* on 7<sup>th</sup>, and six on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 26<sup>th</sup>. The last birds were on 4<sup>th</sup> Sep when singles were at Bridgend *Islay* and at Rubha a 'Mhail on the north tip of *Islay*.

**KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis* Biorra cruidein 0831  
*WP Most records are in autumn and winter, and may represent dispersing juveniles.*

Single birds were seen in the Dubh Loch area of Glen Shira on 24<sup>th</sup> Jan and on several occasions between 25<sup>th</sup> Aug and early Oct. Singles were also recorded at Holy Loch *Cowal* on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan, at Bridgend *Islay* on 4<sup>th</sup> Sep, below the railway bridge on the River Awe *Mid-Argyll* on 11<sup>th</sup> Sep, on the River Add near Dunadd, *Mid-Argyll* on 11<sup>th</sup> Oct (first record from Moine Mhor NNR since 1991), and at Redhouses *Islay* on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**GREEN WOODPECKER** *Picus viridis* Snagardach 0856  
*? Status uncertain, but recorded regularly in Cowal during 1992-94 and 1996. All records required.*

One was seen on several occasions early in the year at Innellan, *Cowal*. The only other records of the year came, unusually, from *North Argyll*, where 'yaffling' was heard by two independent observers at Barcaldine Woods on several occasions in Apr, and a territorial pair was seen 7 km away at Blarreen, near Bonawe, on 4<sup>th</sup> May.

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**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopos major* Snagan daraich 0876

*R* Widespread on the mainland and Mull. Breeding recorded in 31% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 1 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 21 in 1996). There was only 1 territory in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (*cf* 3 in 1996), but this held a successful nest with young fledged in early Jun. A nest with young was found in alder carr at Moine Mhor NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 2<sup>nd</sup> Jun. Three pairs were found in the Duntrune Castle *Mid-Argyll* area. In early Aug, 2 juveniles were seen at Fernoch, Lochgilphead *Mid-Argyll* and an adult with 2 juveniles at Tighnabruaich *Cowal*.

Other records during the year came from *Mid-Argyll* at Ardcastle Wood, Minard Wood, Crinan Forest, Dunchlogan, Crarae Gardens and Slockavullin; also from Dunoon and Sheffield in *Cowal* and Glen Byre *Mull*.

**SKYLARK** *Alauda arvensis* Uiseag 0976  
*B W P* Widespread and common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 79% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration of many birds in winter, with remaining birds mainly in coastal and low-lying localities.

The only counts exceeding 50 birds during the early part of the year were 85 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 8<sup>th</sup> Jan, and 55 during a whole island survey of Oronsay *Colonsay* on 30<sup>th</sup> Apr.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 12 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 11 of 21 in 1996). At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve 517 territories were identified in June and 5 territories in the coastal CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* was a record number. Elsewhere, 10 pairs were seen at 5 localities on *Iona Mull* in Jun, and 3 pairs on *Sanda Islands Kintyre* was well down on the usual 10 or so pairs.

In the latter part of the year the only localities with counts of 50 or more birds were Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (max. 205 on barley stubble on 5<sup>th</sup> Oct), *Rockside Islay* (150 on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct), and *Balemartine Tiree* (69 on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec).

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia* Gobhlan gainmhiche 0981  
*S P* Uncommon and localised breeding species. Breeding recorded in 24% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All breeding records required.

The first birds of the year were 6 at the mouth of the River Osde *Cowal* on 6<sup>th</sup> Apr, followed by 2 birds at *Crannich Mull* and a single at Loch Leathan *Mid-Argyll* on the 8<sup>th</sup>. By 17<sup>th</sup> Apr birds had also been reported from *Islay, Kintyre* and *North Argyll* but the only report from *Colonsay* was 2 on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, and there were none at all from *Coll* or *Tiree*.

**Breeding.** Numbers showed an increase at the two large colonies from which counts of occupied nest hole were received *viz.* 100 at Kilmichael Glen woodyard *Mid-Argyll* (a record count, *cf* 52 in 1996 and 58 in 1995) and 245 at North Connell sandpit (in two groups, of 177 and 68, *cf* 173 in 1996). Birds also bred at *Blairmore* (Loch Long) *Cowal* (no count), at Laggan Bridge *Islay* (20+ birds, no count of nests), at *Kilchiaran Islay* (8 occupied holes), on the River Add near *Dunadd Mid-Argyll* (no count), *Glen Aros Mull* (2 or more occupied holes near *Crannich*), and at *Mishnish Lochs Mull* (only one occupied hole).

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The only report of birds later in the year was one at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sep.

**SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica* Gobhlan gaoithe 0992  
*S P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 76% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was at Powder Dam (near Tighnabruaich) *Cowal* on 1<sup>st</sup> Apr followed, on 7<sup>th</sup> Apr, by singles on *Iona Mull* and at Port Wemyss *Islay* and 4 at *Coultorsay Islay*. The main arrival occurred during the following 10 days when birds were widely reported. Movements were still taking place later, with 300 apparently flying SE in the Portnahaven area of *Islay* on 19<sup>th</sup> May.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 9 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 3 of 21 in 1996 and 4 of 17 in 1995), perhaps indicating a better breeding season. No counts involving more than a handful of breeding pairs were received.

On *Islay* singles were at Ardtalla, Kildalton and Port Charlotte on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct, and the last two were at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

**HOUSE MARTIN** *Delichon urbica* Gobhlan taighe 1001  
*S P Common breeding species on mainland; less numerous on the islands and no recent breeding records from Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was a passage migrant at Balemartine *Tiree* on 1<sup>st</sup> May. The main arrival in the mainland was from 8<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> May. Four birds seen at *Mannal Tiree* on 31<sup>st</sup> May were late spring passage migrants or wandering birds.

**Breeding.** No significant breeding records were received.

The last birds of the year reported were 3 at Tullochgorm, *Minard Mid-Argyll* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep.

**TREE PIPIT** *Anthus trivialis* Riabhag 1009  
*S P Common breeding species on the mainland. Also widespread on Jura and Mull, but very scarce on Islay. Breeding recorded in 54% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

One at *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll* on 10<sup>th</sup> Apr was the first and was unusually early for this location. The main arrival must also have been early as birds were reported as widely distributed in the Kilmelford-Inveraray area of *Mid-Argyll* by 15<sup>th</sup> Apr. There were no spring records from the islands, apart from *Mull*.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 5 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 6 of 21 in 1996). At *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll*, there were a record 15 territories in the woodland CBC plot (*cf* 10 in 1996 and 9 in 1995).

As is often the case with this species, departure seemingly went unnoticed.

**MEADOW PIPIT** *Anthus pratensis* Snathag 1011  
*B W P Abundant breeding species. Breeding recorded in 94% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration of many birds in winter, with remaining birds mainly in coastal and low-lying localities.*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 14 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 19 of 21 in 1996). At *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll*, there were 5 territories in the coastal CBC plot

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(*cf* 5 in 1996) but on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* only 25 pairs were found rather than the usual 40 or so.

Birds moving south later in the year were seen at Tralee Beach *North Argyll* (50 on 8<sup>th</sup> Aug) and Ardmish Bay *Gigha* (27 on 30<sup>th</sup> Sep).

**ROCK PIPIT** *Anthus petrosus* Gabhagan 1014/2  
*R P W* Common resident breeding species. Breeding recorded in 67% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Scarce passage and winter visitor elsewhere.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* none in 1996). The number of pairs on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* was slightly down, with 26 found compared to the usual 30.

**YELLOW WAGTAIL** *Motacilla flava* Breacan buidhe 1017  
*P* Scarce and less than annual; recorded in 10 of the 16 years 1980-95. Birds of the Blue-headed race *M. f. flava* occur from time to time, and there has been at least one record of the Grey-headed race *M. f. thunbergi* (in 1985).

A good year for this species, with single juvenile/females recorded at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug, at Machrie Golf Course *Islay* on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct, and at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**GREY WAGTAIL** *Motacilla cinerea* Breacan bain tighearna 1019  
*B W P* Widespread breeding species. Breeding recorded in 61% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some emigration in winter.

**Breeding.** The only confirmed breeding records were from Carsaig Mull (adults carrying food on 28<sup>th</sup> May), River Sorn in Bridgend Woods *Islay* (adult carrying food and 2 juvs seen 3<sup>rd</sup> Jun), and Laggan Bridge *Islay*.

Presumed passage migrants were at Turraman Loch *Colonsay* on 24<sup>th</sup> Sep and Oronsay *Colonsay* on 25<sup>th</sup> Sep.

**PIED WAGTAIL** *Motacilla alba yarrellii* Breach an t-sil 1020  
*B W P* Widespread and common breeder. Breeding recorded in 87% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Emigration from most areas in winter. Returning birds generally arrive late Feb to early Mar; departure Aug-Oct.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 6 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 7 of 21 in 1996). Four pairs were found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* (where there are usually only 2 or 3) and 2 pairs at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*.

The only flock of more than 20 birds reported was 28 at Tralee beach *North Argyll* on 8<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**WHITE WAGTAIL** *M. a. alba*  
*P* Usually recorded in spring. Extent of autumn passage obscured by identification difficulties.

The first bird of the year was on 16<sup>th</sup> Apr at Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* where number built up to 5 by the end of Apr. The majority of the remaining records came from *Islay* where there were 6 in the Gartbreck area and 17 at Carnain, both on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr, one at Bolsay on 29<sup>th</sup> Apr, 7 at Ardnave Point on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 10 at Bridgend Merse on 4<sup>th</sup> May and 2 at Claddach on 8<sup>th</sup> May. The highest numbers came from *Colonsay* during

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a 4-day period in May; on 3<sup>rd</sup> there was one at Port Lobh and 18 at Ardskenish; on 4<sup>th</sup> three were at Kiloran Meadow; on 5<sup>th</sup> 26 were on Oronsay; and 2 remained at Kiloran Bay on 6<sup>th</sup>.

In autumn, small numbers were regular at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* with one or two present 10<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> Aug, an adult male on 1<sup>st</sup> Sep, and juveniles on 6 dates to 28<sup>th</sup> Sep. The only other autumn record was 2 at Port Charlotte *Islay* on 17<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**WAXWING** *Bombycilla garrulus* Canarach dearg 1048  
*W Irruptive visitor in varying numbers; not seen every winter.*

Only two single birds were reported, possibly a remnant of the Nov 1996 influx. One was at Younger Botanic Garden *Cowal* on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan, and the other was at Connel *North Argyll* on 27<sup>th</sup> Jan.

**DIPPER** *Cinclus cinclus* Gobha uisge 1050  
*B W Widespread, though scarce on Islay and Colonsay; absent from Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 34% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 1 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 1 of 21 in 1996). The only confirmed breeding records came from the Knockdow *Cowal* and the River Sorn *Islay*.

Birds were also reported during the year from *Cowal* (one location in addition to the above), *Islay* (one location), *Mid-Argyll* (4), *Mull* (5) and *North Argyll* (1).

**WREN** *Troglodytes troglodytes* Dreathann donn 1066  
*B W Very common, although numbers fluctuate. Breeding recorded in 84% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** An almost complete recovery took place at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* after last year's sharp decline, with a total of 40 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 28 in 1996, 44 in 1995). Recorded in 9 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 12 of 21 in 1996). At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* 49 territories were identified in Jun, and 11 pairs were found on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre*.

**DUNNOCK** *Prunella modularis* Gealbhonn nam preas 1084  
*B W P Widespread and common, except some islands. Breeding recorded in 55% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 6 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 3 of 21 in 1996). At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* 6 territories were found in Jun. Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* had one territory in the coastal CBC plot, and there was a pair on Sanda Islands *Kintyre* where the species is only an occasional breeder.

This species is scarce on *Tiree*, so records of birds at Bailemartine (one on 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct, 2 from 26<sup>th</sup> Oct to 11<sup>th</sup> Nov, and one on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec) and Crossapol (one on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct) are noteworthy.

**ROBIN** *Erithacus rubecula* Bru dhearg 1099  
*B P Common. Breeding recorded in 79% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Heavy autumn passage in some years.*

**Breeding.** At Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, the species had more than recovered

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from the decline after the cold winter of 1995-96, with a total of 22 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 10 in 1996, 17 in 1995). BBS data also indicated a slight increase, with records from 10 of 16 squares (*cf* 11 of 21 in 1996). A survey at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* in Jun identified 7 territories, but there were no birds on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre* where one or two pairs are normally found.

**NIGHTINGALE** *Luscinia megarhynchos* 1104  
*V Only one definite record for Argyll, on Islay in 1973.*

1989 A record of one singing in woods near West Loch Tarbert on 25<sup>th</sup> May, not previously circulated, has now been accepted and constitutes only the 2<sup>nd</sup> confirmed record for Argyll [EJM, RAGA]\*.

**BLACK REDSTART** *Phoenicurus ochuros* Ceann dubhan 1121  
*P Less than annual. All but 2 of 21 records in Argyll during 1980-96 were in spring (late Mar to May) or late autumn (Oct to mid-Nov).*

There was just one record, of a female or first-year male at Portnahaven *Islay* on 21<sup>st</sup> May.

**REDSTART** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Ceann dearg 1122  
*SP Common breeding species in relatively open woodland, except Islay where scarce; absent from Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 37% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr, an early date for this location. Other Apr records came from Foreland House *Islay* (female on 20<sup>th</sup>), Succoth *Mid-Argyll* (on 27<sup>th</sup>) and Strathmore *Mid-Argyll* (on 29<sup>th</sup>).

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* one of 21 in 1996). From 6 clutches in nest boxes near Bonawe *N. Argyll*, only 4-10 young fledged from 2-3 of the boxes (0.7-1.7 fledged/pr laying); heavy predation by Pine Marten claimed one full clutch, two or three full broods and parts of two other broods. In *Mid-Argyll*, there were 8 territories in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR (*cf* 5 in 1996) and breeding was also reported from Minard Woods.

The only autumn migrant reported was an immature female on *Colonsay* on 6<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**WHINCHAT** *Saxicola rubetra* Gocan 1137  
*SP Widespread and common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 74% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first was at Port Charlotte *Islay* on 16<sup>th</sup> Apr. Other than 6 in the Portnahaven area *Islay* on 30th Apr, no further birds were recorded until May.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 8 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 8 of 21 in 1996). There were 27 territories at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (a considerable increase over 11 pairs found in 1996) and at least 13 young fledged. On *Colonsay*, 9 pairs were located, 4 more than in 1996, and at least 10 males were heard singing along the Dervaig-Achnadrish Road *Mull*. There were reports of pairs or singing males from *Islay* (one site other than the above), *Kintyre* (2 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (4 sites), *Mull* (2 sites) and *North Argyll* (one site).

On Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, where no birds were found breeding, 10 were ringed

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in July. The last was one at Balemartine Tiree from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> Sep.

**STONECHAT** *Saxicola torquata* Clacharan 1139  
*R P W* Widespread, but resident population can decline dramatically as a consequence of severe winter conditions. Breeding recorded in 70% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some emigration may take place in winter.

**Breeding.** The first report of a fledged juvenile was from Port Wemyss Islay on 7<sup>th</sup> May. Following last year's declines (after the hard winter 1995-96) there were mixed indications this year. The species was recorded in only 2 of 16 BBS squares surveyed this year (cf only 4 of 21 in 1996, compared to 7 of 17 in 1995). However, numbers on Colonsay had more than recovered to an impressive 27 pairs (cf only 8 in 1996 and 22 in 1995), while territories at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay had increased to 5 (cf only 3 pairs in 1996 and at least 10 in 1995). Three pairs were located on Sanda Islands Kintyre, and, in addition to the above, there were reports of pairs in the breeding season from Cowal (2 sites), Islay (one site), Mid-Argyll (2 sites), Mull (3 sites), North Argyll (one site) and from Tiree (one site).

**WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe* Bru gheal 1146  
*S P* Common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 83% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The main arrival was early this year. After the first, a male near Keills Mid-Argyll on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar, birds were reported from Oronsay Colonsay on 11<sup>th</sup>, Machir Bay Islay on 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>, Ardnave Loch Islay on 14<sup>th</sup>, Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay on 15<sup>th</sup>, near Connel North Argyll on 16<sup>th</sup>, and Loch na Keal Mull on 20<sup>th</sup> Mar.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 7 of 16 BBS squares (cf 8 of 21 in 1996). At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay 33 territories were identified, 15 pairs were found on Sanda Islands Kintyre, and at least six pairs were seen between the beach and the pier at Calgary Mull.

Birds were still reported frequently from the islands in Oct, with the last singles on Colonsay on 4<sup>th</sup>, at Balemartine Tiree on 19<sup>th</sup>, and at Machir Bay Islay on 26<sup>th</sup>.

**GREENLAND WHEATEAR** *O. o. leucorhoa*  
*P* Apparently rare, but probably greatly under-recorded.

In spring, 5 were on Oronsay Colonsay on 5<sup>th</sup> May and a single male was at Claddach Islay on 8<sup>th</sup> May.

In autumn, a 1<sup>st</sup> winter male was at Gialum Bay Gigha on 29<sup>th</sup> Sep and singles were on Oronsay on 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus* Dubh chreige 1186  
*S P* Very localised upland breeding species. Breeding recorded in 7% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). More widespread, though scarce, on migration. All records required.

The only two records were of spring passage migrants. A male was on Kerrera Mid-Argyll on 4<sup>th</sup> Apr and a female was at Octofad Islay on 15<sup>th</sup> Apr.

**Breeding.** No breeding records were received and the species was not recorded in any of the 14 BBS squares (cf 2 of 21 in 1996).

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**BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula* Lon dubh 1187  
*B W P Widespread and very common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 77% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 5 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 5 of 21 in 1996). A total of 5 territories were recorded in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (*cf* 3 in 1996). 20 territories were found at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* and a single pair was found on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre*.

An influx took place in late Oct-early Nov with reports of 20-50 birds with flocks of Fieldfares and Redwings from *Islay, Mid-Argyll, Mull* and *Tiree*, from 25<sup>th</sup> Oct to 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris* Liath thruisg 1198  
*W P Abundant on autumn passage, but relatively few winter.*

Few birds were reported in the early part of the year; the only flock of any size was 70 at Ballochroy *Kintyre* on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. The last birds of spring were 11 at various locations on *Islay* on 21<sup>st</sup> Apr.

The first birds of autumn were 20+ at Gribun *Mull* on 14<sup>th</sup> Oct. These were soon followed by the main arrival and passage between 19<sup>th</sup> Oct and 5<sup>th</sup> Nov. This was characterised by a continuous series of moderate sized flocks of 10 – 200 birds, the largest being 400 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. These were mostly mixed thrush flocks which, as well as Redwings, often included Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, and Mistle Thrushes. Most records came from *Islay* but birds were also reported from *Colonsay* and *Mid-Argyll*. After mid-Nov the only records were 4 at Slockavullin *Mid-Argyll* on 30<sup>th</sup> Nov, 120 at Loch Gruinart also on 30<sup>th</sup>, and 70 at Coullabus *Islay* on 10<sup>th</sup> Dec.

**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos* Smeorach 1200  
*B W P Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 72% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 10 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 10 of 21 in 1996). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* there were 11 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* only 5 in 1996). 38 territories were identified at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, and 2 pairs were found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*.

Small numbers (up to 30 per flock) were involved with the influx of thrushes in late Oct-early Nov.

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus* Sgiath dhearg 1201  
*W P Abundant on autumn passage, but relatively few winter. Occasional individuals recorded in late spring. Bred on Mull in 1991.*

Up to 30 were seen during Jan-Mar at various locations in *Islay, Kintyre, Mid-Argyll* and *Tiree*, the only counts higher than this being 45 at Bridgend Woods *Islay* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb and 40 at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 27<sup>th</sup> Mar. There was a large arrival of passage birds in early April when flocks of up to 50 were seen on *Colonsay, Islay, Jura*, in *Mid-Argyll* and on *Mull*. Larger numbers were seen at Keills *Islay* (250 on 1<sup>st</sup>), Portnahaven area *Islay* (58 on 2<sup>nd</sup>), Ford *Mid-Argyll* (80 on 2<sup>nd</sup>) and at Tenga *Mull* (68 on 9<sup>th</sup>). Even larger numbers were on *Tiree* from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, with 300+ between Balemartine and Cornaig and an estimated total population for the island of 1000-

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1500. A leucistic bird was seen in a large flock on *Coll* on 13<sup>th</sup> while the last bird of spring was a single at *The Schoolhouse Colonsay* on 24<sup>th</sup> Apr.

The first birds of the autumn were 25 in *Glen Shira Mid-Argyll* on 29<sup>th</sup> Sep but after that none was reported until a single at *Loch Gorm Islay* on 11<sup>th</sup> Oct. This species formed a major component of the thrush influx in late Oct-early Nov with flocks of between 10 and 100 being widely reported at this time. Flocks of more than 100 were at *Balemartine* (150+ on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct), *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay* (max. 300 on 26<sup>th</sup> Oct) and the *Killinallan area Islay* (200 on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct). After this there were only a few reports of small numbers of birds, apart from a flock of 100 near *Ford Mid-Argyll* in Dec.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus* Smeorach mhor 1202  
*B W P Widespread but thinly distributed breeding species. Breeding recorded in 43% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Many birds emigrate in autumn.*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 3 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* one of 21 in 1996). There were 2 territories in the woodland CBC plot at *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll* and one pair at *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay* (*cf* at least 3 pairs in 1996). Elsewhere records of confirmed breeding came from *Colonsay* (one site), *Islay* (one site) and *Mid-Argyll* (2 sites).

At *Kilninver Mid-Argyll* 33 were flying south on 20<sup>th</sup> Aug and small numbers (up to 10 per flock) accompanied the thrush influx in late Oct-early Nov.

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia* Ceileiriche leumnach 1236  
*S P Localised breeding species in all areas, good densities occurring in many young conifer plantations. Breeding recorded in 26% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Once again the first bird of the spring was at *Fernoch (nr. Lochgilphead) Mid-Argyll* on 16<sup>th</sup> Apr. Other Apr records came from: *Octofad Islay* (2 on 24<sup>th</sup>), *Ballimony Islay* (one on 24<sup>th</sup>), *Glen Kin Cowal* (one on 27<sup>th</sup>) and near *Portnahaven Islay* (2 on 30<sup>th</sup>). The main arrival took place during the first week of May with reports from many localities.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded from 4 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* one of 21 in 1996). At *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay* 28 territories were identified, and 4 were heard reeling along the road to the east of *Portavadie Cowal* on 18<sup>th</sup> May. Other reports of singing males after mid-May came from *Islay* (3 sites), *Colonsay* (3), *Cowal* (1), *Kintyre* (1), *Mid-Argyll* (2), *Mull* (2), *N. Argyll* (1) and *Tiree* (1).

There were no records after mid-Jul.

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* Glas eun 1243  
*S P Locally common. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first birds were on *Islay*, where 5 birds were singing in the *Portnahaven area* on 1<sup>st</sup> May. These were followed by singles at *Machrins Colonsay* and at *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll* on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. The main arrival took place during the following week, e.g. 15 singing males at *Portnahaven* on 11<sup>th</sup> May.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 3 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 21 in 1996). At *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay*, 60 territories were identified, another

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large increase (*cf* 33 singing males in 1996 and 17 in 1995). A slow decline continued on *Colonsay*, where 29 singing males were found (*cf* 31 in 1996 and 34 in 1995). Numbers at Tainish NNR however set a new record with 12 territories found in coastal scrub (*cf* 5 in 1996 and 11 in 1995). Two pairs were found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, 4 males were singing in Barr Glen *Kintyre* on 17<sup>th</sup> May, and birds were singing at 4 locations on Iona *Mull* in Jun. In addition, singing males were reported in the breeding season from *Islay* (2 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (one site) and *Mull* (5 sites).

No birds were reported after late Jul, when 15 fully grown birds were ringed on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre*.

**REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* 1251  
*P Rare, with only 2 records in Argyll during 1980-96, the last being at Loch Gorm (Islay) on 26<sup>th</sup> Jun 1981.*

One was seen and heard singing in the garden of Colonsay Hotel *Colonsay* on 3<sup>rd</sup> May [D. C. Jardine]\*.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca* Gealan coille beag 1274  
*S P Rare, with only 7 records in Argyll during 1980-96: 2 in May, 2 in Jun, 2 in Aug and 1 in Sep-Oct.*

1996 An adult was at Balemartine *Tiree* on 12<sup>th</sup> Nov [MW]\*. This constitutes the second (or third) record for 1996 (see *ABR 13*).

**WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis* Gealan coille 1275  
*S P Widespread but thinly distributed breeding species. Marked improvement in numbers during the 1980s, with good breeding densities in many young conifer plantations. Breeding recorded in 59% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was at Loch Gearach *Islay* on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr. There were no other records until 1<sup>st</sup> May, when one was at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, with the main arrival taking place from 10<sup>th</sup> May.

**Breeding.** The counts received from Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (7 territories in CBC plots [*cf* 8 in 1996]) and the BBS (3 of 16 squares [*cf* 3 of 21 in 1996]) showed little change from last year. Elsewhere, however, there were indications of a better-than-average year. On *Colonsay*, 17 singing males were located (*cf* 13 in 1996 and a low count of 6 in 1995) and at least 3 pairs were found on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*. A total of 9 territories were found at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, and 5 singing birds were located in Barr Glen *Kintyre* on 17<sup>th</sup> May. In addition to these, singing males were reported from no less than 26 localities on *Mull* and at 3 sites in *Mid-Argyll*, one on *Islay*, and 15 singing males at 5 sites in *Kintyre*.

The last 2 birds reported were at Imeraval *Islay* on 5<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**GARDEN WARBLER** *Sylvia borin* Ceileiriche garaidh 1276  
*S P Scarce breeding species. Breeding recorded in 14% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

One at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 2<sup>nd</sup> May was the earliest ever recorded there. The only other early May record was one in a garden at Dunoon *Cowal* on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 14 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 21 in

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1996). In *Mid-Argyll*, there were 4 territories at Taynish NNR (*cf* 2 in 1996) and singing birds were reported in the breeding season from Connel, Bellanoch and Minard. The only other breeding season record was one at Ormidale *Cowal* on 19<sup>th</sup> May.

In autumn there were two very late passage migrants; one at *Balemartine Tiree* from 16<sup>th</sup> Oct to 1<sup>st</sup> Nov, and one at *Ballygrant Woods Islay* on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla* Ceann dubh 1277  
*S W P Scarce breeding species. Breeding recorded in 23% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Increasingly numerous in winter.*

The only bird reported during the early winter period was one at *Islay House Islay* on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan. In spring, the first sightings were on 14<sup>th</sup> Apr, when birds were at *Castle Toward Cowal*, near *Heylipol Tiree* and at *Minard Mid-Argyll*.

**Breeding.** Birds were recorded in one of 16 BBS squares (*cf* none of 21 in 1996). There were 'several' territories at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* including 2 in the CBC plots. Elsewhere in May-Jun, there were 5 singing males at 3 sites on *Islay*, 3 at 2 sites in *Kintyre*, 6 at 4 sites in *Mid-Argyll* and single singing males at *Colonsay House Colonsay*, *Blair's Ferry Cowal*, and *Jura House Jura*.

Single birds were seen in autumn on *Oronsay Colonsay* on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Sep, at *Glen Shira Mid-Argyll* from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Oct, at *Balemartine Tiree* on 16<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Oct, and at *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay* on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. In late autumn, at *Balemartine*, 2 females were present from 1<sup>st</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2 males from 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Nov, followed by a single male on 29<sup>th</sup> Nov and finally a female on 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. The only other record for this period was one in a garden at *Soroba, Oban Mid-Argyll* on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* Ceileiriche cille 1308  
*S P Common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 49% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

One at *Taynish Mid-Argyll* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Apr was the earliest ever record for this location. The next was at *Auchnacraig Mull* on 1<sup>st</sup> May with records from most areas in the next few days.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 21 in 1996). In *Mid-Argyll* there were 10 territories in the woodland CBC plot at *Taynish NNR* (as in 1995). Other breeding season records came from *Islay* (7 locations), *Mid-Argyll* (7 locations including *Taynish*), *Mull* (4 locations) and from single locations in *Cowal*, *Jura*, *Kintyre* and *North Argyll*.

The last bird reported was at *Brainport Bay, Minard Mid-Argyll* on 2<sup>nd</sup> Aug.

**CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita* Cailean 1311  
*S P Uncommon breeding species, scarce on islands. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Winter records not infrequent.*

Arrival was early this year; the first to appear were on *Islay* on 13<sup>th</sup> Mar, when one was at *Wester Ellister* and 2 were at *Ardnave Loch*. These were soon followed by birds at *Balemartine Tiree* on 16<sup>th</sup>, at *Kildalton Islay* (2) on 20<sup>th</sup>, and at *Kiloran Wood Colonsay* on 23<sup>rd</sup>. The species was widely reported from *Mull* and the mainland from 29<sup>th</sup> Mar.

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**Breeding.** The species was not recorded during the BBS (*cf* 4 of 21 squares in 1996). Breeding season records were received from *Cowal* (3 locations), *Islay* (5 locations), *Kintyre* (one location), *Mid-Argyll* (2 locations), *Mull* (one location) and *North Argyll* (one location). As last year, a male was recorded on *Iona Mull* in Jun and Jul, outside the known breeding range in recent years (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). The only bird recorded on *Colonsay*, where they are normally present, was on 30<sup>th</sup> Sep.

In late autumn, singles were at *Dunoon Cowal* on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct, at *Keills and Lily Loch Islay* on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct, at *Tiree High School Tiree* on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct, at *Mannal Tiree* on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov, and at *Balemartine Tiree* on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. The last was at *Tiree High School* on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec.

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus* Crionag ghiuthais 1312  
*SP Widespread and very common breeding species. Breeding recorded in 81% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

This species was also early in arriving this year, the first bird being seen at *Bunessan Mull* on 30<sup>th</sup> Mar. The next report was not until 8<sup>th</sup> Apr when one was at *Connel Mid-Argyll*. The following day saw the first arrivals on *Islay* (3 in the *Portnahaven* area) and *Mid-Argyll*, where singles were seen at *Duntrune Castle* and at *Taynish NNR*. This is the earliest date ever recorded for the latter site. The main arrival took place in the following week, with two observers commenting on an influx at this time.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 11 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 13 of 21 in 1996). There was another record total of 99 territories in the CBC plots at *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll* (*cf* 82 in 1996 and 65 in 1995). At *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay* 74 territories were identified, and 8 pairs were located on *Sanda Islands Kintyre*.

The only records after early Aug were from *Tiree* where a late bird was at *Balemartine* on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct and 2 on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus* Crionag bhuidhe 1314  
*RWP Common breeding species and passage migrant. Breeding recorded in 53% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

A single bird seen at *Balemartine Tiree* on 11<sup>th</sup> Mar was probably a spring migrant.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 5 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 5 of 21 in 1996), and

a single pair was found at *Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve Islay*. Family parties of 15 or more birds were seen on *Islay* at *Laggan Bridge* on 1<sup>st</sup> Jun and in *Ballygrant Woods* on 5<sup>th</sup> Jun.

**SPOTTED FLYCATCHER** *Muscicapa striata* Breacan glas sgiobalta 1335  
*SP Widespread but thinly distributed breeding species. Breeding recorded in 53% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The first bird of the year was at *Inveraray Golf Course Mid-Argyll* on 10<sup>th</sup> May.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 16 BBS squares surveyed (*cf* none of 21 in 1996, and 1 of 17 in 1995). At *Taynish NNR Mid-Argyll*, there were 3 territories in the CBC woodland plot (*cf* 2 in 1996), and 4 territories were identified at

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Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*. Records of successful breeding came from Tighnahoran *Mid-Argyll* and Minard *Mid-Argyll*.

The last birds recorded were juveniles at Glen Shira *Mid-Argyll* and at Inveraray, both on 25<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**PIED FLYCATCHER** *Ficedula hypoleuca* Breacan glas 1349  
*S P* Very localised breeder in oak woods. Increase in breeding population in recent years is attributable to the Argyll Bird Club nest-box scheme. Breeding recorded in 6% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).

The first bird of the year was a male near Minard Castle *Mid-Argyll* on 12<sup>th</sup> Apr. A pair were seen in the same place on 19<sup>th</sup> Apr, with 3 there (2 males and one female) on 18<sup>th</sup> May.

**Breeding.** Of 8 clutches in nestboxes at Bonawe *North Argyll*, one clutch was subsequently deserted, and 3 broods were wholly and 2 broods partly predated by pine marten; 20-24 young fledged from 4 of the boxes (2.5-3.0 fledged/pair laying). At Ardgenavan (near Inveraray) *Mid-Argyll*, a single male apparently divided his attention between 2 females laying in separate nestboxes. Both were successful and 11 young were fledged (*cf* the same phenomenon at Bonawe nestboxes in 1995, when 12 young fledged, see *ABR* 12 70; and also there in 1994 when 13 young fledged, unpublished at the time [JCAC]). In the course of BBS work in Raera Forest, 2-3 pairs were found near Kilmelford *Mid-Argyll* in May, while a male singing near nest boxes at Ford *Mid-Argyll*, also in May, apparently failed to attract a mate.

There were no reports of dispersing birds or passage migrants in autumn.

**LONG-TAILED TIT** *Aegithalos caudatus* Ciochan 1437  
*B W P* Widespread and common on mainland, local on some islands and rare on Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 48% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Parties of wandering birds widespread in autumn.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 16 BBS squares (none last year), and a single territory was found in the woodland CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*.

Flocks of 20 or more were in Glen Shira *Mid-Argyll* (20 on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct), at Upper Cragabus *Islay* (24 on 24<sup>th</sup> Oct), and at Kilnaughton Woods *Islay* (22 on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct). A single migrant bird was at Balemartine *Tiree* from 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**COAL TIT** *Parus ater* Smutag 1461  
*B W P* Widespread and common except on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 62% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some dispersal noted in autumn.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 6 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 8 of 21 in 1996). There were a total of 10 territories in the CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (same as last year), and two pairs were found at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*.

Wandering birds were seen on *Tiree* from late Oct to the year end, with one at Balemartine on 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct, 3 at the Old Manse plantation on 29<sup>th</sup> Nov, and 2 at Hynish on 27<sup>th</sup> Dec.

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**BLUE TIT** *Parus caeruleus* Cailleachag ceann ghorm 1462  
*R P Widespread and very common breeder, but rare on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 65% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 5 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 6 of 21 in 1996). Numbers at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* have increased dramatically, with yet another record total of 33 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 24 in 1996 and 18 in 1995). Nine pairs were found at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* in June.

On *Tiree* two were at Crossapol on 12<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2 at Scarinish on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct, and 2 at Vaul in late Nov. A party of 12 or more birds were feeding among seaweed on the shore at Brainport Bay (near Minard) *Mid-Argyll* on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**GREAT TIT** *Parus major* Currac bhain tighearna 1464  
*R P Widespread and very common breeder, but absent from Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 61% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 5 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 7 of 21 in 1996). There was a total of 11 territories in CBC plots at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (*cf* 8 in 1996), and 6 pairs were found at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* in Jun.

There were a series of records on *Tiree*, where this species is only a rare visitor: 2 at Cornaigmore and 2 at Druimbuhe on 21<sup>st</sup> Oct, one at Balemartine on 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> Oct, 2 reported from Vaul in late Nov, and one at Hynish on 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. Some or all of these records may refer to the same birds.

**TREECREEPER** *Certhia familiaris* Snaigear 1486  
*B W Widespread and common except on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 37% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 16 BBS squares (*cf* one of 21 in 1996). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there was a total of 4 territories in CBC plots (*cf* 5 in 1996) and 3 pairs were found at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* in Jun.

**GOLDEN ORIOLE** *Oriolus oriolus* 1508  
*P Rare and irregular. All 12 Argyll records 1980-1995 were in spring (15<sup>th</sup> Apr to 11<sup>th</sup> Jun).*

A male was present on *Islay* in May and was seen at Port Charlotte and Bruichladdich on 2<sup>nd</sup> and at Rockside on 3<sup>rd</sup>. Remarkably, an immature male was singing in woodland at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll* on 10<sup>th</sup> Jun, in the same area as birds were recorded in 1992 and 1993.

**RED-BACKED SHRIKE** *Lanius collurio* 1515  
*V Only 3 Argyll records during 1980-94: a 1<sup>st</sup> winter at Lagg (Jura) from 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> Sep 1986, a male on Mull from 29<sup>th</sup> May to 12<sup>th</sup> Jun 1992, and a male at Dalrannoch (North Argyll) on 5<sup>th</sup> Jul 1994.*

1987 A 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird was at Kilnaughton Bay *Islay* on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct [DB]\*. This record, originally published in *ABR 5* but subsequently deleted, is now reinstated following the submission and circulation of supporting details.

**JAY** *Garrulus glandarius* Sgraicheag 1539  
*R Locally distributed, mainland only. Breeding recorded in 6% of 10 km squares,*

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mostly in *Cowal* (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.

An increase in the number of records this year and possibly an extension in range.

The species was seen regularly during the early part of the year in the Dunoon area *Cowal* and in Minard Woods *Mid-Argyll* (up to 3 birds). Single birds were also seen at Kilbride Farm (near Millhouse) *Cowal*, Asknish (near Loch Gair) *Mid-Argyll* and Achnamara (Loch Sween) *Mid-Argyll*.

**Breeding.** Birds were seen during the breeding season in Gleann Salach (near Barcaldine) *North Argyll*, at West Glen (Tighnabruaich) *Cowal*, near Otter Ferry *Cowal* and at Tighnahoran (Loch Caolisport) *Mid-Argyll*.

Four or five were seen mobbing 2 Kestrels over Dubh Loch Mor (near Benderloch) *North Argyll* on 24<sup>th</sup> Jul.

During the latter part of the year, birds were regularly seen at Blairmore, Loch Long *Cowal*, in the Minard area *Mid-Argyll*, around Dalavich, Loch Awe *Mid-Argyll* and at Braevallich, Loch Awe. Except for one at Auchnagarron *Cowal* on 27<sup>th</sup> Jul, all the other sightings came from *Mid-Argyll*: 2 in Glen Lonan on 28<sup>th</sup> Sep, 2 in Glen Shira on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct, and singles at Caol Scotnish (Loch Sween) on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct, near Crinan on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct, at Taynish NNR on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct, at 3 localities in the Inveraray area also on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct, at Port Ann (Loch Fyne) on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov and at Loch Craiglin (Loch Sween) in Nov.

**MAGPIE** *Pica pica* Cadhag 1549  
*R Local in Cowal, rare elsewhere. Breeding recorded in 2% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). All records required.*

Again very few records were received. In *Cowal*, there were regular sightings at Dunoon and at Blairmore, Loch Long (where the species was described as common) throughout the year.

Individuals seen in *Kintyre*, at Campbeltown on 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Apr and at Southend from 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Jun, could possibly have been wanderers from Northern Ireland. The only other record was, interestingly, one at Barcaldine *North Argyll* on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct, the third year running that birds have been reported from this area.

**CHOUGH** *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax* Cathag dhearg chasach 1559  
*R Islay is the Scottish stronghold, with smaller numbers on Jura and Colonsay and a recent toehold on Mull. All records away from Islay required.*

The only flocks of more than 20 birds during the early part of the year were at Oronsay *Colonsay* (23 on 4<sup>th</sup> Feb), Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* (35 on 16<sup>th</sup> Apr) and Kilchoman *Islay* (26 on 20<sup>th</sup> Apr).

**Breeding.** A pair reared 3 young at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve but no information was available for the rest of *Islay*. On *Colonsay*, 10-12 breeding pairs were located. Of these, two pairs definitely failed and 6 pairs fledged 16 young [DCJ, JJ]. One of the colour-ringed birds on *Colonsay*, a breeding adult, is now 14 years old. On *Mull*, a pair bred at the usual location but failed, as it has done each year since 1989, this year at the egg stage. Birds were seen during the breeding season at two other localities on *Mull*.

During the latter part of the year, flocks of more than 20 were recorded at

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Machir Bay *Islay* (max. 30 on 5<sup>th</sup> Jun), Kiloran *Islay* (32 on 25<sup>th</sup> Sep), *Colonsay* (max. 23 on 7<sup>th</sup> Oct), and Kilchoman *Islay* (26 on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct).

**JACKDAW** *Corvus monedula* Cathag 1560  
*B W Common throughout much of Argyll, but scarce on Mull and does not breed on Tiree or Coll. Breeding recorded in 40% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Immigration into some areas in winter, e.g. Tiree.*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 16 BBS squares (*cf* one of 21 in 1996). At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* 12 pairs were found in Jun. Birds were also recorded from Loch Bellart *Mull* on 26<sup>th</sup> Jun, outwith the recent known breeding range.

The only count during the year of more than 50 birds was 70 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus* Rocas 1563  
*B W Common throughout much of Argyll, but scarce on Mull and does not breed on Colonsay, Tiree or Coll. Breeding recorded in 25% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Post-breeding influx of juveniles to some islands, e.g. Mull and Tiree.*

**Breeding.** Nest counts made in late Apr-early May at all 9 known rookeries on *Islay* gave a total of 314 nests (*cf* 316 at 8 rookeries in 1996) [MAO]. The only other count came from Connel *Mid-Argyll*, where there were 9 nests (11 in 1996). Birds were recorded in one of 14 BBS squares.

On *Mull*, where the species is scarce, 80 were seen coming in to roost near Dervaig on 27<sup>th</sup> Jun. Single migrant birds were recorded on *Tiree*, at Balinoe Bay on 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Feb and at Balephuill Bay on 12<sup>th</sup> Aug.

The only large flock reported was 200 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**HOODED CROW** *Corvus corone cornix* Feannag 1567  
*B W Widespread and common. Breeding recorded in 87% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Approximately 120 were feeding at the head of Loch Feochan *Mid-Argyll* on 6<sup>th</sup> Mar.

**Breeding.** Birds were recorded in 6 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 15 of 21 in 1996). On *Colonsay*, despite a continued cull, 8 pairs were found with 3 broods and 9 young fledged. There were also 13 non-breeding birds present. Other counts of breeding pairs were: 4 pairs at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, 4 pairs at Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, and 2 pairs at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*.

At least 40 birds were present at Machir Bay *Islay* on 7<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**CARRION CROW** *C. c. corone*  
*B W Birds are spreading gradually through Cowal into Kintyre and Mid-Argyll. Breeding recorded in 13% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** Birds were recorded in 5 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 21 in 1996).

Away from the main breeding areas, 2 were at Gott *Tiree* on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan, one was on Iona *Mull* in Jun, and there were more records than usual from *Islay*, with up to 5

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birds at 10 different locations between 10<sup>th</sup> Feb and 4<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**RAVEN** *Corvus corax* Fitheach 1572

*B W Common. Breeding recorded in 75% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

No counts exceeding 20 birds were reported in the early part of the year.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 4 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 9 of 21 in 1996). Of 7 sites checked on *Colonsay*, only two were successful, fledging 4 young [DCJ, JJ]. Of 11 breeding pairs located on *Coll*, 2 nests failed, 4 fledged a minimum of 6 young, and a further 3 had a total of 12 unfledged young in the nest [CS]. A survey in *Cowal* located 21 territories, 14 of which produced 47 fledged young. In *SW Mull*, of 16 occupied territories checked, 12 were successful and produced at least 38 fledged young [RSPB per RB]. A pair at Loch Leathan *Mid-Argyll* produced 4 fledged young and a pair bred on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*. No information was available for *Islay*.

Later in the year, the only count exceeding 20 birds was at Tullochgorm, Minard *Mid-Argyll*, where a flock that began to gather on the morning of 4<sup>th</sup> Nov numbered 54 by dusk.

**STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris* Druid 1582

*B W P Common except on Mull, where a localised post-breeding influx of juveniles occurs. Breeding recorded in 65% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

No counts exceeding 100 birds were recorded during the early part of the year.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 4 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 3 of 21 in 1996). Four successful nests were found at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll*. Only one or two pairs bred on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*; a decline attributed to a reduction in available nest sites on buildings.

Estimates in excess of 1000 individuals were made during the second winter period for flocks on *Islay* as follows: 1500 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct, 1000+ at Loch Gorm on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct, 1500+ going to roost at Machir Bay on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov, and 1500 at Sunderland on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov. Nevertheless, 60 foraging on the foreshore on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov was a record number for Tainish NNR.

A leucistic bird was seen in a large flock at Cornaigmore *Tiree* on 8<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus* Gealbhonn 1591

*R Commonly associated with human habitation, and distribution therefore rather localised in remote areas. Breeding recorded in 57% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 16 BBS squares (*cf* one of 21 in 1996).

The largest flocks reported during the year were 100+ at Lyrabus *Islay* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Aug, and 94 feeding on seed in a garden at Balemartine *Tiree* on 8<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs* Breacan beithe 1636

*B W P Abundant except on Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 80% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Birds commonly forage in cut hay and silage fields outwith breeding season.*

At least 200 were seen bathing in an aqueduct at Airigh Aird (Kilmichael

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Forest) *Mid-Argyll* on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan. This was the only count during the early part of the year exceeding 100 birds.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 10 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 12 of 21 in 1996). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there were a total of 32 territories in the CBC plots (a slight decrease from last year's record total of 35). At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, 36 territories were located.

The only counts exceeding 100 birds during the second winter period were 400 at Tayinloan *Kintyre* on 28<sup>th</sup> Sep and 150 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec.

**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla* Bricein caorainn 1638  
*W P Varying numbers occur between Oct and Apr each year.*

The only flocks of any size during Jan-Apr were c. 40 at South Ledaig *North Argyll* throughout Jan with 25 still there on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb, and 200 at Barcaldine *North Argyll* on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. All other records were in single figures, with 4 at Bridgend Woods *Islay* on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb, 3 with Chaffinches and Redwings at Minard *Mid-Argyll* on 28<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2 at Jura House *Jura* on 13<sup>th</sup> Mar, and a female seen with Chaffinches at Dunoon on 18<sup>th</sup> Mar

The few records during the latter part of the year were all in single figures. The earliest was 5 at Bleachfield *Kintyre* on 14<sup>th</sup> Oct, followed by a male on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2 at Eresaid *Islay* on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct, a single at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 27<sup>th</sup> Oct, a male feeding at a bird table at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov, and 3 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* on 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec.

**GREENFINCH** *Carduelis chloris* Glaisean daraich 1649  
*R W Locally common. Breeding recorded in 31% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

During the early part of the year, counts of more than 20 birds were made at: Grulinbeg *Islay* (30 on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan), at Druimbhuie *Tiree* (26 on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb) and at Leek *Islay* (31 on 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar – possibly the same birds as those at Grulinbeg).

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 16 BBS squares surveyed (*cf* none of 21 in 1996). At Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, 3 pairs were located (*cf* 5 pairs in 1996). There were no breeding season reports from *Tiree* this year.

In the latter part of the year, the only counts of more than 20 birds were 40 at Kiloran *Colonsay* on 25<sup>th</sup> Sep and 50+ at Mulindry *Islay* on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**GOLDFINCH** *Carduelis carduelis* Lasair choille 1653  
*B W P Localised distribution. Absent as a breeding species from Colonsay, Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 32% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Some emigration in autumn.*

The only count of more than 10 birds during the early part of the year was 12 at Loch Don *Mull* on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb. On *Tiree*, where the species is not known to breed, two were at Scarinish on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb and 2 at Balemartine on 15<sup>th</sup> Feb.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 16 BBS squares (*cf* none in 1996). Only 2 territories were located at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, where about 10 pairs bred in 1996.

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Counts of more than 10 birds during the latter part of the year were: 30 at Rubha Mor, Kames *Cowal* on 30<sup>th</sup> Aug, 20+ at the entrance to Glen Lonan, Taynuilt *Mid-Argyll* on 6<sup>th</sup> Sep, and 20 at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct. On *Tiree*, 2 were at Balemartine from 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct to the end of the year and 3 were in the old Manse plantation at Scarinish on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec. On *Colonsay*, where the species is also scarce, from one to three birds were seen at Machrins from 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**SISKIN** *Carduelis spinus* Gealag bhuidhe 1654  
*B W P Numbers fluctuate from year to year, but the breeding population has clearly increased as a consequence of coniferous afforestation. Absent as a breeding species from Tiree and Coll. Breeding recorded in 54% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

Present in good numbers during the early part of the year with flocks exceeding 20 birds reported from Kilmichael Beg, Minard *Mid-Argyll* (50+ on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan), Glen Shira *Mid-Argyll* (75 on 15<sup>th</sup> Jan), Brainport Bay, Minard *Mid-Argyll* (65 on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan), Ledaig Point *North Argyll* (c. 80 on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan), Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* (50+ with Goldfinches on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb), Bridgend Woods *Islay* (25 on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb), Campbeltown *Kintyre* (flocks of 20+ over the town on 18<sup>th</sup> Mar), and Glen More *Mull* (26 on 26<sup>th</sup> Mar).

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 3 of 16 BBS squares (cf 4 of 21 in 1996). After the large numbers seen during the winter, surprisingly few breeding season records were received. Birds were reported at this time from *Mid-Argyll* (4 locations), *Islay* (3 locations) and *Mull* (2 locations).

On Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, 32 adults were ringed in late July. The only other count exceeding 20 birds was 30 at South Shian Wood *North Argyll* on 28<sup>th</sup> Aug.

**LINNET** *Carduelis cannabina* Gealan lin 1660  
*B W P Localised distribution. Breeding recorded in 37% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Flocking in autumn and winter.*

The only count during the early part of the year which exceeded 50 birds was 150 at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 29<sup>th</sup> Mar.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 16 BBS squares surveyed (cf 3 of 21 in 1996). A total of 55 territories were identified at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* and there were 3 territories in the coastal CBC plot at Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*. On Sanda Islands *Kintyre* there were only 4 pairs where there would usually be up to 8.

In late summer and autumn, flocks of 50 or more birds were reported from Ledaig Point *North Argyll* (c.60 on 31<sup>st</sup> Aug), Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (max. 75 on 27<sup>th</sup> Sep), and Tayinloan *Kintyre* (50 on 28<sup>th</sup> Sep).

**TWITE** *Carduelis flavirostris* Gealan beinne 1662  
*B W P Localised breeding species, found especially on the islands. Breeding recorded in 36% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Flocking in low-lying arable and coastal areas, Aug onwards. Some evidence to suggest emigration from Argyll in autumn, although there may also be an influx of wintering birds to some areas.*

All the counts of 50 or more birds during the early part of the year came from *Islay*, where there were 50 at Smaull on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan, a maximum 100+ at Machrie Golf

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Course on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan, 150 at Loch Gruinart on 29<sup>th</sup> Mar, and 68 at Machir Bay on 20<sup>th</sup> Apr.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 16 BBS squares surveyed (*cf* 3 of 21 in 1996). On *Colonsay*, 39 pairs were located (*cf* 40 in 1996). There were 2 territories at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, and only 8 pairs were found on the Sanda Islands *Kintyre*, where there are usually up to 14.

The maximum recorded at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* during the latter part of the year was 110 in Sep. Other localities with 50 or more birds at this time were: Oronsay *Colonsay* (max. 65 on 18<sup>th</sup> Sep), Turraman Loch *Colonsay* (180 on 26<sup>th</sup> Sep), and at the north end of Iona *Mull* (150 on 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct). Towards the end of the year, flocks of this size were only reported from *Islay*: Storakaig (88 on 15<sup>th</sup> Oct), Frenchman's Rocks (max. 90 on 16<sup>th</sup> Oct), Rockside (200 on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct), Saligo Bay (100 on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct), Ardnave (70 on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov), Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve (max. 60 on 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec) and Kintra (100 on 14<sup>th</sup> Dec).

**REDPOLL** *Carduelis flammea* Dearcan seilich 1663  
*B W P Localised breeder. Numbers fluctuate from year to year, but breeding population has probably increased as a consequence of coniferous afforestation. Breeding recorded in 41% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Flocking occurs in autumn and winter.*

No count during the early part of the year exceeded 20 birds.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 4 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 21 in 1996). At Taynish NNR *Mid-Argyll*, there was a total of 6 territories in the CBC plots (*cf* 5 in 1996) and a single pair were located at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*. Other breeding season records came from *Islay* (6 locations), *Colonsay* (1 location), and *Mid-Argyll* (one location).

The only flocks of any size were 20 birds at Kynaggary plantation *Islay* on 26<sup>th</sup> Aug and 10 at Connel Airfield *North Argyll* on 24<sup>th</sup> Sep. A series of records of singles at Balemartine *Tiree* from 7<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Sep included one large individual, on 21<sup>st</sup>, which could have been of the Greenland race *rostrata*. Three were at this location on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**COMMON CROSSBILL** *Loxia curvirostra* Cam ghob 1666  
*B W Numbers and distribution vary depending on abundance of conifer cone crops. Highly irruptive species with large flocks sometimes moving to locate a new seed area, usually in summer. Breeding recorded in 16% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91).*

The species was recorded in 3 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 2 of 21 in 1996).

Many more were reported than in either of the previous two years. Most records during Jan-Apr came from the northern half of our area, with 2 at Loch Leathan *Mid-Argyll* on 19<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2 at Tunns, Kilmichael Forest *Mid-Argyll* on 26<sup>th</sup> Jan and a female there on 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar, one female at Add Ponds, Kilmichael Forest on 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar, one over Achnacraig, Glen Bellart *Mull* on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar, approx. 8 at Blackmount, Loch Tulla *North Argyll* on 12<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2 (a female and 1<sup>st</sup> year male) at Loch Bealach Ghearran, Kilmichael Forest on 29<sup>th</sup> Mar, and 2 at Garhallow, Dunoon *Cowal* in Apr.

A sound recording made, on 19<sup>th</sup> Mar, of calling birds at Doire Darach, Loch Tulla *North Argyll*, where Scottish Crossbills *L scotica* have been claimed in the past,

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confirmed the birds' identity as Common Crossbills - see *ABR* 13 96-100.

Records from May to Aug included some larger flocks, with 15 (inc. 13 juvs.) at Fishnish *Mull* on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 12 flying over at Loch Arail *Mid-Argyll* on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 13 near Cairmbaan *Mid-Argyll* on 24<sup>th</sup> Jun, c. 20 at Ruaig *Tiree* on 25<sup>th</sup> Jun, a remarkable 87 moving N and W from the N tip of *Jura* on 28<sup>th</sup> Jun, c.20 at Ardgenavan, Loch Fyne *Mid-Argyll* on 29<sup>th</sup> Jun, and 12 at Craighouse *Jura* also on 29<sup>th</sup> Jun. Smaller numbers (less than 10) were reported during this period from Strath na Lub *Cowal*, Glashgour, Loch Tulla *North Argyll*, Ardmore Forest *Mull*, Loch Avich *Mid-Argyll*, Lealt *Jura* and Grasspoint *Mull*.

Many fewer were seen later in the year, the only records being: 4 at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 7<sup>th</sup> Sep, one near Inveraray *Mid-Argyll* on 25<sup>th</sup> Oct, and a male and female at Staoisha plantation *Islay* on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.

1996 On 10<sup>th</sup> Dec, 14 birds, including 2 males in full song, were at Moine Glas (Loch Glashan) *Mid-Argyll*.

**COMMON ROSEFINCH** *Carpodacus erythrinus* 1679  
*V* Three previous *Argyll* records; an adult female Jun 1989, a female and 1<sup>st</sup> year male 12<sup>th</sup> Jun-15<sup>th</sup> Jul 1990 and a male on *Colonsay* 11<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Jun 1994 (with a probable 2<sup>nd</sup> bird on 11<sup>th</sup> Jun).

1996 A single female was at Balemartine *Tiree* on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep [MW]\*, and a juvenile female was on Oronsay *Colonsay* on 7<sup>th</sup> Nov [JH]\*. These constitute the fourth and fifth records for *Argyll*.

**BULLFINCH** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* Corcan-coille 1710  
*B W* Locally common. Absent from *Tiree* and *Coll* and irregular on *Gigha* and *Colonsay*. Breeding recorded in 35% of 10 km squares (*BTO Atlas*, 1988-91).

The largest counts reported during the early part of the year were: 12 at Slockavullin, *Kilmartin Mid-Argyll* on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan, max. 8 at Blairmore (Loch Long) *Cowal* in Jan, and 8 at Blackmill Loch *Kilmichael Forest Mid-Argyll* on 9<sup>th</sup> Feb.

Breeding. The species was recorded in 2 of 16 BBS squares (cf 3 of 21 in 1996). Another increase occurred at Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* (where breeding was first confirmed in 1995), with a total of 4 territories in CBC plots (cf 3 in 1996). Two territories were found at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay* in Jun, and there were records of pairs or family parties from all the remaining main woodland areas on the island.

The only autumn flock reported was c.10 at Connel *Mid-Argyll* on 10<sup>th</sup> Sep.

**LAPLAND BUNTING** *Calcarius lapponicus* 1847  
*P* Less than annual. Most frequent in autumn, less so in spring, and very rarely recorded in winter.

A male in almost full breeding plumage was at Loch Gruinart *Islay* on 23<sup>rd</sup> Mar, the first on the island since 1988. One was flying and calling over The Reef *Tiree* on 17<sup>th</sup> Sep.

**SNOW BUNTING** *Plectrophenax nivalis* Gealag an t-sneachda 1850  
*B? W P* Has bred *N. Argyll* in recent years. Varying numbers on passage and in winter.

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Apart from 28 near Campbeltown *Kintyre* on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan, all records for the early part of the year were from the islands. The largest flock was 50 at Kilchoman *Islay* on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan and smaller gatherings included: 9 at Balemartine *Tiree* on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan, 8 at Machir Bay *Islay* on 14<sup>th</sup> Feb, 11 at Kintra *Islay* on 1<sup>st</sup> Mar, and 5 at Sorobaidh Bay *Tiree* on 9<sup>th</sup> Mar. All other records were of single birds on *Tiree* and from various localities on *Islay*, the last being a male almost in full breeding plumage at *Islay* Airport on 11<sup>th</sup> May.

The first returning birds were 2 at Machrihanish SBO *Kintyre* on 17<sup>th</sup> Sep, with 6 there on 28<sup>th</sup> Sep and a flock of 52 nearby, at West Parkfergus, on 11<sup>th</sup> Oct. Smaller numbers were seen on the islands with: 4 near Kilchattan *Colonsay* on 25<sup>th</sup> Sep, 7 at Ardnave Point *Islay* on 26 Oct, 2 at Traigh Hough Bay *Tiree* on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov, 5 at the N end of *Gigha* on 8<sup>th</sup> Nov, and singles at 3 localities on *Islay* in Oct-Nov. Unusually there were no records after 8<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**YELLOWHAMMER** *Emberiza citrinella* Buidheag bhealaidh 1857  
*B W Localised breeding species. Breeding recorded in 46% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Birds forage in cut hay and silage fields outwith breeding season. Population may be in decline and all records are welcome.*

There was a welcome increase in records this year, although this may reflect increase in reporting in appreciation of the relative scarcity of this species rather than an actual improvement in its status. During the early part of the year, the only flock exceeding 10 birds reported was 14 at Loch Gorm *Islay* on 16<sup>th</sup> Feb, but up to 5 were seen in a garden at Connel *Mid-Argyll* at this time, 6 were at Redhouses *Islay* on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan, 5 were at Kildavaig Farm Cowal on 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan, 5 flew over Port Ellen *Islay* on 10<sup>th</sup> Mar, and 2 were at a bird table at Tioran Mull on 24<sup>th</sup> Mar. In addition singles were reported from other localities on *Islay* (3) and *Mull* (one).

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in one of 16 BBS squares (*cf* one of 21 in 1996). Breeding season records were received from *Cowal* (one site), *Islay* (one site), *Jura* (4 sites), *Mid-Argyll* (2 sites), and *Mull* (2 sites).

There were many reports from *Islay* during the latter part of the year, with flocks of 12 at Barr on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct and 18 at Laggan on 29<sup>th</sup> Dec and up to 7 birds at 11 other localities. Elsewhere a male was seen above Loch Fada *Colonsay* on 24<sup>th</sup> Sep, a male was singing at Kintra *Mull* on 12<sup>th</sup> Oct, a pair were at Loch na Cille *Mid-Argyll* on 19<sup>th</sup> Oct, 2 males were at Minard *Mid-Argyll* on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov, and 4 were at Slockavullin, Kilmartin *Mid-Argyll* on 30<sup>th</sup> Nov.

**REED BUNTING** *Emberiza schoeniclus* Gealag Ioin 1877  
*B W Locally common. Breeding recorded in 56% of 10 km squares (BTO Atlas, 1988-91). Small flocks sometimes gather outwith the breeding season.*

The flock remaining at Portnahaven *Islay* from the end of 1996 numbered 80 on 4<sup>th</sup> Jan but had declined to 20 by 10<sup>th</sup> Mar. The only other count during the early part of the year exceeding 10 birds was a flock of 20 at Kinnabus *Islay* on 11<sup>th</sup> Feb.

**Breeding.** The species was recorded in 2 of 16 BBS squares (*cf* 3 of 21 in 1996). On *Colonsay*, only 8 pairs were located (*cf* 15 in 1996 and 10 in 1995), indicating a return to the smaller population of the early 1990s. A healthy population apparently exists at Loch Gruinart RSPB Reserve *Islay*, where 65 territories were

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identified. At Tainish NNR *Mid-Argyll* two territories were located, 2 pairs were at Moine Mhor NNR *Mid-Argyll* in spring and 5 pairs were located on Sanda Islands *Kintyre*. Pairs were also found during the breeding season at Laggan Bridge, Portnahaven and Bunnahabhaínn *Islay* and at Tighnahoran *Mid-Argyll*.

In the second winter period, the only flock exceeding 10 birds was 20 at Rockside *Islay* on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**CORN BUNTING** *Miliaria calandra* Gealag bhuathair 1882  
*R Declining resident species which is facing extinction in Argyll. Recent breeding on Tiree only.*

At least one bird still remains on *Tiree*, with singles reported at Ruaig on 25<sup>th</sup> Jun, Balephuill on 20<sup>th</sup> Sep, and at Balemartine from 16<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> Nov. There were no other records.

### ESCAPES AND INTRODUCTIONS

This section includes species which are not on the British list or whose occurrence in the UK is exclusively within Categories B, D or E. Other species, whose occurrence in Argyll arises partly or wholly from introduced birds which may not or do not form self-sustaining breeding populations, include White-fronted Goose, Snow Goose, Barnacle Goose, Mandarin, Red Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Red-legged Partridge, Grey Partridge and Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon). They are dealt with in the main systematic list.

**RUDDY SHELDUCK** *Tadorna ferruginea* 0171  
*Category B/E. All recent records of this species are assumed to be escapes from wildfowl collections.*

An adult female was at Bridgend Merse, Loch Indaal *Islay* on 4<sup>th</sup> May and two were reported from Loch a' Phuill *Tiree* on 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> July.

**EAGLE OWL** *Bubo bubo* 0744  
*Category E. This species has been removed from the full British list by the BOURC.*

The escaped bird regularly seen at Arduaine *Mid-Argyll* during 1989-91 is apparently still present in the area and was recorded on 18<sup>th</sup> Jun (see previous ABRs).

### LIST OF REJECTED RECORDS, PENDING RECORDS AND RECORDS FOR WHICH DETAILS ARE STILL AWAITED

Please note that the records below are listed for information purposes only, and do not form part of the data set for the years in question.

The following records of species on the ABRC, SBRC or BBRC lists have been rejected since the publication of ABR 13.

Hobby	<i>Kintyre</i>	26/07/97	ABRC
Capercaillie	<i>Mull</i>	22/06/97	ABRC
Crane	<i>Colonsay</i>	01/08/97	ABRC

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Kumlien's (Iceland) Gull	<i>Islay</i>	18-23/02/95	BBRC
Bluethroat	<i>Tiree</i>	20/05/97	ABRC
Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Mid-Argyll</i>	19/10/97	ABRC
Hawfinch	<i>Cowal</i>	08-09/96	ABRC

It should be noted that most records are rejected not because the committee in question is convinced that a mistake has been made, but because the evidence provided is insufficient to establish the identification.

The following records of species on the BBRC, SBRC or ABRC lists are currently in circulation around the relevant committees. In some instances, a decision has been delayed pending the receipt of additional details.

Cory's Shearwater	<i>Colonsay Ferry</i>	29/09/97	SBRC
Balearic Shearwater (14)	<i>Kintyre</i>	09/08 – 14/09/97	SBRC
Ruddy Duck	<i>Mid-Argyll</i>	26/06/97	ABRC
Honey Buzzard	<i>Kintyre</i>	08/07/97	ABRC
Sabine's Gull (7)	<i>Kintyre</i>	30/09/96, 01/10/96 & 13/09/97 (5)	ABRC

Details of the following 1997 records of species on the BBRC, SBRC and ABRC lists have not been received.

Balearic Shearwater	Frenchman's Rocks	<i>Islay</i>	26/08/97
Little Egret	Campbeltown	<i>Kintyre</i>	18/05/97
Green-winged Teal	Easter Ellister	<i>Islay</i>	04/03/97
Black Kite	Vaul	<i>Tiree</i>	16/05/97
Gyr Falcon	Lyrabus	<i>Islay</i>	14/05/97
Sabine's Gull	Hynish	<i>Tiree</i>	14/09/97
Bee-eater	'Centre of island'	<i>Mull</i>	21/06/97
Arctic Redpoll	Balinoe and Balemartine	<i>Tiree</i>	30/04 – 07/05/97

Anyone who saw any of these birds is encouraged to send in details. The records will not be referred to again in future reports unless details have by then been forwarded to ABRC, BBRC or SBRC.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

The entire text of the systematic list was compiled by myself, and any errors in transcription are solely my responsibility.

I am indebted to all those who submitted records. A full list of contributors appears below; apologies will be due to anyone whose name has been inadvertently omitted. I am particularly grateful to observers who sent me comprehensive reports or regular series of observations for specific areas, especially: John Halliday for records from the Taynish and Moine Mhor National Nature Reserves, Roger Broad for information on Raptors and Rare Breeding Species, Rab Morton for information from the Sanda Islands, Simon Walker of the Treshnish Isles Ringing Group, and David Wood and Margaret MacKay at SNH for Goose count data. Special thanks are due to Eddie Maguire for an advance copy of the 1996/1997 Machrihanish Seabird Observatory Report and Malcolm Ogilvie for providing a disk of his Islay database and a copy of the 1997 Islay Bird and Natural History Report. The latter was the source of most of the information about the birds of Islay used in this report. And, last but not least, to Tristan ap Rheinallt for his advice and assistance over the last year.

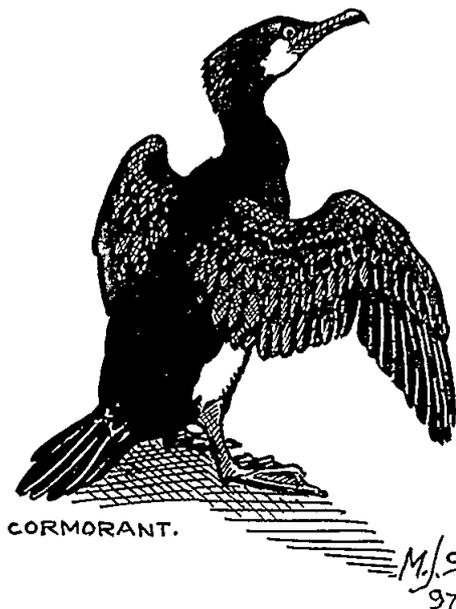
I am grateful to Tristan ap Rheinallt, Roger Broad, David Jardine, Eddie Maguire and Malcolm Ogilvie for commenting on a draft version of the text.

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J. Allen, G. Anderson, T. ap Rheinallt, P. Appleby, Argyll Raptor Study Group, R. Atkinson, I. Bainbridge, A. Barker, the late D. Beaumont, A. J. van Beest, D. Bennett, E. & S. Bignall, J. Blatcher, V. Blaxter, M. F. Bleaney, G. Bolton, J. M. Bradbury, P. N. Bradbury, J. Bradfield, C. Bradshaw, British Trust for Ornithology, R. A. Broad, E. Brown, R. Butler, K. & C. Byrne, B. Cairns, I. Cameron, E. Campbell, S. Carmichael, R. Chappell, D. Clarke, N. Clarke, R. Clough, D. Clugston, E. Coleman, P. J. Collier, R. J. Cook, J. Cowles, J. C. A. Craik, T. B. Cresswell, C. Davis, P. Daw, J. Dawson, S. L. Dean, G. M. de Mornay, J. Dickson, J. Drew, T. Drew, J. C. Duncan, A. R. Duncan-Jones, Edinburgh YOC, W. M. Edgar, H. Embleton, M. Emerson, A. Evans, J. Evans, R. J. Evans, V. Fairbrother, L. Farrell, C. F. Fergusson, I. M. Fleming, D. Gilbert, A. Goodall, E. A. Graham, P. Graham, A. & G. Greaves, M. & R. Gulliver,

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## Increases in Fulmars breeding on Colonsay 1975 -1997

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The Fulmar has made a remarkable expansion in its breeding range and population in Britain during the twentieth century (Fisher, 1952; Lloyd *et al*, 1991). This short note documents recent trends of one of the larger populations in Argyll.

### Historical perspective

Fulmars were first recorded breeding on Colonsay in 1927 by Duncan Macdonald, and by 1933 the population had grown to 19 pairs (Loder, 1935). This tallies well with Fisher's (1952) comprehensive account of the species, which indicates that there were 15 pairs in 1932.

There are only four other estimates of the total population of Fulmars on Colonsay. Operation Seafarer (Cramp *et al*, 1975) estimated the population to be between 101 and 1000 pairs in 1969-70. Two full counts of seabirds on Colonsay and Oronsay were conducted in the mid 1980s (Clarke & Clarke, 1986, 1987). These found 682 and 968 apparently occupied sites (AOS) in 1985 and 1986 respectively. Lloyd *et al* (1991) suggested a population of 1001 to 5000 pairs in 1985-87.

### Methods

Counts were made by the author along shorelines and clifftops as follows (see map in Fig 1)

Site	Location (Grid Refs)	Years
A	Kiloran Bay- Port nam Fluichan (NR396980 - NR383980)	1976, 1990-1997
B	Kiloran Bay - Port Sgibinis (NR404984 - NR405993)	1975, 1989-1997
C	South of Port Lobh (NR350926 - NR356927)	1992-1997

Counts at all three sites were also made in 1985 and 1986 by Clarke & Clarke (1986, 1987) and these are shown in Table 1 for comparison. Counts in this study were made from land during 5 - 20 June, while those of Clarke & Clarke were made from land and sea during May.

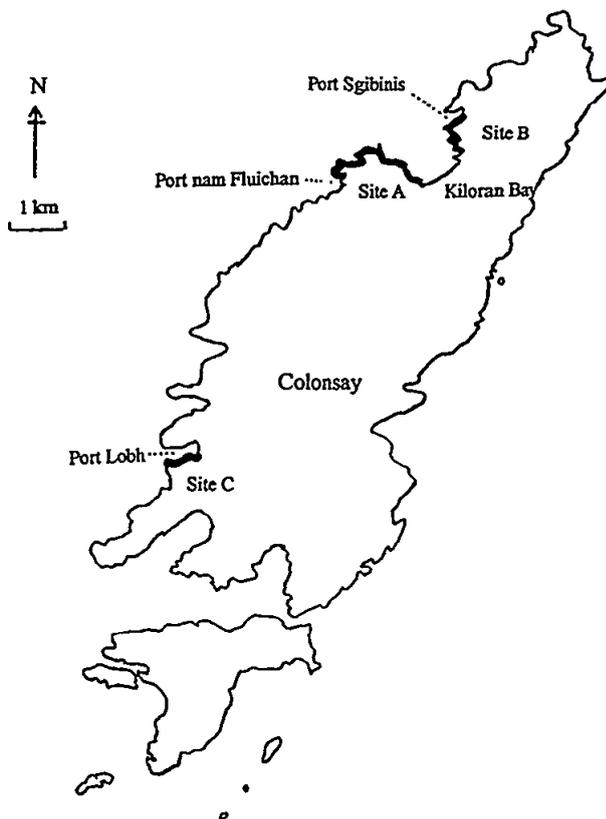


Figure 1. Location of Fulmar study sites on Colonsay, 1975 - 1997.

## Results

The number of AOS at each of the three sites is presented in Table 1. The number of AOS at site A peaked at 611 in 1996, representing a 232% increase since 1976. The annual rate of increase between 1976 and 1997 was 5.6%.

At site B the breeding population peaked at 77 in 1989 and 1994, an increase of 670% since 1975. The average annual increase between 1975 and 1997 was 8.0%.

The number of AOS at site C peaked in 1995 at 27, an increase during the study of 170%. Between 1985 and 1997 the average rate of increase at this site was 6.8%.

While trend of increase is significant at site A in the long term (1976-97, Spearman Rank Correlation  $r_s=0.927$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), the trend is not significant in the short-term (1993-97,  $r_s=0.700$ , NS). There is no significant trend in the population at site B over the

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long-term (1975-97,  $r_s = -0.327$ , NS) or the short-term (1989-97,  $r_s = 0.125$ , NS). There is no trend in the population at site C (1985-97,  $r_s = 0.446$ , NS).

Table 1. Number of breeding Fulmars (AOS) at three sites on Colonsay, Argyll, 1975 - 1997

Year	Site A	Site B	Site C
1975	n/c	10	n/c
1976	184	n/c	n/c
1985 <sup>1</sup>	364	26	10
1986 <sup>2</sup>	407	33	10
1989	n/c	77	n/c
1990	334	66	n/c
1991	394	71	n/c
1992	420	73	25
1993	514	65	23
1994	576	77	26
1995	583	67	27
1996	611	58	24
1997	577	54	22

n/c - no count

1 - data from Clarke & Clarke (1986)

2 - data from Clarke & Clarke (1987)

### Discussion

Population growth rates on Colonsay during this study were similar to the national average of 7% (Lloyd *et al.*, 1991) and the 8% increase, dropping recently to 3%, recorded on the Firth of Clyde (Monaghan & Zonfrillo, 1986).

There is some variation in the count at site A between this study and Clarke & Clarke (1986) which suggests that there may have been a decline in this population between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s. While this may be real and would mirror a decline in the early 1980s on Canna (Swann & Ramsay, 1984) it may also have been caused by differences in timing of count and in method.

In recent years there has been a reduction in the numbers at all three sites, suggesting that the Fulmar's population growth on Colonsay may have ceased. The reason for this change is not known but, as Sea Eagles are not present on Colonsay, the reason cannot be that suggested for a similar change on Canna in the early 1980s (Swann & Ramsay, 1984).

Based on the proportion of the total count of Fulmars for Colonsay included in the three sample sites in 1985 (58.7%) and 1986 (46.5%) (Clarke & Clarke, 1986, 1987) it is estimated that the population of Fulmars on Colonsay in 1997 was between 1112

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and 1404 AOS.

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## Recent mink-related declines of gulls and terns in west Scotland and the beneficial effects of mink control

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### Abstract

*In 1998 a complete census was made of gulls and terns breeding on small islands along the mainland coast between Mallaig in the north and West Loch Tarbert in the south, including L Fyne. In this habitat of sealochs, firths and sounds, numbers of pairs (colonies) were as follows: Black-headed Gull 321 (10), Common Gull 1263 (56), Lesser Black-backed Gull ca 853 (12), Herring Gull 6445 (70), Great Black-backed Gull 443 (54), Common Tern 954 (17) and Arctic Tern 127 (10). Between 1989 and 1998, Black-headed Gulls decreased by 49%, Common Gulls by 39% and Herring Gulls by ca 37%. Between 1987 and 1998, Common Terns decreased by 48% and Arctic Terns by ca 58%. Mean annual decreases for these five species ranged from five to seven percent. Many former breeding sites are now empty each year. These decreases can be explained by widespread breeding failures, known to have been caused each year by mink, often involving whole colonies of these species. During 1996-1998 attempts were made to ensure the survival of some remaining colonies, particularly of terns and the smaller gulls, by removing mink locally each spring. This led to greatly improved overall breeding success and has ensured the continued existence of several colonies. After local mink control in 1997 and/or 1998, following several years of mink-related failure or absence, Common Terns bred successfully in Lochs Ailort, Leven, Etive, Feochan and West Loch Tarbert and in the Sound of Mull. Except for one colony in each year, the only tern colonies in this large area where young terns fledged in 1997 and 1998 were those where mink were removed.*

### INTRODUCTION

North American Mink *Mustela vison*, the descendants of escapes from furfarms, are now causing serious damage to seabird populations in the sealochs, firths and sounds of western Scotland by causing widespread whole-colony breeding failures. This has had two marked effects on seabird populations in this habitat.

1) Seabirds respond to repeated mink-related breeding failure by abandoning affected breeding sites. As a result, several sealochs and sounds have lost all or almost all breeding seabirds over the last ten years.

2) Too few young are reared to replace adults that die from all causes. As a result there have been pronounced declines in numbers of breeding gulls and terns in the region as a whole (Craik 1995, 1997).

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In 1996-1998 attempts were made to protect some of the remaining colonies of terns and gulls by removing mink from their vicinity just before the seabird breeding season. This was done only where mink were causing massive breeding failures, usually of entire colonies of gulls or terns in successive years. The aim was to allow the birds to breed normally again and to ensure the survival of the colonies, which otherwise would almost certainly have disappeared within a few years. This paper summarises the results.

### METHODS

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, Common Gull *L. canus*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*, Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* and Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea* were studied at colonies in sealochs, firths and sounds along the mainland coast of Lochaber and Argyll, between Mallaig in the north and West Loch Tarbert in the south (including the extreme east of Mull, excluding Gigha and the rest of Mull). Numbers of breeding pairs were obtained by counts of clutches and well-formed empty nests in mid-May (gulls) and mid-June (terns). Numbers fledged were obtained by counts of flying young at suitable times (gulls) or by counts of large unfledged young (terns); at a few larger colonies numbers of large young were estimated by mark-and-recapture on ringing visits (Walsh *et al.* 1995). Productivity was defined as number fledged/number of breeding pairs.

In 1996-1998 (and at a few sites in earlier years), volunteers were given detailed instructions to trap mink close to selected seabird colonies. In February-April of each year, mink were trapped in conventional mink traps along mainland shore within about 1 km of the colony. Usually about 5-10 traps were used and typically about 1-4 mink were caught each season at each colony. Sometimes many more than this were caught, but in some years at some colonies no mink were caught, particularly where control had been effective in previous years. Trapped mink were humanely killed, when possible by shooting, otherwise with chloroform.

### RESULTS

#### Disappearance of seabird colonies: loss of breeding seabirds from entire sealochs and sounds

The most conspicuous mink-related changes up to 1998 have been as follows.

(1) Islands which, ten years earlier, held dense colonies of a rich variety of breeding seabirds are now empty every summer (at some a few pairs of gulls remain). These include most or all islands in (north to south):

<i>Loch nan Ceall (off Arisaig)</i>	<i>L Don (&amp; L Spelve?) (Mull)</i>	<i>Danna</i>
<i>L Sunart</i>	<i>Whole of Sound of Luinig</i>	<i>L Sween</i>
<i>L Teacuis</i>	<i>Balvicar Bay</i>	<i>Tayvallich Harbour</i>
<i>L Creran</i>	<i>L Crinan</i>	<i>L Caolisport</i>

*Creag Archipelago (part of L Linnhe)*

*E nan Coinean-E Fraoich island group (Sound of Jura)*

In L Creran all the former tern/gull islands are empty following annual mink predation of eggs and chicks, but a productive colony of Common Gulls has formed on a factory

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roof, presumably because it is inaccessible to mink.

(2) In 1998 many islands were still populated by breeding gulls and/or terns which, annually or almost annually, lost all or most offspring because of mink predation. This stage usually precedes complete abandonment and the condition described in (1).

*Complex of islands between Mallaig and Arisaig*

*Complex of islands in L nan Uamh*

*Complex of islands around the north tip of Lismore (L Linnhe)*

*Easdale Island*

(3) There have been losses (i.e., considerable decreases in overall numbers or loss of some island colonies but not all) in:

*L Leven*

*L Feochan*

*Sound of Mull*

*L Craignish*

*L Etive*

*L Fyne*

*McCormaig Islands (Sound of Jura)*

(4) Healthy colonies of terns and/or small gulls survived in 1997 and 1998 in:

*L Ailort*

*L Craignish*

*L Leven*

*West L Tarbert*

*L Etive*

*Sound of Mull*

*L Feochan*

*Lynn of Lorn*

All the surviving colonies in the first seven of these eight areas were protected by mink-trapping in 1996-98, and some of these colonies also in earlier years.

There have thus been major changes in the local marine avifauna and it seems right that these should be recorded in as much detail as possible. Provisional lists of Common Gull and Herring Gull colonies that have disappeared are given in Appendix I and Appendix II respectively. Under normal circumstances, breeding sites of these two species are occupied faithfully in successive years, so each site listed reflects a break with years of tradition. Black-headed Gull, Common Tern and Arctic Tern are much more mobile; whole colonies regularly and normally move between breeding sites from year to year, so for those species lists of apparently abandoned sites have little meaning.

### Breeding gull and tern numbers in 1998

In Table I the numbers of breeding birds counted in the whole study area in 1998 are given. By far the most abundant of the gulls was the Herring Gull, numbering more than twice the other four gull species combined. For each species, the percentage of birds breeding at colonies of less than ten pairs is given. This ranged from under 1% for Herring Gull to almost 16% for Great Black-backed Gull. The numbers of single pairs of each species are also given. The species with the greatest number of single pairs was the Great Black-back: exactly half of its breeding sites (27/54) held single pairs.

Common Terns are much more numerous than Arctic Terns in this habitat.

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**Table 1. COMPLETE CENSUS OF GULLS AND TERNS IN STUDY AREA IN 1998**

First line gives total number of pairs and number of colonies in study area.  
Second line gives number (and %) of these pairs that are at colonies of less than ten pairs, and number of single pairs.

<b>Black-headed Gull</b>	<b>321 prs at 10 colonies</b>
Colonies of < 10 prs	24 prs (7.5%) at 7 colonies incl. 3 single prs
<b>Common Gull</b>	<b>1263 prs at 56 colonies</b>
Colonies of < 10 prs	98 prs (7.6%) at 33 colonies incl. 9 single prs
<b>Lesser Black-backed Gull</b>	<b>Approx 853 prs at 12 colonies incl. 3 single prs</b>
<b>Herring Gull</b>	<b>6445 prs at 70 colonies</b>
Colonies of < 10 prs	57 prs (0.9%) at 26 colonies incl. 11 single prs
<b>Great Black-backed Gull</b>	<b>443 prs at 54 colonies</b>
Colonies of < 10 prs	70 prs (15.8%) at 38 colonies incl. 27 single prs
<b>Common Tern</b>	<b>954 prs at 17 colonies</b>
Colonies of < 10 prs	36 prs (3.8%) at 10 colonies incl. 1 single pr
<b>Arctic Tern</b>	<b>127 prs at 10 colonies</b>
Colonies of < 10 prs	23 prs (18%) at 6 colonies incl. 1 single pr

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### **Changes in gull and tern numbers in the years 1987/89 to 1998**

Counts of Great and Lesser Black-backed Gulls made in earlier years by comparable methods are not available, but comparisons of the other five species are given in Table 2.

There were considerable decreases in all three gull species and in both species of terns. The decreases range from 37% for Herring Gull to 49% for Black-headed Gull, both in nine years. (The decrease of 58% for Arctic Tern is provisional as 1998 was a poor breeding year for the species and some birds may not have bred.) The annual rates of decline are all of similar magnitude, ranging from 5.0 to 7.5%.

The results emphasise how few tern colonies of medium and large size now remain in this area. In 1987 there were 20 Common Tern colonies of ten or more pairs, but in 1998 there were only seven. The corresponding figures for Arctic Tern were nine and four. In 1987 this study area held 1839 prs of Common Terns, about one eighth of the British Isles total of 14,900 prs (Lloyd *et al* 1991); by 1998 this had almost halved. In 1987 the large Common Tern colony near Mull held 728 prs, 40% of the 1839 prs in the study area and the largest colony of that species in the British Isles. In 1998 it held 649 prs (68% of the 954 prs in the study area; 1998 British Isles total not available). There are good reasons for believing that this colony has survived only because of mink control. After mink killed notable numbers of chicks there in 1989 and later years, mink have recently been killed in the area each year.

**Table 2. CHANGES IN BREEDING NUMBERS OF GULLS AND TERNS**  
Number of colonies in brackets

	1987/89 <sup>1</sup>	1998	% decrease	Mean annual decrease (%)
Black-headed Gull	630 (8)	321 (10)	49.0	7.22
Common Gull <sup>2</sup>	1248 (32)	764 (30)	38.8	5.31
Herring Gull (>10 prs)	10143 <sup>3</sup> (73)	6388 (44)	37.0	5.01
Common Tern	1839 (23)	954 (17)	48.1	5.79
Arctic Tern	299 (21)	127 <sup>4</sup> (10)	57.5	7.49

<sup>1</sup> Terns were counted in 1987, gulls in 1989.

<sup>2</sup> In 1989 Common Gulls were counted over a smaller area than that of Table 1. To compare like with like, the Common Gull totals in Table 2 are both from this smaller area.

<sup>3</sup> This total should be regarded as approximate since numbers at many colonies were obtained from counts of adults rather than counts of nests. It is likely to have been an underestimate.

<sup>4</sup> This total is provisional since 1998 was a poor breeding year for Arctic Terns.

### Breeding success of Herring Gulls in study area

Earlier work showed that, for Common Gull, Black-headed Gull and Common Tern, decreases in breeding numbers in the study area could be explained by the cumulative effect of known instances of whole-colony breeding failures caused by mink (Craik 1997). This kind of analysis is not possible for the Herring Gull as its breeding success has not been recorded in such detail. An alternative approach was therefore used as follows.

In 1997 and 1998 breeding success was recorded at a number of Herring Gull colonies in the area. The results are striking (Table 3 and Appendix III). In 1998 at 25 colonies with 2507 prs where mink were not removed, there were 15 colonies where no young fledged and one colony where 93 prs fledged 3 young. These 16 colonies contained 1550 pairs or 62% of the sample. Mink were the cause of breeding failure at 13 of the 16 and suspected at another 2, and it is very likely that mink were the cause of all 16 whole-colony or near-whole-colony breeding failures.

Effects of mink on Herring Gull breeding success in 1997 were rather less severe (Table 3 and Appendix III). This was partly because, at two of the largest colonies where mink predation led to no chicks fledging in 1998 (E nan Caorach and Inn island - see Appendix III), mink predation of large chicks did not appreciably occur until late in the 1997 season, after many young had fledged.

In 1998 these 25 colonies held 2507 (39%) of the 6445 prs in the study area (Tables 1 and 3) and are thus locally representative of Herring Gulls. If we assume that the six colonies where mink were removed are representative of Herring Gull productivity in the area in the absence of mink, then mink lowered the productivity by  $(1.01 - 0.47)/1.01 = 53\%$  in 1997 and by 68% in 1998. The approximate mean of mink-

**Table 3**  
**EFFECTS OF MINK REMOVAL ON BREEDING SUCCESS OF HERRING GULLS**  
**Colonies of ten or more pairs**

	Pairs (colonies)		Total young fledged (Colonies fledging no young)		Fledged per pr
<b>1997</b>					
Mink removed	698	(6)	703	(0)	1.01
Mink not removed	1709	(14)	809	(5)	0.473
<b>1998</b>					
Mink removed	754	(6)	805	(0)	1.07
Mink not removed	2507	(25)	860	(15)	0.34

related lowering of productivity for the two years was therefore 60%.

If mink-related failure of whole colonies of Herring Gulls occurred at this intensity every year, would this be adequate to explain the 37% population decrease during 1989-1998 (Table 2)? Application of a simple population model suggests that it is (Appendix IV).

### **Remedial measures**

As shown in Table 3 for Herring Gulls, it is possible to mitigate these harmful effects by removing mink in spring near colonies one wants to protect. The results of the wider trapping programme are given in Tables 4-6.

#### *Common Gull*

The results are summarised in Table 4. In each of the three years 1996-1998, mink removal led to improved productivity; in 1996 by a factor of 4.3 (0.81/0.19), in 1997 by 1.7, and in 1998 by 2.3. In each year the number of colonies that fledged no young was greater where mink were not removed.

#### *Black-headed Gull*

The results are summarised in Table 5. In both years, removal of mink led to improved productivity, by factors of about 1.6 in 1997 and 15 in 1998. Because of the small number of colonies of this species in the study area, this factor was greatly affected by results at single colonies.

#### *Common Tern*

The results are summarised in Table 6. In each of the three years, mink removal led to increased productivity, by factors of 5.4, 9.5 and 28. In all three years, the number of colonies that fledged no young was greater where mink were not removed. Except for one colony in each year, the only tern colonies in this large area at which young terns fledged in 1997 and 1998 were those where mink were removed. Following several years of mink-related failure or absence, mink control allowed Common Terns

**Table 4**  
**EFFECT OF MINK REMOVAL ON BREEDING SUCCESS OF COMMON GULLS**  
 Colonies of ten or more pairs

	Pairs (colonies)		Total young fledged (Colonies fledging no young)		Fledged/pr
<b>1996</b>					
Mink removed	475	(5)	383	(0)	0.81
Mink not removed	399	(12)	75	(6)	0.19
<b>1997</b>					
Mink removed	533	(7)	361	(1)	0.68
Mink not removed	535	(10)	216	(4)	0.40
<b>1998</b>					
Mink removed	700	(10)	612	(1)	0.87
Mink not removed	357	(9)	134	(4)	0.38

**Table 5**  
**EFFECT OF MINK REMOVAL ON BREEDING SUCCESS OF BLACK-HEADED GULLS**  
 All known colonies in study area

	Pairs (colonies)		Total young fledged (colonies fledging no young)		Fledged/pr
<b>1997</b>					
Mink removed	122	(3)	72	(0)	0.59
Mink not removed	168	(4)	64	(2)	0.38
<b>1998</b>					
Mink removed	254	(6)	75	(3)	0.30
Mink not removed	64	(2)	1	(1)	0.02

to breed successfully again in Lochs Ailort, Leven, Etive, Feochan and West Loch Tarbert, and in the Sound of Mull.

## DISCUSSION

Mink-related whole-colony breeding failure, repeated annually at some sites, was recorded in earlier years at many former tern and gull colonies that are now empty. Extrapolating, it seems inevitable that those colonies now affected will soon disappear, and possible that mink will eventually reach unaffected colonies which will then succumb. These results (Tables 3-6) show that, in general, removal of mink near gull and tern colonies where they are having severe effects leads to greatly improved productivity. This has been accompanied by the continued existence of the colonies

**Table 6**  
**EFFECT OF MINK REMOVAL ON BREEDING SUCCESS OF COMMON TERNS**  
**Colonies of ten or more pairs**

	Pairs (colonies)		Total young fledged (colonies fledging no young)		Fledged/pr
<b>1996</b>					
Mink removed	848	(5)	453	(2)	0.53
Mink not removed	604	(8)	59	(4)	0.098
<b>1997</b>					
Mink removed	873	(5)	832	(0)	0.95
Mink not removed	144	(3)	15	(2)	0.10
<b>1998</b>					
Mink removed	794	(3)	455	(1)	0.57
Mink not removed	124	(4)	2	(3)	0.02

concerned (otherwise, like many similar colonies, they would almost certainly have disappeared) and by increases in numbers breeding at some of them.

Othe seabird species in this habitat are being affected by mink, notably Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* and Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*. In the study area, several former large colonies of both species are now empty after well-documented mink-related whole-colony breeding failures in successive years. Notable among these has been the large mixed gull/Shag/Black Guillemot colony at Eilean nan Coinean and Eilean Fraoich in the Sound of Jura (NR 7186).

Protection of selected colonies of seabirds, as described above, is at present conducted on a small scale relative to the size of the problem. Whether or not we stop seabirds from disappearing from more of this habitat in Argyll, Lochaber and beyond will depend on further control of mink.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the following for mink control work: Steven McDonald (L Ailort), Liz Macdonald (L Sunart), Jim Buttery (L Leven), Duncan Henderson (L Etive), Helen Anderson (Dunstaffnage), Alan Spellman & David Bennett (Mull), Hugh Campbell-Gibson (L Melfort), Susan Ellison, Jo Leslie, Mike Murray & others of Craignish Coastal Forum (L Craignish area), Graham McWhirter & Stewart Marshall (West L Tarbert), Matt Wilson (L Teacuis), David Wood & Ann McGregor (L Caolisport), Anna Davidson & Tom Wilson (Easdale). I am particularly grateful to Ian Hynd for generous financial support that underpins most of this work; and to Scottish Natural Heritage for financial support of operations on Mull. Liz McTeague of SNH, and Rob and Niall Lightfoot and others helped with fieldwork. Many thanks also to Argyll FFWAG (Jamie Mellor, Kirsten MacCallum, Helen Bibby) for

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considerable assistance in organising the mink control work during its early years. Many thanks to Bob Furness for valued comments on a draft of this paper.

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### APPENDIX I

Colonies of Common Gulls that were occupied in mid-late eighties but had become empty in or before 1997/1998.

North to south. Grid references are given. Most held 10-50 prs.

Islet, Camas Rubha a'Mhurain	NM6590
Samalaman Is., Moidart	NM6678
An Glas Eilean, Moidart	NM6376
Islet, Altshellach, L Leven	NN0659
Islet, L Droma na Buidhe, L Sunart	NM5958
E nan Gabhar, L Teacuis	NM6157
Islet, Caolas Rahuaidh, L Teacuis	NM6256
E Balnagowan, L Linnhe	NM9553
Sgeir nan Tom, L Linnhe	NM8847
Port Appin LH islet, L Linnhe	NM9046
Dubh Sgeir, Lismore	NM8545
Islet, Creagan, L Creran	NM9744
Sgeir Caillich, S Shian, L Creran	NM9142
Eilean Beag, Dunstaffnage	NM8835
Sgeir lag Choan, L Etive	NN0233
Sgeir an Eitich, Ganavan, Oban	NM8532
Eilean a'Mhadaidh, L Don, Mull	NM7531
Islet, Oitir Mhor, Kerrera	NM8230
Eilean Coltair, L Melfort	NM8012
Belnahua, Sound of Luìng	NM7112
Ormsa, Sound of Luìng	NM7111

Scoul Eilean, L Melfort	NM7611
Islet, Bagh dun Mhuilig, L Craignish	NM7801
Reisa an t-Struith, Sd of Jura	NR7399
Eilean da Mheinn, L Crinan	NR7894
Islet, Caol Scotnish, L Sween	NR7689
Leth Sgeir, N of Carsaig Bay, Sd of Jura	NR7389
Islet, Whitehouse Bay, L Fyne	NR8581
Liath Eilean, Danna, Sd of Jura	NR6878
E. na h-Uamhaidh, L Caolisport	NR7476

**Colonies affected by mink in early or mid-nineties, reduced or very reduced in 1998 and probably about to become extinct**

Coruanan, L Linnhe	NN0669
Islet, Bonawe L Etive	NN0033
Ban Eileanan, Sound of Mull	NN6741
Four islets in L Sunart	various
E. Fada, L Caolisport	NR7575

**APPENDIX II**

**Colonies of Herring Gulls that were occupied in mid-late eighties but were empty in 1997/98.**

North to south. Grid references are given. Most held 30-300 prs (mean  $\pm$  sd for 29 colonies: 130  $\pm$  96 prs)

Eilean Ighe, L nan Ceall	NM6387
Lunga Bheag, L nan Ceall	NM6187
Lunga Mhor, L Nan Ceall	NM6085
Am Fraoch-eilean, L nan Uamh	NM6783
Samalaman, Moidart	NM6678
Eilean Coille, Moidart	NM6376
E Raonuill, L Moidart	NM6272
Risga, L Sunart	NM6160
Islet, Sanna Point, Ardnamurchan	NM4369
Eilean Dubh, Lismore	NM8338
Eilean na Cloiche, Lismore	NM8338
Eilean nan Gamhna, Lismore	NM8338
Creag Island, Lismore	NM8337
Pladda Island, Lismore	NM8337
Eilean a'Mhadaidh, Loch Don, Mull	NM7531
Heather Island, Sound of Kerrera	NM8329
Island, Balvicar Bay, Seil Sound	NM7717
Belnahua, Sound of Luing	NM7112
Fladda, Sound of Luing	NM7212
Eilean Creagach, Melfort	NM7809
Reisa an t-Struith, Sound of Jura	NR7399
Liath-sgeir Mhor, L Craignish	NR7797

Eilean na h-Eairne, Sound of Jura	NR7496
Eilean nan Coinean, Sd of Jura	NR7186
Eilean Fraoich, Sound of Jura	NR7186
Eilean Ghamhna, McCormaig Islands	NR6775
Liath Eilein, L Caolisport	NR7172
Islet, Barmore Island, L Fyne	NR8771

**Colonies seriously affected by mink 1995-98, nearly extinct in 1998**

An Glas Eilean, Moidart	NM6376
Eilean Loch Oscair, Lismore	NM8645
E Rubha an Ridire, Sound of Mull	NM7240
Leth Sgeir, Sound of Jura	NR7085

**APPENDIX III**

**Breeding success of individual colonies of Herring Gulls in 1997 and 1998**  
 This table includes only those colonies of ten or more prs where accurate clutch counts and counts of numbers fledged were made in 1997 and 1998.  
 - Productivity was not recorded.

Site	Grid Ref	1997		1998	
		Prs	Fledged	Prs	Fledged
<b>Mink removed</b>					
E Eoghainn, West L Tarbert	NR8263	252	174	250	155
E Beag, Dunstaffnage	NM8835	182	225	173	177
Sligneach Mor, L Sunart	NM5660	151	190	216	323
Abbot Isles , L Etive	NM9534	50	60	53	61
Sgeir nan Gobhar, Sd of Mull	NM7039	46	50	51	87
Kilmaronag steep isl, L Etive	NM9334	17	4	11	2
<b>Total at 6 colonies</b>		<b>698</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>805</b>
<b>Mink not removed</b>					
E na Caorach, Lismore	NM9046	435	96	404	0
Inn island, Lismore	NM8946	228	129	261	0
E Balnagowan, subcolony, L. Linnhe	NM9553	260	248	254	418
Sgat Beag, L Fyne	NR9466	-	-	203	0
E Buidhe, L Fyne	NR9169	-	-	121	121
Islet, Fort William, L Linnhe	NN0976	118	39	126	85
Subcolony,E na Cille, Sd of Jura	NR7597	-	-	121	76
E Glasa, Sound of Mull	NM5945	122	135	-	-
Ruadh Sgeir, Sound of Jura	NR7292	86	35	106	33
E an Sgurra, L nan Uamh	NM6782	-	-	94	0
E Rubha da Chuain, N of Arisaig	NM6591	-	-	93	3
Sgeir Ghlas, L Ailort	NM6979	90	7	83	0

E Mor, McCormaig, Sd of Jura	NR6675	68	60	-	
Glas Eilean, L Fyne	NR9185	75	60	-	
An Glas Eilean, N of Arisaig	NM6491	-	-	82	0
E Loch Oskair, Lismore, L Linnhe	NM8645	22	0	81	0
Am Fraoch Eilean, L nan Ceall	NM6185	-	-	74	11
Sgeir an Eididh, Ardtoe	NM6171	-	-	70	0
E mhic Neill, L Moidart	NM6572	77	0	64	26
E na Cille, steep islet, Sd of Jura	NR7496	-	-	62	44
E da Chuain, N of Arisaig	NM6491	-	-	54	0
Sgeir an Fheoir, L nan Ceall	NM6286	-	-	36	0
Sgat Mor, L Fyne	NR9366	-	-	29	43
E nan Coinean, Sound of Jura	NR7185	48	0	-	
Leth Sgeir, Sound of Jura	NR7085	40	0	14	0
An Glas Eilean, L nan Uamh	NM6682	-	-	26	0
Islet between Inn & Caorach	NM9046	-	-	24	0
E Rubha an Ridire, Sd of Mull	NM7240	-	-	15	0
An Glas Eilean, Moidart	NM6376	40	0	10	0
<b>Total no of pairs (colonies) fledged</b>		<b>1709 (14)</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>2507 (25)</b>	<b>860</b>
Colonies (pairs) fledging none		5 (227)		15 (1457)	

#### APPENDIX IV

##### Model to reconcile breeding and population data

From Table 2, Herring Gulls decreased by 37% in the nine years 1989-1998.

From Table 3

In 1997 where mink were removed, productivity was 1.01 young/pr  
where mink were not removed, productivity was 0.473 young/pr  
so mink lowered productivity to 0.47 of its normal value.

In 1998 where mink were removed, productivity was 1.07 young/pr  
where mink were not removed, productivity was 0.343 young/pr  
so mink lowered productivity to 0.32 of its normal value.

Mean of 1997 and 1998: mink lowered productivity to 0.40 of its normal value.

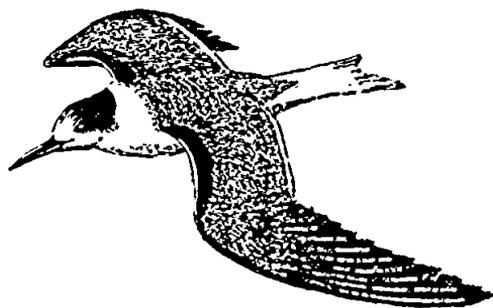
Suppose this population is closed, stable in absence of mink, and that annual adult survival (proportion) = 0.90 (Cramp *et al.*, 1983). Then, in absence of mink, each year 0.10 of breeding population are replaced by survivors of those hatched four years previously.

Suppose mink predation, exclusively of eggs and chicks, has occurred at the above intensity annually since 1986 (this may well be so, since breeding failures of whole colonies were first noticed in 1987). Since Herring Gulls start breeding at 3-4 yrs old, by 1990 mink would begin to affect recruitment, reducing it to 0.4 of normal. Application of these quantities to a spreadsheet produced the following Table of

numbers of breeding adults, starting with 100. Numbers have been rounded to nearest tenth.

Year	Survive from previous yr	Recruit from 4 yrs before	Breed this yr	Comments
1985	90	10	100	No mink
1986	90	10	100	Mink predation begins
1987	90	10	100	
1988	90	10	100	
1989	90	10	100	
1990	90	4	94	First effect on breeding pop.
1991	84.6	4	88.6	
1992	79.7	4	83.7	
1993	75.4	4	79.4	
1994	71.4	3.8	75.2	
1995	67.7	3.5	71.2	
1996	64.1	3.3	67.4	
1997	60.7	3.2	63.9	
1998	57.5	3.0	60.5	40% reduction 1989-1998
1999	54.4	2.8	57.3	
2000	51.6	2.7	54.3	
2001	48.8	2.6	51.4	
2002	46.3	2.4	48.7	

The model thus gives a 40% reduction in population in the nine years 1989-1998, compared with the 37% that was observed. This suggests that mink-related breeding failure at the level observed is alone enough to explain the population decrease. The Table is given in full here since it shows how repeated mink-related breeding failures may affect a typical seabird. Broadly similar figures describe the declines of the other gull and tern species in Table 2.



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